



Keeping in touch

Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart OVERSEAS AID INCORPORATED

Issue 2, December 2009

Dear friends of the OLSH Missions



In this Issue of *Keeping In Touch* we focus on the continuing work of our OLSH Sisters in South Sudan.

The needs of this large and poor region are highlighted in the following statistics which were released during a recent conference held in Khartoum, by the UN Humanitarian Coordination Chief in South Sudan, Lise Grande.

* More than 90% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day.

* 1.2 million people in Southern Sudan suffer from a food deficit and will need assistance during the year.

* One out of every seven women who become pregnant will probably die of pregnancy related complications.

* There are only ten certified midwives in all of South Sudan.

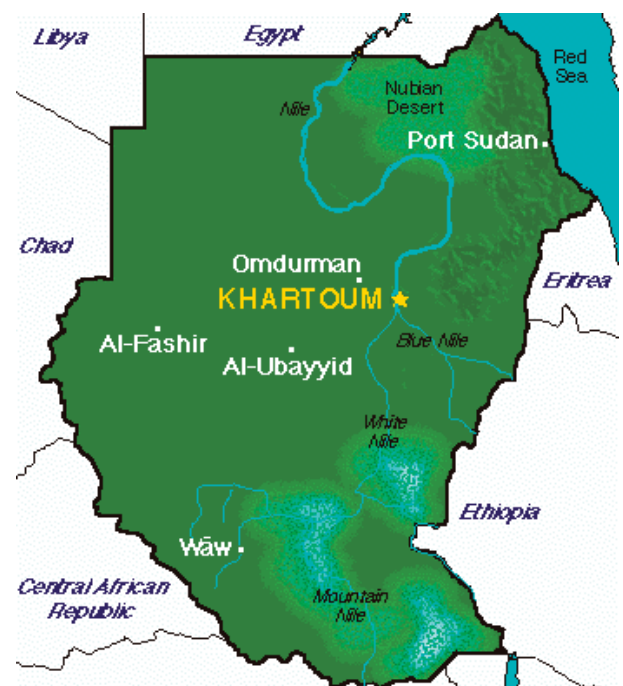
* Only 27% of girls are in school and there are 1,000 primary school children per teacher.

* 97% of the population has no access to sanitation.

* Polio, once eradicated from South Sudan, has reemerged.

* Some of the deadliest epidemics in the world are prevalent in South Sudan, including Cholera, Meningitis, Rift Valley Fever, Ebola and Guinea Worm.

* And perhaps the two statistics that capture it all: a fifteen year old girl has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than of finishing school; the maternal mortality rate is the highest in the world and the child immunization rate the lowest.



The *Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Overseas Aid Incorporated* is a signatory to the Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct. The Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

www.acfid.asn.au

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are tax deductible

Thank You

For Helping Our Hospital

The letter below was written by Dr Br Rosario, a medical doctor and the Director of the Mary Immaculate Hospital, Mapuordit.

Dr Rosario is a member of the Comboni Congregation. The Comboni Community consists of one Priest and four Brothers (two nurses, one doctor and one teacher). Patients seen annually in the hospital number 3000 inpatients and 27,000 outpatients. The hospital was commenced by the OLSH Sisters.

Dear Friends of OLSH Overseas Aid Organization,

We are writing to express our appreciation to your Organization for the many ways you have helped our Hospital over the years. This would go back to the time when the first OLSH Sisters - Sister Jo Kenny and Sister Moira Lynch - came to Mapuordit in 1995. Sister Korete came a little later. All are fondly remembered by our staff, some of whom were working with those Sisters and are still serving here. Sister Mary Batchelor, who came in 1996, is still faithfully serving our Comboni School, and most of the Hospital staff are past pupils of Sister Mary and Comboni School, and hold her in the highest esteem.

When we look around us and take stock of the way our Hospital has grown during this time, but particularly in the last 2 to 3 years, we must also look at how this has happened. We truly could not have progressed to this stage if it had not been for your help and unfailing support. Every time we have asked the support of OLSH, somehow that support has been forthcoming.

Late last year, we were given the opportunity to host the initial year of the Rumbek Nurse Training School, for the State Ministry of Health, which is not yet in a position to run the School. The plan is for Rumbek Hospital campus to take it over from year 2 of the School, which will be in March 2010. The School opened here on May 4, with a first year intake of 15 students - 13 males and 2 females. In the setting up of the School, and also with the ongoing medical education of our own staff in mind, we recently asked again that OLSH Overseas Aid would support us in setting up the educational aids for the School and for the Hospital.



Through your great generosity we have been able to purchase many Nursing Texts for our Reference Library, as well as Library Furniture, and Audio-Visual equipment necessary for teaching - TV, DVD, and hopefully, a projector. These things would have been beyond our budget had OLSH Overseas Aid not agreed to help. They will be invaluable to us.

Last year, OLSH Overseas Aid funded an HIV Awareness Programme which was introduced into the Upper Primary and Secondary School. Four of the Hospital's Clinical Officers spent 10 weeks visiting the Schools and helping to create a right understanding of the whole spectrum of HIV. It was very well received, and students, teachers and parents were very grateful for this intervention. We really want you to know that your participation in the work we are doing here is always remembered and we ask God to bless your kindness.

In faith, (Sgd) Dr Br Rosario Iannetti (Medical Director) Mary Immaculate, DOR Hospital, Mapuordit, Southern Sudan



Pauline (Volunteer) with Nursing School students

Our Primary School

Numbers Exceed

1200

Sister Mary Batchelor came to the Sudan in 1996. For the past 13 years she has been involved in education. Her first class rooms were mostly mud huts with bamboo walls; students sat on logs. Some classes are still in the open air under trees.

There has been a big effort to replace these classrooms with more permanent structures; however in the interim the situation of many classrooms is much the same. At present there are five permanent buildings and an effort is made to add two more each year. Sister Mary Batchelor began the school from nothing when she first arrived in South Sudan.

Today there are over 1500 students enrolled in primary and secondary classes. Sister is a member of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Before entering our congregation she lived in Cohuna, Northern Victoria. Sister Wendy Violet grew up in Sydney and she is a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, likewise. Sister Wendy spent many years teaching and working with the people of Kiribati in the Central Pacific. Sister Mary continues...

Now for some news of Mapuordit. There is a new lease of life in the hospital. From the dispensary of Sister Moira's time to the hospital of today, OLSH Overseas Aid had provided medicines and drugs and running costs - and that is still a number one priority. But this year a Nursing School was opened. It was supposed to be in Rumbek but they were not ready so the first year was transferred to Mapuordit, and fifteen students are in full swing. Hopefully Rumbek will still not be ready in 2010, so that the second year may continue here.

OLSH Overseas Aid has helped to get the Nursing School established, especially with medical books and audio-visual equipment. Form 4 is a requirement for admission, but a few exceptions were made and two of our young women, without Form 4, were accepted.

The setting up of this school created concern for the long-term nurses who have "borne the burden of the day" and kept things going during war years and after - they do not have Form 4. Sister Rita stepped into the gap and has started an up-grading programme for ten nurses and is taking them through Form 1. To take this into future years and higher standards, we will be seeking support from Overseas Aid. Sister Rita also has a group of women from scattered places for a concentrated English course, which Sister Wendy is helping with as well as her normal Adult Education School.

Our small secondary school opened with 215 students this year, and it is struggling to keep pace with South Sudan's new secondary syllabus. This syllabus will reach Form Three next year and that is where it diverts considerably from the Kenyan syllabus which we have been following. So the cost of providing all that the new syllabus requires will rise significantly. Meantime our primary numbers have exceeded 1200 and the little ones keep coming. We have over 300 in Grade One, and have had to turn away another hundred or more.

(Continued over...)



Form 3, Senior School, with Sister Philippa and Sr Mary



Old primary classroom, with happy children



Sr Wendy visiting the sick in the Hospital

On the downside, Sudan needs a lot of prayers. There are so many tribal clashes and violent paybacks and so much fear around. We are not in any danger, just the people whose only crime is to belong to the ill-fated tribe from which "someone" has killed "someone" from theirs. There is no guilty person, only a guilty tribe and anyone is likely to pay the penalty; hence open roads are not safe for travellers.

Corruption is rife also, and the salaries that started to be paid to teachers have dwindled; they have become less with every monthly payment, until now it is little more than the incentive given during war time, rather than a proper teacher's salary. Fortunately our teachers carry on, most of them willing to continue teaching for the sake of the children in need of education.

Life is hard in this part of the world and the future does not seem too bright. But we place all our needs in the hands of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in this her 150th year, keeping in mind that this land of ours belongs to her, being placed under her protection by Saint Daniel Comboni himself in 1875. On her feast day this year we renewed Comboni's consecration of Sudan, and we carry on regardless as we look forward to the imminent arrival of two new OLSH Sisters.

Thank you again for your support. May God bless and reward you for your goodness.
(Sgd) Sister Mary Batchelor, Mapuordit, fdnsc



Sr Christina teaching sewing skills

Remembering the Missions in your Will ...

Would you like to include the work of our Missions in your Will?
We will gladly advise your solicitor of the specific terms of the bequest.
Alternatively, Mr Michael O'Dea, of Carroll and O'Dea Lawyers,
will be happy to advise you at no cost.
He may be contacted direct on 02 9291 7100.

On behalf of all our Sisters working throughout the world,
we sincerely wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas.
We pray that our God, who is the Father of all goodness,
will bless you and reward you abundantly.

Sister Maureen Brazel, Editor



One Cannot Imagine The Poverty And Deprivation Of Our Sudanese Women



Your donations to OLSH Overseas Aid are very much appreciated; they are responsible for so much good being achieved in our overseas missions.

As an example of what we mean, we print here the following letter from Sister Rita Grunke, South Sudan. Sister Rita, who is a member of the OLSH religious congregation, grew up in Toowoomba, Queensland; she has been working in South Sudan for 6 years. Ed.

I send my deepest gratitude to OLSH Overseas Aid and to all our generous donors.

You have made a difference to so many women of our Parish and Diocese. One cannot imagine the poverty and deprivation of our Sudanese women; my work among them has been truly graced and they have taught me so much - their ability to transcend hunger, to withstand beatings from their husbands, to soothe babies crying because of hunger, to work hard from dawn to dark.

They are immensely grateful for any small contribution to their welfare or development: they are so proud of being able to crotchet handbags and make small table covers. The

Intensive English Course progressed more slowly than planned but some progress was made; they have reached Grade 3 Level, not Grade 6 as hoped, but they are happy with what they have achieved.

It is wonderful to have the privilege to be part of their lives, in their own setting. Recently I met small Angelina Sabun. She is so named because 'Sabun' means SOAP; when Sabun was born, her presence washed away the family conflicts that had dominated the marriage and family!

I want to acknowledge the value of having the use of a vehicle for my work.

I would have been unable to make real contact with the people had I not had a vehicle.

Thank you a thousand times for making this available. Every day this week I have needed to be in the field - I was able to be there because the 4 Wheel Drive makes it possible to be there.

OLSH Overseas Aid has made a huge difference to the lives of those in our Parish.

Thank you so much.

Sister Rita fdnsc (Mapuordit, South Sudan)



Some First Thoughts from Sr Philippa

In Sister Mary's letter she made reference to the anticipated arrival of two new OLSH Sisters, Sister Christina Raotitei and Sister Philippa Murphy.

These two Sisters arrived in August 2009. Sister Christina comes from Kiribati and is settling in to a new environment and work.

I am hoping that in future editions of *Keeping in Touch* we will hear news of her work for the people of Mapuordit. Sister Philippa sends us her first impressions of life among the Dinka people of Mapuordit.

Sister was a qualified secondary teacher before entering our order. Prior to taking up her present position, Sister Philippa was Principal of St. John's Secondary College, Darwin. Here are her impressions.

I share with you some thoughts since I arrived here a month ago. I am sitting in my room, a small wooden shack with a tin roof and a mosquito coil burning, while I type on my battery operated computer, listening to the falling rain outside which provides a welcome relief from the scorching temperatures of the day. At night the skies are usually clear and we sit outside to eat our dinner, which is cooked on an open fire. We just talk and gaze at the stars and track the movement of the moon. These times are highlights.

The people here are so poor. Since being here the Gospels have taken on a new meaning for me: I have sat next to a man with a withered leg; shaken hands with a fingerless leper; and my eyes have gazed into the vacant stare of a blind man. Each day I am confronted with the 'rawness of humanity' and my greatest challenge is how will I respond to Christ who lives within each of these people. I watch in awe at our Sisters and I know my only response is Love.

Life is very different here and I must say many things that I have taken for granted are a great effort here. I have a great admiration for the Sisters who have lived and worked here for many years, including the extremely difficult war years. I am grateful that I have been given the opportunity to be with these proud Dinka people and I believe strongly that education will make a difference to those who have and who continue to suffer greatly.

Mapuordit is a tough place in which to live and work, but I feel encouraged knowing that we have generous benefactors who join with us in trying to alleviate the suffering of these people of Southern Sudan.

*Thanks and blessings.
Sister Philippa Murphy fdnsc*



Family group with Sr Rita



Sr Rita with a blind family

**Check out our new website
www.olshoverseasaid.org**