

Summer 2010

SUMMER 2010 NEWSLETTER

We're happy to update you on the awesome progress of the three projects that you've made possible: Sisterhood for Peace, the Kunyuk School for Girls and the Women's Peace School. We urgently need your time, talent and treasure to continue this work. As you read, please consider how you might partner with us to meet our ambitious goals to facilitate sustainable peace.

The Current State of Sudan:

Why Achieving Peace is the Most Important Challenge

While the 2005 peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and southern former rebels marked the end of the 22-year North-South civil war, it did not halt countrywide tensions. The 7-year conflict in the western region of Darfur continues to fester. In addition, second-tier skirmishes are on the rise, many of them inter-tribal or fueled by competition over scarce resources such as land. Sudan's chronic conflicts have involved extensive human rights violations, destroyed infrastructure and engendered widespread displacements.

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative (www.ungei.org) observes:

"Achieving peace in the Sudan constitutes the most important challenge. Achieving peace will make it possible to facilitate poverty reduction, human rights promotion and socio-economic development. ...Addressing basic root causes of the second-tier conflicts, especially those related to social and economic underdevelopment, and well-designed programmes to promote grassroots peace building will have to be an essential component of the overall peace building and reconciliation efforts."

Sisterhood for Peace on the Move:

Grassroots Women Building A Pathway to Sustainable Peace in Sudan

Sisterhood for Peace (SFP) supports the growth of a network of diverse Sudanese women committed to cross-cultural collaboration to facilitate peace throughout Sudan. In January 2010, 150 women signed an action statement - An Urgent Call For Peace In Darfur - addressed to Mr. Djibril Bassolé, the United Nations-African Union Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur. A delegation agreed to present the letter in person and requested a formal invitation from Mr. Bassolé's office to attend the Darfur peace consultations in Doha, Qatar. Their request was denied.

However, cognizant that "well-behaved women rarely make history," eight audacious women went to Doha-uninvited and

undeterred. They subsequently met with a rather surprised Mr. Bassolé, representatives of all the armed movements and the Government of Sudan, as well as other key stakeholders. By all accounts, the women proved to be constructive, honest brokers. They were even asked to extend their 7-day assignment to 10 days. The success of this historic mission demonstrates the unique contributions that diverse Diaspora women can make toward peace building in Darfur and Sudan. You'll be inspired by the video report at <http://www.motionbox.com/videos/7c99d9b51915e8c6f4>.

Nevertheless, peace in Darfur remains elusive and peace in South Sudan is decidedly fragile. Next steps? SFP women have requested training in conflict management and peace building. Therefore, in June 2010, My Sister's Keeper will host 35 Diaspora women living in the US and Canada for a training led by expert facilitators from the US Institute of Peace (USIP). In July 2010, USIP and MSKeeper will take our show on the road to Juba, South Sudan, to train at least 50 diverse women living in Sudan. Up to 10 Boston-trained women will attend the Juba conference in support of their sisters in the motherland. Additionally, Boston staffers, Lee and Sarah, will remain in Sudan for two months. Along with our Sudan staffer, Kaidi, this team will work with partner organizations to grow the network of diverse women collaborating cross-culturally to promote peace throughout Sudan.

Lucy Lomodong is a South Sudanese educator who lives in Kansas City, MO, and traveled to Doha. Lucy conveys her passion:

We really need to make peace a priority. All the children that are being born should be taught peace as their first word. Even if the flames are dying, Sisterhood for Peace needs to keep fanning the flame. If other people in other nations can achieve peace, why can't we?

Resourceful Girls, Resilient Women:

Building Educational Pathways to Sustainable Peace

"If you look around the world at the areas that are unstable and are incubators of terrorism or other forms of violence, you will find women and girls being oppressed, being denied rights, being marginalized in a way that is dehumanizing... it is something that I see as Secretary of State that is absolutely integral to our approach to the kind of better and safer world that we are all trying to create."

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, January 2010

My Sister's Keeper fully agrees with Secretary Clinton. That's why we're so committed to the 525 resourceful primary school students who attend the Kunyuk School for Girls and the 200 resilient women enrolled in our adult literacy project at the Women's Peace School in rural Akon, South Sudan. We believe that educating girls and women reverses the legacy of poverty, two decades of conflict and a tradition of early marriage. According to UNICEF:

- Close to 90% of all Southern Sudanese women are illiterate
- 1 in 5 adolescent girls is a mother and is unlikely to attend school
- Only 1% of girls enrolled in primary school each year will subsequently graduate

- Only 7% of teachers are female

In the little village of Akon, My Sister's Keeper is determined to beat the odds. Last year, we kept our promise and completed construction of a new fully furnished educational complex to house the Kunyuk School and the Women's Peace School. In December 2009, Rev. Liz Walker, My Sister's Keeper Co-Founder and Board Chair, returned to Akon for her ninth visit. Accompanying Liz was Dr. Holly Carter, Board Member and Chair of the Dept. of Education at Northeastern University. The two women visited the campus to assess opportunities for My Sister's Keeper to support teacher training and development.

Liz: From the very beginning, the Kunyuk School for Girls in Akon, Southern Sudan has personified the mission of My Sister's Keeper—supporting the aspirations of Sudanese women. Our most recent visit to the three-building, eight-classroom campus affirmed that mission! The school is up and running and learning is underway!!!! 14 teachers and more than 200 girls agreed to an informal Saturday school day so that we could assess the progress and needs of Kunyuk. There is much to celebrate. Teachers and students are fully engaged, parents totally supportive. Still, there are many challenges to overcome.

Holly: Amid the many obstacles of subsistence economic existence, cultural traditions that limit prospects for young girls, and the on-going political instability of the country, to see some of the girls walking over two hours a day to learn was extraordinary. As an educator, I know that student motivation is critical to academic achievement. As we reviewed the teachers' assessments of students' work, it was clear that the Kunyuk School will produce young woman graduates who will contribute to and define the future of their village and their country. Day by day, these young students are chipping away at oppression and marginalization and emerging as a new generation of educated women leaders and dedicated peace builders!

Give Peace A Chance, Today!

With the Darfur peace talks stalled and the North-South peace agreement vulnerable, our Sudanese sisters are fiercely forging multiple pathways to sustainable peace—from bold advocacy and activism to girls' education and women's literacy. Now more than ever, we need your generous contribution to equip more Sudanese women as effective peace builders and to further invest in teacher training and student learning in Akon. Thank you for your continued commitment that makes all of this work possible. Together, we're making a difference in Sudan!

Thank you for your generous donations, prayers and volunteer service. Email us at mskeeper@mskeeper.org .

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