

TOGETHER FOR SUDAN

Excerpt from Director's Report to Trustees. July 2006.

The January 2005 merger of Together for Sudan and The Bishop Mubarak Scholarship Fund for Nuba Women marked the beginning of a new stage in our educational and educational support work in Sudan. The most significant developments over the past several months have been rapid growth in our projects and considerably increased funding. Neither of these can be attributed entirely to the merger although working with one charity instead of two has enabled me to concentrate more closely on fundraising. Something more fundamental has happened. What we are now experiencing is the result of ten years persistent and transparent effort involving innovative projects to help people who are being reached by few other charities. Together for Sudan is a success story.

What we are also seeing at this stage in the life of Together for Sudan is a significant increase in positive attention based on growing respect from UN organisations, other international charities and Sudanese health and education authorities. I credit this development in part to the success of our projects such as the Eye Care Project and the HIV/AIDS Awareness Outreach which are nearly flamboyant in their assault on the misconception that there is not much to be done at low cost to help people who are poor and marginalised. Both these projects have brought TFS recent statements of approval and gratitude from Sudanese government institutions and UN agencies. Dr. Nabila Radi Elias who runs the Eye Care Project is an unrecognised champion of human rights against the injustices of poverty and disempowerment.

But credit for positive publicity is also due to our growing educational projects including the Women's Literacy Project and the Project to Pay Teachers' Salaries. Together for Sudan has demonstrated that it is possible to empower displaced and disadvantaged women and children by educating them even in almost unbearably difficult circumstances. Our success, including the opening of a sub-office in the Nuba Mountains in January 2005, now creates further opportunity. In January 2006, the UK Department for International Development began providing TFS with funding for training of both women's literacy teachers and basic school teachers over the next year and a half. Similar educational work among the displaced in the Khartoum area begins this summer with funding from Manos Unidas, a major Spanish funding charity.

Meanwhile, the TFS University Scholarships Project, working in close cooperation with Ahfad University President and TFS Patron Dr. Gasim Badri, has over the past decade instilled hope into a generation of Nuba women. Our decision three years ago to open this project to all impoverished Sudanese women is today providing hope and opportunity to an increasing number of individuals and families. Due to this success, another of our Patrons, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, has stepped forward to contribute to and eventually to underwrite this, our most expensive project. Dr. Gasim and Dr. Mo are two more Sudanese heroes.

But underlying Together for Sudan success is the hardworking Khartoum office staff headed by Country Director Silas Jojo and Deputy Country Director Neimat Hussein. Our Sudanese colleagues are deeply dedicated and probably underpaid. Working from a building which is almost certainly the most downmarket office of an international charity in northern Sudan, they push forward work which continually stretches their capabilities and backgrounds. I do not hear complaints when I ask them for extra hours to meet a deadline or to take on work which is unfamiliar and difficult. Instead they thank me for supporting them to help their fellow Sudanese! Here, too, are unsung heroes.

None of the above is intended to imply that Together for Sudan has no need for improvement, that the way forward will be easy or that we do not need better management, more careful project monitoring, and greater support for our fundraising efforts. All that is true as is the fact that we are working in a difficult environment among people whose needs are daunting. Rather, what I want to stress here is how far we have come from our “kitchen table” beginnings ten years ago – and the great opportunity which Together for Sudan now provides to thousands of Sudanese to better their lives and to thousands of non-Sudanese to make our lives a blessing to others.

Lillian Craig Harris
Director