



Loreto
Rumbek



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St. Stephen's Green

2021 presents a new ray of hope for Loreto programs in Rumbek following an unprecedented year in 2020 caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. All programs at Loreto- Rumbek were affected by the pandemic as were other activities globally. Despite this setback, Loreto- Rumbek continued to work closely with the community to uplift the most vulnerable as well as provide a glimmer of hope to those without means.

Loreto Primary School

Loreto Primary School enrolled its highest ever student population yet with a total of 1236 students being registered at the beginning of the year 2020. This number represented 539 female students and 697 male students. This was a 5.6% increase in the student's admission compared to the 1167 (673 male and 494 female) students enrolled in 2019. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) at the school improved slightly to 43.6% up from 42% in 2019. This was a good representation that the community was embracing the idea of girl child education which is still not fully embraced in the local culture.

In the first term, students had an opportunity to participate in all school activities which included extra-curricular activities and sports. They also benefitted from daily meals provided at the school through the school feeding program as well as clean water for drinking and sanitation, and basic health care. During this period as well, the first annual teacher training program for the local teachers. This training focused on peaceful play methodologies and was attended by 29 teachers (23 male, 6 female) as well as interns; including 9 teachers from other primary schools in the County.



Photo 1: Teachers participate in a teacher training workshop focusing on peaceful play.



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The spread coronavirus globally in the first quarter of 2020 led to disruption of school activities following the closure of all learning facilities at the end of March 2020. Loreto primary School students remained home for almost six months till when schools were partially re-opened for students in candidate classes in October. Following this re-opening, all 57 students in this class reported back to school ready to continue with preparations for their national examinations. Loreto primary school being a day school, the 18 girls in this class requested the school administration to allow them to use the secondary school boarding facilities to enable them have additional hours of learning every day. This request was granted and these girls lived alongside their secondary school colleagues who also aided them in their studies and encouraged them.



Photo 2: Loreto Primary School Candidate Class Students during in classroom

During this period, the students were able to participate in all school activities as they normally would but were also required to observe protocols put in place to limit the spread of Coronavirus. Students were required to wash hands regularly at sanitation points set-up in the school compound as well as have their masks on and observe social distancing while in class. While this was a new thing for them, the students took up these practices positively and applied them when they were required to.

The end of year break for 2020 was different for the students as they took three weeks off school unlike the usual 7 weeks. This was because the national exams were scheduled for mid- February. The students were however enthusiastic about this for it meant that they could finally get to finish primary school. As is the tradition at Loreto, prayers and blessings were provided for the students in a special mass at the school compound.



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Photo 3: Loreto Primary School Students during the special mass for the candidate class



Photo 4: Loreto Primary School Candidate class of 2020.



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Loreto Girls Secondary School

Just like Loreto Primary School, students at Loreto Girls Secondary school were forced to take an unprecedented long break in early 2020. The school calendar began as normal with continuing students (S2- S4) reporting in late January and new students sitting their entry exams in early February. 2020 however saw the highest number of girls wishing to join the school with over 400 young women from across South Sudan sitting for the entry exams. At the end of the examination period, a total of 60 new girls were enrolled in Senior 1 class and transition class bringing the total number of students registered in 2020 to 340 students. This marked a 16% increase in the student population and represented a huge opportunity to more girls in South Sudan to access quality education. These students attended classes and were assessed across subjects including History, Social Sciences, Commerce, English Literature, English Language, Agriculture, Mathematics, General Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Accounts, Geography, Christian Religious Education and Computers (Computer Science).



Photo 5: *Prospecting students sit their entry examinations at Loreto Girls Secondary School.*



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Closure of schools due to Coronavirus however meant that the second term was delayed for all students. The candidate S4 class resumed learning in October 2020 while the other continuing classes are expected back to school in April 2021. Of the 47 students in the candidate class, 41 reported back to Loreto girls Secondary School with 6 requesting for transfers to other schools within their localities. Students from other classes who were not able to travel back home due to various reasons including insecurity, threats of forced marriage and low financial capability to afford the long trips were hosted at the Loreto compound during this period.



Photo 6: Senior 4 Students reporting back to school in October 2020 following a six months school break.

The students who reported back after the school break were able to resume normal learning in the school compound. They however had to take COVID-19 precautions including wearing masks, regular sanitation and keeping physical distance. Students who reported late due to the distances that they had to cover in order to get to school were placed in mandatory quarantine before they could join their colleagues in the boarding sections. The students have been participating in student clubs and programs including the school prefects' program, peace club, environmental club, debate club, drama club, cultural club, entertainment club, and academic clubs. In addition to these, co-curricular activities and sports have been on going as part of the initiatives to form a holistic approach to education that enables each girl to develop to her full academic, personal, spiritual and social potential.



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Photo 7: Loreto Secondary School Students during a morning students' assembly



Photo 8: Loreto Girls Secondary School participate in a 'listening Circle' with their primary school counterparts.



Mary Ward Primary Health Care Center (PHCC)

For three years Loreto Primary Health Care Unit had been and serving students and staff at Loreto-Rumbek as a basic health facility for simple illnesses. In February 2020 however, the facility was upgraded to a Primary Health Care Center by the ministry of health in Lakes State South Sudan and renamed to Mary Ward Primary Health Care Center. With the upgrade, the facility was able to run a number of programs including;

- *Daily Medical consultations (medical diagnosis and treatment)*

The 2020 global health pandemic presented a new challenge for the clinic staff and the programs run by the facility. The clinic participated in more medical outreach activities in the surrounding community educating community members on COVID-19 during physical meetings around boreholes and through radio programs. Mobile clinics targeting vulnerable members of the community were also rolled out. This led to a dramatic increase in the average number of patients attended to by the clinic from an average of 1800 monthly clinical consultations in 2019 to about 5000 monthly clinical consultations in 2020 with some months recording as high as 8000 consultations. This demonstrated the impact that the clinic had on the community and the demand that the community members have for quality healthcare.

Malaria was the most prevalent illness diagnosed and treated for both children and adults. This accounted for over 60% of the medical cases that were presented in the facility. In addition to this, respiratory tract infections, skin infections and digestive tract infections were also prevalent.



Photo 9: A patient being attended to at the Mary Ward PHCC

- *Nutrition feeding Program for malnourished children under age 5.*

The nutrition program reached about 200 malnourished children together with accompanying children under 5 years through the year 2020. These children benefited from fortified porridge (with Moringa and Peanut butter) is prepared daily and served twice to the children for five days of each week. Children and their caregivers benefitted from supplementary nutrition, food, medicine and baby kits which contained clothes and baby items for new born babies. Through the intensified outreach program and health education, more parents and caregivers are bringing their children for immunization and are now better able to give proper nutrition.



Photo 10: children Being assessed by a nutrition nurse for enrolment into the feeding program

- *Expanded program on immunization targeting babies under 6 months.*

Low uptake of early vaccinations by children in rural communities of South Sudan has been attributed to the high incidences of child mortality for children under the age of 5. Most of the parents in these areas are illiterate and do not appreciate the importance of timely vaccination to the health and wellbeing of their children. As part of the efforts to increase the uptake of vaccinations for children particularly under the age of 6 months, Mary Ward PHCC has been mobilizing parents to enroll their children into the vaccination program. The vaccinations are not only carried out at the PHCC but in six other villages which were designated to Mary Ward PHCC by the WHO in recognition of this noble exercise.



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- *Health Education for community members.*

Through community meetings and radio shows, a significant population of Rumbek county residents were able to interact with Mary Ward PHCC staff and ask questions on general health topics including Coronavirus. community members interacted face to face with Mary Ward PHCC staff in different forums where they were able to get education and support (hand washing stations and soap) for their general hygiene. These community drives were carried out around the local community boreholes where men, women and new mothers were targeted. In total, Mary Ward PHCC staff visited 40 boreholes in 2020 around the community where over 800 community members benefited from the health talks and education.

Radio shows hosted by two local radio stations (Radio good news and Radio Rumbek) reached the local population in the local Dinka and Jur Bele dialects. Health talks which were the focus of these shows focused on the topic of Coronavirus (what it is, how it is transmitted, its prevention) as well as other common ailments that are being faced in the community. These included malaria, hepatitis B, tuberculosis and malnutrition. Community members interacted with the radio hosts through phone calls and on social media where they asked questions and were directed on where to obtain more information as well as where to seek medical assistance. In total, about 24 shows were aired between the months of May- July with more shows being aired in December.



Photo 11: Mary Ward PHCC staff at Good News Radio Studios



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- *Community health outreach program to remote villages.*



Photo 12: A PHCC staff member attends to a patient during a community health Outreach exercise.

This outreach program targeted community members who could not easily access the health facility due to various reasons including distance. Due to the high demand for health services around the community, Mary Ward PHCC has been carrying out two weekly community health outreaches. Through these, more community members are able to access health services closer to them. The reception of the outreach has been positive with approximately 200 consultations being made every week.

- *Vulnerables support program for elderly and disabled community members.*

This program targeted the neglected community members who lack basic essential items. The PHCC identified and was able to support individuals who were aged, disabled or simply neglected by their kin. Through the PHCC, these vulnerable members were able to access food, housing and basic care including psychosocial support and counselling. Two of the identified vulnerable members were supported to build a house for themselves having lacked proper shelter for some time.

These vulnerable members of the community were also provided with an opportunity to earn a decent livelihood through work. Loreto was able to engage the vulnerable members who had the physical capability to work in agriculture and farm work where they not only earned some money but were also able to learn modern methods of agriculture, farming and food production.

- *Twins support program.*

This program identified and supported vulnerable families with twin babies. Due to cultural beliefs and the effects of poverty, most families with twins often do not take proper care of both the children. One of the children is often neglected and ends up losing their lives before they get to age 5. Because of this concern, the PHCC has been engaging with families that have birthed twins and supported their parents in the children's upbringing. This is often done through educating the community and the mothers on the care of the children. In addition to this, the mothers are provided with food and non-food items that are aimed at making the upbringing of the children more bearable to the parents. Often at times, the mothers of these children are in polygamous marriages and the husbands provide little or no support towards the upbringing of the children. Through this project, 8 sets of twins received food as well as dairy items to help in their growth and general nutrition.



Photo 13: Mothers with twins at Mary Ward PHCC during a health education workshop



The parents with the twins are provided with health education in addition to food items and clothes for their children. The health education focusses on the care of the children, the required nutrition as well as the early identification and treatment of illnesses.

In addition to this, nutritional information provided ensure that the women are educated on the nutritional needs of children as they grow and develop. The mothers are also taken through training in agriculture to enable them produce their own food at home in order to supplement their food at home for themselves as well as their families.



Photo 14: *Infant Care Kits for Babies*

Baby kits given to babies were also helpful in encouraging the mothers to bring their babies for clinics as well as immunization. The clothes and materials also enabled the mothers to provide more personal hygiene to their children by alternating the clothes that the children are able to wear daily.