

**South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP)
2nd Quarter 2015 Summary Report**

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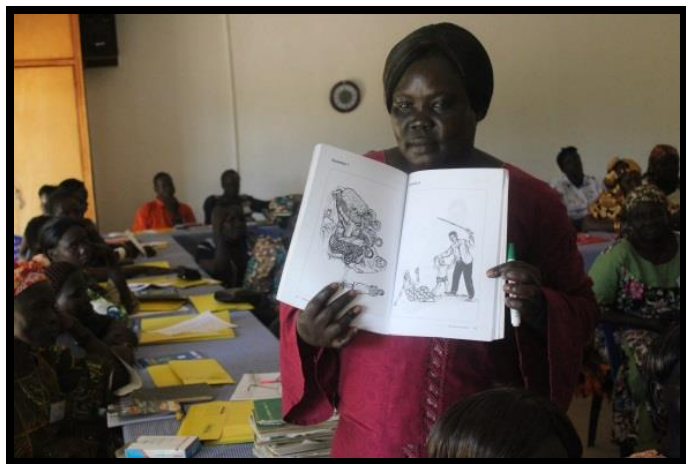
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RPI alumni, Margaret Sadia, teaching about Gender Based Violence. Margaret served as a 2015 RPI Assistant Principal.

I. Brief South Sudan Context Update:

“There is one more point I want to make,” said Canon John Kanyikwa, “it is about the phrase, ‘de mara saket.’ I do not like that phrase.”

The longtime, beloved RECONCILE Peace Institute (RPI) instructor then elaborated on commonly held cultural beliefs which allow for the existence of the phrase: “de mara saket” meaning “that is only a woman.” Canon Kanyikwa then expressed his contrary conclusion that women and men have equal value. “Is there really something a man can do that a woman cannot do?” he asked the student teachers and the RPI participants gathered together at the Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC).

One female student teacher stood up among her classmates to ask a question: “What can we do to change the mindset of ‘de mara saket’?” Her deep concern about the topic was evident on her face.

“We need to educate the girl child,” responded RPI Alumni Assistant Principal, Margaret Sadia, “If girls are in school then the culture that says “that is only a woman” will disappear.”

RPI participants often visit different institutions in Yei as they do practicums for their coursework. Their opportunity to share about peacebuilding with the student teachers at YTTC brought together the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP) in a unique and powerful way. Teachers from the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan who received project scholarships listened attentively as the RPI

group (which also included SSEPP scholarship recipients) shared about topics such as resolving family disputes and addressing tribalism.

During this quarter, the Civil War in South Sudan continued claiming lives, destroying homes, and displacing people. South Sudan's economy suffered greatly, bringing new tensions to areas where communities are experiencing the effects of the war but not the fighting. Yet, God is still at work and we have witnessed God's hand in many ways.

In June, through the South Sudan Council of Churches, twenty-five church leaders from different denominations and ethnic groups gathered to make a united statement. Their plans for peace included the words: "Not only will we warn our leaders and our people to renounce wickedness and evil ways, we will take action to bring peace and to begin reconciliation." While their actions may bring them personal harm, one church leader explained, "the church cannot stand by, while people are being killed."

Also this quarter, student teachers remained committed to their studies, communities continued to mobilize for education, and because of the support of SSEPP, a record seventy-five participants graduated from the RECONCILE Peace Institute. Upon their graduation, the class president explained that the student body, which represented many ethnic groups, had become "a family."

And when the one female RPI participant who joined the volleyball match served a ball that none of her male classmates could return, a teammate exclaimed, "de mara saket!" Everyone laughed, embracing the reality that women can indeed compete with men and be successful. We thank God for all of the changes, big and small, which took place this quarter, and for your support which helps to make this project possible. Thank you.



A Yei Community Forum brought together grassroots leaders and RPI students to share experiences of conflict and commit to work together. RPI alumni coordinated and Canon Kanyikwa facilitated the event.

II. EDUCATION Update:

1. Capacity Building with PCOSS Education Department:

- The PCOSS Ed Director, Rev. Stephen Nyang, began a two-year, distance learning Diploma in Education Management at Christian Organisations Research and Advisory Trust of Africa (CORAT Africa) in Nairobi, Kenya. He is excited by this opportunity and challenged by the depth of the program as well as the experience of his fellow classmates. In addition to his duties as the director of education, he is fully engaged in the assigned home research and study.
- Planning and preparation took place for the introduction of two new programs: “Onsite Pedagogic Guidance Days (OPGD)” for teachers and school administrators and “I Love Reading” periods for pupils. Content and training materials were gathered and teaching aids designed for the OPGD. Materials to encourage reading included the “Big Books” introduced during the recent visit of Dr. Mac Brown from Trinity Presbytery.
- PCOSS Education Department published its quarterly newsletter, Issue 2. Content included topics such as effective classroom and school management, inclusive education, partner visits with the PCOSS, and brain teasers.
- A soft copy of the new primary school curriculum was secured by the department for free distribution to its schools. To ensure that each school is able to assess this curriculum, it will be printed for distribution.



PCOSS Ed Director, Rev. Stephen Nyang, visiting a local school

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

- Before and after attending YTTC sessions, the PCOSS Ed Office met with each group of student teachers for prayer, debriefing, and encouragement. This gave each student a chance to discuss issues that they are experiencing, to gauge the effectiveness of the program, and to be encouraged in their studies.
- The nine pre-service and in-service students continue their studies at YTTC and are actively involved in their learning environment. They are dorm and class leaders, chapel musicians, Sunday school teachers, sports stars, and farm leaders. Two of the SSEPP recipients were among the top ten students during the first semester and one hopes to serve as a senior student government leader during the next academic year.
- The three in-service teachers returned to their home schools during school breaks. All are serving as volunteer teachers and are sharing their YTTC experience with their untrained and trained colleagues.

3. Community Mobilization for Education:

- The Pochalla community continues its mobilization for education with the assistance of the PCOSS Ed. Department. Activities for a new school construction in Pochalla included digging two



Community members dug a pit latrine for the new school in Pochalla

pit latrines, planting a garden to feed the children or sell to raise funds, building a school garden fence out of locally-available materials, securing a 2300 liter water tank, and continuing meetings and training of the School Management Committee.

- Discussions about building and expansion of education infrastructure, greater parent involvement, and accessing local NGO and government resources were facilitated in the communities of the Jaborona and Munuki Nursery and Primary Schools and the new school site at West Nyakuron.

- In West Nyakuron, the community has contributed to the construction of a brick wall to secure building supplies and the future school compound.

III. PEACEBUILDING Update

4. RECONCILE Peace Institute

- The 2015 RECONCILE Peace Institute offered three months of training for 75 faith and community leaders engaged in peace work, development and trauma recovery in South Sudan and Sudan.
- Four leaders received full (3-month) scholarships from SSEPP funding. Mr. Ichut Telar Makeny (Lake State) and Mr. Malish James Morris (Western Equatoria State) took courses in Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation while Mr. Chuol Dual Kuon (Jonglei State) and Mr. Joseph Nuer Nyang Deng took courses in Community Based Trauma Healing.
- Four leaders received scholarships to attend a 2-week module on Community Education and Mobilization for Peace: Ms. Suzan Wasuk Felix (Central Equatoria State), Ms. Awate Loice Bullen (Central Equatoria State), Mr. Samuel Bak Ding (Northern Bahr Gazal) and Rev. James Dhel Ngor (Northern Bahr Gazal)
- RPI students live and study in a diverse learning environment, which provides opportunities to spend time in dialogue inside and outside the classroom with students of different genders, ethnic groups, ages, social-economic statuses and life experiences. In addition, RPI students participate in fieldwork which allows them to practice their skills in the community and learn from organizations and churches based in Yei, South Sudan.
- All Full Scholarship students raised 300 SSP (or \$1,00USD) from their families or communities in an effort to “co-share” in their education.
- A team of more than fifteen RPI alumni served on the 2015 RPI Coordination Team. They served as Teaching Assistants, Principal Assistants, an RPI Intern, and an Instructor and as a member of the Academic Selection Committee. This level of involvement is crucial for the on-going success of RPI especially as we seek to recruit an official Assistant Principal and later a South Sudanese Principal.

5. Women's Dormitory and Security Fence

- The foundation and the walls of the new women's dormitory are finished, and work on the roof has begun! *"People are already appreciating the building," explained the Training Center Manager Dele Seme, "They are so happy with the upgrading of RECONCILE's facilities."*
- To increase the security of staff and RPI participants, work began on a security fence for the training center. The compound was measured, the bars for the fence have been bought and holes are being drilled in the bars for the fence.

IV. Testimonies of Impact

- *"The PCOSS Education Office meets with the SSEPP teacher scholarship recipients at the end and beginning of their training periods. Each time, it is thrilling to see how they have grown and developed in their teaching skills, English language proficiency and overall poise and confidence. Their experience at YTTC is also providing them with the opportunity to interact with people from all over South Sudan and to experience and understand other ethnic groups. At the last gathering, as each one arrived, there was much handshaking, backslapping and excited chatter at seeing the other. It was hard for the Education Director and me to believe that it had only been two weeks since they had departed for holiday break. When asked why they were so excited to see one another, one responded, "This is my brother. My heart rejoices when I see him alive and well." Another spoke up with, "We are all in this together. We need each other to succeed." The others laughed in agreement.*

As they shared their experiences, it was obvious that they were gathering a lot of ideas to take back to their home schools upon graduation and looking for every opportunity in which they could build a sense of real community within the school environment and to share this new experience back in their home communities." – Leisa Wagstaff

- *"When the RPI students were here this year, the women talked about the "women's village" a lot. They wanted the housing to be finished before they left, so that they could move in, even just for a day."*
- *"It has never happened before that there is a special facility named for especially for women. So, they feel that RECONCILE is really honoring them. They can even come with their children and*

feel happy that they are in their women's village."



The women are preparing for RPI Graduation, but Esther (far left) missed the event as she went into labor, giving birth to a healthy baby boy she named "Reconcile"

- *“Our instructors have given us a lot. I came with the aim of taking the information and transforming my community, but I came and I was transformed....this course [has] brought to light what it means to be at peace with yourself and to extend it to your family members and community. We also learned that challenge will never be absent in our lives and we have been given teachings as to how to deal with the challenges. Challenge is not a stumbling block for peace, whatever happens there is a hope for peace” -Kleda Benjamin, Nuba Mountains Community Leader & RPI Participant 2015*
- *“All RPI students develop a “Plan of Action” during RPI. Less than two months after graduation, we are receiving reports of initiatives alumni are doing in their communities.” – Rev. Shelvis Smith-Mather*
- A story from Mr. Malish James, a SSEPP Scholarship Recipient, a child soldier, and the President of the RECONCILE Peace Institute Student Body:

The name Malish means “sorrow.” In some cultures in South Sudan, children are named after the situation into which they were born. At the age of seven, Malish’s village was raided by soldiers looking for opposition troops and willing to burn any village in their path. The soldiers lined up each of the males in Malish’s family while his mother and sisters watched. Malish’s father, uncle, and brother were shot consecutively, falling right at the young boy’s feet. The gun was then turned towards the seven year old, but it misfired three times and he remained alive.



The memories of those deaths haunted him at night for many years. As a 12-year-old he decided to join the fighting. He was motivated by revenge and become a child soldier. When he grew older, he no longer wanted to hold on to the bitterness and hatred that was controlling him. After attending training by the council of churches, he decided to let go of the desire for revenge. The people responsible for the deaths of his family members were then living in his community; he saw them regularly, yet he decided to forgive them.

James Malish came to RECONCILE International as a Peace Officer from the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). This young man, once a child soldier, was voted by his peers to be the President of his class at the 2015 Peace Institute. Malish credits the SSCC’s reconciliation forum with transforming his life; it provided safe space to deal with unresolved memories of hurt, reimagine his identity and grapple with “forgiveness.” He credits the RECONCILE Peace Institute with providing him with the tools to offer the same opportunity to others.

This former child soldier and SSEPP became President of the 2015 RECONCILE Peace Institute Student Body.

V. Challenges

- Project funds were disbursed to Across and RECONCILE towards the beginning of this quarter. For multiple reasons, including meeting new and old financial and reporting requirements, funds did not reach PCOSS until later in the quarter, making the implementation of activities difficult.
- The start of the rainy season posed challenges for travel during this quarter.
- Many participants who attended RPI live in territories controlled by Anti-Government Forces (or “Rebels”). Samuel Bak and James Dehl arrived two months late because their church communities were captured by Anti-Government Forces. This made the logistics of their travel extremely difficult.
- RPI’s daily activities are often hindered by poor national infrastructure, limited cell phone networks, and no national postal system. In addition, RECONCILE’s computers are outdated and the compound’s internet often does not work. These combined factors often make basic communication with students and partners a daily challenge.
- *“Another challenge has been the rapid inflation in the country and the devaluation of the South Sudanese pound. The contractor gave us a good quote, but now prices have doubled. The dollar has gone high and prices have gone higher than what is budgeted, which will affect the contractor. Fortunately, we have found good contractors who also understand the situation, and they are committed with their work.” – Dele Seme, Training Center Manager*

VI. Financial Update

Gifts so far in 2015, standing at \$547,348 as of July 12, show growth over 2014, and we have already surpassed last year’s final total of \$523,100. Special thanks go to Westminster Presbyterian Church of Minneapolis, MN, and to Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, IL, for their major gifts of \$250,000 each. We also celebrate the major gift of \$38,000 by George and Jan Beran, which demonstrates the impact that individuals can have on the success of the project.

We have not yet received pledges for the entire \$3.4 million for the project, so please invite others to join in this amazing ministry of God’s mission in South Sudan. Please understand that your gifts, of whatever size, continue to be welcome.

We are grateful to share that in this quarter \$223,424.5 reached partners for the implementation of the project:
 \$99,984.50 to RECONCILE International
 \$64,763 to Across
 \$37,677 to PCOSS
 \$21,000 to YTTC

In addition, project funds also covered the sending and support of Sharon and Lynn Kandel and Leisa Wagstaff. Praise the Lord!



To celebrate the completion of their semester exams, the Smith-Mather family invited the PCOSS student teachers for a meal in their home.

VII. Mission Co-Workers Updates



Leisa Wagstaff has been very busy this quarter, visiting schools, designing materials and programs, writing a newsletter, and coordinating training for student teachers as well as the PCOSS Education Director.

Unfortunately, towards the end of the quarter, Leisa broke a bone in her leg while in Kenya. She received initial treatment in Nairobi, and then returned to the US for further care and rehabilitation. While on medical leave, Leisa is in regular contact with the PCOSS Education Department and will focus on report and proposal writing for various departments of the PCOSS.



Lynn and Sharon Kandel report: *“We are doing well and becoming more involved with PCOSS as well as work related to the SSEPP.”* Lynn has been doing some preliminary estimates and material pricing in hopes of starting some construction in Jebel (Juba area) as well as Pochalla. *“In 6 months we've gone from an exchange rate of 5.25 to 12.5 SSP per US Dollar. Of course the building material prices are tied to the hard currency value. In spite of this and the fact that our PCOSS leaders haven't been paid their salaries for a long time, our Moderator Peter Gai and the other PCOSS leaders have remained remarkably positive about their situation.*

We thank God for their unwavering leadership in spite of very difficult circumstances!” said Lynn.

“Please pray for the General Secretary John Yor. He's been battling a physical ailment for some months and is presently in Khartoum for some kind of medical treatment,” ask the Kandels.



Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather: The Smith-Mather family went to the US at the end of May and plan to return to South Sudan in August. While in the US they have traveled to several states and spoken widely about the South Sudan Education and Peace Project. Addie celebrated her first birthday on June 1st, and Shelvis and Nancy will celebrate their 10 year wedding anniversary at the end of July. *“God has been so good to us.”*

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!

