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A country without an education

A new year has begun! Solidarity with South Sudan offers best wishes for this new year to all who have supported our efforts during this past year. It is amazing what the "widow's mite" can do when there is collaboration and generosity!

As the new year breaks into our lives, students are arriving at the Solidarity Teacher Training Institute at Yambio and the Catholic Health Training Institute at Wau. They arrive in Yambio just as ground is being broken for additional staff and dormitory rooms necessitated by the increase in students coming from areas ravaged by civil unrest during this past year. The newly built Solidarity TTC at Malakal was virtually destroyed in the early part of last year and, as this is still an area of insecurity, Solidarity has chosen to expand the college at Yambio. It is now a national college accepting students from throughout the country; 120 teachers are being accommodated for in-service in January and February and it is anticipated that there will be 120 students taking advantage of the two year pre-service program that runs from March to November.

Solidarity staff often ask themselves, "Are we focusing our efforts on the greatest need facing the people of South Sudan? Is training health care providers and teachers what we should be doing?" Some days it is difficult to focus on education when there are so many other needs – refugees, the homeless – yet, we believe that education is the key to the future development of South Sudan. Whether or not those we educate become nurses or teachers, they will be leaders in their communities precisely because they are educated.

Alvar Sánchez SJ, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Maban, South Sudan, had this to say in a recent article, "A country without education is like a house without a foundation, and the foundation of South Sudan is crumbling. You can't build a future for a new nation unless you prioritize education; sadly South Sudan never did so. The country is on the brink of disaster, and one of main reasons is the lack of access to education."

He quotes Adolfo Nicholas, SJ, superior general, "Education is a priority, an emergency, something that should not be suspended or postponed ... Emergencies – wars or even natural disasters– do not go away overnight; they affect people for years and whole generations miss out on an education. ... Ignorance breeds violence, which in turn becomes a vicious circle."

The article also highlights the importance of educating girls. Only 6 percent of girls finish primary school in South Sudan. Solidarity espouses affirmative action intending to change this situation. CHTI is to be congratulated at achieving gender balance in its student population in 2015.

Solidarity staff are affirmed in their choice to focus on education. It is what religious have done for centuries and it is what has made the United States a strong nation. It is through collaboration and sharing of resources, both personnel and finances, as well as the energy of the Spirit which comes from prayer, that Solidarity is able to build the capacity of South Sudanese to be leaders for the next generation.

To read the full article published by Jesuit Refugee Services go to:

http://en.jrs.net/news_detail?TN=NEWS-20150113033757

To become involved and support the work of Solidarity go to www.solidarityssudan.org or contact jmumaw.solidarity@gmail.com

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