



**Report Outline:**

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**I. Brief Context Update:**

“They said their teacher has not come,” Peter, Across’ Education Facilitator in Pochalla, translated from Anyuak to English.



*Rain Cancels Class for Students whose School Building is Weak*

Pondering the whereabouts of the other students, I asked the ten boys sitting in the muddy field, “Where are your friends?”

“They did not come because of the rain,” came the response, a reference to the rain which fell two hours earlier, around 7:30am.

Looking at the classroom, made with a few wooden poles and a tarp roof, Peter explained, “There used to be three structures, but the wind blew two down.”

Once the teacher, Obang, arrived, we sat together and talked about his experience at the teachers’ training.

“Have you seen any changes since the training?” I asked. A few teachers from several of the schools in Pochalla attended the training facilitated by Across. Obang’s school, with 250 students, has 5 teachers, none of whom are trained professionally, and two attended the course.

“Before the training, the teachers were smoking in class, now they left that one,” Obang shared, crediting the lesson on the teachers’ code of conduct.

After discussing the challenges facing the school and the progress made, I concluded with a question sparked by curiosity: “How long do you want to teach at this school?”

“I will teach here all the years, because I need the child to develop,” Obang stated, his commitment evident, his English broken.

Weighed down by the plight of Obang’s school, I tried to keep up with Peter who navigated the puddled road at a fast pace. When we reached our next destination, the Presbyterian Education Center of Pochalla (PECP), the heaviness in my spirit lifted. Under the shade of three different trees, groups of students listened attentively to their teachers. While the fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes choose to sit outside in the breeze, first through

third graders remained in their respective classrooms indoors. The few seventh grade students took notes on the teacher's presentation on the veranda of the building constructed with SSEPP support.

The fifth graders learned about rainfall in swampy areas, as the fourth grade class tackled big words like "evaporation" and "condensation." After completing a lesson on God's creation, the first graders filed outside forming a large circle in the sandy dirt, their teacher in the center.

"Write letter 'A'" the teacher said. Squatting close to the ground, the students used their fingers to carve 'A's into the earth.

"Good!" the teacher repeated enthusiastically, after inspecting each child's work.

"Now, write letter 'B.'" The children quickly erased their 'A's from the dirt blackboards, and replaced them with 'B's.



*Writing Practice*

The early morning's rain had not canceled PECP's classes. At play time, the younger children skipped rope while the older ones played soccer. Lunch break marks the end of the day, so the children went home, plastic chairs resting upside down on their heads.



*Headed Home from School*

"The school does not have chairs," one teacher explained, "so they bring a chair from home."

Sitting with the PECP teachers, I listened to their reflections on the teacher training, the challenges the school faces and the progress they see. Like Obang, they were grateful for training on the teachers Code of Conduct, lesson planning and classroom management. They lamented the absence of water, a security fence and uniforms.

Even though he serves as a volunteer, one teacher named Ojullu explained his commitment: "(when I was a student) I left Pochalla in 2010 because of a lack of proper education here, and I came back to

help my younger brothers who I left here. I need this place to be changed through education, and it starts through me first.. A long journey starts with the first step. If the first step is in the right direction, then the journey will be in the right direction..."

In Pochalla, many children do not go to school, and most teachers are not trained. Through partnership with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) and Across, the PCUSA is supporting educational development including an emphasis on the education of girls. With partner, church and community support, the PECP school strives to be a model for their area. Thank you for strengthening their efforts to take steps in the right direction.

## II. PCOSS EDUCATION Update:

- Almost 100 girls gathered for the Girls' Empowerment, Self-Image and Hygiene quarterly initiative. The girls selected their leadership and are busy setting an agenda for 2020. By building confidence and allowing safe space to share their struggles, such an initiative helps girls overcome the pressure to drop out of school.
- 106 girls and boys uniforms were delivered to the PECP (Pochalla).
- 30 school desks were constructed and delivered to 2 schools.
- 16 participants from 6 schools received training in the development of children's capacity geared for an after-school program. The 2 SSEPP teacher training scholarship recipients and graduates of Solidarity Teacher Training College were key facilitators for this training.
- Construction of 2 classrooms completed in Kasire 2 community. The school was registered with the South Sudan State Ministry of Education and received its Certificate of Establishment. This certificate will enable the school to apply to the government as well as other agencies for assistance.
- 2 toilets constructed at the Presbyterian School in Bor.
- A meeting with Akobo Presbytery assessed the status of the PCOSS educational activities in the area and reestablished a link between the PCOSS Education Department and the Akobo Presbyterian schools. Such a link brings the schools into the PCOSS network, giving them an additional support system.



*Kasire PCOSS School Before*



*Kasire PCOSS School After*

## III. Across Education Update

### Pibor:

- 67 teachers in 5 schools (including Pibor Girls' School) received printing, ruled, and manila paper, as well as pens, pencils, box files and markers. The materials helped teachers with lesson planning, exam preparations and record keeping. The distribution also benefited upper primary school pupils as they sat for the second term exams. Previously, exams were written on the blackboard, yet this term they were printed.
- 27 teachers (3 women) in Pibor participated in 15 days of training, including practice-teaching and daily homework assignments, equipping them with skills in learner-centered and multi-grade teaching methods, classroom management, health and science education, production of teaching materials with local materials, as well as child social and financial education. The majority of the teachers in Pibor are young, between 25 and 35 years old, so these teachers might serve for a long period of time and influence thousands of students.



**Teacher Training Closing Session in Pibor, South Sudan**

training. The topics included tenses, parts of speech, sentence structure and language skills. After the training, participants were observed while teaching, and notable improvements in language witnessed. *“Some of the teachers testified that they had totally forgotten to use language correctly before the training, but the training opened their minds” – Across Education Facilitator, Pochalla*

- 15 School Managers and Head Teachers refreshed and strengthened their knowledge of supervision and inspection in a 1-week course. The participants did not initially understand their role of assessing the overall school environment, improving the teaching and learning activities, as well as guiding, encouraging and overseeing the teachers.

- 15 Education Managers, Head Teachers and Government Officials strengthened by 5 days of training in supervision and inspection roles and responsibilities, community mobilization, conflict sensitivity, and an introduction to school cluster management systems.
- There are 5 teachers in Pibor that the facilitator highly recommends for attendance at a teacher training college.

**Pochalla:**

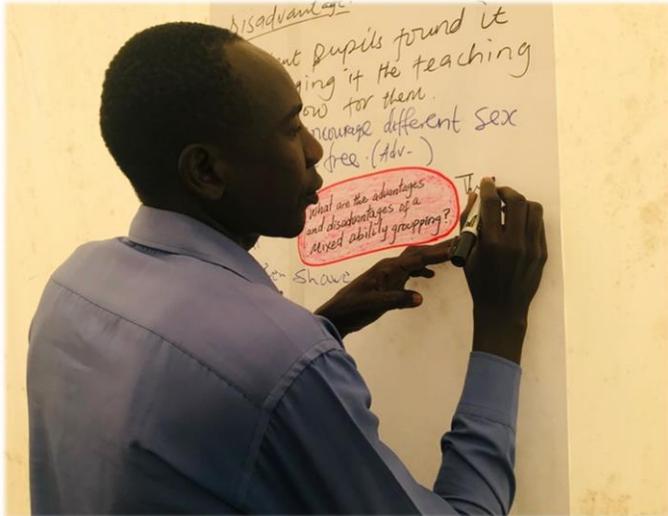
- 45 teachers (5 women) improved their English language skills at a 3-week intensive

**IV. PEACEBUILDING Update**

- Mentoring visits with Peer Counselors and Educators in both Rhino Refugee Camp (20 participants) and Bidibidi Camp (19 participants) allowed participants to reflect upon specific case studies and provided opportunities to learn from one another’s counseling experiences. Participants included religious leaders, camp leaders, women’s leaders and youth in both the host and refugee communities.
- Monitoring and mentoring visits with Income Generating Activity (IGA) groups in both Rhino (50 participants) and Bidibidi Camps (60 participants) revealed an increase in their initial funds from between \$830 to \$1,100 per group.
- After a 2 day consultative meeting with a mainly Nuer group in Omugo camp, the participants (about 75) agreed to come for a reconciliation meeting with the mainly Dinka group from Tika Camp with whom they were in conflict. This good news was then taken by RECONCILE to Tika Refugee Camp, discussed further, and both communities are eager to meet and reconcile. This activity was facilitated through the collaboration of RECONCILE, the Borderlands Co-Op and YWAM in Arua.



**Rev. Tibi of RECONCILE (right) spoke in English, Julius Lotet (middle) of YWAM translated into Arabic, and a Community Leader (left) translated into the Nuer Language. All spoke with passion towards peace during the consultation meeting in Omugo Refugee Camp.**



**Joseph Monjor, a Committed Teacher who has Attended the Teachers' Trainings Since 2017**

## V. Testimonies of Impact

### Education

- The results from the pre-training test at the start of the Intensive English Training for teachers reported 90% of the teachers' scores were below average, 5% average, and 5% above average. Most of the teachers were not familiar with the use of tenses in the English language. The post-training test showed that 60% of the teachers scores were average, 30% below average, and 10% above average.
- Teachers and Head Teachers now have clear records of learners on file for reference, showing a large improvement in record keeping/documentation, partly due to the distribution of stationary.
- The upper primary girls on scholarship through

SSEPP are performing well in class. Girls from Kondako PCOSS Primary and Pibor Girls Primary performed well during a teaching and learning session organized by the Governor of Boma state. The event brought all schools together to demonstrate reading and writing skills. The SSEPP girls were competitive with the boys. Their scholarships enable them to attend lessons full-time, without being sent home for unpaid school fees.

- The concept of Child Social and Financial Education sparked teachers' ambitions and enthusiasm to start something for themselves. At the end of the session on financial literacy, the teachers formed entrepreneurial groups based on their interest, including: a climate change group focused on planting trees and improving school environments, a fishing group, and a savings and loans group. The groups agreed to work with other teachers who did not attend the training.
- *"We believe that the short teacher trainings, with the support from PCUSA, are contributing to improved performances of the schools in Pibor and Pochalla. Before this project, Boma State at large had low performance, particularly in Pibor. However, 2 years down the road, doing regular intensive trainings for untrained teachers is contributing to improved performances."* – Across Education Facilitator, Pibor
- As an example of improved record keeping, *"the state Ministry of Education now has records of the functional schools at the Payam level, which include the number of teachers and learners. The improvement is as a result of the trainings. The trainings helped Education officials understand their roles, leading to good practices in documentation."* – Across Education Facilitator, Pibor
- The state level education officials traveled 30 miles by foot from Pibor to Gumuruk to conduct an assessment of the condition of



**Teachers Excited to Learn Financial Literacy**

and challenges facing schools. Also, the state education officials now organize for routine (1-2 times a month) supervision visits of schools in Pibor to check on the day to day running of the schools, including supervision of teachers. This has contributed to improved teaching and learning in the schools.

- “I first met John Amor in 2017 when a training was organized by ACROSS with Support from PCUSA. John Amor is one of the education officials at the Ministry of Education in Boma State. The training for Education Managers was crucial in Pibor, with the largest number of untrained teachers, teachers who have not finished secondary education, a high illiteracy rate, and untrained education officials. Not only that, Pibor had just come out of communal fights and war with the government. Thus, everything was a mess. As such, the training for Education Managers and Teachers was aimed at strengthening the education sector and mainstreaming peacebuilding.



**Education Managers (John Amor in plaid shirt) Strengthen Skills to Support Schools**

When John Amor was appointed to the Ministry of Education, he did not undergo job training, yet he held the responsibility of inspecting and supervising schools in Pibor. After attending the trainings organized by Across, he said “Since Across training we have become more active in our department, we visit schools, work with PTAs and the teachers to ensure that everything is okay...” This is the first time in his appointment to the government’s ministry of education, that he actually had the necessary skills to improve the education system.

John Amor was also part of the team that walked 30 miles to conduct an assessment. According to John, it was the first that the Boma State Ministry of Education did the assessment in that area. “It was a nice experience to know what was happening at the grass root (level). We reached 3 schools in Gumuruk and others in Pibor town. We thank Across for empowering us with such skills and knowledge...”

With a lack of funding from the government, most of the challenges affecting schools in rural areas is not known. Having officials, like John Amor, take a step to find out what is happening is very important and motivating to Across.” - Across Education Officer Pibor, Aloro Butrus Joseph

- *“My name is Jwok Ojulu. I am teaching at PECP. I teaches Mathematics, English and Social Studies. Before I took training on English Language Capacity Building, I used to teach in an ordinary way... Even though I [completed High School], I never realized that I should use grammar in the way I was trained by ACROSS staff in Pochalla. I did not get much detail in schools. (At the training), I learnt the tenses and the way of using them at different times. Not only this, I got to know that even though English has a lot of words, each word has its own use at a right time. I have developed the fear of making mistakes, as I know the rules of using tenses, parts of speech and sentence structure which in turn enables me to use the right way. I hope Across continues giving more time to equip teachers with English knowledge as most of the teachers are not qualified. I personally appreciate the existence of Across in Pochalla and PCUSA for supporting Across to conduct such training for teachers in Pochalla.” – Jwok Ojulu, PECP teacher*



*Goats Multiply, Increasing Livelihoods in Refugee Camps*

### Peacebuilding

- The livelihood activities are very successful in promoting peaceful co-existence among refugees and nationals in both camps. The farming group is cultivating simsim (a grain) on 10 acres of land that was given to them by members of the local Uganda community. The IGA groups have reported an increase in their capital investments from between \$830-\$1,100, (3 to 4 million Uganda shillings) per group. Goats in Bidibidi have increased from 20 to 35. In Rhino Camp, goats increased from 15 to 31.

- Combining both peace building and livelihood training

has being applauded by both the national and the refugees as they all benefit from the initiatives.

- Peer counselors are doing great job facilitating trauma recovery in the camps! Networks with the churches are strong, so the churches are ready to support and uplift the peer counselors and peer educators in the community.
- *“The IGA initiative has helped unite the different tribes together as they are put to business. I am so happy that we are working together regardless of our tribes contributing to the wellbeing of the community” – Peter, IGA group participant*
- *“The cooperation of the IGA groups has helped other refugees and nationals in the camp to realize the strength of working as a group. This is a positive influence for the communities.” – RECONCILE staff*

### **VI. Challenges/Opportunities**

- Teacher, Parents Council, and School Management Committee trainings scheduled for PECP (Pochalla) was postponed due to mechanical problems with the plane.
- The training on child social and financial education would benefit from seed funds to assist the groups in implementing their plans.
- Some participants in the training leave the teaching profession for other employment, however those who are committed are doing well. It’s better to keep training the teachers who are committed and not add in newcomers during the training.
- Rain delayed some training sessions and also canceled a flight the flight from Yei to Arua, causing a delay in the start of activities.
- Some government school inspectors and supervisors have limited knowledge of the content of the subjects the teachers are teaching, making it difficult from them to offer guidance.
- RECONCILE facilitators traveled a least two hours daily on bumpy dirt roads to carry out training in the refugee camps which caused the trainings to start a bit late and ultimately led to the trainers being extremely drained. ] There is no accommodation within the camp, so RECONCILE staff could not remain overnight, and commuted from Arua town.
- The number of participants for the consultation in Omugo camp was more than what was budgeted, as more and more community members joined. This was a challenge in terms of the amount of food



*Illustration of Conflict:  
When 2 People Want to Sit in 1 Seat*

prepared for lunch. The additional number, however, was also an opportunity to create wider consultation among the community, gaining more support for the reconciliation process between the community in Omugo and in Tika.



*Football During Break, Presbyterian Education Center Pochalla (PECP)*

## VII. Financial Update

At the end of the third quarter, \$51,475 has been raised by churches and individuals for the SSEPP. Westminster Presbyterian Church's match of 38% brings that amount to \$71,035, which is roughly a third of the total funds given last year. With that in mind, we are inviting you and your church to consider a year-end contribution to help ensure there are funds available for our partners to continue and even expand their powerful programs in 2020. Developing a quality education system may take decades and sustainable peacebuilding can be a long, complicated process, yet PC(USA) remains committed to

our long-term partners who stay focused on this transformative goal. Your commitment is vital to this team effort aimed at alleviating poverty through education and bringing life-giving peace in South Sudan. May God bless and multiply our collective efforts.

## VIII. Mission Co-Workers Update:

**Sharon and Lynn Kandel:** *"We are encouraged by the teachers and students of the schools that we get to work with. To see a school built where there was nothing and to know that it was the community that did it and that we only had a small part is the way it should be. Education can take place anywhere – even under a tree – but to see a community put importance on education, enough that they work towards getting a permanent building, is life changing for the whole community. Thank you for your prayers and support for the future of South Sudan."* – Sharon Kandel

**Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather:** *"Sitting with our partners and listening to them bravely dream always inspires and deeply moves me, in part because I've seen glimpses of what those daring visions are up against. This quarter, I had the privilege of sitting with both YTTC's (Yei Teacher Training College) and Across' leadership in Juba, and listening to the plans towards which these organizations strive in a context which remains uncertain and incredibly challenging. YTTC hopes to re-open their college in 2020, welcoming new as well as former students to their campus. Across longs to see the girls on SSEPP scholarships from Pibor and Pochalla complete primary school, then secondary, and return to serve their communities. So few women in those communities have finished secondary school. May God provide the resources, protection and wisdom required for such plans to take form and breathe life."* – Nancy

*"I spent most of the summer meeting with denominational and congregational leadership in the Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in America (of which Nancy and I are jointly appointed). My visits,*



**Shelvis Shares about South Sudan on NPR Radio. To Listen to the Interview: [www.tinyurl.com/y5sjdvmf](http://www.tinyurl.com/y5sjdvmf)**

*presentations and sermons highlighted the joys and struggles of our collective efforts in South Sudan. The gatherings also provided opportunities to share about the research which will soon begin at Oxford University on the role of the church in reconciliation within South Sudan. While my travels away from my wife and children were difficult for the entire family, I was grateful opportunities to meet face to face with so many people who care about the welfare of the South Sudanese people. Our hope is that God multiplies these efforts in ways that lead to a greater prayer, more synergy, creative collaborations and additional*

*funding support for the South Sudan Education and Peace Project. Already, I am humbled by invitations to share about this important work through NPR (National Public Radio), an online consultation to develop the United Nations (UN) System Wide Community Engagements Guidelines in Peacebuilding & Sustainability, as well as in depth discussions with the newly appointed Communication Director of the US Embassy in South Sudan. To God be the glory.” - Shelvis*

**Leisa Wagstaff:** *“Thank you for sharing your life and ministry with the people of South Sudan. Your commitment and care are felt across the miles. I will be in the USA on Interpretation Assignment (IA) 15 December 2019 through 14 April 2020. I hope that I will have an opportunity to visit with all of you.” – Leisa Wagstaff*

**Nancy and Leisa Met with the Y TTC Team, (Principal James Kepo center in red shirt) and learned of their desire to reopen the college.**

