



In all things to love and to serve

Irish Jesuit Missions Newsletter

ISSUE 26 | SPRING 2019

HE IS RISEN!
Alleluia!
HAPPY EASTER

I want to be a teacher

Basamat Osman Atom was born just a few kilometres away from Maban, in a small market centre known as Jam in Blue Nile State, Sudan. Her story is one of resilience and deep determination.



Basamat Osman Atom, from the Blue Nile region of Sudan, is training to be a teacher with the support of JRS in Maban, South Sudan (Photo: Nyamweya Omari)

I was born in 1996 to Sarah and Osman Atom, and I am the oldest in a family of six girls and one boy.

Before I joined the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Teacher Training Programme in Maban, I was an untrained volunteer teacher at a school in the camps. I am now in my second semester and expect to complete my Certificate in Primary Education course in December 2019.

I ran away from my home town because of the unending war in Blue Nile between the government and the opposition forces (who are called 'rebels'). After war broke out, in 2011, my family and I ran to Maban to find shelter from the violence.

I was in the second year in secondary school in Sudan when I was forced to stop my schooling. Unfortunately, I was unable to continue my studies in Maban as there was a different curriculum, and my mother was jobless and therefore didn't have the income to support me. After staying in the camp for three years, my mother found work as a cleaner in a private construction company. She could then send me to the neighbouring

country of Uganda to continue with my studies. After only two years in Kampala, I was again forced to leave school and come back to the refugee camp because the company my mother worked for had closed down and she could no longer support me.

During school days, I wake up at 6:30am. After breakfast, I walk to the nearby market where I and some other students from the same camp will be picked to go for training.

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Irish Jesuit
Missions
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I want to be a teacher

JRS currently offers a 'day-school' model of training where we are taken to the centre in cars by JRS in the morning and home in the evening. Funds permitting, JRS aims to extend this to provide to have a residential model of the training which will enable us to have more contact hours with the tutors.

When not in school I like to stay at home, and have tea and a chat with my mum and sisters. There is nothing much to do in Maban, so we talk and joke amongst ourselves. I sometimes give informal remedial classes to my siblings who are in primary school.

I love to cook, but conditions in the camp mean that we have very few options about what to eat. In the morning I have tea and zalabia (the Arabic name for doughnuts), during lunch we have kisra (local food) or posho with lentils or beans. At times we have meat... if we can afford it.

At the JRS Teacher Training Centre, I came top of my class of 42 trainees

in the first semester exams. Once I finish my training I hope to become a better teacher and contribute to improving the quality of education for my people. My favourite subjects are Mathematics and Science.

Like other girls my age in my community, I am under pressure from the other community members to get married.

I would like for there to be more opportunity for girls to develop and grow freely and chase our own dreams. I want to see the community's living conditions improve, so that people are happier.'

JRS offers two models of Teacher Training to 512 teachers in both the refugee and host communities in Maban. One model is meant for teachers in active service and takes four years to complete, while the other one (known as Pre-Service), takes two years.

Like other girls my age in my community, I am under pressure from the other community members to get married. I would like for there to be more opportunity for girls to develop and grow freely and chase our own dreams.

In addition to Teacher Training, JRS Maban provides a range of services, including English Language and Computer Courses, Counselling, general Psycho-Social Support, and Day Care Services to children living with disabilities. It also runs pastoral programmes and gives direct support to the host community where it supports Early Childhood and Development Centres and Primary Schools. +

Author: Nyamweya Omari, Education Coordinator JRS Maban

A Word from the Director

A day in the life...

A day can change a life forever. A car accident, the diagnosis of a terminal illness, or a broken relationship are examples of the kind of personal catastrophes which can turn our world upside-down in a day. In countries where war has broken out, the day that changes your life may be the one where you are forced to flee your home, to find safety elsewhere, as a refugee. In this edition of our newsletter we glimpse the daily lives of people around the world. They are tales that encompass pain and sadness. However, Easter Day is the story of transformation from death to life, sadness to joy, tears to laughter, despair to hope. Jesus is risen from the dead.

Equally, the articles included here are resurrection stories, of people who have found a renewed hope in the future because of the opportunities they have been offered, and taken. Basamat who lives in a refugee camp in Maban, South Sudan is training to be a teacher, so she can help to educate others like her. Nyanwuok, a girl who lives in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya who is a Psychosocial Community Counsellor, working among her community to help them process the trauma and stress of the refugee experience. Another refugee, Elias, has made it through secondary school in Loyola, Wau and is excited about the possibilities of a new future. Fran is working with colleagues on an agricultural project and his days in JCED are filled with the plans to bring Malawi closer to being environmentally friendly.

The daily lives of people like Elias are getting better, because of your



care, whether that is through prayer, donations or working within these marginalised communities. This Easter, we say alleluia as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and we continue to work so that the world will become a better place. Thank you. +

Fr John K. Guiney SJ
Director

Investing in Peace Through Education

Education is a tool not only for imparting knowledge, but for achieving societal and political change.

This month, our colleague Noelle Fitzpatrick left Ireland for South Sudan, to take up a post as Country Director with the Jesuit Refugee Service. On a visit to the country last August for the Xavier Network, a group of 13 Jesuit organisations who work together for global justice, she visited Loyola Secondary School, in Wau and was touched by a story of resilience and courage from a young boy she met there.

Elias is a 17-year-old refugee from Sudan, whose parents moved to South Sudan after independence in search of a peaceful life for him and his siblings. They are one of thousands of families who are caught between conflicts.

'I was still in primary school when the war in South Sudan broke out. I remember being rushed home to safety from school by my grandfather amid the sound of gunshots. The resulting war would prove to be devastating for me and my family.'

In 2015, two years after the war started, my father disappeared. He had fled to the bush for safety to escape being targeted by militias, as an enemy of the state, where he joined others who were in opposition to the government. I have not seen him since. A year later, the conflict again came to our door in an outbreak of violence by government troops and local armed gangs, who shot and killed civilians in my village, causing my family to run away, in fear of our lives. Like many others, we took refuge in the compound at Wau Cathedral for seven months. I went to school during the day, but me and my brother returned to the compound at night for protection from the army which was capturing young boys from ethnic groups associated with the opposition. Even now, insecurity remains and thousands of people who

fled their homes around Wau continue to live in protected areas. Some had begun returning to their homes but there is still a lot of fear and mistrust, despite the peace agreement which was signed last year.

Loyola Secondary School

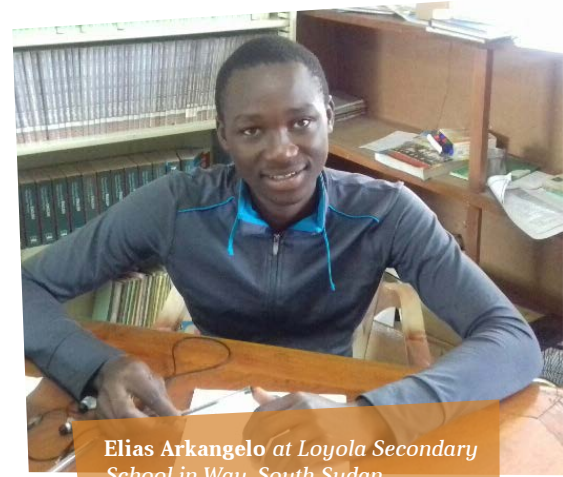
Loyola Secondary School has been a lifeline for me, throughout my family's troubles and the stresses of war. I received a scholarship to the school which paid for my fees, uniform and food. Without this support, going to school would not have been an option for me, as there was no money spare for my education. My education has been about 'the heart, not just the mind', as Loyola school, like all Jesuit schools strives to create 'men and women for others'.

I worry about my father, who is still missing, and hope that the fragile peace in my country will last, so my family can be together again.'

Almost half of the children at the school are in receipt of scholarships, funded by organisations including Irish Jesuit Missions. Elias has left school now and hopes to become an electrician, a far brighter future than one he would have faced without an education.

Civil War in South Sudan

The war in South Sudan has made stability and security hard to find. It has forced families to flee from their homes and villages, leaving behind possessions and abandoning their crops, causing food shortages and entrenching poverty in an already vulnerable place. The conflict which began as a divide between the Dinka and Nuer people, has fragmented in the years since into more chaotic, inter-clan fighting. Increasing the level of education in the country, where three-quarters of people are illiterate,



Elias Arkangelo at Loyola Secondary School in Wau, South Sudan

would foster skills of dialogue, communication and negotiation which are important to building a lasting peace.

The role of education

The subject of girls' education is now, rightfully, getting the attention it deserves, such as in the JRS campaign Make Room For Her, which highlights the challenges girls face in accessing schooling, especially in poor communities and refugee settlements. In South Sudan, the obstacles that girls meet are even greater, and the need to overcome them more important. Education for girls helps them to escape being married off as children so that their families can receive a dowry payment in cattle.

Boys are equally vulnerable to the stresses and difficulties of living in a conflict zone, and education also offers them an alternative to this. They are vulnerable to conscription into armed gangs, where they could at least feel assured that they would have food to eat and a purpose. Attending school provides them with better options for their future, and the chance of a sustainable, stable job. But more importantly, as those who hold the positions of power in this traditional society, it is vital to educate the future generation of men to enable them to find a peaceful resolution to conflict.

Supporting the education of a boy like Elias is contributing to the peace and stability of the world's youngest country. +

Counselling is a tool for survival

'My name is Nyawuok Chuol Mut. I am a South Sudanese refugee. My day starts at 6.00am, when I begin to the normal household chores like cleaning the house and my compound, before preparing breakfast. At around 7.30am, I start my journey to the work place, which takes me 30 minutes. I work for Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), in Kakuma refugee camp in the Turkana west part of Kenya as a Psychosocial Community Counsellor.

I walk to my work station and sign my name in the register book by 8.00am. After signing, I go to where my clients are and begin my counselling services. This work is emotional. Some refugees cry as they tell me their stories. Others are quiet, but their sadness shows on their faces. As a counsellor, I also feel emotional because some stories act as triggers for my own traumatic experiences as refugee as I made the journey to the camp.

My day is quite predictable because, each day, I have to walk to work. There are days when I have to miss work because of sickness or I have to go for firewood at the distribution centre, which is a long distance from where I live. I also have to plan for the days of food distribution. There is a lot of struggle at the distribution centres¹ - people push and pull to get the food because it is not given out at the centres in an orderly way. I have to walk back home from these places with food or firewood balanced on my head. I often feel exhausted and tired at the end of my day.

Other things happen in the camp, which can disrupt my normal routine. These could be emergencies such as a child falling sick in the night, which forces me to spend my time at the hospital, especially

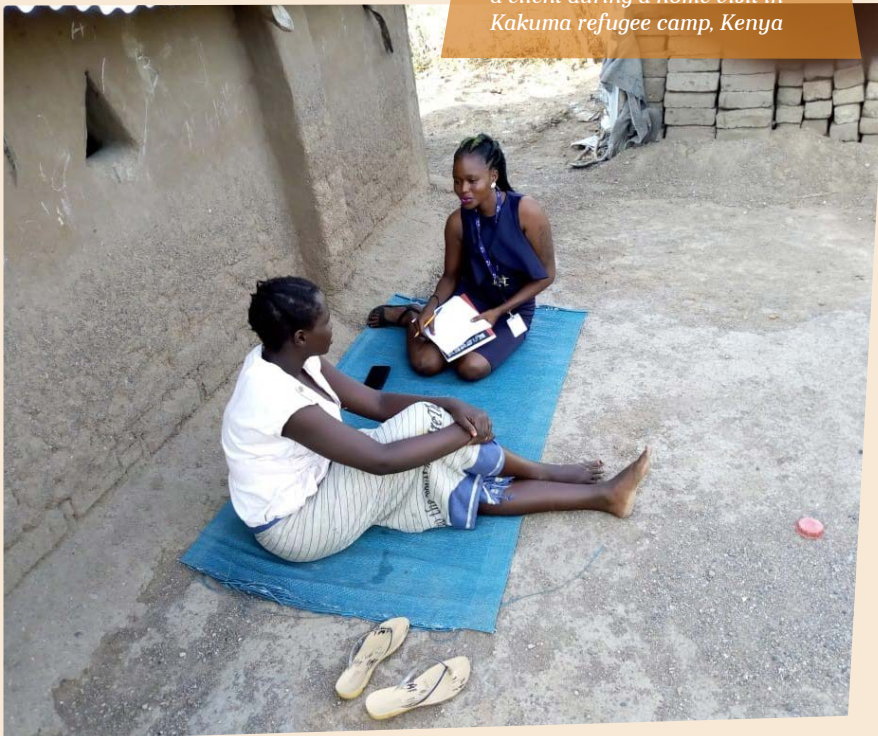
when the child gets admitted. Kakuma refugee camp is known for its harsh and extreme weather patterns. When it rains, the place gets flooded and movement becomes impossible. I cannot go for food, firewood or even to work because of the filled lags². My house is made of mud and so, during rains, it gets damaged by the water and then I have to do some repairs. The same thing happens when there are strong winds, especially during February and March. Roofs of houses get blown off during the day or night, leaving the inhabitants bare and vulnerable.

After work, I walk to the market to buy what I will prepare for dinner. Commodities are expensive in the camp. Traditionally or culturally, we eat our food as a community

and in one pool, this is a symbol of togetherness. My main food is kiswa³ and fish, sometimes I eat wal wal⁴ and milk.

Going by the mission of Jesuit Refugee Service of accompanying, serving and advocating for rights of refugees, I work for my fellow refugees to ensure that their psychological and emotional needs are met. I do this work because I easily connect with them, since I also have an almost similar experience. I discovered that counselling can be a powerful tool for human survival. I have the passion and drive, to help people to manage and cope with the stress of life as a refugee.' +

Nyawuok in conversation with a client during a home visit in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya



- 1 Food and firewood are among the items distributed to refugees in Kakuma. The distribution time and place depends on where a person lives and the type of item (food or firewood).
- 2 A laga is a type of seasonal river which fills up during the rainy season but remains dry for the rest of the year.

- 3 Kiswa is a traditional fermented bread made of either sorghum or wheat common in South Sudan
- 4 Walwal is a traditional South Sudanese food made of ground sorghum, lightly balled and boiled to a solid porridge.

Coping with climate injustice

I usually set off from home at 7.30am on my journey to the office. It's a half-hour walk which is very pleasant as almost invariably the sun is shining and the temperature not so high. Also, as it's the rainy season, everything it seems is in bloom. A good harvest beckons!

I begin work at 8.00am, by tackling any outstanding issues from the previous day, followed by administration, including my list of emails.

My working day is from 8.00am to 4.30pm with a break for lunch from 12.30 to 1.30pm, when I eat with JCED Director Fr Adrian Makasa SJ and other members of the community. The food here in Malawi is wholesome and organic. One real challenge people face here are the 'outages' of electricity which are regular and cause disruption to people's lives, which are also affected by the lack of running water.

Daily meetings and tasks

Each day is different, and the management team in the centre meets regularly to plan, monitor and evaluate the progress of the projects that the JCED is involved with, and to discuss our next steps for the future of the work. I work closely with the entire staff, especially with Fr Makasa and Programme Director Steve Makungwa.

'Tasintha' or 'Building resilience of farming communities in Kasungu, Malawi, to the impacts of climate change' is the flagship project of the JCED. It is a three-year project that aims to create a productive and resilient society for small-scale farmers and their families in the Kasungu District through increased livelihood opportunities, enhanced food security and improved nutrition. There is an environmental

aspect to the projects too, which promotes improved green, climate-resilient farming practices. The project is funded by Misesan Cara, through the Irish Jesuit Missions office.

Kasungu District, where the 'Tasintha' project is based is a 1.5-hour drive from Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, where the JCED office is. As the major project of JCED, it takes pre-eminence in the organisation – it appropriately also takes up a considerable amount of my time and energies. I make regular field visits to the project to engage with staff and participants and to monitor progress.

In implementing the project, we work with thirty communities and three schools in Kasungu District. There are thirty farmers selected in each of the communities. Small-holder farmers greatly depend on rain-fed agriculture for their survival. Therefore, farmers' livelihoods are vulnerable to weather-related shocks and the declining natural resource base. The project sets out to address these challenges by supporting techniques needed in the identification and understanding of climate change impacts. It also highlights a range of different livelihood opportunities to reduce the farmers' dependence on the land.

There is almost universal agreement that the most disadvantaged are suffering most from the impact of climate change, even though these communities are least responsible for the emissions causing it. I witness first-hand the effects of a changing climate, as Malawi, and in particular Kasungu District, are examples of marginalised communities that are suffering the effects of climate injustice.

Fr Adrian Makasa SJ
and Fran Flood, Director and
Deputy Director at JCED



'Tasintha' is a very strategic response to the challenges of climate injustice, and the objectives and work of the project are of vital importance, not only to the direct beneficiaries but in terms of learning and advocacy, to a much wider audience. I feel privileged to spend my days playing a part in that.'

The Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development (JCED) has been in Malawi since 2012. Its mission is to promote sustainable livelihoods, food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, use of efficient and renewable energy sources, and proper management of natural resources. The centre works to improve the livelihoods of local community members by counteracting the effects of climate change and also improving the environment. +

Author: Fran Flood joined the JCED team in November 2018 as the Deputy Director.

Mission News

Commitment to Child Safeguarding

The Xavier Network (a collective of 13 Jesuit organisations from Europe, Australia and Canada) approved the 'Commitment to Child Safeguarding' document, which was developed by Irish Jesuit Missions, in a meeting on 7th March 2019. This has consolidated the group's approach to supporting partners in the Global South around this important issue.

Cavan woman new South Sudan Country Director

Our colleague Noelle Fitzpatrick has taken up her new position as South Sudan Country Director with the Jesuit Refugee Service. She is

the first woman and one of the first laypersons in this role. We wish her all the best in her new challenge.

Good response to Tony's interview with Seán O'Rourke

Tony O'Riordan SJ visited in January from Maban, South Sudan. He caught up with family and friends in the short time he was in Ireland. He also gave a very interesting interview about the situation in the country on the RTE Radio 1, Seán O'Rourke show.

Many thanks to all at SFX Parish

Thank you to Gerry Clarke SJ and the patrons of this year's Novena of

Grace in St Francis Xavier Church, Gardiner Street, who raised more than €12,000 for our South Sudan fundraising appeal.

Dublin students support their peers in Adjumani

Gonzaga and Belvedere Jesuit schools in Dublin raised money for the building of a science classroom at Pagarinya Secondary School which is in a refugee settlement in Adjumani, northern Uganda.

Thank you to teachers Philippa Morris-Peeters and Divinia Lyons, and to all of the students who fundraised. +



Thank you for your continued support. Your contributions play a vital role in our missionary work in Africa and Asia.

For donations online log onto:
www.jesuitmissions.ie

If you wish to make a donation with a **credit/debit** card, please contact:
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If you would like to make a donation by cheque/postal order, please make it payable to 'Irish Jesuit Missions' and post to **Irish Jesuit Missions, 20 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin D01E9F3**

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My choice for this donation is:

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☐ Education in South Sudan

☐ Area of greatest need

Are you eligible for PAYE Tax Relief for donations?

☐ Yes ☐ No

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To learn more about our missions or to make a donation, please contact:
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For more information on the issues in this newsletter, visit www.jesuitmissions.ie



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