

## South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP) 1st Quarter 2018 Summary Report

### Report Outline:

- I. Brief Context Update
- II. PCOSS Education Department Update
- III. Teacher Training Update
  - A. Yei Teacher Training College
  - B. Across Mobile Teacher Training
- IV. RECONCILE Peacebuilding Update
- V. Testimonies of Impact
- VI. Challenges
- VII. Financial Update
- VIII. Mission co-worker Update



### I. Brief Context Update:

*They shared stories of anger, bitterness, and jealousy.*

It is hard to imagine envying a refugee. Refugees have lost “everything.” “Everything” often includes: losing all earthly possessions, losing home, losing all sources of income, losing a way of life, losing body parts, losing loved ones... It is hard to imagine envying a refugee, yet, when lying in bed at night, with a gnawing hunger in one’s stomach, remembering the truck loads of food rations distributed to your new refugee neighbors, a host community can be driven to the point of saying, “We are jealous of them.”

Many Ugandans warmly welcomed the South Sudanese refugees into their country. One local government leader explains, that during the time of Ugandan President Idi Amin (a cruel military dictator), Ugandans fled into South Sudan for refuge. He now encourages Ugandans to welcome their South Sudanese neighbors with open arms.

But, the rocky land of Eden settlement does not show loyalty to her longer-term tenants, yielding little harvest for refugees and local Ugandans alike. While both communities struggle, many NGOs support the displaced South Sudanese alone. Tensions spark. A language barrier between the two groups adds fuel to the fire.

When Presbyterian World Mission’s partner, RECONCILE International, brought leaders from the host and refugee communities together, with interpreters, the forum of participants had no trouble recounting incidents of conflict between the groups: South Sudanese searching for grass to thatch rooves chased away by locals with machetes; South Sudanese from middle class backgrounds mocking the poverty of the Ugandan woman without shoes, locals raising the price of goods when a refugee comes to the market, and a swell of anger over water distribution at the borehole.

After sharing their grievances in a safe space, the two groups better understood each other and began working together to create solutions: requesting a police post in Eden to reduce theft between the groups, creating by-laws to regulate the market, agreeing to share resources like water and firewood. Listening to one another also cultivated new compassion, leading the host community to allocate temporary pieces of land for the refugees to farm free of charge.

The host community was deeply grateful that RECONCILE included them in this forum. One Ugandan participant pointed out that other NGOs focus solely on the refugees, neglecting the nationals and creating jealousy, yet “this time we are happy that we are part of your [RECONCILE’S] project and encourage other NGOs to do the same.”

There are more than one million South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, and the UNHCR expects that number to grow in 2018. Last year,



**They laughed and found solutions together.**

the efforts to support the refugees was greatly underfunded, with less than half of the needed funds raised (UNHCR). While some refugees return to South Sudan due to the lack of schools or the inadequate food rations in the camps, many will not consider going back until peace is achieved at the national level.

While national level peace talks bump along in Ethiopia, peace continues to be hard to predict. Some opposition groups are working towards a united front, and at the same time, new ones continue to form. Recently, the former South Sudanese top army official declared his intention to form a new movement to oppose the government.

While many hands, applying many strategies, grasp at peace, they have not yet found a way to hold it together. As prayers and dialogue continue, most refugees seek ways to make life more livable in neighboring countries as they wait for what may be months or years to return home.

After the refugee and host community forum in Eden zone ended, participants asked RECONCILE to take the training to other camps, so that the impact would multiply. While this initial forum was small, with 36 leaders in attendance (15 Ugandan and 21 South Sudanese), it was a good start, and preparations are in process to duplicate the effort in other locations.

After listening to her husband, who attended the forum, one Ugandan woman decided to make a change. She walked her potatoes and vegetables over to her refugee neighbors who had been surviving on a limited diet of corn flour and beans. It was a small gesture, yet with the potential to create a ripple effect. Let us pray such acts of kindness will reach far beyond anyone’s expectations. Amen.

## II. Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) EDUCATION Update:



Female Headteacher (with baby daughter) and female youth attend training.

- 12 teachers, including 2 women, completed training in developing children's capacity and implementing afterschool clubs.
- Afterschool clubs initiated in 2 schools (one in a Protection of Civilians (POC) community and one in a resettlement community). Each club meets twice a month with an even participant ratio of boy to girl.
- Visits were made to 5 local PCOSS schools to observe, evaluate, and counsel teachers and administrators in policy, school management, etc. This also gave an opportunity to interact with the pupils and encourage them to continue their education.
- 
- Some of the teachers who have been trained at Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC) were observed and mentored in their respective classes.
- 6 schools in Juba were provided with basic school supplies (chalk, pens, pencils, notebooks, and large plastic chairs & tables). The PCOSS school in Pochalla was supplied with report cards at their request.
- 1 school was supplied with drinking water to assist in their opening for this academic year.
- 30 mahogany (yes that's common here!) school desks were supplied to two schools with additional desks on order for other schools. Each desk can seat up to 5 pupils.
- 2 tents were supplied to 1 school to assist them in providing protection to pupils who were learning under the sun and rain.
- Parents, pastors, and school management committee members, including head teachers, from two new schools were trained in school administration and developing work plans. The assembled group included one female pastor, one female head teacher, and several female members of the community.



Desks for learners, chairs for teachers, classroom built through SSEPP in 2015.

## III. Teacher Training Update

### Yei Teacher Training College:

While YTTC held a few mobile teacher trainings in the country, their staff continues to “knock on doors” to raise the funds needed to bring back the 300 students whose studies were interrupted by the conflict. At this time,



most of the former YTTC students are living in Uganda, which makes it more expensive for them to return to Yei while also adding security concerns for students who would return by road.

At the end of April, the YTTC board is meeting and will carefully assess the possibility of returning to Yei in August. Please keep the board and the hard-working members of the YTTC staff in your prayers as they continue to seek out the best way forward.

Mobile Teacher Training implemented by Across:

**First Training in Pibor:** In the final quarter of 2017 (Oct 23 - Nov 28), an initial teacher training took place in Pibor for 30 teachers and 11 Education Administrators.

- The Director General of the Boma State Ministry of Education opened and closed the training, describing it as “a chance for Pibor” and encouraging teachers to be “change agents in the community.”
- Some topics covered with teachers: teachers’ code of conduct, lesson planning and implementation, teaching methods, classroom management, time management, and strategies to address the barriers to girls’ education in South Sudan.
- Some topics covered with administrators: school supervision and inspection, record keeping, report writing, school development plans, resource mobilization, community participation in education, purpose and goals of education.



Group discussion at the Mobile Teacher Training.



Teacher receiving school supplies.

**Second Training in Pibor:** In the first quarter of 2018, a follow-up teacher training was held for 37 teachers and 16 Education Administrators.

**Second Teacher Training in Pochalla:** This training began in the first quarter of 2018 and will be completed and reported on in the second quarter.

**Other Across Education Activities in Pibor and Pochalla:**

- 5 mentoring visits conducted in Pibor of teachers who attended the training.
- Educational supplies procured and distributed in Pibor and Pochalla, including: paper, pens, staplers, files, folders, lesson planning books, 395 Textbooks (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Christian and Religious Education, Dictionaries).
- Schools visited to support teachers on the use of distributed supplies: how to accurately fill in pupils’ attendance registry, developing a school timetable for the term, regular role call for learners, etc.

#### IV. PEACEBUILDING Update

- RECONCILE carried out a needs assessment in Rhino Camp, Arua District and Bidibidi Camp, Yumbe District (January 2018).
- A conflict prevention and peace building forum was held with refugees and their host community in Eden Zone, Rhino Camp-Arua (March 2018). The forum was attended by 35 leaders, 15 nationals, and 20 refugees (11 female and 25 male). The participants were comprised of local government leaders, church leaders, and community leaders. In all, they help supervise more than 6,000 residents in their various communities.

#### V. Testimonies of Impact

Supplying Desks to 2 PCOSS Schools: As we loaded the 'brand spanking new,' shiny and heavy desks onto a large truck, the school children walking from a neighboring school stopped to watch the activity. Finally, a few of the onlookers mustered the courage to ask if they could sit at them for a moment. Finally, all the children (and adults as well!) rushed forward to occupy the desks and pretend that they were in the classroom. A woman passing by on her way to the market congratulated us on the construction of these desks and repeatedly stated, "They are beautiful, so, so beautiful."



Carrying the burden for education.

After arriving at the schools to offload the desks, the hired loaders' work was hampered by the rush of children wanting to help carry the heavy desks while others were trying to sit at them and pose for photos. Cries of ululation (le, le, le, le, le...!) could be heard throughout the area as adults welcomed what people in the USA would take for granted as a standard classroom item.

One head teacher commented, "Surely this will encourage everyone - pupils, teachers, and parents. I know that the parents will be more active now and the enrollment of (out-of-school) children into this school will rise. This is a great incentive."

Prior to their arrival, neither school was in possession of a child's desk. Learners either bring a chair from home or sit on the floor and use their laps as desks.

#### Refugee and Host Community Forum Participants:

- A South Sudanese refugee church leader - "we ran out of food in the house, we eat once, but we thank God that your coming has brought hope... This training of today has given me hope. My heart was broke, but I thank God for RECONCILE coming and building us back... Being South Sudanese refugees in Uganda here, there is also a problem between the refugees and the nationals. And we could not be able to reconcile or solve our problems, between the refugees and the nationals. We cannot, but we thank God



*that you have come as a neutral person to reconcile us back again. And peace has come back to my heart and even to the community where I am living right now..."*



**A grandmother's testimony.**

- *One Ugandan woman testified that a young South Sudanese refugee impregnated her granddaughter, and then ran away. The young girl then dropped out of school to breast-feed the baby. The situation caused the grandmother to hate all of the South Sudanese refugees and regret allowing them to move into her community.*

*After attending the forum with refugee and host community leaders, she realized that not all South Sudanese are bad. She forgave and asked them to forgive her for generalizing them all together. She concluded by promising to work for peaceful coexistence among the host community and the South Sudanese refugees.*

#### Across Mobile Teacher Training in Pibor:

- *"The mentoring and assessment findings showed that teachers are beginning to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they gained from the trainings. There is improvement in the quality of instruction because teachers are now able to develop improved lesson plans and schemes of work including improved use of classroom management practices." – Across staff*
- *"Previously teachers enter classrooms to conduct lessons and come out when they are done. There was no consideration of duration or time to conduct lessons. Following our trainings, teachers testified of exhausting the required time in classroom, enabling them to do more and accomplish each objective stated in lesson plans and schemes of work." – Across staff*
- *"I used to enter into classroom using a hard stick which might hurt a child, now am using a pointer which is safe and does not threaten learners" - Mr. Lokuronyang, teacher*
- *Twenty-two-year-old Nyaback Yolock teaches at Pibor Boys Primary School, yet he was not previously trained as a teacher. Before Across' training reached Pibor, Nyaback did not know how to plan lessons or manage his students. As he put it "every time I come to school I pick a text book and go straight to class. I don't prepare anything. After that I mark their work and that's all. Children complain of my teaching method because I only copy the notes and explain to them."*

*Nyaback's teaching greatly improved after the trainings in 2017 and 2018, which led him to say "I am a full teacher now, I develop my scheme of work and prepare my lesson plan very well and conduct my lessons effectively. (The) tools I learned from ACROSS training has made my teaching very easier and the learners understand things very well compared to last year."*



**Nyaback Yolock Ngale, an improved teacher.**

## VI. Challenges



- *The abrupt suspension of one of the largest cell phone services in South Sudan hampered communication between the PCOSS Education department and its schools as well as other stakeholders in education. We are having to make additional calls to secure new cell numbers as well as physical trips to schools and communities to reach our constituents.*

### Across facilitator taking the training to the teachers.

*the training in Pibor completed their education in Arabic and struggled to understand English, so some sessions were conducted in both English and Arabic.*

- *Of 30 Pibor teachers trained, only 1 was female, which demonstrates the gender inequality in education in the area.*
- *There was flooding in the area, limiting some participants from attending the full training in Pibor as they were cut off by the water, and the training ended at 4:30 instead of 5:00 as teachers were afraid of attacks on their way home from the afternoon session in Pibor.*
- *“My observation and interactions with education officials and participants of the training clearly indicates that education in Pibor is far behind.” – Trainer/Consultant*
- *Many attending the Pibor training are teaching in classrooms under trees.*
- *Increase in prices of commodities in the market negatively impacted some budget lines making it hard to provide the desired services.*
- *RECONCILE could not initially enter the camps easily because they are not currently registered to operate in Uganda, so it entered into partnership with Youth with A Mission (YWAM) Arua in order to enter the camps. While grateful to be working together, the two organizations implement activities differently, so there was need for much discussion before signing the Memorandum of Understanding.*
- *Interruptions from food distribution, rain, and the visit of the area Member of Parliament (MP) caused some delays in the training in Eden refugee camp, yet participants were willing to amend the training schedule to make up for lost time.*

- *Some of the teachers attending*

## VII. Financial Update

We are grateful that \$20,750 was raised this quarter which is \$7,200 above the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter in 2017. That



RECONCILE and YWAM staff and RPI alumni facilitated the forum.

number does not include the many who separately support the sending and support for Leisa Wagstaff, the Kandels, and the Smith-Mather family.

We are also grateful that Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis continues to match 38% of each gift, multiplying the impact of each contribution.



Please continue to share the story of this project with others interested in supporting peace, education development, and South Sudan. Thank you!

#### **VIII. Mission Co-Workers Update:**

The Smith-Mather family was very grateful that Sharon and Lynn Kandel came to visit them in Arua, Uganda this quarter. In their roles as Regional Liaisons, the Kandel's facilitated the annual review process with Nancy and Shelvis and then carried out the "more important work" of visiting Jordan and Addie's school, reading them stories, and helping them learn how to ride bikes.

The Kandels returned to the US in March for meetings and to visit supporting churches. Please pray that they will get some much-needed rest before they return to South Sudan, so they can head back feeling refreshed and restored.

#### **Lynn sorting school supplies.**

Leisa will be on Interpretation Assignment (IA) in the USA from mid-June until the beginning of September. She is looking forward to visiting with many of you and sharing her experiences of living in a country at war with itself and serving alongside individuals determined to make a difference.



**Sharon getting a mega-hug.**

