



Loreto Rumbek Newsletter



February 2017

A Busy Month for the Loreto Peace Club— The girls of the Loreto Peace club spent their weekends working to better their communities. One of their precious weekends was spent with the struggling women and babies at the Missionaries of Charity Orphanage in Rumbek Town. While the girls usually come with sweets, treats, and games for the children—this time they came with soap, and at the request of the Missionaries of Charity the girls conducted a hand washing training for around 50 women with their sick and malnourished children. The girls also spent time talking about conflict resolution, sharing their stories of learning and growth with the ladies at the training who had also been affected by conflict.



The Peace Club has also been recognized by United Nation Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Civil Affairs for their work in peacebuilding and trauma healing; UNMISS seeks to replicate Loreto's success in other schools. The girls were invited to facilitate a trauma healing workshop to kick off the new UN initiative: Peace and Human Rights Club Programme. Other guest speakers included the Western Lakes State Minister of Education, Director General of Secondary Schools, and the UNMISS State coordinator. When UNMISS gave the girls travel money, the girls made a unanimous decision to donate the cash they had been given for their training to the Missionaries of Charity for soap, sweets, or whatever they need.

Celebrating the Old and Welcoming the New—Loreto is graduating 29 girls, the highest number yet, up from 23 in the previous year, and wishes them all the best as they prepare to sit the national exams in March. Loreto is the home, school and community for over 200 girls representing nearly 20% of the overall enrollment of girls in the greater Lakes State Region (Gok, Western Lakes and Eastern Lakes states).

The Loreto Girls Secondary School is also welcoming the new Senior 1 class of 2020. Around 240 girls applied from around the country, were tested, and interviewed for the meager 74 placements available for the 2017 year. With a dropout rate of only 2.5% in 2016, against the staggering statistic of over 25% nationally, the Loreto School represents hope, progress, and even a future for the girls wishing to study here.



Hunger, Famine and Malnutrition — Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in mid February by both UN and government officials. In a meeting of education stakeholders in Western Lakes State on Friday, February 24, the State Governor declared a state of famine as well. In that meeting other private and religious schools were encouraged to minimize school fees because of the current economic and food security crisis.

In our community and on our compound we are working to increase food security and simultaneously address acute/ chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. We are also helping the community to survive the lean season, through planting and until the harvest. Community workers have come to the school and asked for help with purchasing raw commodities like sorghum, in lieu of a salary increase—the South Sudanese Pound has a rapidly depreciating purchasing power. For many families annual fees of 2.00 USD are a major investment and for some families, school fees represent more money than they will earn in a single month. The crisis that started in 2013 has become progressively worse, but the community perseveres, and even succeeds. When both schools and the Loreto PHCU are in operation, we provide over 2000 nutritious meals daily to students, staff, faculty, while treating extreme cases of malnutrition.

A Special Thank You to all of the donors, advocates, and supporters of the Loreto Programs in Rumbek.

Without your hard work or support none of this would be possible.