

STTC Newsletter - September 2022

Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan



Welcome Sr Elizabeth Blok

Sr. Elizabeth Blok is a new member to STTC from Poland. She belongs to the Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She has lived as a missionary in Nigeria for seven years and the Gambia (Western Africa) for 21 years. Before deciding to come to South Sudan, Elizabeth was working with Ukrainian refugees in Poland. All through her missionary life, Elizabeth has worked among the most vulnerable groups of people, especially girls and women, trying to improve their dignity through education and vocational skills. We trust that her enormous experience and wisdom will be a great asset to the college in the professional development of the young people of South Sudan. Welcome Sr. Elizabeth.



Visit by the Misean Cara

Mike Williams, an independent consultant from Ireland, visited STTC Yambio to conduct a Sustainability Review of Solidarity with South Sudan (SwSS) on behalf of Misean Cara, one of the main donors of Solidarity. The review involved in-depth discussions with the student-teachers, staff, government and church representatives to get as full feedback as possible about the activities of the College and the difference it is making in South Sudan. The students had lengthy interaction with Mike. They shared about the life in STTC and expressed how blessed they are to be in the Solidarity family. This feedback will help inform our long-term strategic planning.



Bishop Abangete Day, 13 Sept.

Bishop Abangete Day, to remember the late bishop of the diocese of Tombura-Yambio, was celebrated on a grand scale with a range of spiritual and social activities. STTC student teachers, who are from various parts of the country as well as this diocese, participated in the events. They enjoyed the opportunity of celebrating within the rich culture of Western Equatoria. Part of the memorial is the "The Hume Koda-Bee" initiative, that is, 'joining hands together to do something', to raise funds to support poor families and pastoral and social ministries. This collection goes directly to the people who are affected by violence and displacement. Solidarity College extended its support to this initiative to help the poor.



Contributions from Students

After the disruptions of Covid-19, STTC has faced a sudden increase in the student population. More young people are now opting for teacher education. Currently, the college has 184 students of whom 134 students reside in the campus dormitories. There was a lack of toilet facilities due to the unexpectedly rapid increase in the student population. Thanks to Caritas Antoniana for helping STTC to build more toilets and shower-rooms for the girl students. Contributions from the student teachers, especially the girls, with manual labour was commendable. A major plan is underway to construct more dormitories, dining hall and classrooms.

Early Childhood Studies

As expected under the new guidelines for Initial Teacher Training in South Sudan, STTC students study in-depth the pedagogy of very young learners. For their first Teaching Practice experience, the current Y1S2 were placed in nearby nursery and primary schools for a fortnight. They combined Child Observation and a school report with Language and Mathematics teaching using an Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) approach. This was a most successful trial, if success can be measured by the fun and laughter in the classroom. The multi-sensory teaching method was taken to heart, with lots of action songs and children's games.



School Practice by 2nd Years

STTC student-teachers plan for and undertake class teaching, learning and assessment following the National Curriculum South Sudan. They undertake at least three periods of supervised teaching practice, across Early Childhood to Upper Primary, in local schools. This gives them the chance to apply the classroom management strategies they have studied that support effective learning and inclusion. Class sizes vary - up to 147 pupils this time round - as does the classroom equipment, with many children still without benches. The student teachers thus learn to promote positive behaviour in different settings. Teaching Practice is assessed by STTC tutors and in the final semester by a lecturer from the University of Juba School of Education and by a senior official in the Department of Education for Western Equatoria State.

Welcome to Mode2 & Diploma

The students of the two-year weekend programme of the National Certificate in Primary Education had a formal welcome ceremony on 16 September 2022. The senior residential students arranged for a celebration with cultural dances and singing followed by refreshments. The Diploma students were also introduced and welcomed with traditional dances. STTC launched a two-year National Certificate in Primary Education programme (mode 2) with classes on Fridays and Saturdays, with some extra days during school holidays. This In-service programme is for those who work while studying towards the same Certificate award as the residential students. By the end of the Certificate programme, students will have earned 120 credits, the total required for Qualified Teacher Status. In each year they earn 60 credits (60+60=120 credits).



Professional Development

STTC was included in the intensive training programme of teaching staff for national Teacher Training Institutes held 19-23 Sept. 2022 in Juba. Mr Justin Agallah and Sr Jacinta Prunty attended at the invitation of the Undersecretary, National Ministry of General Education and Instruction, the Hon. David Lowella and the DG for Teacher Training, Mr John Sebit. The need to re-align the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) curriculum so that teachers are competent to implement the new National Curriculum (2018) has long been recognised but Covid and other matters delayed progress. Now that the ITT guidelines and syllabus have been published in their approved form, we will be able to complete the revision of our Certificate programme with confidence. This was a packed but most worthwhile training week run by consultants Ms Vikki Pendry and Dr Andrew Joyce-Gibbons from the Curriculum Foundation (UK).



Master Trainers Workshop

STTC was also included in the 'Training of Master TOTs' (Trainers of Trainers) workshop held by the Ministry of General Education and Instruction in Juba 26-30 Sept. 2022. Mr Charles Thomas, Mr Francis Loding and Sr Guillermina Vasquez attended. The Ministry has approved a condensed version of the two-year Certificate programme (ITT) to be delivered over a series of workshops along with school practice and other requirements. Successful completion of this CPD programme (Continuing Professional Development) leads to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The workshop in Juba was to educate those who will deliver the training to experienced teachers who will themselves become 'trainers of teachers' approved by the Ministry. STTC is very pleased to have several of its tutors qualified to lead this training in Yambio and elsewhere in the future.

Success Story - Nyanbol Maker

Mr Allan Drummond, a former English teacher at STTC, from Australia writes:

"I've often used the word resilient to describe the people I met in South Sudan. None of them are untouched by hardship in one form or another, but they seem to get up the next day and get on with it. I'm fortunate to have a rather sunny disposition, inherited from God knows where, so I don't often feel sorry for myself. If I did, I'd be looking to the ordinary South Sudanese people, above any other, for the inspiration to pick myself up, dust myself down, and to start all over again."

Nyanbol Maker is one such inspiring person. Mother of three children, her husband was murdered while she was studying at Solidarity Teacher Training College. The community grief when we received the news was almost overwhelming, but so was the support that Nyanbol received. She went home to sort out her affairs, but decided to return to us some six months later to resume her studies to be a teacher. That's her in mourning clothes between me and Josephine, and getting her hair done by Nyakandei. (For students of language Nya means girl.) Having graduated, Nyanbol went back to her community, but not before asking me to help her to come to Australia. While pointing out the obstacles that the Australian government places in the way of such movement of people, I was also thinking that she would be a genuine asset to my country, as would so many of those I taught."

On the other hand, I saw my job as being to help give South Sudanese people the skills to be able to help themselves. We trained them to be teachers, but a large number of them end up elsewhere, because the organisational skills we gave them are in demand. Recently we received news that Nyanbol has been appointed Minister for Local Government and for Law Enforcement in the Ruweng administrative area, coloured in red. She, and those willing and good people like her, are the future of their country."

Allan, a lay Lasallian missionary who is currently in PNG, is an author of over 40 story books of famous people.

