

Winter 2007

Women-Led Humanitarian Action

WINTER 2007 NEWSLETTER

DARFUR ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

Great news! Our initiative, Sisterhood for Peace: Transforming Sudan, is off and running! Launched in partnership with Interaction Institute for Social Change, the Sisterhood is led by a phenomenal Core Strategy Team. The twelve Sudanese and African American women leaders are meeting monthly to design an outreach strategy to engage Sudanese and African American women as global activists to end genocide and secure justice throughout all Sudan.

The Sisterhood's first project was the Sudanese Women's Forum held on October 26-28, 2007. Thirty Sudanese women living in Sudan and the U.S., gathered at the John Hancock Center in Boston, MA to explore the cultural, political, and social divides that undermine their solidarity as sisters. They confronted hard issues, yet encouraged one another. The sisters have committed to ongoing cross-cultural dialogue and building unity among diverse Sudanese women.

A highlight of the Forum was a meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu during his visit to Boston. The sisters encouraged Tutu to leverage his immense moral authority to facilitate peace throughout Sudan.

The Sisterhood for Peace seeks to network with other women who share our vision for transforming Sudan. Please join us! For more information, contact geneva@mskeeper.org.

UPDATE ON THE 'KUNYUK GIRLS' PRIMARY SCHOOL' IN AKON

Come February 2008, after two years of hard work, My Sister's Keeper and the village of Akon will break ground on the Kunyuk Girls' School. With approximately 1,000 girls enrolled, the school is meeting for the most part under trees. The new campus will include eight classrooms, a library, offices, a kitchen, and a dining area. Because of God's grace, and your generosity, the school will equip the next generation of Sudanese women leaders.

Construction projects are logistically challenging in any context, but in Sudan they are unimaginably difficult. Merely gaining legal permission from the US government to operate in a humanitarian capacity in Sudan required a year of relentless effort. In recent months, MSK's field director — a Sudanese woman named Kaidi Rial — has shown great courage and resourcefulness in her efforts to secure blueprints, materials, and contractors for the construction site. She has navigated floods and dirt roads, gone weeks without telephone access, and coped with sickness, while constantly on the move to get the job done!

To date, MSK has raised approximately \$350,000 for Kunyuk School. To complete construction, train teachers, and provide desks, books, and supplies, we will require another \$215,000. You can support the future women leaders of Sudan when you visit our website www.mskeeper.org and click “Donate”.

BIG KENNY AND CHRISTIEV ALPHIN VISIT AKON

In October 2007, My Sister's Keeper hosted Big Kenny Alphin (of the Big and Rich country music duo) and his wife Christiev, on a trip to Akon village. After hearing Rev. Gloria speak at a gathering in Nashville last spring, the couple was inspired to organize the mission. Included were the documentary crew, Matt Dyer and Matthew Hamilton; Kenny's musical protégé and preacher, Damien Horne; and physician/real estate developer/pilot, David Marks.

The mission, dubbed Love Everybody after Big Kenny's company, carried medical and school supplies, t-shirts and musical instruments for all the students at the Kunyuk Girls' School. Dr. Marks examined almost 200 patients at the village health center. Big Kenny, a man of immense talent and heart, deeply believes the words of a song he wrote during our visit--Nyan Niarraan even, Akol riec even, Nhialic Nhom.” The Dinka words are translated as “love everybody, all the time, in front of God.” They express the simple, yet profound message of this special cultural exchange.

ADULT LITERACY UPDATE: REPORT BY AMIE CRESSMAN

New friends of My Sister's Keeper have come along side to support our work in Akon. Boston University graduate student volunteer, Amie Cressman, worked with adult women and teachers in Akon for three months to create the adult education program. The Women's Peace School has been visited and praised by South Sudan's president, His Excellency Salva Kiir. We trust you will enjoy her report!

“Women's Peace School empowers women (and men) who were not educated because of the war through life-changing knowledge and literacy. We believe that education is a basic human right and can enable women to be active participants in their community and their world.”

This mission statement was developed by the teachers of the newly formed adult literacy program in Akon. It captures their view that education is the key to change. Hence, community response to the “Women's Peace School” was overwhelming. Education officials donated supplies. Primary school teachers encouraged the women at the opening celebration and volunteered to teach classes. Local leaders resolved conflicts between husbands and wives over school attendance. Teachers were trained in management and administrative duties as well as instruction in adult learning. The learners, from 14 to 50 years of age, were mostly mothers, but also included 10 men. To encourage attendance and husbands' approvals, the World Food Programme provided monthly rations to each learner's family. As women walked to school with oil or sorghum on their heads, they were walking advertisements for the Women's Peace School and signified their determination, in one woman's words, “to achieve anything we want as women.”

BETHEL AME CHURCH AND TEMPLE ISRAEL TEAM UP FOR SUDAN!

This partnership, AMETI, provides humanitarian support to the people of Sudan. Their latest effort raises funds for the Kunyuk Girls' School. You can purchase beautiful note cards with professional photographs by Jessica Scranton,

taken at the School this past June. For more info, contact Joan Harrington: Oakville@comcast.net or Fran Godine: godine@comcast.net

Thank you for your generous donations, prayers and volunteer service. We welcome your comments, suggestions and inquiries. Email us at info@mskeeper.org. Visit www.mskeeper.org to stay abreast of the latest happenings in our humanitarian and advocacy efforts on behalf of the great people of Sudan.

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