



# PCOSS/S EDUCATION NEWS

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTH SUDAN/  
SUDAN (PCOSS/S) EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Second Edition  
2018

## From the Education Department

As we approach the ending of another academic year, we know that it is by the grace of God that our pupils, teachers and parents were able to stay committed to uplifting education in the various PCOSS school communities. Our church communities, as well, are really stepping forward to assist the PCOSS Education Department in supervising, supporting and encouraging the work that is being done in the classrooms. We thank all for your various inputs and look forward to working hand-in-hand towards the stability that the society needs in order for our children to grow and develop.

Both the Education Director and Education Facilitator did a lot of travelling this year; Rev. Nyang to Scotland and Leisa to the USA, both to share with donors the successes over the seemingly insurmountable challenges of providing education as well as the high level of commitment that each of you show to your families, communities and Christian faith. Thank you for giving us these wonderful stories to share.

In this edition, we confront a stereotype plaguing our society and highlight two individuals who are impacting education and changing these perceptions in major ways. Each knows that “being challenged in life is inevitable, (but) being defeated is optional.” A school that is setting standards is also focused in this edition.

As our learners sit for their examinations, we want to encourage them to do their best, our teachers and examiners to adhere to best practices and codes of conduct, and our parents to provide a calm home environment conducive to studying.

May God continue to uphold you and show you the way.

**“When we obey God in the seemingly small work, God expands the impact in ways we could never imagine. Our call is to do God’s work.”** Kristen G. Johnson

**“There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more.”**

Robert M. Hensel



Above: Mr. Peter Mama Oleyo, Teacher, Jabarona IDP Presbyterian Nursery and Primary School, Jebel, South Sudan (Story on page 2).

Below: Mr. Stephen Gai Choat, Head Teacher, Good Hope Presbyterian School, Rhino Refugee Camp, Arua,



## Differently-Abled But More Than Capable

Although he was one of the youngest head teachers or teachers present, his maturity, intelligence, energy, and experiences in education belied his youthfulness. The way his colleagues valued his opinions and held him in respect was testimony to the work he had dedicated himself to. He gave insight to all — myself included — of his work in an “under-the-tree “school. I en-

(Continued on page 2)

## Inclusive Education

Fewer than 16% of South Sudanese school-age children complete primary school. If you are a child with a disability, your chance for completion is even less. In 2011, it was estimated that under four percent of the 850,000 disabled children residing in the country were in school. Often these children are hidden by their family because of shame or “invisible” to the community because they are stigmatized and thereby, limited in where and how they can participate in the larger society. With an increasing number of children impaired due to the conflict and the disruption of education, the futures of differently-abled children are dimmer than ever.

As educators we have a responsibility to help secure their basic right to education, a key toward leading an independent life in the future. We can lobby for services to accommodate their basic needs, ensure physically accessible environments where they can fully participate, encourage parents to provide the best chances possible for their children, raise an awareness of inclusivity within the community and call upon the government to enact an inclusive education policy.

The most important role with the greatest impact that an educator can play is to model acceptance towards those seen as different, for children do not see differences as greatly as adults. They begin to see them as bad or good through observation and imitation of how grownups treat these challenged individuals. However, “sensitization at the younger ages lessens the stigmatization and is a natural progression to embracing diversity.” If there are “handicapped” children in your community, our office may be able to connect you with adapted learning/teaching resources and training.

**Never mistake my disability for inability.**

*Editor’s Note: Reprinted to emphasize that issues of peace must address all forms of discrimination within the society.*

### Mr. Peter Mama Oleyo, The “Teacher”

“Teacher” is what he is affectionately called whether in the classroom, church or locality. This is because he has dedicated his life to teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, literacy and numeracy, and citizenship to anyone willing to be a learner; all despite the challenges within his life: growing up in war

and days without eating or shelter, becoming paralyzed at fifteen, having to literally crawl his way from country-to-country just for mere survival, being abandoned by all the other fleeing people when the bullets of war rained down upon them, decades of thinking that his mother had been killed in the war, and serving as a teacher whose monetary incentive is little and far in-between. Mr. Peter is this remarkable human being, teacher, evangelist, father, neighbor, community leader and colleague and it shows in his concern for others, commitment to serve and willingness to sacrifice, and from the happiness that shows on his face and exudes from the words he speaks.

He has lived a very tough life, and this accounts for some of the wisdom and love he shares with the children he teaches at Jabarona IDP PCOSS Primary School. During his younger years of hunger and insecurity, education wasn't available, so he only began learning to read and write his mother tongue – the Murle language - at age 18 and completed his high school when he was “very old,” according to him. In fact, he was 30 or so because he lacked the opportunity, not the intelligence or desire. He skipped the first four grade levels and started learning English as a refugee in Kenya. Whenever an opportunity came to strengthen his skills and give back to the community, he did so. He has helped others to survive, learn and have hope, started schools and gathered converts under trees, constructed classrooms and churches – even in a “river” and kept moving forward, with or without his dilapidated twenty-five-year-old wheelchair.

He advises the children to study hard and be the best for “education means development...(it) brings a lot of things...go straight” and offer these words to his suffering colleagues, “Support one another and the community and

*(Continued on page 3)*

**“The only disability in life is a set of ingrained social constructs which normalize the oppression, exclusion and othering of people with disability.”**

**“I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. They are the real heroes and so are the families and friends who have stood by them.”** Christopher Reeve, actor who played ‘Superman’

*(Continued from page 1): Differently-Abled But More Than Capable* encouraged him to help us work through some of the problems we were facing: lack of assistance, classrooms, teaching aids, desks, chalkboards, chalk, marking pens and paper, not to mention salaries or even incentives; and the astronomical pupil-to-qualified-teacher-ratio of 146 to one, hunger and poverty, traumatized staff, parents, and learners, and a “dramatic increase in the number of children who are aging out of primary school range” (UNESCO). And most enrollees cannot pay the very minimum school fee.

During small group activities, participants rushed to work with him and moved to form a group where he sat. It was not until break that I noticed him leave the room — using his hands to propel himself.

At 29 years old, Stephen has not always walked on his hands. At an early age, a rapid onslaught of “paralysis without sickness” attacked him. With war and famine all around, there were no doctors or clinics or even medicines. Even if they were available, states Stephen matter-of-factly, “there was no money with which to buy. Sickness and doing without were part of life and no one spent much time contemplating or thinking on it ... no sorrow or regret or blame.”

By a miracle, he found his way to a refugee camp in Kenya and to education. His keen interest in learning enabled him to skip the first grade. He never allowed his physical “challenge” to stop him: he saw himself as “differently-abled but more than capable” and managed to complete secondary school while still a refugee, this time in Uganda.

In 2014, there was a great influx of South Sudanese evacuees into the Rhino Camp in Uganda who needed spiritual, emotional, and educational support. With so many new arrivals and no schools to attend or money to pay school fees at existing schools, Stephen gathered those interested in learning under a tree and the Good Hope Presbyterian School has grown to the secondary level.

He doesn't allow anything to stop him. Occasionally, he may arrive a bit late to school, but he arrives ready to educate, inspire, and challenge others not to see “armed conflict as their only choice” (Nikki Haley, USA Ambassador to the UN).

“If you lived, that was the miracle,” is another thing Stephen said to me. He is helping scores of South Sudanese, both young and old, differently-abled and able-bodied, teachers and preachers, and all others to see the “miracle” that can only come through our prayers, hard work and determination, acceptance of differences, loving and forgiving one another, and advocacy at all levels.

Thank you, Stephen, for being the great teacher and leader you are.

*Editor's Note: This profile was written by the editor for another publication and has been edited.*

**“There needs to be a lot more emphasis on what a child can do instead of what he cannot do.”**

*Dr. Temple Grandin*

**Responding to the Need**

Relevant social institutions tend to grow out of a consciousness of a deep community need and in 2010, the Akatgol Presbyterian Church in South Sudan took another step towards providing intellectual, emotional and physical growth and development and spiritual maturity to children, particularly girl children and orphans, who had never received or experienced a stable educational environment at the lower and upper primary school levels. This included children who faced major problems related to school fees and space within the schools located in Juba County. Doing something about this problem and others within their midst is what the school and church community still sees as part of its ministry and is successfully proving that starting with the little that is at hand can yield great results.

After the conflicts in the Pibor area intensified and many internally displaced persons found their way to Juba with few or no choices, some of the congregation's secondary and high school students felt compelled to volunteer as teachers in the evenings. The congregation wholeheartedly supported the desire and an "under the trees" school was born. The congregants continue to encourage the school with infrastructure, furniture, channels of communication, teacher incentives, water, and prayer.

So, it was no surprise that the school received the ranking of the third-best results in the entire country on the 2017 Primary Leaving Examination; the schools' first class to sit for the exam. Though it is not the first PCOSS school students to distinguish themselves on this very important exam, it does continue the tradition of the PCOSS' commitment to education. Congratulations for such a distinction and a job well done. Congratulations also go to the Presbyterian Education Complex of Pochalla (P.E.C.P.) for its one hundred percent pass rate on the same exam. It was the first time this school has written this exam. (P.E.C.P. was highlighted in a previous edition.)

**“Being unconscious is the ultimate disability.”**

*Theresa Sheridan*

*(Continued from page 2): Mr. Peter Mama Oleyo*

love teaching, love the work. I started teaching in 1982 without payment but God will pay to us.” As far as “Teacher” getting in and out of classrooms, it takes a bit of determination. As he crawls out of his wheelchair, his students and colleagues rush to lift it over the rough spots and heights so that he can get back in and carry on with his call to serve.

**We must “find commonality because we are [to see] one another as Christ sees us.”** Rev. Dr. Dave Dawson



**Left to Right: Mangaten's Parents, Teachers & Community Leaders; A Lighter Moment with Parents & Youth In Kasire 2 and the Chief Headman Shares His Group's Discussion on Handling Conflict Within the School Community.**



**Right: The Kasire 2 PCOSS Pastor and School Community Share Their Vision With the Education Facilitator.**

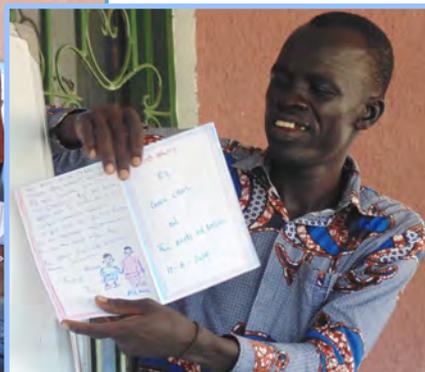


**Above: South Nyakuron NPS Parents Owning Education.**

**Below: PCOSS Teachers Sharing a Special Moment With the PCOSS Moderator.**

**Below: Windows and Doors to Secure the PCOSS School in Bor.**





**“Every child has a different learning style and pace. Each child is unique, not only capable of learning but also capable of succeeding.”**  
 Robert John Meehan

**Above: Stressing the Importance of Reading in Training and in the Classroom Because 85% of Children with Learning Difficulties Have a Primary Problem With Reading and Related Language Skills.**



**Mr. Johannes Turuk Kengen, a Hero For Volunteering His Abilities in Construction With the Akatgol School Community.**



**Wherever the Presbyterian School Communities Are, So is the Work of the Education Department. Trainings for Headteachers and Teachers in Bweleya, Uganda (Above) and for Teachers in Kakuma, Kenya (Above Left). The Education Director is All Smiles in Front-Row Center.**



**The Child Soldier**  
**Who?**  
 \*Tens of thousands of South Sudan's youth.  
 \*30% are female.  
 \*Your child!  
**Consequences?**  
 \*Traumatized children  
 \*Difficulty getting back to normal life.  
 \*Use of violence as a way of problem-solving  
 \*Inhuman treatment and disrespect of others con-

**Above and Below: Touching Issues that Affect Our Children Now: Child Soldiering and Proper Sanitation.**



**Above Left: Girls Counting Their Scholarship Money and Dreaming of a Future of Positive Options. Left: P.E.C. Pochalla Pupils Building Skills on Their School Farm and Looking Towards A Bountiful Harvest.**



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**PCOSS/S EDUCATION NEWS**, sponsored by the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP) of the Presbyterian Church (USA), invites your comments, letters to the editor, school and personnel updates and news, stories, articles on education, and advertisements. *Photographs: Education Dept., Rev. Nancy-Smith Mather & Elder Othow Okoti.*