

Rebuilding the Ruins and Promoting Peace (RRPP)

South Sudan

Methodist University & Macalester College

Nyoma Clement, South Sudan, Methodist University, United World College in Mostar

Talata Evers, South Sudan, Methodist University, United World College in Mostar

Joy Minalla, South Sudan, Macalester College, United World College in Norway

www.youtheducationforpeace.org

Section I

Our goal for “Rebuilding the Ruins and Promoting Peace “project was to renovate the Library of St. Joseph Secondary School and restock it with curriculum based student and teacher textbooks. We also aimed at conducting seminars and workshops to empower the students with study strategies and skills to achieve excellent academic performance, demonstrate the importance of student involvement in schools and their communities and finally show the importance of women’s education in community development.

After meeting the school administration on June 1, 2012 and laying out the plan of the project, we spent the first four weeks preparing the venue, purchasing appropriate tools and equipment for the renovation process, hiring construction workers, fixing and repairing the broken roof and door and plastering the walls and the floor. When we were finished with the inside of the library, we started painting it and building an outdoor veranda used for studying. In the final two weeks of the project, we spent most of the time preparing and executing the seminars, purchasing the textbooks and furniture, as well as setting up the library. The construction workers were chosen based on their masonry background and experience and most importantly, we were looking for people who were willing to contribute their time and skills to make a difference in the lives of these students. The majority of the student body were very instrumental and helped as volunteers in fetching water and setting up the library. We also received a lot of support from the staff members, especially the director of studies, the headmaster and the education coordinator for the catholic schools who worked on administrative and management issues.

This project was one of the most effective and instrumental experiences we have ever accomplished. Being part of the team who dedicated time and effort into making this happen and experiencing the positive changes the project brought to those students and teacher’s lives was extremely rewarding. From our personal experience, this project was very successful. We were able to exceed our goals and expectations. For instance, in the beginning we were in need of some funding to help us supplement our transportation cost from the United States to South Sudan besides the funding the Davis Foundation offered us. We then decided to undertake some fundraising efforts including; bake sales, online fundraising through the project website, and presentations about the project to charity organizations, groups, clubs, and churches. We continued to reinforce this by distributing fundraiser letters to the student body and staff members from the two universities. As a result, we received generous donations in cash totalling \$3,772.96 and additional gifts that helped supplement the budget of the project and our transportation. The feedback we received from the community members was positive. The students, staff and their families appreciated the project and the work we did. They all hoped that we could hold future seminars and training sessions.

The other part of the project’s implication for peace was to use the seminars and the workshop to encourage the students that they are capable of going beyond their potential, develop problem solving skills, share ideas with peers and find the courage to help those in need in their communities. We truly believe we triumphed in our mission. Throughout the program, we asked our participants not merely to share ideas with each other but to work together to find ways to turn their ideas into practical initiatives. The students were given the opportunity to discuss the problems that existed in schools and their communities and we made them work in teams and present what they thought would be alternative

solutions to those conflicts. In the end, the students felt more confident to use their existing resources to work their way into life accomplishments, academic success and broader life goals.

Having come up with the expected budget for the expenditure of the project, it was difficult carrying out the project in South Sudan due to the unexpected inflation we faced. It is a new country with undeveloped sectors. South Sudan is battling inflation and a shrinking economy. Therefore, acquiring all the necessary materials was difficult at times as the materials were not readily available in retail shops but could only be found at exorbitant prices on the parallel market. However, despite these economic challenges, the project was a tremendous success as we withdrew \$500 from the money that we earned fundraised for our tickets to add to the peace project money to enable us to achieve all of our budgeted goals. Communication with the locals and the students was no problem since we speak most of the local languages that most students understood thus making our interaction with the community easier and friendly. Mobilizing volunteers during the time of the renovation did not work well because most of the students were attending classes during our working time. So it was hard for them to forgo classes and help us, but most of them tried their best to make up for it during their breaks and fetch some water.

Section II

We define peace as the recognition and celebration of humanity. It is recognizing the worth of every individual and every place in our global society. By sharing, coexisting and appreciating the diverse cultural heritage within our global family, we can jointly make our earth a better place where every person knows that they can achieve their best through education and that they will have more opportunities in life to break out of the cycle of poverty, helplessness and war in which they are living. With the available textbooks and a serene library, we are certain that these students at St. Joseph will now settle to go beyond their academic and mental potentials to change this young nation into a home of peace where the different South Sudanese tribes can coexist with a unifying goal of rebuilding the ruins of their motherland.

We believe that education is a process that generates a change in the minds of young people of today to prepare them to be responsible leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, this project is meant to initiate this process of change today for the younger generation of South Sudanese for a better tomorrow for the entire country and the world at large. The leadership and self-motivation skills learned by the students during the seminars can help them become successful students who will not only help pull themselves and their families out of poverty, but also set a good example for generations to come. By teaching immediate life skills like understanding the real meaning of the concept of love and peace amidst diversity, we looked forward to reducing school conflicts among the students and contributing to peace within the school by alleviating hatred that would have resulted from sharing of insufficient textbooks in the school library. Through reading and doing their individual research, the students will be enriched, equipped and empowered with knowledge as they read their lives and their generation out of poverty and crimes thus promoting peace.

This project has indeed been a life changing experience for us. Through this project, we have come to believe that the only way to save lives and lift poverty stricken individuals out of poverty is to give them the necessary education for the mind and the heart. This necessary education should be in such a way that it makes the students not only creative, but also compassionate for their fellow mankind who are in desperate need for any kind of assistance. Through the personal stories that some of the courageous students shared with us, we have learned that in order to best meet the needs of individuals; we need to listen to them.

In the words of John F. Kennedy, I have learned that with education, "My task now is not to fix the blame for the past, but to fix the course for the future." "To be an ambassador of peace that when I look into the eyes of my fellow people, I can confidently be glad that I have made a positive change in their lives."
Joy Minalla

Part B



Leadership seminar with 63 student Leaders of St. Joseph Secondary School



Student Volunteers and Project participants sort the textbooks in the Library



Fixing the door of the Library during the renovation process.