



Keeping in touch

Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
OVERSEAS AID INCORPORATED

NOVEMBER 2023

SOUTH AFRICA

Holy Family Care Centre



One of our senior girls
holding Mokgadi

We admit many children to Holy Family Care Centre including children of single mothers who have neglected or abandoned their children. We are never in a position to judge these mothers as the stresses of their home lives can be unimaginable to us. The whereabouts of fathers are mostly unknown, and the women often do not receive any support from their own families. They are overwhelmed by their circumstances.

We admitted baby Mokgadi whose mother nominated to put the child up for adoption when she was 8 months pregnant. The location of the biological father is unknown. The mother is unemployed, has two other children and relies on a meagre child support grant. She and her two children live in a room in a house that belongs to another family member, and she does not

have space for another child. No other members of her family were willing to provide care and support for the new baby.

Mokgadi arrived at Holy Family Care Centre at just 3 days old, a beautiful baby girl whom everyone immediately fell in love with. She spent the first nineteen months of her life at Holy Family happily and achieved all her "growth milestones". She was a perfect child in every way.

Intervention by the child's social worker over a period of time can help improve the home situation or find an alternative family to care for a child. In Mokgadi's case, the social worker provided both counselling to the mother and family and access to family reunification services. The family, therefore, had time to discuss caring for Mokgadi. The maternal Aunt showed interest in taking parental responsibility for her. All due diligence occurred and several home visits with the child ended in the child being reunited with her family and the aunt taking full responsibility for her care. In the few cases we have had concerning an adoption request by the mother, with time, alternatives have been arranged to keep the child within the family group. We are always sad to see our little treasures go, but happy Mokgadi has been reunited and will grow up knowing her family.

Sr Sally Duigan



This Christmas you can make a difference to countless people around our world who need your generosity. Please donate this Christmas to assist in caring for the most vulnerable.

May the gift of God's love bless you and all those dear to you this Christmas and always!

**Gifts of \$2 or more
are tax deductible**

SOUTH SUDAN

The Land and People I've Grown to Love

Some days ago, I asked our Ugandan surgeon how he was. His reply was,
"I see my patient walking now, so I'm happy and relieved."

In one way this encapsulates my feelings as I begin to wrap up my almost 20 years of presence in Mapuordit, South Sudan.



Sr Rita with Mama Anna and her Deputy Rebecca Adut

My entry into the mission of South Sudan was greatly supported by a close companionship with well-seasoned missionaries, the likes of Sr. Mary Bachelor, Fr. Joseph Pellerino, Bishop Caesar Mazzorlari and others. They were broad-shouldered people whose hearts had been expanded by the many tragedies they journeyed through together with the people of Mapuordit. They had accompanied the people through war, drought, starvation and much personal suffering. Since the beginning of my journey in South Sudan in 2004, I've been in the privileged position of standing on the shoulders of these great people, benefitting from the growth of their seed planting. I've been spared the many rats, snakes and scorpions that frequented their tukuls. Our current simple, permanent structures offer adequate office space as well as a comfortable sleeping facility.



On arrival on this mission, my first impression was the plight of the women. The poverty of their lives was stark and brutal; they were oppressed but were unaware that life could be different; they felt they had no voice and in truth, they didn't. Very few of the Human Rights in the UN Declaration were granted them. Polygamy was and still is a cause of much suffering for mothers. Lessons I've learnt from our mothers: resilience, never self-pity, dance and sing even in hard times, laugh, accept but always move forward.



Sr Rita with Martin and Diktor go to check a Drilling Project

Through the generosity of donors to Overseas Aid a Toyota Land Cruiser became a reality and after some few years I graduated from a bicycle on sandy tracks to the Land Cruiser. The vehicle allowed me to venture out to the women in their own village settings, where I could spend weekends and work with the various women's groups as well as visit what we termed "Satellite" schools operating in the villages. Being with the women over a few days and especially being with them in the evening helped build relationships to that deep level of mutual trust. These contacts formed strong foundational working relationships.



Srs Rita, Jeviana, Dolorosa and Immaculae at a Women's Gathering

Through constant meetings and workshops and women's activities mutual trust was formed and grouped voices emerged; respect grew and shared strength encouraged the voicing of matters that needed to be heard at public meetings. This now is the experience throughout our parish.





In recent years we've had gatherings of women alone, of men alone, of mixed groups trying to work together to highlight the plight of women that culture imposes on them. Gradually changes are perceptible and I believe that the effects of our small seed planting are rippling into State and National planning.

Self-reliance projects have always been held with great respect; agriculture, especially cropping has developed greatly. Thank you for having trained three agricultural officers who now extend training to other small family gardeners. Healthier diets with healthier children are emerging.

Education has developed but we never reach the stage where we feel we've accomplished the task. The road is long but our immediate task is to have every Grade 4 student reading in both English and Dinka. Meanwhile, our untrained teachers show sufficient goodwill and potential for continued in-service work.

I pay strong tribute to a people who have survived as a Nation, having walked through war, bloodshed, starvation, thirst and cruelty to gain independence and retain it; they remain ever dignified and proud to be who they are. May their resilience and hope sustain their journey forward.

Sincere gratitude to all who have so generously contributed over many years to the supply of fresh clean water for households and schools. Thanks to OSA, the MSC Mission office personnel and the Bracken Ridge parish in Brisbane for your efforts to supply water points. Water supply has reached the remotest parts of our parish and hence the remotest parts of South Sudan.



My great hope and dream are that the doctor's reply to my simple question, "How are you?" will become a reality of Mapuordit "getting up to walk" for better living for all.

Sr Rita Grunke



Sr Rita with two primary school teachers, John and Jeremiah



Sr Rita with the Youth Group who walked for days to Juba for the Papal Visit

Would you like to make a Bequest in your Will to the OLSH Overseas Aid Fund?



Two possible ways you can make a significant difference to the lives of people in need in the areas where the Sisters work:

- By including the work of the Fund in your Will. We would gladly advise your solicitor of the specific terms of the bequest. Alternatively, Michael O'Dea AM of Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers would be happy to advise you at no cost. He can be contacted directly on **(02) 9291 7104**.
- By requesting mourners at your loved one's funeral to donate to the OLSH Overseas Aid Fund in lieu of flowers.

ANGOLA

Tutorial Classes for Children with Learning Difficulties

The Mission School has 630 students from pre-school to Grade 6. Most of the children enrolled are children of refugees from Zambia and Congo Democratic, children of farmers and girls from distant communities who have no access to schools and stay in the mission boarding school.



Tutorial Classes in the Mission School

In the school survey conducted last year, 45 to 50 children were identified as needing immediate help due to learning difficulties and absenteeism. 15 children were repeaters or had left school before finishing and 35 passed but with much difficulty. Some children, mostly girls, are in Grade 6 but still do not know how to read and write. In the Parents and Teachers meeting, everyone had a realisation that the main reason for the learning difficulty was poverty. Some students live 10 kms from school and go to school without breakfast. They walk to school, leaving at 6.00 am to be in school at 7.30 up till 12.00, then walk back home again. The children have difficulty learning because of an empty stomach. They do not have school materials and uniforms because their parents cannot afford them. It is a big challenge on their part to attend classes.

Facing this problem, we submitted a funding application to the Overseas Aid Fund for tutorial classes once a week and to provide food to the students before they go home from school. With the approved funds, the tutorial classes started in September with four teachers. School uniforms and school materials were also given to the children. Initially, the plan was to have tutorial classes once a week for 30 children, instead, classes were held 3 times a week for 45 children with food given before they went home. In the third month, tutorial classes were held three times a week but food was only given on Fridays. In the fourth month of the implementation, the children were very motivated and showed great interest in learning. At the end of the school year, the number of students grew to 55, still with tutorial classes 3 times a week and a lunch was only served at the end of the school year as a treat.

We are very happy with the positive outcome of this project. The problems in absenteeism and dropouts are down. The children are showing interest in learning and ten of the children participated in the national zonal examination of Mathematics and Portuguese.

Sr Susan Ilustrisimo

ONLINE DONATIONS can be made through the OLSH Australia website www.olshaustralia.org.au/overseasaid

BANK TRANSFER to DOLSH Overseas Aid Fund

BSB number: 062239

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