

**South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP)
3rd Quarter 2015 Summary Report**

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I. Brief South Sudan Context Update:

This week is the "Week of Witness" in Yei, South Sudan. What does that mean? South Sudanese churches carry out a large scale effort to visit homes for prayer, praise and fellowship. Church leaders contact local organizations, like RECONCILE, and ask if they may lead a morning devotion with their staff. Christians of all ages parade down unpaved roads singing "Hallelujah" and waving flags and branches in the air.



Farther down the road, on the way to Juba, reports of cars stopped, passengers robbed, cars stolen and individuals killed continue to multiply. Crime in South Sudan is on the rise, while fuel and electricity are in short supply.

There is a battle taking place between more than just government and rebels, over more than just power, resources and revenge, in more ways than just what the human eye can see. The sound of a children's choir practicing under a tree for Sunday worship fills one ear, and gun shots in the distance from an unknown conflict, fill the other. A national peace agreement is signed and then another ceasefire broken, but those with the peace of Christ in their hearts remain steadfast.

A small wooden building witnesses to the way the SSEPP continues to join hands with those working hard not to give in to the many reasons for hopelessness. In the past five years, no new structures were built at the training center of RECONCILE International. During the 3-month Peace Institute, juggling the limited space was becoming more and more difficult. With no dining hall, students ate lunch outside in good weather, and they squeezed into the dormitory foyer when it rained.

In 2015, however, trucks started delivering stones for the foundation of the Women's Village Dormitory.



A Student Dining Hall inspired by the SSEPP

Shortly after, a small dining hall began to take form in front of the dormitory. At first it was just the wood posts and an iron sheet roof, a few months later, wooden walls were added. This student dining hall was not funded by the SSEPP.

Once the Women's Village began to take form, however, the energy was contagious. The Center Manager decided it was time to build a dining hall. Trees from the corner of the RECONCILE property made the posts.

Left-over iron sheets, which remained in storage for years, covered the roof. The rest is history.

The SSEPP has a multiplier effect. When a community catches the energy, more can be done than anyone had ever thought or imagined. Which is just the way that our God works. Hallelujah!

II. EDUCATION Update:

1. Capacity Building with the PCOSS Education Department:

- The Education Director completed several units of his School Management program requirements and is preparing his research paper proposal for submission. He is scheduled to finish his studies in June 2016.

2. Teacher Training through the Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC):

- The Ed Office met with each group of students before and after their return to YTTC. This gave each student a chance to discuss issues that they are experiencing, to gauge the effectiveness of the program, and to encourage them in their studies.
- The nine pre-service and in-service students continue their studies at YTTC and continue to excel in academics, extra-curriculum activities, student leadership, and church activities.

3. Community Mobilization for Education:

- In Pochalla, the School Management Board implemented activities to promote the importance of education and solicit a commitment from parents and youth to stay in school. For one activity, they held an education tea party for primary school students to encourage them to continue their education. The county's education director, students from Ethiopia, parents, and concerned community members were in attendance and discussed quality education.



Above: PCOSS Ed. Director (Rev. Nyang), Lynn Kandel, and students in front of new school (building below)

The basic structure of the Murle Presbyterian Primary School (2 classrooms) was constructed from August 25 to October 1. This construction is a collaborative effort with the congregation (Akatgol



Congregation, located in Jebel which is near Juba) who are currently raising funds to complete the building. The interior of the classroom (floors, wall plastering, doors, and windows) will be finished gradually by the congregation and school community as part of their continuing engagement in education.

III. PEACEBUILDING Update

4. Women's Peacebuilding Forum

- 30 women gathered in Juba from June 22nd-24th for a Peacebuilding Forum. The ethnically diverse group included women from the UN protection camp. They discussed several topics, including: peaceful ways to transform conflicts, good governance, leadership, and human rights, including the role of individual governments in promoting and protecting women's rights.
- *"Most of the women were not aware of their fundamental rights as provided for in the Interim Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, issues having to do with Human Rights, Women's Rights and Children's Rights are completely new to some of them though we were able to discuss this with them during the forum which opened their minds"* —Raphael Sabun, Coordinator of Leadership and Governance Department, RECONCILE International. The women requested more forums as they felt empowered by the things they learned.



5. Peer Counselor and Peer Educator Training

- 26 community and church leaders began a Peer Counselor and Peer Educator training course in Kajo Keji County from July 6-10th. The training is implemented in several phases, which provides follow-up and mentoring for participants over several months.
- The trained leaders will provide counseling services in Kajo-Keji County, South Sudan and Moyo, Northern Uganda. During recent months, a cycle of violence among the Kuku people of South Sudan and the Madi people in Northern Uganda has resulted in the displacement, injury and killing of residents. RECONCILE was invited by Bishop Anthony Pogo of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Sudan to assist with the ongoing crisis on the border. Before the training began, the church administrators requested that more representatives of other denominations take part in the training, so that psycho-social services could reach more people.
- The leaders enjoyed the training because it uses a participatory approach. They learned that counseling reduces pain and stress in people and provides people with guidance to discover solutions to their own problems.
- During the training, participants shared testimonies of their experiences during the conflict with the Madi people, they identified the common causes of stress in their lives, and they discussed ways to be personally transformed in order to be care-givers for others. Common causes of stress included: “conflict between Madi in Northern Uganda and the Kuku in South Sudan, boarder disputes, land grabbing, killing of innocent lives, robbery, motor accidents, allegations of poisoning, change of leaderships, divorce, forceful marriages, mob justice, high rate of poverty, marriage separations, un-employment, and child abuse.”



6. Women's Dormitory and Security Fence

- The Women's 12-room dormitory now has a blue roof! Plastering of the walls is next.
- Poles for the new RECONCILE security fence are in the ground. A "live fence" will be planted in addition to connecting the poles with wire.

IV. Testimonies of Impact

- YTTC Teachers: *The nine in-service and pre-service SSEPP-sponsored teachers matriculating at the Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC) are excellent models of the potential of the South Sudanese teacher. They are contributing greatly to the betterment of the school community and garnering experience for future work and development in their local communities. In addition to featuring academically in the top ten percent of their class, five of the nine have been chosen in an open election by their peers for various posts in the school's Student Guild. This organization is a "voice for YTTC student teachers and is a forum whereby YTTC student teachers can engage in community service projects, learn the principles of democracy, and develop leadership/management skills." The SSEPP scholarship recipients will serve their constituents as the Student Guild President, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Parliamentarian, Deputy Governor and Class Coordinator.*

In his acceptance speech as Guild President, Omot Mam Ochala gave thanks to the PC(USA) for the opportunity to become a better teacher and citizen. He challenged his classmates to "let bygones be bygones and begin a new chapter of working together to yield liberty and prosperity. The brighter future of this country is lying in our hands - the youths as well as the professional teachers - as it is said...a country's asset is its citizens".

- Women's Forum: "The father of Mary Lonur, a Murle participant in the forum, was killed by a Nuer during the clashes. As a result, she hated any Nuer who she came across, be it a man or a woman. She was advised by relatives and friends to forgive and forget, but the death continued to haunt her. However, today she learned a lot from the forum: not all Nuers are bad, only some individuals among them. For this reason, she has forgiven them, including the one who killed her

father. She leaves everything to God the creator, and asked God to forgive her for the bad attitude she had against the Nuer tribe.”



Women's Peacebuilding Forum, Juba

- Peer Counselor Training: Many participants said that before they attended the training, they were giving advice to their clients instead of counseling them and guiding them to their own solutions. They also said that they did not have counseling skills before the training. During the training, they learned that counseling is a process and gained new skills.
- Bishop Anthony Pogo, during the closing ceremony of the training, said he was very pleased for the support from PC(USA) for this training. During the conflict of their people the Kuku and the Madi, he saw one of the pastors who was armed with arrows, ready to kill. At that time he did not ask the man how a pastor can behave like an ordinary person, but in the morning he asked him why he behaved that way the previous day. The pastor responded by asking the Bishop to forgive him. Immediately, the Bishop knew that the pastor needed counseling from his stress. This training has come at the right time to equip the church and community leaders to be counselors and care-givers not supporters of conflicts.

V. Challenges

- The instability of the South Sudanese Pound and unavailability of hard currency within the country have created an increase in the cost of goods and services and shortage of supplies. This means that the proposed budget has to constantly be adjusted and proposed activities prioritized. The insecurity throughout the country limits the freedom of movement by SSEPP personnel.
- “The major challenge I encountered was how to bring the women living in the UN Protection Camp to come out and attend the forum at ECS province Hall in Juba. Thanks to God I was able to approach Hariet, the Chairperson for the ECS Mothers Union in Juba, a very influential person who played a leading role to enable the women from the UN Camp came out for the forum.”
- “Due to the war there is insecurity all over Juba town even during the daytime; as such I have to make sure that the forum closes every day at 3:30 pm instead of 5:00 pm to enable the participants to reach home before dark, especially those living at the UN Protection Camp.”

VI. Financial Update

An updated estimate of the complete cost for the entire five years of the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project is \$3.8 million dollars. That's a lot of money, but what would that amount accomplish here in the US? The addition of a single classroom, maybe two to an existing school, perhaps? In South Sudan, for the same amount of money, we have the opportunity to impact the entire education system of the newest nation on earth! That impact includes the education of girls and women, who have previously been under-valued as a resource for the future of the nation. Not only that, we can empower the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan to be recognized as the educational leader for the entire country, while the new government struggles to answer other challenges.

In regards to fundraising, we are about halfway to our goal! More good news is that there is still time to join in and be a part of this project for 5 years (2015-2019) if you are not already doing so. Please prayerfully consider, as an individual, as a church, as a presbytery, a 5-year pledge to this important work. Pledging for the 5-years is incredibly helpful for our partners whose efforts, such as training teachers, requires several years.

We are very grateful that you join Presbyterian World Mission in this ministry through your prayers, your engagement, and your financial gifts. Please continue your commitment for the coming year, so that we can continue ours.

During this past quarter, \$122,077.38 was disbursed to partners, praise the Lord!

VII. Mission Co-Workers Updates

The Mission co-workers were asked to respond to the question: "How did you feel when you heard the news about the signing of the Peace Agreement?"



Leisa Wagstaff: "I thought I would finally be able to fully exhale upon hearing of a peace agreement between the major warring parties. However, when the agreement was signed and announced, I could only recall that a prior signed peace agreement had been followed by prolonged and intensive fighting. I am cautiously optimistic that this agreement will hold and that the country is headed toward a better tomorrow. My South Sudanese colleagues and neighbors tell me they want to be hopeful but have 'little confidence that peace will hold just because of a piece of paper with signatories on it. They say that it will take years of heart-searching to find peace within before even thinking of our homeland as a peaceful place'".

Leisa is currently in the USA for medical leave but is in regular contact with the PCOSS Education Department - usually on three a.m. international calls. She has focused on assisting with report and proposal writing for the various departments of the PCOSS with whom she works. She plans to return to South Sudan at the end of October.



Lynn and Sharon Kandel: *“We travel by public transit frequently and therefore talk with a lot of different people. Everyone we talked with was happy that the agreement was signed but quite skeptical about whether it would actually be implemented or last. There are many issues to yet be resolved and many resentful people who were wronged during this long conflict. One church leader said, quote ‘we will forgive but not forget.’ He made that statement somewhat tongue in cheek but there is certainly a significant element of truth there.”*

The next building project we plan to be working with is the school building project in Pochalla in the coming months. We have also begun responsibilities relating to logistical work involving organizations who are partnering with PC(USA) (Across, YTTC, etc.) relating to reporting, acquisitions, transfers and other logistics related to various partners. These are responsibilities previously handled by the RL Michael Weller who continues to serve as the Regional Liaison for South Sudan. These responsibilities also include logistics relating to church visitors and mission co-workers in South Sudan. Sharon is also continuing to build relationships with the PCOSS head office personnel, help with office reporting responsibilities, and doing half of Lynn’s work. Thanks Sharon!

Pray for peace in South Sudan as there seem to be a lot more robberies and violent crimes in the last month or so including a triple homicide right outside our apartment gates. These have the potential to make things such as the transport of building materials to Pochalla very risky as well as affecting the lives of so many South Sudanese in a negative way. – Lynn Kandel



Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather: *“I had chill bumps when I heard the news. The last 20 months have been difficult, but the last year has been especially difficult. The economy is depressed. Basic needs like fuel and electricity are almost non-existent. People are hungry more than ever before. The possibilities (the Peace Agreement) opens up are awesome, but we also know there are huge challenges ahead,”—Shelvis.*

“We planned to spend vacation, continuing education and some fundraising time in the US this summer, but we did not return to South Sudan in August as planned. The loss of our unborn child the week of our scheduled departure caused an initial delay. Three more medical delays followed, the final one for Jordan who had tubes put in his ears and his adenoids removed. We greatly appreciate the prayers and support which surrounded us during this time, and we felt incredibly blessed for access to such great medical care in the US.

Our family returned to South Sudan, on October 13th. As we pulled into the RECONCILE Training Center, Jordan exclaimed, “My house! My house! I love it! I love it! I love it!” We are all very grateful to be back in Yei,”—Nancy.

*Thank you for your interest in this ministry which uplifts and equips people in South Sudan, for the glory of God! Please keep this project in your prayers and also share it with others!
Thank you!*

