

## Dear Friend of IRT

Usually when I write to you it is to ask for support for a project in a particular country, but this time my request is a little different as it covers very similar projects in two different countries, namely Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda. These two regions are trying to recover from years of civil war and neither community can re-build for a successful future if their children are not educated. There is no time to be lost as a whole generation in Southern Sudan has grown up without receiving any formal education. You may have read my article in this year's IRT newsletter where I say that IRT wants to help some of the children to be educated.

We already work on long-term projects that help some of the most underprivileged children in Gulu District of Uganda and Wau in Southern Sudan. These new projects will focus on helping orphans living in these areas to receive a primary education and naturally complements our existing work there. In the recent questionnaire which we sent out with our annual newsletter and to which so many of you kindly responded, support for IRT carrying out primary education projects was overwhelming. At the same time many of you were concerned that in



*Life is already such a struggle for this orphaned girl and her baby brother. At least with an education she would have a better chance.*

doing this we might overstretch ourselves. This work will certainly not do that and it is so important to be doing something really positive to ensure these children get the education they deserve.

Here in Europe we value education, in the knowledge that it creates opportunity, and we know that without it our future prospects would be severely restricted. Adults and children in Africa have the same belief, but many cannot avoid the reality of more pressing every day concerns such as where the next meal is coming from.



*The schools that do exist are overcrowded, have few facilities and are in a terrible state of repair.*

On my recent project visits to Uganda and Sudan I saw some of the many thousands of orphaned children, some as young as five (whose parents had been killed in the wars or had died of AIDS), living in ramshackle hovels, with little food, rags for clothes and no hope or chance of going to school. This situation affected me deeply. This injustice holds

back development and underpins continuing poverty. Two of the organisations we work with in Uganda and Sudan, the Comboni Missionary Sisters and the Comboni Samaritans of Gulu, feel as strongly as I do. With your help, we can begin to make improvements.

The situation is grim but over the coming years we intend to support these two organisations to enable many hundreds of orphaned children to receive an education.

## Gulu and Amuru Districts, Uganda

For some years IRT has supported projects in Uganda to help the internally displaced people in the north of the country. While most parts of the country have had peace and prospered over the past decade, Gulu and Amuru Districts have suffered terribly through rebel activities and atrocities against the people there. Those living in the rural areas were forced to migrate and live in makeshift camps around the larger towns of the north where they could be better protected by the Ugandan army. However, with the government and rebels holding peace talks for the past year and many of the rebels giving up their guns, things are returning to normal. People are moving back to their former homes in huge numbers and are starting to re-build their lives. Unfortunately the local school buildings they are finding on their return have fallen into ruin.



*Years of war have destroyed so much, including this classroom.*

The Comboni Samaritans informed me of this sad situation and, while I knew IRT had to do something to help, it was also important to know all the facts and to develop a very clear plan of action. Fortunately I was quickly able to secure a small grant to enable the Samaritans to carry out research into the primary educational needs of orphans in Gulu and Amuru Districts. The Samaritans interviewed teachers, community

members and orphans to find out what could be done to help these children and improve the education system.

The results of the survey were shocking. As we expected, orphaned children are not able to go to school, but we also confirmed that the schools themselves are in appalling condition after years of neglect caused by the rebel activities. Those children that are going to school are forced to study under trees because there are no classrooms and sit in the dirt on the ground because there are no chairs or desks. There are very few text books, exercise books, pencils and pens. The children are forced to travel through thick scrub to reach the schools because there are no proper paths and run the very real risk of being bitten by poisonous snakes. We also found a lack of teachers in these schools, not because there are insufficient numbers of teachers, but because there is nowhere for them to live in the remote areas where the schools are located.

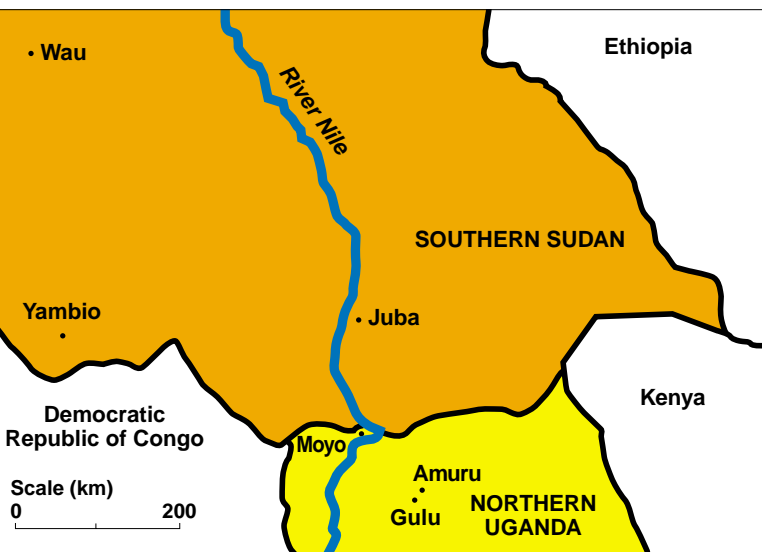


Photo: IEPartners

Based on the results of this research we have developed a plan of action to help six of the poorest schools in the area. We would like to help more schools but first we need to ensure that our resources are not spread too thinly. As with nearly all the primary schools in the north of Uganda the six schools are state run. While the government does its best to help pay the salaries of the teachers it simply does not have the resources to develop the infrastructure of the schools. Therefore with the help and support of the local communities



*It used to be a treat at my school to have lessons outside in the summer, but these children have no option, come rain or shine.*



The investment in new classrooms, equipment, resources and teacher training is an essential part of raising the education standards in the schools. The Comboni Samaritans also hope to train the schools' management committees, and advise them how best to run and support their schools in order that the investments we make will be sustainable. These management committees are made up of community members and teachers, who are, in effect, the governors of the schools. Although these communities are poor they will provide the locally produced bricks and sand for the construction of the buildings.

Although primary education in Uganda is supposed to be free, in reality fees still need to be paid by pupils to help cover the schools' running costs and exam fees; the children also need to buy exercise books and uniforms. This is way beyond the means of orphans who have virtually no money. Therefore, we have also decided to pay for the education of 300 orphans in the six primary schools in both Gulu and Amuru Districts. Over the coming years we hope gradually to increase this number. To provide an education, uniform and school books for one orphaned child costs just £33 per year. **Can you help one or more of these children?**



*These orphans in Gulu would love to go to school.*

we intend to do the following over the coming three years:

- Build seven classrooms in each of the six schools
- Build 14 latrines in each of the six schools
- Provide sufficient desks incorporating seating
- Provide text books
- Provide teacher training
- Establish simple income generating projects in each of the schools and their communities, such as rearing chickens and pigs and growing bananas and beans
- Provide basic sports equipment to each school
- Provide training in school management



*Sr. Odette with some of the children in Wau who desperately need to be at school if they are to have any hope of a bright future.*

## Wau, Southern Sudan

20 years of civil war in the South of Sudan came to an end two and a half years ago when a peace agreement was signed between the North and South of Sudan. The region is now in the process of being re-built. This is a massive undertaking with roads, water supplies and health services all



*Keen to learn, but no books or writing materials.*

needing to be sorted out. However, what really suffered throughout the war was the primary education system, which is now in a state of virtual collapse. A whole generation of children has missed out and the sooner the education system can be re-built the better.

I visited Wau in April this year and was shown around the two Catholic primary schools near to the town by Sr. Odette of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. These schools have suffered greatly from the war but since the Peace Agreement was signed things have slowly improved.

Surprisingly the school buildings were in better condition than the buildings in Uganda, but they still need repairs and again there is a chronic lack of text books and other school equipment.

Sr. Odette explained that a few orphans do attend school and the Combonis are paying their modest school fees. How happy these children are to get this wonderful opportunity. However, there are hundreds more who do not have the means of paying the very small fees required, so cannot attend school. IRT intends to support the education of at least 200 orphans in Wau. The fees and uniforms for each child for one year cost approximately £30. **Can you help one or more of these children?**

We want to repair and improve the school facilities and provide sufficient text books, sports equipment and other much needed scholastic materials. We also hope to help establish small income generating projects such as cow grazing (also a valuable skill for the students to learn) so that the schools can run to generate income and thus make them more sustainable in the future.

## The Way Forward to a Brighter Future!

IRT is committed to ensuring that these education programmes will be a real success over the coming few years. This commitment will, I believe, have a massive impact in both areas. Not only will we be supporting hundreds of children who otherwise would have no education but we will be giving hope to whole communities who are desperate to see their countries return to normal and prosper in the future.

If we are to have any chance of success we need the support of individual donors such as you. Please support this work if you possibly can – together we can give the opportunity of an education to hundreds of young orphaned children. Below is the cost of some of the items and activities:

- A school text book £5
- To educate one child for a year (Sudan) £30
- To educate one child for a year (Uganda) £33
- To provide desks and chairs for four children £100
- To purchase sports equipment for one school £600
- To build one block of three classrooms £12,000

We hope and pray you will be able to help.

Thank you

*Adrian Hatch*

Adrian Hatch  
Chief Executive



*These are some of the lucky children in Wau, who go to the school run by the Comboni Sisters. With your generosity we could help many more.*