

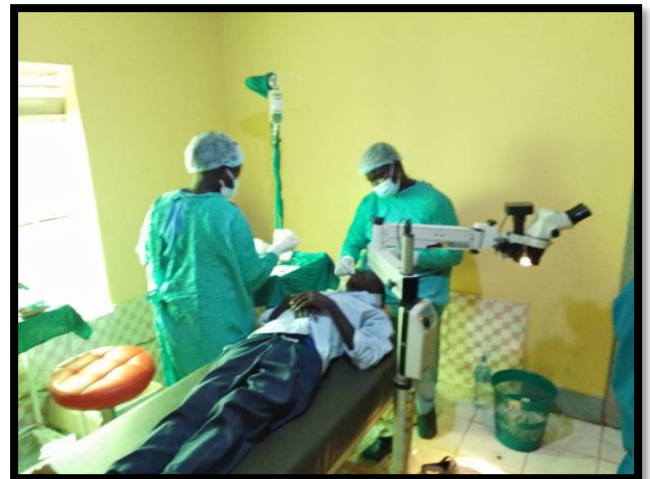


## Latest news – April 2025

Dear Friends, This is our quarterly newsletter to bring you to date with our activities in South Sudan. It's been a busy quarter so far with 20 teachers continuing their training courses, 3 weeks of discipleship training in 3 different Dioceses, a two-week training course for clergy in the Yei Diocese and a very successful cataract camp. At the end of last month, we completed another financial year, giving thanks that we ended the year with almost the same amount in the bank as 12 months previously, despite spending over £128,000 on the work in South Sudan. We received many generous donations and grants during the year and are so grateful for this support.

The political situation in South Sudan has recently deteriorated and some countries have closed their embassy in Juba and some ex-pat staff have returned home. The insecurity appears to be mainly in the north of the country and in the capital, Juba, and we are not aware of any new issues arising in Central Equatoria where our partners work. Certainly, the Diocese and the Martha Clinic, the training colleges and churches are all functioning well.

At the beginning of March, the Martha Eye Clinic ran another very successful cataract camp and over 100 patients received cataract surgery. In addition, many other patients with serious eye conditions were treated. The Mission Aviation Fellowship, which celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, flew the team of five eye specialists with all their equipment and eye medications from Juba to Yei and work began almost as soon as they landed, such was the demand from patients.



Last month, we were contacted by the Bishop of Morobo to see if we could help the Diocese to rebuild St Joseph's Primary School which was badly damaged during fighting in Morobo in 2016. Most of the local population fled to refugee camps in Uganda and this church school lay abandoned and overgrown. In 2024, as Morobo became safe again, refugees returned home, and people are rebuilding what has been destroyed. Already there are over 500 children at St Joseph's school, but they have no classrooms and the pupils sit under the shade of the mango trees. This is fine until it rains. We find it hard to believe that this school was one that John was involved in project managing in 2010 and the photo shows how devastating war can be, and how it impacts the children.



We wrote last year to mention our concern at the impact of a reduction of UK Aid on the provision of health services in South Sudan, as the UK was a major donor. Our concern about future funding has grown since the US government stopped all US Aid. We hear that US Aid donates about \$1 billion every year to South Sudan to provide vital services to the population, including health and education, through the United Nations, the World Food Programme and UNICEF, as well as through charities and international NGOs. The double impact of cuts to both UK and US government funding may be very serious indeed, although it appears to have had no immediate impact on services in Yei so far. A health NGO in Yei that also supports the Martha Clinic may be impacted by these cuts so we are keeping a close eye on the situation.

Turning now to teacher training, we are excited to be able to support so many teachers on courses at the Yei Teacher Training College this year. 10 of them are fully funded by The Brickworks and eight are jointly funded by UK charity African Revival. In February we added two more, who receive a full scholarship from the Harriet Memorial Fund (HMF). The HMF was set up in 2010 following the tragic death of Harriet (right), who was the wife of the College Principal, James Kepo. The fund is managed by The



Brickworks and its purpose is to give scholarships to South Sudanese young women, who have the potential to

succeed as teachers or nurses but who through family circumstance cannot afford the fees. One of the two scholars is Christine (left) who is 22 and from Yei, whose parents are refugees in Uganda. Christine started primary school in Yei, then moved to Juba where she completed Senior years 1 to 4. Christine managed to score 84% at senior 4. Despite her great performance she was not able to proceed beyond secondary school through lack of funds. It's a privilege to be able to support students like Christine, who will be committed to teaching in primary schools for many years to come.



Looking ahead, four of us are preparing for a visit to Yei in October. John and Poppy will be joined by mother and daughter, Nicki and Jess Mead, from St Michael's Church. Nicki is a specialist diabetes nurse and

Jess is a qualified chiropractor. Both will be involved in teaching at the Yei Health Training College and at the Martha Clinic. We plan to fly into South Sudan with MAF from northern Uganda. Please be praying for all of us, as we finalise our travel plans as well as our daily programme in Yei.

Last year, we held our AGM on Zoom and were delighted when we were joined by supporters from all over the UK, as well as USA and Uganda. The trustees have decided to continue with this approach for 2025 and so please make a note in your calendar of Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm. This date has been chosen so that you can hear from the team that will have recently returned from South Sudan, hopefully with great stories to share with you all.

Thank you so much for your prayers and support.

John and Poppy Spens