



Tilting The World On Its Axis

When people have an opportunity to learn, socialise and self-actualise in a safe, friendly environment, their sense of themselves, their sense of the world and their place in it blossoms” says Noelle Fitzpatrick, the new Country Director for JRS South Sudan, who sees a focus on providing quality education and on not losing sight of hope as crucial to the next decade.

It is challenging to ‘look ahead’ and reflect on what the next 10 years might bring in South Sudan. A recent meeting of Country Directors at the JRS International Office in Rome, the Director of Mission & Identity, Michael Smith SJ, urged us to ‘go and tilt the world on its axis’. His challenge echoed the call of St Ignatius centuries ago to ‘go forth and set the world on fire’. It is rooted in the reality of the now, bent always and positively toward the future.

Since taking up the role of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Country Director at the start of April, I can already appreciate how much can change here, just in one week. This is the world’s newest country and still a fragile State. Its people have lived with insecurity and the constant threat of it for years. In just a few short months, I’ve glimpsed the profound reality and impact of that.

JRS had a very important presence in Sudan during years of conflict. Now, since South Sudan gained independence in 2011 and formed a new State, new frontiers of our work have opened up. We have a large presence in Maban County, since 2013, close to the northern border with Sudan and Ethiopia. Here, the host community, internally displaced people and refugees from Sudan live in what is often an uneasy co-existence. Through



Women singing at mass in South Sudan. Photo by Paul Jeffrey

one bridge-building initiative led by the Irish Jesuit, Tony O’Riordan SJ, JRS has brought together a group of young people from these three different communities to live and learn together in a full-time teacher training programme. This is the only initiative of its kind in Maban, and it is a unique response to the invitation to ‘tilt the world on its axis’ by taking a risk to promote engagement in an location where people co-exist but live apart. JRS works in Maban alongside others in the midst of a barren landscape, accessible only by aircraft, where a box of oranges transported with other supplies for the project is welcomed like manna from heaven by the team!

At the other end of the country close to the border with Uganda and

the Democratic Republic of Congo, JRS Yambio is working to support a network of Diocesan and Community schools. In this context, the internally displaced live amongst the host community and returnees (those who were once displaced and recently returned).



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One of our staff there told me that though there is huge potential for peace and prosperity in this fertile region of South Sudan, because of past experiences, people here are always ready to run. JRS helps create stability and opportunity in a different way in this location and spends a lot of time advocating for the protection of people living in a nearby camp for internally displaced persons who are under-supported.

As a faith-based organisation, no matter what we do into the future, hope must always be at the centre of our messaging and way of being. In South Sudan, JRS aims to nurture this hope primarily through supporting access to quality education. When people have an opportunity to learn, socialise and self-actualise in a safe, friendly environment, their sense of themselves, their sense of the world and their place in it blossoms. The future looks different, creativity flourishes, many things become possible. Education is transformative, and transformed people go on to transform their societies and the future of their nation. It is as simple as that!

So this continues to be the aim of JRS into the future.

We cannot do everything and it would be harmful to try. Our aim will be to grow responsibly, to balance the focus on the quantity of people reached with the quality of the support. The core values of JRS - *solidarity, compassion, hospitality, integrity and justice* will be at the centre of our efforts. Child safeguarding will continue to be a key area of focus across all our work. In the months ahead JRS South Sudan operations will be strengthened by a new financial management system and increased attention to human resourcing and staff wellbeing.

We will also critically review our work in light of the Universal Apostolic Preferences and think about how we live, how we work and how we relate to the people we serve. We must in the years ahead continue to reflect on our ways of working and living amongst those in need and ensure we never become detached from those we serve, or inadvertently leave them behind as we run ahead! It calls for a patience and a pace of work

that is in many ways counter-cultural for those of us who were raised in the 'western world'.

In an environment where funding is increasingly volatile coupled with pressure to meet short deadlines and high targets, there is always the risk of being swept along and led by agendas and ways of working that belong to others, and not to JRS. It will take careful collective discernment and courage at times to find and keep on the right path.

There is so much to look forward to on the road ahead. Later in the year, we hope to work with the Eastern Africa Province of Jesuits to organise a first gathering of all Jesuits working in South Sudan. These will include those working with JRS Maban, those at the Secondary School in Wau, at the Parish and Vocational Training Centre in Rumbek, the Teacher Training College in Cueibet and the Farm initiative in Akol Jal. This is what the way ahead looks like. Sincere thanks for your prayers and support now and into the future. +

Author: Noelle Fitzpatrick, Country Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in South Sudan

A Word from the Director

People often ask me what Jesuits are up to at the moment and what our current focus is. To answer, this year, we published a blueprint of the mission of the Society of Jesus for the coming decade, called the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs). This has inspired the theme of this edition of the newsletter, which is 'looking ahead'. It can sometimes be difficult to look ahead, to retain hope and optimism for the future, especially when we are suffering. Fear and anxiety may cloud our vision. The UAPs are a message of hope; a gift we all need as we journey together in life.

The four UAPs are: **Showing the Way to God**, which urges Jesuits and their partners to deepen their faith and spirituality and accompany people as they discern complex choices in the personal, social, economic, cultural

and political lives. **Walking with the Excluded**, which covers the work Irish Jesuit Missions, Jesuit Centre of Faith and Justice and Jesuit Refugee Service do for reconciliation and justice with those who are poor and marginalised. **Journeying with Youth** which calls for us to guide and listen to young people. **Caring for our Common Home** is based on the entreaty of Pope Francis to protect and nurture mother Earth.

The stories in this issue reflect the four UAPs, and are also tales of hope, where individuals and organisations look ahead and commit themselves to striving for a better future for all. We hear from our colleague and friend Noelle Fitzpatrick about progress in South Sudan, in the year since the peace agreement. Kenneth Simalalo SJ, the headmaster of a Jesuit school in rural Malawi, tells us about the joy of seeing the first graduation class this year. Alice Mapulanga reports on how communities in Zambia are learning to stand up for their rights to clean water and health services. Elias Opongo SJ



updates us about the work being done in Kenya, in peace studies and environmental advocacy.

We thank you for your continued support for our mission as we grow together in faith and solidarity **building a just, compassionate and peaceful world.** +

Fr John K. Guiney SJ
Director

Nobody Is Too Poor To Give Some Time

“In looking ahead, it’s good to look back!” says Kenneth Simalalo SJ, Head Teacher of Loyola Jesuit Secondary School, Malawi, as he reflects on the last ten years which led to the recent graduation of a class of young men and women who will go on to shape the future.

In looking ahead, it’s good to look back! Those were my thoughts while watching the first graduation of Loyola Jesuit Secondary School (LJSS) in Kasungu, Malawi, in early June. It was a wonderful occasion, joyous, colourful, hopeful. As I saw the graduates – 48 boys and 49 girls – process into the celebration field, I recalled the empty plot of grass and trees and scattered gardens that had been here only ten years ago.

We Jesuits of the Zambia-Malawi Province (ZAM) had made the ambitious - almost dangerous - decision to open a new secondary school in one of the poorest countries in the world. Where less than 30% of the youth have a chance to attend secondary school and less than 10% actually complete the required four years. Sadly, the statistics for girls are significantly lower.

The decision to go where there was great need was made, before the Universal Apostolic Preferences had directed us “to discern who are the most vulnerable and excluded persons in our midst and to find ways to walk closely beside them.” That decision shaped the character of our future LJSS: located in a poor rural area, co-educational and all-boarding, and co-funded by the Government of Malawi which sends and pays teachers, bringing down fees for families to less than USD \$400 a year.

In a country of 18 million people, more than 50% are below the age of 16. There is no viable future for Malawi unless better educational opportunities are offered to its youth. It was this crucial fact that was influential in the ZAM Province’s decision to take the risk of establishing LJSS on a deserted plot of land on the outskirts of a town which



Prayers prior to graduation ceremony. Photo by Pete Henriot SJ

was the capital of tobacco crops; a town declining as tobacco sales globally rapidly decrease.

LJSS from the start strove to offer more than excellent education courses. It has made an explicit effort to be a school guided by Jesuit pedagogy. “Come to Loyola not just to learn to make a *living*, but to learn to make a *difference*!” And that means we are really concerned about the future - of individuals, families and neighbourhoods, of our nation and of our Church.

We don’t want to see a nation where more than 50% of the people live below the poverty line, without decent access to the basic needs of life. We don’t want to see a government where high political figures leave office with much more money than they had upon entering. We don’t want to see a Church where fewer people have access to the Sacraments because of a paucity of ordained priests.

Our aim is for LJSS students to make the well-known Ignatian pedagogical tenets be real, be realistic, be realisable. On the front of our Administration Building are the words “*Forming women and men*

with and for others.” The walls of our classrooms display the four powerful goals of Competence, Conscience, Compassion, and Commitment.

One way of putting this pedagogy into practice at LJSS is through our mandatory “service” programmes. During school breaks and during Lent, all students are obliged to fulfill service obligations of assisting persons in need. Students pick programmes themselves and in reporting back must explain why they picked these and what it meant for them to be involved. Visiting prisoners, taking care of the aged, tutoring primary students, visiting persons hospitalised, planting trees, etc. The most recent Lenten project focused on care of the environment by cleaning up local plastic waste, thus responding to the urgent calls of Pope Francis.

“We try to move students beyond their comfort zones by reaching out to others. This helps them realise that no one is too poor to give some time, material, thought, presence. If our students are formed now for that service, *they will make a difference for our future!*” +

Author: Kenneth Simalalo SJ, Head Teacher at Loyola Secondary School, Malawi.



Zambians Fight for their Rights

People living in poor, rural communities in Zambia are not informed about their rights to demand access to health services, clean water and better schools. A project run by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is changing this.

'Promoting Fullness of Life Through the Promotion of Human Rights' funds education and advocating for the economic, social and cultural rights of four communities in the districts of Kasama, Kitwe, Livingstone and Mongu. The JCTR team works with these communities to identify the biggest challenges they face and helps them to engage with local authorities and government, to question why they are denied access to social services.

Healthcare and Sanitation Provision

Health, education, water sanitation and hygiene practices are a big challenge across Zambia, especially in rural and poor communities. Most people are forced to use pit latrines, and access water from shallow wells. There are sometimes water kiosks available, but they cost money to use and most people can't afford the fees. Unsafe water sources cause diseases, and the damage this causes is compounded by the lack of access to health services. There are few health centres, and those available are poorly stocked with medical supplies and understaffed.

This is a big risk to the health of the population. Women in rural Zambia travel long distances to give birth in poor maternal facilities that don't have access to clean and safe water.

By collaborating with these communities, the project is changing things. There is increased community action. People are now challenging service providers and questioning the use of resources that are allotted for their community development. Local authorities have responded to this engagement, as they are forced to listen now that these communities know how to articulate their rights.

Improving Conditions in Schools

Most of the schools in these communities were originally meant to have classes from Grades 1 to 7. But to make education accessible to more pupils, they now also include Grades 8 to 10. The buildings have not been upgraded to accommodate the extra pupils. The result has been a reduction in learning hours for all pupils so that all grades can be taught. Teacher-

pupil ratios have become too high, and learning materials are in short supply. This affects the quality of education children receive in these communities.

Things are now improving throughout Zambia. Schools in Mongu now have improved boreholes for water as well as classroom block rehabilitation, which they received funding for after holding advocacy sessions facilitated by JCTR. Similarly, community schools in Livingstone obtained funding for staff accommodation for additional teachers. Schools have also received funding to update their computer labs.

Embodying the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs)

The JCTR project, aimed at raising awareness on peoples embodies the spirit of one of the UAPs; that of walking with the poor, empathising with their situation and trying to change it for the better, by working with them and advocating on their behalf. The centre and its project are also grounded in Catholic Social

Zambians Fight for their Rights

Teaching, which has helped with the application of UAPs. However, the work of the centre and the progress of the project could be affected by external forces in Zambia.

The Next Decade

The upcoming general election in 2021 will change the social and political environment and provide an opportunity for JCTR to engage the

public and use the UAP guidelines to shape the discourse. Zambia's debt burden is an issue that may affect the work of the organisation over the next decade. As it will affect funding for social services which will impact on rural communities' access to healthcare. Youth engagement will be vital over the next ten years. This is a group that is often neglected when in the context of marginalised communities. We will share our

vision of leadership and include the lessons of the Universal Apostolic Preferences as we journey forward with the leaders of the future. +

Author: Alice Mapulanga, JCTR Media and Information Officer

**The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) is a research, education and advocacy centre that promotes education and action on issues linking Christian Faith and social justice in Zambia and Malawi.*

Protecting Peace and the Natural Environment

The Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR) in Nairobi, Kenya, was started in 2004 to respond to social and environmental issues. It is involved in healing the trauma caused by conflict and religious extremism and in protecting the natural environment from the damage being caused by the extractive industries.



The institute, led by Elias Opongo SJ, has a strong commitment to working with the poor and marginalised. It runs courses including an MA in Peace Studies and International Relations and certificate courses in subjects such as human rights and governance, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, national healing and reconciliation, and Catholic Social Teaching. HIPSIR graduates are involved in transforming conflicts within communities into peaceful co-existence, where human dignity is respected and common good safeguarded.

Extractive Industry Damage

Kenya is rich in natural resources including oil, gas, and many precious metals and minerals which have attracted international corporations to

the country. A key issue of concern is whether these natural resources can be translated into economic growth and sustainability for the country itself. HIPSIR training programmes inform participants about the damage that extractive industries are causing. A participant on the Chartered Mediators Training course says:

"We have a responsibility to protect Kenya's natural resources. Multinational mining corporations are here to reap as much profit as possible and leave us poorer

than we were before. This course by HIPSIR, has motivated me to mobilise communities, to educate them about the negative effects of these industries and to create a strategy for how we are going to stop the environmental damage the extractive industries are doing."

The Next Decade

In the next ten years, HIPSIR hopes to extend its outreach to a much larger audience through online programmes, regional and international partnerships and

HIPSIR graduates are involved in transforming conflicts within communities into peaceful co-existence, where human dignity is respected and common good safeguarded.

Protecting Peace and the Natural Environment

networks, joint advocacy initiatives and community support training. The Institute will continue to run its course on Catholic Social Teaching, which emphasises Laudato Si's call for care of the environment as well as accountable political leadership, and the protection of the common good. Participants in programmes run by HIPSIR have an impact on Kenyan society by tackling prejudice and inequality.

Healing Trauma

HIPSIR will also build on its expertise in transitional justice in post-conflict societies in Africa, to pursue its agenda of reconciliation, particularly

among societies that have experienced violence and divisions. This will have an added component of psychosocial support and trauma healing for people affected by violence including women and girls who have endured sexual violence. It will also include spiritual accompaniment to help people heal and move towards forgiveness and reconciliation. The institute is organising an international conference on Women, Peace and Conflict in Africa in October 2021.

Interfaith Tolerance

The institute will continue its active involvement in addressing religious extremism and violence through

inter-faith dialogue, regional and international conferences, and curriculum development for academic and non-academic institutions. In the next ten years, this direct engagement with people of different faiths, government institutions, religious institutions and others, will build mutual understanding and social cohesion.

It will include young people who can be vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment into extremist groups. It will also continue to advocate for freedom of religion where this is suppressed, to work towards a future of inclusiveness and tolerance. +

With thanks to Elias Opongo SJ, Director of HIPSIR

Mission News

Visits of African Provincials

We were delighted to welcome the Provincial of Eastern Africa, Fr Joseph Afulo SJ to the Missions Office in June. Fr Leonard Chiti SJ, Provincial of Zambia-Malawi was also a welcome visitor to our office in July.

Thanksgiving Masses

• The **Annual Galway Mass** takes place on Saturday 28th September at 2.30pm in **St Ignatius Church, 26 Sea Road, Galway.**

• The **Annual Memorial Mass for deceased Irish Jesuit Missionaries** takes place on Sunday 3rd of November at 3pm in **Gonzaga College Chapel, Sandford Road, Dublin 6.**

Thank you for your continued support. Your generosity changes the lives of people affected by global injustice and inequality.

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