



Rebuilding Hope: JRS Syria's Earthquake Response

It's been 6 months since the 7.8 degree magnitude earthquake struck Syria, affecting tens of thousands in Homs, Al-Kafroun, Damascus and Aleppo.

"The response of the people of Ireland to the Syria earthquake has been profound. This tragedy has resonated with our supporters more than anything I've seen before in my 15 years as Director at the IJI."

John K Guiney SJ.

Our office has worked with other Jesuit NGOs and Mission Offices across the US, Canada, Europe and Australia in this crisis – yet the response from the Irish has far outweighed that of others. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Syria has met half of the funds they need for the earthquake response. The needs are acute and are as basic as food, shelter, and warm clothes.

The people of Syria have suffered so much already, and the earthquake has left them re-traumatised and fragile. Life for so many families has been extremely tough, with the war, huge destruction, the lack of electricity and fuel to warm houses in a very cold city. Even before the earthquake happened in February, 61% of people in Aleppo were food insecure and access to

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non-food items like winter clothing and blankets were becoming inaccessible compared to previous years.

Our very own Tony O'Riordan SJ was in Syria at the time of the earthquake issuing warm clothes with the funds raised from our IJI Winter Appeal. That appeal saved the lives of many, as thousands were forced to face the elements in the aftermath of the earthquake as many buildings, homes and infrastructure collapsed. One mother, who was forced to sleep outdoors, thanked God for JRS, saying: 'God sent you to us, your warm clothes for my children came at the time I most needed them.'

Cork man, Tony, is leading the JRS Syria earthquake response on the ground, accompanying survivors and providing

immediate needs of food, warmth and counselling. With your support, JRS Syria has been able to:

- Accompany 40,000 Syrian children, women and men.
- Provide 10,963 medical consultations in gynaecology, paediatric and general practice and the JRS Health Centres in Eastern Aleppo.
- Distribute food parcels to 7,800 families which are designed to support family meals for 25 days.
- Provide 2,000 children and 6,800 adults with Psychological First Aid
- Provide 500 people with individual psychosocial sessions
- Provide 7,000 people with Earthquake Safety Information

- Continue the afterschool program and provide a safe space for children.

Tony's team in Syria are now conducting phase two of the emergency response which is around food shortages and providing families with supplies to sustain them for one month. The response of JRS Syria is focused on Aleppo city – one of the worst impacted

areas, but the team is also working with families who fled Homs and surrounding towns as well as those displaced in Damascus.

The work and compassion of JRS has been astounding as the team has rallied to support families in desperate need and we have been so moved by the immense support from all our friends, supporters & donors.

“Sharing photographs of people in Ireland hosting bake sales, coffee mornings, sales of work, has brought tears to the eyes of many Syrians we serve – it has let them know Ireland is thinking of them – that the people of Ireland have not forgotten the hardship lived day in day out by those in Syria.”

Tony O’Riordan SJ.



THANK YOU

Your generosity in supporting our Syrian Earthquake appeal has brought hope to people's lives and made a massive difference. So, from Tony and all the team at IJI we want to give a massive THANK YOU to everyone!

From the knitters, the bakers, the quizzers and card players to parish collections and many school and sponsored events – it has been amazing to see so many men & women for others in action!

A WORD FROM OUR DIRECTOR

As we reach halfway through the year, it is important to give ourselves a moment of pause and reflection and notice the blessings around us.

The countryside looks its best at this time of year. Summer sunshine brings us new life and joy. It is indeed a time to relax and take a break.

It is indeed a time for us to say thank you for your solidarity, generosity, and kindness to those we support and walk with in Irish Jesuits International.

Therefore, this summer's newsletter is dedicated to all our supporters who took time in their busy lives to fundraise for our projects focused on accompanying those struck by natural disaster as well as supporting our appeal to give marginalized communities the precious gift of water.

We have been so moved by the immense support from all our friends, supporters & donors. Your generosity in supporting our Syrian Earthquake appeal has brought hope to people's lives and with this newsletter we share with you snapshots of all the activities

in the months that have passed. As well as receiving large individual and institutional donations many people organized coffee mornings, cake sales and community fundraising events to support the victims of natural and man-made disasters. Our compassion and empathy for those who suffer wherever they live is vibrant and is an inspiration and consolation.

Included in our newsletter is an update on the relief work of Fr Tony O 'Riordan's team in Aleppo from food packages to psychosocial support. With your help and generosity, Tony and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) team continue to bring light in times of darkness.

In response to the fundraising during our Lenten appeal, a letter from Fr Alan Ggita SJ, the Director of Development for the Eastern Africa Province, expresses his thanks highlighting the importance of access to water and its impact on excluded communities.



Emer Kerrigan, operations manager at IJI, recounts her trip to South Sudan and reflects on her visit to a number of projects from Rumbek to Wau. Emer was based in South Sudan at a time when South Sudan, the youngest country in the world, did not officially exist – she shares with us her experience reflecting on both the past and present.

Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ, the 28th Superior General of the Society of Jesus, whose cause for beatification and canonization is presently being processed in Rome often said: *'only by being a man and woman for others does one become fully human'*.

Thank you for showing us the way to become men and women for others. In so doing we humanize our world and make it a better place to live in.

Fr John K. Guiney SJ
Director

Rumbek - a bright future ahead

By Emer Kerrigan, IJI Programmes Manager

Visiting Akol Jal on the outskirts of Rumbek, South Sudan was very moving. As Headteacher, James Majang showed us around the Multi-Educational and Agricultural Jesuit Institute in South Sudan (MAJIS), he explained how they use their classrooms as primary school in the mornings, and as the Agricultural Institute for the women farmers in the afternoons.

The recent interest in the local Dinka community in educating their children is really unprecedented. The Governor of Rumbek ruled in 2022 that children must be sent to school. Up until then, the local community had little interest in sending their children – as the children were needed at home to help their mothers in getting water, cooking and farming. Once a girl reaches the age of 13 or 14, she gives up the work in the home and the marriage negotiations begin. With boys, at the age of 13 or 14, they too give up the work in the home, dress smartly, are served in their homes by their younger siblings and they begin to enter marriage and dowry discussions. If a girl becomes pregnant before dowry has been agreed, she and the female members of her family are beaten, and she is forced to move away.

St Peter Faber Primary School is responding to the new interest in sending children to school. With 97 children, the school is expanding quickly. With funding from IJI **Build a Classroom Appeal**, and funding from Misesan Cara in Ireland, IJI is helping build 3 new classroom blocks and latrines – a good start in expanding the school, while recognising there will be a need for another classroom block in the near future. The children showed us the new site, where the foundations were already laid. A bag of cement in Rumbek costs €25, that would only cost €5 in Kenya. Getting construction materials is a real challenge. The road to Juba was flooded in the last few months, so transporting any building materials from the capital, has been impossible. The team were lucky enough to have purchased the cement bags in May before the floods, so they were able to start the building.



MAJIS beneficiaries sharing a smile of joy as they show their harvested vegetables.



Celebration of blessings of the new St Peter Faber Primary School at MAJIS - fruit of Build a Classroom Appeal.

“What was a Lenten campaign in 2022 – Build a Classroom – is now a reality. Once again thank you for making what was a dream to being a reality in Akol Jal.”

Fr Eric Wanyonyi SJ

Before sending our farewells to the students and teachers, we shared the IJI Annual Report 2021 with the Headteacher. James laughed – delighted – ‘that’s me!’ he says, pointing to the cover page.

As we left MAJIS and St Peter Faber Primary School, Fr Eric Wanyonyi SJ drove us back to Rumbek. Along the road, we passed a white wooden cross, marking the spot where the driver was shot and killed some years back. During that time, Irish Jesuit, Fr Richard O’Dwyer SJ was on mission in Rumbek. Richard is now the parish priest in Gardiner Street yet has been remembered well in Rumbek and Akol Jal. Richard was on mission during a time when the MAJIS compound served as a buffer between two different Dinka clans either side – tensions were high and insecurity was a daily reality.

There has been an alcohol ban in the Lakes State for 2 years now, introduced by the Governor. I thought it was strange that the state would want to revert to any alcohol ban, reminding us of times of S’haría Law in South Sudan over 20 years ago. But I only appreciated its impact during my short stay in Rumbek. The numbers of shootings have reduced dramatically. Whereas before, you would expect to see a lot of people walking around with AK47s, now a person must have a licence costing €100 for a gun. There were so many attempts to disarm the local population over the years, all of which failed. The recent introduction of the fine, seems to have worked. Before, people wouldn’t walk around after 7pm for the risk of being shot, but now you can see people

walking around at 8pm and 9pm. The Governor has also banned check-points on the road, making the roads more passable for local trade and supply trucks.

The difference in the last two years in Rumbek is stark. It had been two years since our colleague Tim Flynn, who is based in Kenya, last visited the South Sudan teams. The progress made in all the Jesuit schools, centres and institutes has really taken him aback.

South Sudan is not an easy place to live – yet those working with the Jesuits have shown immense perseverance, commitment and hope for a better future. Much of that thanks also needs to go to Caroline Sanga, in the Development Office in South Sudan, who not only accompanies the Jesuit projects in planning, monitoring and reporting – but provides a beacon of hope and enthusiasm for what each project can become.



Caroline Sanga

“ The difference in the last two years in Rumbek is stark. It had been two years since our colleague Tim Flynn, who is based in Kenya, last visited the South Sudan teams. The progress made in all the Jesuit schools, centres and institutes has really taken him aback.

Thank you for the gift of water!

The East African region is faced with an urgent need to address the effects of climate change as extreme weather brings long periods of drought and flash flooding that ruins water sources.

Water shortages are having devastating effect on pastoral and farming communities, with the United Nations warning that more people could face starvation unless humanitarian interventions and climate adaptation measures are taken. Rainfall is less than normal, stream flows decline, water levels in lakes and reservoirs are falling, and available safe and clean water is becoming more difficult to collect.

The Development Office of the Eastern Africa Province is attempting to address water shortages caused by droughts, by exploring solutions such as rainwater harvesting to provide a sustainable

source of water for communities in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan.

Our water appeal was focused on fundraising in Irish Jesuit Schools for life-saving water resources from village boreholes to school water tanks and the needed piping and drainage systems to harvest, irrigate and collect water. The 'Jes' came out in force to support schools and communities overseas!

We have been so moved by the support and solidarity from all the Jesuit Schools across Ireland. From Pilgrim walks and long hikes carrying jerrycans to bake sales and sports, your fundraising events have made a



huge impact and will give marginalised communities the gift of water which will improve the lives of people now and for future generations to come.

From all of us at IJI – Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

Below is a letter from Fr Allan Ggita SJ, who is the director of Development for the Eastern Africa Province:

I am very grateful to Irish Jesuits International (IJI) for supporting our works in the provision of much needed water facilities at our schools.

On World Water Day 22nd March 2023, it was stated that there are over 2 billion people living worldwide who don't have access to safe water. In many of the areas where we work this is a challenge faced by those we serve.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the need for water to promote handwashing and good hygiene was brought to the fore. Even before the Covid - 19 pandemic we have been working to supply and store water throughout our institutions in Eastern Africa. This has been particularly so in the educational establishments which we manage and run or support.

Back in 2020 with IJI support we ran the very successful "Tippy Tap Campaign". This ensured that handwashing facilities were made available to a number of our works in the province. Having such facilities near toilets/matrines and where people eat and the promotion of proper handwashing has gone a long way towards the reduction of infections and illnesses. Having such facilities in place is vital but so too is ensuring that there is a consistent supply of water for not just hygiene and sanitation but also other purposes.

In the majority of the places where we work there is minimal provision of water by local government authorities. This means that we need to rely on

independent means of getting water. This includes rainwater harvesting, tanks for storage and the sinking of shallow wells or the drilling of boreholes.

Some of the places where we work are arid and semi-arid areas and prone to periods of drought. Loyola Secondary School in Wau is a school in such an area. It is vital therefore that when there are rains, there are facilities to harvest and tanks to store the rainwater and when there is no rainfall, there are other means of accessing water for drinking, cooking, washing and cleaning.

Our schools also look to see how they can impact positively on the environment through tree planting and also from a nutritional point of view through growing crops and vegetables. Water is needed to sustain these actions.

We would like very much to thank the students of the Irish Jesuit schools for embracing this campaign so wholeheartedly. Your solidarity and financial sacrifice will make a huge difference to the lives of the students at Loyola Secondary School in Wau in South Sudan, at Abay Mado School in Ethiopia and at St Joseph's Technical Secondary School and 3 local primary schools in Kangemi, Nairobi, Kenya.

May God Bless you and your families at this time.

Fr Allan Ggita, SJ

How many litres of water can you give?



Belvedere College



Culture Day: All staff and students were invited to dress up in a traditional costume representing the culture or country of their choice. It was for a good cause as they raised funds for the provision of water facilities to Jesuits Schools in Eastern Africa.

Clongowes →
Wood College

Movie Night: Clongowes' Green Schools Team organised a whole-school film screening of the documentary 'Seaspiracy' on 11th March 2023. The main objective of this event was to raise funds for IJI's Lenten Water Appeal by selling sweets and popcorn.



Colaiste Iognad

- Management, staff, and parents supported Second Year students who went on a 6 km pilgrim walk during Lent.
- Third-year students went on a 'Farmer's Walk' to Salthill Promenade. They carried 20-30 kg jerrycans full of water to experience how hard it is for women farmers in South Sudan who must walk long distances to fetch water for their crops.

Crescent College

Crescent College Comprehensive SJ nominated IJI as their chosen charity to raise funds for much needed water facilities in Jesuit Schools in Eastern Africa. Some of the fundraising activities included:

- Colours Day - A fun non uniform day where senior students brought imagination and creativity to their costumes.
- 60 first year students went on a 12 Km Pilgrim Walk carrying Jerrycans.

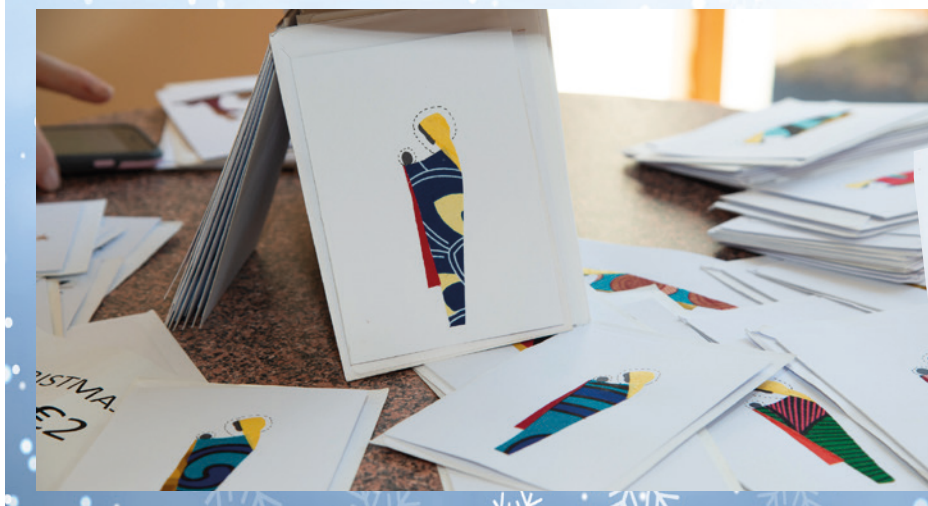


- Champion Class - 2nd years raised over 700 euro at their Bake Sale.

Order your Mikono Gifts and Christmas cards now

Mikono Refugee Craft Shop in Nairobi was started in 1993 to enable refugees to make a living from their hand-crafted products. Since then, refugee artisans from all over the region have been offered space and resources to showcase and sell their wares. The shop started at the JRS compound, where people passing could buy things ranging from peanut butter to wood-carvings and patchwork aprons.

IJI buys Christmas cards and other crafts from the shop each year to support people with a refugee background. If you would like to order some handmade African Christmas cards or any other items for your Christmas presents, please get in touch with Amanda or Rosaleen on reception@iji.ie or 01 836 6509.



Please pass this newsletter on to your family and friends so we can share the positive impact of our work with them.



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

I want to help today. Here's my gift of:

☐ €25

☐ €75

☐ €250

☐ Other amount €

I enclose a cheque/ postal order/bank draft made payable to **Irish Jesuits International**

Your Information: (please print clearly using block capitals)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Date:



Donate online:

www.iji.ie/donate/



Donate by telephone:

Call: 01 836 6509 | 083 164 5739



Bank Transfer: Bank of Ireland, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

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I would like my donation to go to:

☐ Syria Earthquake

☐ Where the need is greatest

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.iji.ie

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