

TOGETHER FOR SUDAN — The Bishop Mubarak Fund

Website: <http://www.togetherforsudan.org.uk>

Registered Charity No. 1075852

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Dear Friends,

Together for Sudan is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Our work started simply in 1996 with two university scholarships at Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman. But because education is the most widely desired commodity in modern Sudan – second only to peace – we have been expanding ever since. **By late 2006 TFS expects to have a total of over 260 young women at university in Sudan as well as 90 university graduates.** We are deeply grateful to all individual, corporate and charitable donors -- the Gordon College Memorial Trust, in particular -- who over the years have helped us provide “Power to the Powerless through Education”. As founding director, I have been enriched by close association with impoverished people from all areas of Sudan – Muslims and Christians as well as traditional believers -- whose lives despite all still illustrate hope, patience and forgiveness.

The TFS vision is to provide educational opportunity to marginalized and displaced women and children without religious or ethnic discrimination. **Where possible we also set up educational support projects** such as school breakfasts, simple medicines, solar lighting, and eye care outreach for people who would otherwise be without. Supported by many Sudanese volunteers, we are, in the words of our second motto: “Building Peace through Service”.

Ten years on we are working not only among the two million displaced people who live in shanty towns around Khartoum but have this year taken an educational leap forward in the Nuba Mountains. “Education for the Nuba” will over the next three years allow us to train 60 women’s literacy teachers, 60 pre-school teachers and 60 basic school teachers and then place them in teaching positions where TFS will pay their salaries while they complete inservice training. This project, which is partially funded by the British Department for International Development, will change the lives of hundreds of Nuba women and help build a more secure future for their children. Meanwhile, **we are seeking funding to begin a similar educational training project in the Khartoum area.** We expect that many of the teachers we train in the Khartoum area will eventually return to their homelands in southern Sudan taking their new skills with them. For all concerned, it is wonderful to be able to receive and to give the gift of education!



Undergraduates at Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman. Since 2003 we have been assisting our university graduates who are Nuba to return to the Nuba Mountains as teachers. Recently the Ministry of Health in Kadugli discovered that four TFS/BMF graduates of the Ahfad University Nutrition Centre had returned to Kadugli -- and hired them to reopen a long closed child nutrition centre. Hunger, malnutrition and associated conditions remain barriers to development in the Nuba Mountains and children in particular are affected.

WOMEN'S LITERACY CLASSES IN DARFUR?

TFS believes that education, of women in particular, is the foundation of civil society. Women's literacy is, therefore, one of our most important projects. We now have 20 women's literacy classes in the displaced settlements surrounding Khartoum and another 20 in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan. Since 1998 approximately 2,250 women have graduated from TFS literacy classes.

For over a year Together for Sudan has been hoping to begin women's literacy work in Darfur. In February I went back to South Darfur looking for a way forward. When I last visited Nyala, in early 2005, women newly arrived in a nearby camp for displaced persons listed literacy, after water and food, as their greatest need. But now, with protection and food thanks to the UN and international organizations, **they see education as their number one priority: "Teach us to read and we will help ourselves!"** An elderly woman in a camp outside Nyala was very direct. Seizing the arm of a young girl, she pushed her way through the crowd, stopped in front of me and demanded: "Why should this child be learning to read when I am not?"

Together for Sudan has not yet been able to set up literacy classes in Darfur as the region remains very insecure and attacks on both humanitarian workers and African Union peacekeepers are increasing. A large international charity which had agreed in early 2005 that TFS could embed literacy teachers in its projects was unable to follow through. But the international community now hopes to see UN peacekeepers in Darfur as a means to restrict the presently growing violence and, hopefully, that old woman will not have to wait much longer.

Meanwhile, another charity already active in Darfur hopes to host a TFS literacy teacher from Khartoum sometimes this summer. In a month's time our teacher should be able to impart the dynamic Reflect literacy method to some 25 secondary school graduates. The newly trained literacy teachers would then begin classes in the women's handicraft/trauma centers set up by our partner INGO. The Reflect method (which TFS uses elsewhere) typically results in literacy for at least 80 percent of the students over an eight month period. My hope is that Nyala and its environs will remain calm enough for us to begin this work in coming weeks. **Literacy for all women is a major part of the Together for Sudan vision.**



At Otash camp outside Nyala displaced women showed British Special Representative for Darfur (and TFS Trustee) Alan Goulty and me the handicrafts they are making to help support themselves. When we got on to the subject of learning to read, the women suddenly began to rejoice – as they are doing in this photo. The older woman to the far left is just about to go in search of a young girl with whom to illustrate her indignation that children are learning to read and she had not yet been given that opportunity!

HIV/AIDS: A GROWING DILEMMA FOR SUDAN

During my February visit to Sudan I spent time discussing the growing HIV/AIDS crisis with TFS office personnel, with UN and other international humanitarian workers, with trainers in our HIV/AIDS Awareness Outreach project and with people living with AIDS. The People Living with AIDS Care Association (PLWA), with which TFS is already partnering through our HIV/AIDS outreach, has a potentially major role to play in responding to the growing pandemic. Like many small non-government organizations, PLWA faces twin problems of management and funding and it is here that TFS would like to be able to assist. By enhancing cooperation in these areas we can significantly deepen our mutual effectiveness in the displaced communities.

Founded in 2000, **PLWA has urgent aspirations to work in AIDS prevention**, to combat discrimination, to pay school fees for AIDS orphans and to help find solutions for AIDS victims who need feeding, shelter and medicines. However, 95 percent of their membership are jobless and some of them, rejected by their families, are homeless. **But it is lack of home-based care which PLWA describes as the most urgent problem.** Many people suffering from HIV have been abandoned and many affected children have no medicines. We continue our conversations with the communities, PLWA volunteers said when they met with me and TFS Khartoum office staff, but our hands are empty and we feel as though we are doing nothing!

On the contrary, we told them, you are helping communities come together to support those who suffer. Look at yourselves, we said. You are Muslims and Christian, old and young, men and women, northerners, southerners and westerners working together to help others and to help your country. **You are grassroots peace builders!** And look at what else you are doing, we added. What country has ever come to grips with the need to counter the AIDS pandemic and help those afflicted without organization on the part of people living with HIV/AIDS? **Then help us, they replied.**

Together for Sudan hopes to do that even if the beginning must be small. We would like to provide PLWA with medicines. We hope also to put them to work referring more AIDS orphans to us for scholarships and train them to assist the home-based care component in our HIV/AIDS Awareness project. All this requires funding. But because CAFOD, which has generously supported this TFS project from its beginning, is unable to increase our budget, we must find additional supporters. **Please make a donation today to the TFS AIDS Orphans Project or Home-based Care Project.**

Several of these people work for Together for Sudan and the rest are members of PLWA. Several are in both categories. But all of them are among the most dedicated people in Khartoum. They have seen the effects of HIV/AIDS at first hand and they want to offer whatever help they can to those who are suffering. "I was a teacher," one of them told me, "but now I am AIDS and I am nothing." TFS would like to turn that around with training and other support which will help him continue to help others.





Zakariah Yuma Adbera is 13 years old. His father, with him here, brought Zakariah to Khartoum from Kauda in the Nuba Mountains after the boy developed infected, bulging eyes and severe headaches. Dr. Nabila Radi, the ophthalmologist who runs the TFS Eye Care Project, was obliged to remove both Zakariah's eyeballs in order to extract the large tumor behind them. Recently a number of Nuba children in an area not far from where Zakariah lives have been discovered with malignant eye tumour, possibly the result of buried chemicals. At the time of writing we remain hopeful that Zakariah's tumour has been contained. A week-long TFS Eye Care outreach will be held in Kadugli, the Nuba Mountains, this summer.

The Eye Care Project, now four years old, was recently praised by Sudanese officials for its service to impoverished communities. The major costs of this project are currently being met by Refugees International Japan. But Dr. Nabila points out that the growing project needs increased funding for surgeries, medications, hospitalization, long term medical needs and even for transportation for ongoing treatment. For

example, a young woman with an eye tumor discovered by Dr. Nabila early last year has had the eye removed but needs an artificial eye which she cannot afford. Meanwhile, Dr. Nabila says, this TFS project is providing another important community service by connecting poor people with medical professionals who want to volunteer their time. **Any contribution you can make to this expanding project will be gratefully received by people whose lives could well depend upon it.**

With appreciation for helping us help the Sudanese towards a better future

Lillian Craig Harris
Director

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Dr Nabila conducting an Eye Care outreach in Thawra displaced persons settlement near Khartoum, February 2006