

CHANGE STORIES:
MORE QUALIFIED TEACHERS FOR SOUTH SUDAN



Christine Baptist, Parent, Sunrise Nursery and Primary School, Yambio, South Sudan

(From left, 12 year old Christine, the mother/parent also Christine, 16 year old Evaresto and 10 year old Kubako)

"My children hope to be 'important' people in the future: governors, presidents, doctors... because the young generation will take over the country in the near future and if they are well educated they will fight to end poverty in South Sudan...and this can only happen when qualified teachers teach them."

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Christine Baptist has enrolled all her three children, 2 boys and a girl at Sunrise Nursery and Primary School in Yambio, a community school of 300 students set up by parents within her community. The parents ensure that the teachers, majority of who are high school graduates, are paid.



*Sunrise Nursery and Primary School,
Yambio, South Sudan*



*Christine Baptist and her children at
Sunrise Nursery and Primary School,
Yambio, South Sudan*

“At home, my children would talk about the teachers that come from Solidarity College. They like how those teachers use pictures to teach them. This is really good because when the children look at those pictures and talk to their teachers about what they see, they understand the subjects much better.”

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Josephine Kuol, 22 years old, current student at Solidarity Training Teachers College, Yambio, South Sudan

Soft spoken Josephine Kuol, 22 years old, is currently a student at Solidarity Training Teachers College, Yambio, South Sudan, in level 3, her final year at the college. She comes from Abyei from a family of 5 girls and she is the second born.

She is currently the head girl whose roles include enforcing lights out in the girls' dormitories and representing the female students. She comes from Abyei, a town currently disputed by Sudan and South Sudan.

"In Abyei, most of the girls get pregnant and married very early and end up dropping out of primary school. On the other hand, majority of the teachers are male and most of the female teachers come from Uganda. Not many girls want to become teachers. I have always wanted to be a teacher. My sister, who graduated from this college, really encouraged me. Right now she is a teacher back home in Abyei and is the one financially supporting me."



Josephine and her friends at Solidarity Teachers Training College, Yambio, South Sudan

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A "talking classroom" with pictures and flash cards on the walls

Josephine was determined to train as a teacher at Solidarity Teachers Training College (STTC) in Yambio despite the fact that she only understood Arabic. Upon arrival at the college, she first had to study English. "When I arrived here, I was unable to speak any English because I had done my primary and secondary schooling in Arabic. The college administration encouraged us to be confident about our abilities. The debates are the best because you end up learning a lot of English."



Josephine at Solidarity Teachers Training College, Yambio, South Sudan

"I used to be even shy than I am now but my self-confidence has really grown. How the tutors teach has really contributed to this because you can go to them and ask them to teach you something until you understand it well. You can borrow many different kinds of books from the library. The tutors also use good examples for teaching that can be found in our environment."

"When I graduate, I hope to go back home to Abyei and hopefully I can be able to help other unqualified teachers and more importantly, help to reduce the number of girls that are getting pregnant and married early and then end up dropping out of school."

THIS STORY IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE according to the Strategic National Action Plan to End Child Marriage in South Sudan, one of the ways to bring about change in the fight against child marriage is by ensuring access to education and promoting girls' empowerment. Additionally, through the training, teachers in the Arabic-speaking areas will be able to use English as the language of instruction.

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John Dau, 30 years old, from Abyei, current student, Solidarity Teachers Training College, Yambio, South Sudan

"I used to believe in corporal punishment but in STTC I learned that the best solution in disciplining is through positive reinforcement. We used to use what was almost similar to military punishment where a child would be sent outside to kneel with their hands up in the air. After all, harsh punishment affects the children psychologically and they may end up violent, unforgiving and traumatised plus their choice of problem resolution may be through the use of force. They could end up dropping out of school if they develop a fear of being in school, as they would associate it with caning. The best is to promote positive reinforcement in the form of praise, which can be quite effective in changing their behaviour. Teachers are role models and peace builders – they are the ones who understand the learners and are the ones who are at the grassroots, in the communities, and are able to bring change through education."

John Dau, 30 years old, from Abyei, a violently contested oil-rich land on the border between Sudan and South Sudan. He is married and has 4 children.

He stands taller than his college-mates and his thoughtful, decisive mannerism stands out. He is currently in Level 4, the last level before he graduates from Solidarity Teachers Training College (STTC) Yambio. Before joining the teachers training college in Yambio, John was both a farmer and a teacher in Abyei where he taught for 8 years. His parish sent him for teacher training to Yambio.



John Dau at Solidarity Teachers Training College, Yambio, South Sudan

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“Deciding to join the college was a bit tough for me because I had to leave my family behind. The good thing is that my wife encouraged me to come. She believes that I am doing a good job. She said that when people meet her on the street, people recognise and appreciate the working I am doing for the community by teaching their children. I am proud that my former students have joined university while some are here at STTC.”



John Dau with Br. Methodius a tutor at Solidarity Teachers Training College in Yambio, South Sudan

“STTC means so much to me because I am not only receiving quality education from committed teachers but I am also getting to think about my prayer life. I wasn’t a committed Christian before, but now, I am part of a group that does the rosary prayers every Saturday, we pray for peace and also pray for the sick. I am also a former student guild president and this experience challenged me and taught me how to be a leader. Apart from learning how to solve problems between people, that experience taught me how to face the challenges in my life.”

“During my 8 years of teaching, I wasn’t a good teacher. For one, I had a poor knowledge of the subjects especially Mathematics. My English was also poor because of my Arabic background. I am quite good in Mathematics now and can write English essays in any subject! I also learned the importance of a teacher being creative in the classroom and the need to actively involve students so that they are able to be more attentive and the subject can be more interesting for them.”

“I used to believe in corporal punishment but in STTC I learned that the best solution in disciplining is through positive reinforcement. We used to use what was almost similar to military punishment where a child would be sent outside to kneel with their hands up in the air. After all, harsh punishment affects the children psychologically and they may end up violent, unforgiving and traumatised plus their choice of problem resolution may be through the use of force. They could end up dropping out of school if they develop a fear of being in school, as they would associate it with caning. The best is to promote positive reinforcement in the form of praise, which can be quite effective in changing their behaviour. This is especially important in a country where children have mostly grown up in war – you can see it in the small mud models they make. They make guns, tankers and other weapons of war. Teachers are role models and peace builders – they are the ones who understand the learners and are the ones who are at the grassroots, in the communities, and are able to bring change through education.”

While in Level 3, John went for his practical in a school near the college. After one month of practice was over, the children cried, as they did not want him to stop teaching them! They even escorted him back to STTC. “Even now, when I

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meet them on the streets, they are always happy to see me and when they greet me, they appreciate my work.”

THIS STORY IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE a qualified teacher is one who is not only able to impart knowledge from school books to his or her students, but one who is able to manage the students in a positive manner so that their character can develop through the positive influence of a confident teacher whose behaviour can be emulated by the children and inspires them towards meaningful lives. This is especially important in a country where children have mostly grown up in war that has had a very negative impact on their development.

Religion is also an important part of daily life at Solidarity Teachers Training College, which has proven to be very much needed and appreciated especially because of the many traumatic experiences faced by almost all the students.

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Tereza Peter, graduate of Solidarity Teachers Training College in Yambio, currently teaching at St. Michael's Primary School in Wau

"In general, my experience at STTC changed my life – I came to really like teaching and I love being in class with the kids. I can interact with them and talk freely. I also gained so much self-confidence. Just then I arrived at the college, I was so timid that I could not even dare raise my hand in class to contribute. One day, I presented at the morning assembly in front of the whole school and everyone was shocked. I was even given a gift by the administration as a form of encouragement. This really built my confidence!"

Tereza Peter is from Wau and is a graduate of Solidarity Teachers Training College (STTC) in Yambio. She had two children when she was studying at the college and she currently has three of them.

"I really liked it in Yambio. That experience changed me. I used to pick a book and go teach without any planning but now, I can do my scheme of work, which is an overall plan that is based on the syllabus and a lesson plan which is a detailed guide for each lesson. At my current school, I am the only STTC graduate – the rest are either untrained or they graduated in another field and were not originally supposed to be teachers. I usually try to help anyone willing to accept my help – not everyone accepts the help but I try."



"Before my training at STTC, I used to teach the upper primary classes but after the training, I was changed to teaching lower classes so that I can help to give

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them a good foundation because I am now better skilled to do so and I can manage them better.”



Graduates of Solidarity Teachers Training College

“I never used to pray at all. I liked how we used to pray at the college and we also used to go to church on Sundays. When you pray, you realise changes in your heart. This is especially good for us who come from areas of tribal conflict such as where I come from. At the college, all of us from different tribes used to pray for peace in South Sudan.”

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“Education is the key to everything in this world and without a teacher, nothing will go well. A teacher changes lives – a student comes with nothing, and leaves with something.”



A primary school in Yambio, South Sudan