

**South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP)
4th Quarter 2016 Summary Report**

Report Outline:

- I. Brief South Sudan Context Update*
- II. EDUCATION Department Update*
- III. ACROSS
- IV. Yei Teacher Training College
- V. PEACEBUILDING Update
 - 1. RECONCILE Peace Institute
 - 2. Collaboration with Partners
- VI. Testimonies of Impact*
- VII. Challenges*
- VIII. Financial Update*
- IX. Mission Co-Workers' Update*



Small group work during teacher training for PCOSS
Refugee camp teachers in Uganda

I. Brief South Sudan Context Update:

Wherever there is immediate need or recovery from human made or natural disaster trauma, Presbyterian Mission is there. The people of South Sudan have endured years of civil war and food insecurity. In the last six months, there has been yet another outbreak of heavy fighting in Yei where the Teacher Training College is based. This resulted in students not able to return to class and Presbyterian Mission Co-workers evacuated. Now there is a declaration of famine. For people in South Sudan, and the city of Juba in particular, a “normal” way of life is a far cry from what U.S. Christians know.

We may complain about our U.S. economy but in South Sudan the exchange rate continues to worsen and people are more than challenged to figure out how to survive. More than 1.2 million South Sudanese are in refugee camps outside of the country and an estimated 1.6 million people are internally displaced, most of which are very afraid to return home.

Our call and our ministry is to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, to renew hope in the midst of life-long suffering. We are partners in ministry with the churches of South Sudan. Despite living in an environment of danger and fear, they are people of hope. They do not give up. They are people who endure. To demonstrate that faith, hope and endurance they are engaging in long term planning. The people of South Sudan are an inspiration to all of us as they work relentlessly for peace and stand firm in their faith in Jesus Christ. They are making new life in Jesus Christ happen despite every obstacle and challenge that is put in front of them. We give thanks for their witness and their enduring ministry.

II. EDUCATION Department Update:

In the Fourth Quarter 2016 the PCOSS Education Director and Education Facilitator returned to Juba after fleeing the civil violence of July and the uncertainty that immediately followed. All our school personnel, programs, and infrastructure were negatively impacted by the week of fighting in the capital and the continued armed conflict in other parts of the country. What happens during civil violence:

- People seek refuge from the violence. Programs, budgets, and expectations are adjusted. (Two PCOSS schools are closed).
- Restrictions are placed on educational department work in places deemed secure,
- There is a shortage of fuel that limits movement of personnel and supplies, and
- As working capital diminishes, banks drastically reduce withdrawal amounts.



Sharing problems and working together towards solutions-teacher training in Juba.

The SSEPP-sponsored teachers training at Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC) were unable to return to their studies as the college's conditions for a safe and conducive study environment in Yei could not be guaranteed. (See last quarter's report.) The Yei Teacher Training College was on track to graduate 8 of our 14 teachers-in-training. The eight graduates would return home as **qualified** teachers in December 2016! Civil violence is true "disruption" and there was deep concern that the school may not reopen.

The Education Department stays in touch with the students to encourage them and assist with their studies during the absence. Four are engaged in additional studies, many are in their respective primary school classrooms, and all are active in their communities and congregations and making every effort to connect with educational experiences that improves their abilities to be better teachers for a future generation of citizens of South Sudan. These responsible, faithful citizens stay in contact with each other to provide mutual support, caring, to share ideas and to reduce anxieties. To make every effort at a "normal" life.

Mentoring PC(USA) SSEPP teacher training scholarship recipients.

Seeing them interact gives hope that the country can move beyond tribal affiliation differences to "unity in diversity".



A mentoring and debriefing session was held during the quarter for the Juba-based students with additional sessions to be held when they return to YTTC. Other forms of contact are carried out with the Pochalla-based student teachers during this period.

The PCOSS Education Board held its second meeting following the board members initial training and meeting. As the board members seek to merge and compliment each other's strengths and areas of expertise and special interests, a first task is the structuring of the Education Department, providing guidelines for its schools, and strategically planning for the next five years despite the country's uncertainty. Leisa



Teacher training in Bweyela Refugee camp, Uganda

will play a major role in this as well as the Education Director who has been empowered by his SSEPP-sponsored studies at CORAT Africa.

Four days of training was carried out for thirty-five untrained teachers who have stepped forward to provide some level of education to the PCOSS school community in the UNMISS IDP camps of Juba. Joined by two parents and three presbytery secretaries and school managers, the training introduced participants to methodology, how children learn, lesson planning, classroom management, positive discipline, and helping traumatized children.

“My confidence to teach has grown because I have attended the training. When I first entered the classroom at the Bweyale Refugee Camp, the children were just roaming all day long with nothing to occupy them. Now I know how to change that experience,” said one participant but echoed by all. The teachers called upon the PCOSS Education Department to provide more opportunities for learning and to assist schools in securing basic needs.

A five-day workshop was held in Bweyale Refugee Camp, Uganda for the PCOSS school teachers serving the six South Sudanese refugee locations in that country. Most of the teachers in attendance are teaching in “under the tree” schools with little more than a primary school education and a shared chalkboard and piece of chalk. But as one of the facilitators testified during the training, these schools are important and every effort counts: “I am a product of an ‘under the tree’ school but that experience gave me the basis to continue my education to the present level of university. It also instilled in me the determination to avail my community, especially the children, to educational opportunities. Thanks be to God; I was given an opportunity to learn!”



Construction of the Presbyterian Education Complex of Pochalla and New Site were completed. Photo credit: Othow Okoti

In both trainings, Leisa was instrumental in the planning process and served as chief facilitator.

The disruption of civil violence severely limits the number of school visits that are possible. There are other challenges as well: Leisa was assigned to represent the PCOSS Education Department at an end-of-course celebration and recognition of merit at one of the camp schools. Expectations and excitement were high at the chance to thank learners, teachers, parents, and the larger community for their hard work and to encourage their further support and cooperation. This opportunity was lost as access was denied to the area. On a long, bumpy 12 km ride there were more than six security checkpoints. At each our car was searched for weapons. At one point, the driver was frisked.

III. ACROSS

Civil violence did not get in the way of the staff of ACROSS travelling to Pochalla for their first Mobile Teacher Training workshop in October. Training is always welcome and valued by teachers and administrators. This training, as expected, was well attended. It was a bonus to have the 4 Yei Teacher Training College students in Pochalla during the training. They assisted with the training and received a refresher course. This was important because they had not been able to return to school since July, 2016.



Students hard at work. Photo credit: Othow Okoti

IV. Yei Teacher Training College

The college remains closed at this time because of the threat of violence and insecurity in the Yei area. The plan/hope is to open by June, 2017. The enrolled students are eager to return to classes. Eight students had one semester remaining to graduation and are hopeful that day will arrive in 2017. New students want to get back to classes and are using this time to get involved with workshops and teaching. As people continue to live with the fear of a disruption that will force them to flee from their homes, while food prices soar, your prayers and your gift ensure that the hopes and dreams of these future leaders of a young country.

V. PEACEBUILDING Update

RECONCILE Peace Institute

I think that Rev. Peter Tibi says it best in this excerpt from his letter to the partners.

“We request for your prayer and support for us, and that you would seriously place your intention before God by faith in considering to be a part of this service to the South Sudanese people. RECONCILE will use a small Juba liaison office to facilitate activities outside Yei in other areas of other states including Juba City, Arua Liaison office to facilitate activities in the refugee camps in Uganda. The main office in Yei will support all the operations in Yei and outside Yei. Our activities for peace making, peace building, and conflict transformation with psychosocial support runs across the country. Our Reconcile Peace Institute will start in Yei during the middle of the year of 2017.

We hope to see as many of you together with your support we will do great things and make a change for better in South Sudan. Our prayer is that God will make a way for you and others to be part of us here. Through what you do in the life of RECONCILE. It is because you are there, that is why we are here. We are grateful for your support and directions offered by our Board of Governors. We count on you greatly.”

Even though Yei, the base of RECONCILE, has been at the center of the current conflict they remain at the forefront, engaging in some courageous and strategic peacebuilding work during this quarter including:

- Fostering a sustainable system of community healing for peaceful coexistence and community resilience by addressing the effects of violence among the communities. (Addressing child and adult trauma) trainings taking place in Yei and Juba.

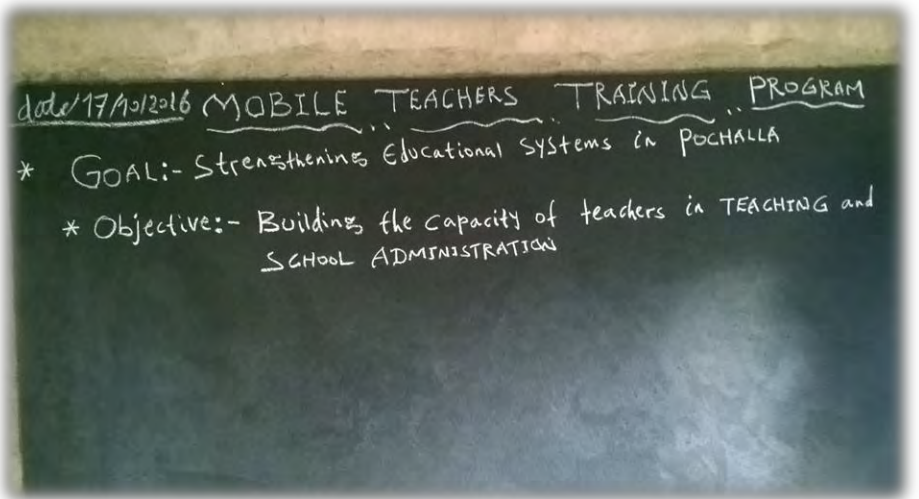
- Establishing a strong community based system for peer counselling and peer education through equipping religious and community leaders and Community Based Organizations members in the region with Peer Counselling skills and knowledge. (Inside South Sudan and the Refugees camps/IDPS).

- Empowering community leaders, religious leaders, women, and youth with knowledge and skills on peace-building and conflict transformation. (Currently

trainings taking place in Juba and Yei), Inter-religious peace building dialogue initiatives (Christian and Muslims) trainings taking place in Juba. Religious and traditional leaders' peace dialogue forums in Greater Pibor(Jonglei).

- Quiet /shuttle diplomacy process for conflict preventions between the armed groups and the government/ military in Yei River State.

- All ethnic groups in Yei Youth Peace initiatives (Training and supporting initiatives activities in Yei).



Welcome! Getting ready for teacher training.

VI. Testimonies of Impact

This is what I observed at the four days of training in December, 2016 with the PCOSS Education Department. I was struck with the numbers of people that came and the level of confidence of the students of Yei Teacher Training College. They feel a strong and compelling call to teach the children so that they will have a better future. These adults want to increase their own abilities as teachers and as citizens. We have heard stories of these adults attending school under trees and wanting more for this next generation.

VII. Challenges

- Insecurity in travelling: This continues to be a very dangerous. Citizens risk their lives when they travel out of Juba. The Juba to Yei is extremely dangerous. This means all our transportation needs to be by plane and not all locations have planes flying to them. It also means that people who have fled are not able to return to their homes in South Sudan.
- Food insecurity and costs continue to be a challenge.
- Crime is increasing.
- Getting money from the bank has become very difficult but PCOSS is making arrangements for the money to be sent to Kenya where we can then have it brought to South Sudan.

VIII. Financial Update

We are so thankful for the financial support that you continue to give. In 2016 the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project received \$106, 474 from individuals, congregations and mid-councils for a total of \$1,200,492 in support since 2014. It is important to note, that during a time of civil violence and now famine, additional gifts totaling \$488,138 were received between 2014-2016 in support of other South Sudan related ministries that work in education, peacemaking, hunger, and relief efforts. **Thank you!**

These gifts make workshops and mentoring programs possible while we wait for Yei Teacher Training College to re-open. Training board members of PCOSS increases their skills and capacity – they now have the time to really look at what the next five years could look like and plan accordingly.

Please continue to share about this project with others – through many people, great things can happen and are already happening. We look forward to 2017 and beyond!

VIII. Mission Co-Workers Updates



Leisa Wagstaff:

I continue to enjoy my ministry within the PCOSS community, though at times, it would be easy to despair. My spirit is renewed when I can learn from so many different members of the PCOSS Church through my fellowship and work with an IDP congregation, Women Work Department, Education Department, and General Assembly Office. As a “special observer” at the recent GA Executive Committee (EXCO), I gained a broader understanding of the tough challenges facing PCOSS leadership and an appreciation for their commitment to staying true to their calling. Continue to remember our brothers and sisters in this land and advocate on their behalf, and for the prayers and encouragement of PC(USA) members who undergird us daily. I am truly grateful for the many ways you engage in ministry with the South Sudanese.



PCOSS EXCO Attendees along with mission co-worker Leisa Wagstaff (right front).

Lynn and Sharon Kandel:

The fourth quarter was a time of transition for us. As the new Regional Liaisons for the Horn of Africa we are praying for the wisdom and guidance in this new role. Sharon spent time at the bank again, along with Rev. Yor – what a great time to get to know this man! Lynn found us a place to live and got us moved! As we accept this new position, we continue our ministry with the SSEPP and continue to live in Juba. We ask for prayers for wisdom, stamina, and good hearing as we meet many new people.



Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather:

The Smith-Mather family's fourth quarter was quite eventful. With joy, we welcomed our daughter, Nicole Kristi, into our family on October 13th. Shortly after her birth, Shelvis was hospitalized with malaria and a few weeks later Nicole with RSV, Corona Virus, and a bacterial infection. We found ourselves in the position of needing help during their illnesses, and we were incredibly blessed by the prayers, visits, meals, messages, and child care that were offered to us. God reminded us of both our weakness and the strength we gain from being a part of a larger faith community. We are deeply grateful.

Thank you for your prayers, your partnership, and your continued support!

