



## Spirit of Success in South Sudan

**Sarah and Rahab** are inspirational young women who are striving to complete their education in the hostile climate of war-torn South Sudan. With the help of programmes run by the Jesuit Refugee Service in the northeastern region of Maban, they are learning English to help them to pass their exams, so they can provide for themselves and help their families and communities.

### JRS Maban Refugee Camp

Maban is located in the furthest corner of the northeast of South Sudan. It is a very isolated area and the refugee camp is inaccessible at times because of armed conflict in the region. Irish Jesuit, Tony O’Riordan has just travelled to Maban to take on the role of Project Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) team in the camp, whose work is supported by Irish Jesuit Missions and other mission offices in Europe.

JRS has been responding to the call for education from refugees and internally displaced persons since 1992, when it first established schools in refugee camps in northern Uganda, and later expanded its work to increase access to education in four sites in what was then southern Sudan.

### Sarah’s Story

Sarah Phillip lives with her family in Bunj, the county capital of Maban. Her home is just a few hundred metres from the JRS Field Office, and more than 600 kilometres from the country’s capital, Juba.

Three years ago, when she was only 17, Sarah was married off by her family. She was in 6th grade of primary school at the time, but her marriage made it difficult for her to proceed with her education. She



*The desire to learn in both refugee and local communities in Maban county, Upper Nile is strong. JRS offers teacher training programmes, awareness campaigns and career talks in Maban Refugee Camp. (Photo: Pascal Zingashane)*

is currently in her second year of the JRS Adult Literacy Programme, despite pressure from her husband who was initially against her enrolling.

Sarah joined the JRS English Programme with the hope of increasing her level of proficiency in the language. She hoped that this would improve her understanding

of subjects in primary school, which she rejoined last year. In most parts of South Sudan, there are no trained teachers. The language of instruction is officially English. Arabic is so dominant in Maban County that this is the language in which most subjects are taught, yet the national examinations are set in English. For this reason, among others Sarah decided to join the JRS programme.

### Contents

- Spirit of Success in South Sudan
- A Decade of Friendship
- An Oasis at the Margins
- Bringing Mandazi to market in Kenya
- Mission News





## A Word from the Director

**‘Educate a girl and you educate a village’** says the Bantu proverb, because women play such an essential role as community builders. They are the peacebuilders and peacemakers in many societies and diverse cultures, especially ones that have been torn apart by war and conflict. Women are often the backbone which keeps a family and wider community together in the midst of trauma.

In many refugee and internally displaced persons camps around the world, women and children comprise the majority of the population. This is why the Jesuits have programmes that reach out specifically to women and girls in their works.

In the Bible stories of the passion and resurrection of Jesus, the presence of women is strikingly significant. In St John’s Gospel it is Mary of Magdala who announces the resurrection by noticing that the tomb of Jesus is empty. In contemporary life, it often falls to women to carry the burden of suffering in a family and community.

The Easter edition of our newsletter speaks of the Jesuit projects which empower girls and women. Education is crucial in all these projects and provides a key to women’s freedom. When a girl is educated she is better able to assert herself and to prevent personal, social and economic exploitation. The stories we share in this newsletter are signs of hope for the future – resurrection stories.

As we celebrate Easter we do so in a spirit of gratitude about how together we can be Good News for our world. We bring hope to others – to the girls and women who in turn help their communities to change for the better. Happy Easter to you all.

Fr John K. Guiney SJ  
Director

## Spirit of Success in South Sudan

She sat her South Sudan Primary Leaving Examination in December last year and now awaits her results. If the security situation remains stable, she will join secondary school this year and eventually sit her final examinations in 2021. Like many young people her age, Sarah’s vision of her future brims with optimism. *“I want to be a doctor when I finish school”*, she says confidently, adding that her goal is to help her community.

In a society where child marriages are the norm and women are looked down upon, Sarah has managed to beat the odds to continue with her education.

Sarah’s story is far from unique. Many more girls have to overcome insurmountable obstacles just to access basic education. JRS introduced a female-only English language course in June of last year, to address the challenges facing women in the greater Maban County. By enrolling as many women and girls as possible, this course can have a significant impact on their performance and success in primary school.

### Rahab’s Story

18-year-old Rahab\* is among the 81 women who have successfully completed the course so far. She enrolled in August 2017 and graduated in December. She is now the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in one of the public primary schools in Bunj. Her decision to enroll in the course was motivated by the difficulties she experienced in grasping concepts in class where the untrained teachers mostly used Arabic to teach their subjects.

*\* Rahab’s name has been changed at her request, for reasons of confidentiality.*

**Author:** Nyamweya Omari is Education Coordinator with JRS Maban, South Sudan.

Rahab now feels confident that she will complete her education, and is determined to continue the English course until she completes the remaining four levels.

Although Rahab is happy with the course, she decries the long distance she has to travel to reach the JRS ‘Arrupe Learning Centre’, which is approximately six kilometers from where she lives with her parents. *“The distance to the centre is too long to walk there four days in a week”* she says. This means that she and many others who access the centre for both the English and Computer Courses travel an average of 10 kilometers a day, four days a week! To encourage participation, JRS has been offering transportation to a few female participants, although it is not possible for them to accommodate everyone who needs this assistance, they are trying to close this gap.

### Girls’ Education in South Sudan

South Sudan has proportionately fewer girls going to school than any other country in the world. According to estimates, less than one percent of girls complete primary education, and just one in four students is a girl. The country has the highest female illiteracy rate in the world, making the programmes run by JRS to increase the opportunities for girls to get an education vitally important.

Apart from English courses, JRS Maban also offers a certified Teacher Training Programme, Computer courses and Psychosocial activities including counselling and daycare for children living with disabilities. +

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***In a society where child marriages are the norm and women are looked down upon, Sarah has managed to beat the odds to continue with her education.***

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# A Decade of Friendship

The South Dublin parish of Sandymount has shared cultural and social links with a township in Lusaka, Zambia for almost ten years. The partnership resulted in clean running water for a school in Matero, and insights into a different culture and way of life for the Irish community.

## Friendship Programme Between Ireland and Zambia

A community in Sandymount Parish, Dublin built a 'friendship programme' with the Jesuit Parish of Matero in Lusaka, Zambia almost 10 years ago. The partnership is an example of a twinning programme to connect a community in the Northern Hemisphere with one in the Global South, which has become a common practice to encourage people from different cultures and socioeconomic contexts to learn from and support each other in different ways, and recognise that our world is a global village.

As part of this partnership, sponsorship from Sandymount Parish has helped vulnerable and orphaned children in the township of Matero to attend school. In return, members of the Sandymount community have visited Matero to immerse themselves in Zambian culture and learn about the region, which has nurtured cultural and social links between the two communities.

## St Mary's Community School Water Project

St Mary's Mother of the Redeemer Community School in Matero was affected by a lack of clean water and proper sanitation, due to the fact that there was just one water tap at the school for 570 pupils and 13 staff members. The lack of a safe water supply meant that the children needed to bring their own drinking water to school, or return home when there was no running water at the school, which affected their academic performance. It also exposed them to the risk of an outbreak of cholera.

Thanks to the generosity and support of their friends in Sandymount Parish, the Matero community was able to install a borehole and new running water system at the school. This has made a dramatic difference to the lives of pupils at the school.

## Girls' Education in Matero

Wandile Hope Musa is 14 years old and is in Grade 9 at St Mary's school, thanks to a scholarship. She recognises that an education will give her a more equal footing with men in decision-making and for employment opportunities and is glad of the chance to complete her schooling.

Maria Mbewe is also 14. She is grateful for the financial support that will allow her to continue her education and says she is motivated to succeed by the difficulties she has already endured since her father died two years ago, leaving her mother without the means to afford school fees.

Education for girls like Wandile and Maria will enable them to go on to have more stable lives. Giving them increased opportunities to gain employment is just one benefit. Girls who attend school are more likely to avoid early marriage and pregnancy with the risks for their health and the health of their babies that this entails. It will affect the next generation too, as children who have an educated mother with knowledge about health and nutrition are more healthy, and her skills and knowledge are likely to be shared with them, making them more likely to pursue education themselves.

The partnership with Sandymount Parish has given these girls and others like them a priceless opportunity to go on to have safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. +

*Learning to make a living and a difference. St Mary's Community School in Matero, Zambia.*





*The JRS Safe Haven houses dozens of children in need of protection and guidance in Kakuma refugee camp. (Angela Wells/ Jesuit Refugee Service)*

## An Oasis at the Margins

**“Women and girls are Africa’s greatest untapped resource, and it is they, not diamonds or oil and minerals, that will be the foundation for solid, sustainable and equitable progress”. - Joaquim Chissano**

**Kakuma Refugee Camp** is located in the northwestern region of Kenya. It was established in 1992 to host unaccompanied minors who had fled the war in Sudan and came walking from camps in Ethiopia. Today, the camp accommodates more than 185,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers from countries all over Sub-Saharan Africa, including Somalia, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Irish Jesuit Missions works in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in the camp to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons within it. They have implemented a range of projects to help this marginalised community, among them two projects aimed at addressing the education and protection needs of refugee girls and women.

### Obstacles to Girls’ Education

Girls face difficulties accessing education, in the setting of Kakuma

and other refugee camps. Girls are the first to be kept out of school to help with family chores such as collecting water and childcare. In cases where a girl is the head of the household because her mother has died, she will receive the food token from camp staff so that she can queue for food for the family, making it impossible for her to go to class.

There are also considerations that are particularly linked to gender. The vulnerability of girls in refugee camps can lead to more serious problems that are particularly linked to gender including forced early marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape. JRS tackles these issues through a variety of interventions.

### Safe Haven

Safe Haven is the JRS protection centre for women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence. The centre empowers resident women by providing skills training and other capacity-building activities. The women receive instruction in child protection and personal hygiene to improve the quality of parental

care given to their children, many of whom still exhibit signs of trauma. They also attend tailoring, bead work and catering classes, which give them the skills they need to generate some income for themselves, including making bags, ornaments and bracelets for sale.

Because the centre’s protocol restricts their movement for safety reasons, the programme helps them to market their products by taking advantage of events that attract crowds, like the celebration of international days, inter-agency coordination meetings, and also the arrival of visitors to the camp. The products are also sold through the JRS Mikono Shop in Nairobi. Currently, JRS is working towards organising registered self-help groups for the women. This would enable them to save money which could provide a start-up fund when they leave the protection centre.

### Sunshine School

The Sunshine School is an early childhood education programme for children from the age of six who are admitted to Safe Haven with their mothers. The children receive weekly art and play therapy in addition to the normal learning activities. The therapy helps improve their social wellbeing and enhances their ability to positively cope with trauma and to develop healthy interpersonal relationships. After the age of 14, girls are enrolled into primary and secondary boarding schools within the camp, to help to smooth their transition into mainstream education, when they are discharged from the centre.

### Girls with Special Needs

Girls with special needs in Kakuma comprise a particularly vulnerable group in the resource-deprived context of the camp. Some of these



## An Oasis at the Margins

girls receive scholarships from JRS to enable them to attend specialised schools outside the camp, as this is the only way for them to access education. Camp schools are too overcrowded and have neither the personnel or the requisite equipment to adequately manage the education of special needs children.

## Harnessing Potential

Jesuit Refugee Service continues to work hard to help refugee girls to receive an education, through efforts to break down the obstacles to

access and by continually reviewing the programmes that are provided for effectiveness and relevance. It is hoped that these programmes will go some way to helping to release the untapped potential of girls and women in the camp, which is waiting to be harnessed. +

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## Bringing Mandazi to Market in Kenya

A group of single mothers in Western Kenya access training and resources from the Jesuit Hakimani Centre to create employment for themselves and promote healthy eating by starting a group that makes bread and cakes from traditional crops.

### Sena Women's Group

Sena Women's Group is a shining example of a simple idea that was developed through training by the Jesuit Hakimani Centre. It has transformed the lives of the women in the Bungoma region of western Kenya who comprise the group and their families, as well as the wider community of those who were indirectly involved in the project. Most of the women in the group are single mothers and are therefore almost fully dependent on it for their income. Thanks to its success, they are now able to afford to cover their basic needs and to pay school fees and provide for their children.



TP&E 2015 winner, Carolyn Wamene from Sena Women's Group, receiving her award for Best Innovative Idea.

### Jesuit Hakimani Centre

The Jesuit Hakimani Centre (JHC) in Nairobi, Kenya, is a research, formation, and social action institute for Eastern Africa, that aims to transform the lives of oppressed or marginalised people. Its name 'Hakimani' combines the Kiswahili words 'haki' (justice) and 'imani' (peace with faith).

### Carolyn Wamene

Carolyn Wamene is a woman born and bred in Bungoma County, in the heart of Western Kenya. As a mother-of-five who has struggled to make ends meet for her young family, she has faced challenges that have instilled in her resilience and courage. Some time ago, Carolyn met with leaders from the JHC to discuss the opportunities for developing an innovative project that would utilise local crops and encourage healthy eating habits locally.

After the initial meeting, and some subsequent training with the Centre, Carolyn decided to make the most of her readily available resources in her home. The vegetables sweet potato,

pumpkin and cassava, are plentiful in the region. These traditional, nutritious crops are grown in many places but are slowly losing popularity as people adopt modern methods and styles of cooking. Carolyn then started the Sena Women's Group to make popular modern snacks such as cakes, mandazi, and bread using these crops, adding value to the products and also promoting healthy eating by enabling people to use them in a way that keeps their nutritional value.

### National Prize for Sena Women's Group

Sena Women's Group attended a national summit that brought together hundreds of youths, mentors and political leaders, and was determined to win the prize at a competition there. The group put in a concerted effort with their products and their excellence won them the prize for best overall innovative idea in the competition. The Hakimani team did not stop at awarding the group; they followed up on them during the post-summit evaluation.

### 'Think Positive Alternatives Exist' Initiative

'Think Positive Alternatives Exist' (TPAE) is a Hakimani Centre project that trains young people to develop their talents and use those skills to create employment for themselves. In Bungoma, where the 'Sena Women's Group' is located, the TPAE team met with an agricultural officer who was following up on the group. He had introduced the concept of farming and value addition to the group and was excited to note their progress. This aligned well with the government initiatives which seek to improve farmers' livelihood using the Sena Women's Group as a case study for other farmers to emulate.

The agricultural officer promised to keep empowering the group with different products and linking them up with the market.

### Funding for the Group

By 2015, the group had already obtained money from the Uwezo fund (a five-year initiative that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 6-16 years old in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and a farm where they grow the crops. They also won the TPAE top prize of KSh 100,000 to boost their business. They accessed Uwezo fund after intensive training by the TPAE team on the procedures of acquiring government funds, and

harnessing the connections that were created by the team.

Through networking with the help of the Jesuit Hakimani Centre, the group received funds from several NGOs and their lives have been entirely transformed. Ten members of the group are employed directly in the project, and there are also over 20 indirect jobs for the people picking and supplying the goods. Their products have gained market share and popularity over time because of the health benefits of the ingredients. +

*Author: Yvonne Kuntai, Communications Officer at Jesuit Hakimani Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.*

## Mission News

### Provincial Fr Afulo SJ visits Dublin

The Jesuit Provincial of East Africa, Fr Joseph Afulo was in Dublin for a few days on his way to the US. He called in to the office and shared with us the news of the Province and the progress being made in education and pastoral services in the six countries of the region.

### Tony O'Riordan SJ travels to Maban

Irish Jesuit Tony O'Riordan SJ travelled to South Sudan recently to take over the role of Project Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Maban. He was full of enthusiasm for the challenging task that lies ahead, and expressed gratitude to be a part of the Jesuit response to the humanitarian crisis there.



### Northern Ireland Annual Mass

This year's mass for our Northern Irish friends is once again taking place in the beautiful setting of Dromantine Retreat Centre, Newry, on Saturday, 23rd June at 11.30am. We hope to see you there.

### Rehabilitation for Joe Keaney SJ

Fr Joe Keaney SJ (Zambia) is home in Ireland at the moment for physiotherapy and rehabilitation treatment. He is based in Dublin at present and expects to be here for approximately three months. Best wishes to you Joe. We hope you are feeling the good effects of your therapy and continue to improve.

### JESAM Treasurer in Ireland

We had a visit from Paul Hamill SJ, the Treasurer of the Jesuit Superiors of Africa and Madagascar (JESAM). He arrived in Dublin at the end of the snow and even as a Scotsman, he was surprised at how cold it was here!

### Director of JESC Peter Rozic SJ Visit

The new director of the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC), Peter Rozic SJ visited Dublin recently and called into the Missions Office as well as other Social Apostolate works. We were delighted to discuss our work and our overseas partners and to hear about his experience of his new role.

