

A MESSAGE FROM NEIL CORKERY

PRESIDENT OF SUDAN RELIEF FUND

Dear Friend in Christ,

I hope this newsletter finds you well amidst these strange times. In this newsletter, I wanted to share with you some heart-lifting stories from our partners—stories that you made possible.

As the government-directed coronavirus lockdowns went into effect, our resilient friends made adjustments and stayed on mission. When refugee camps were closed in the Wau region, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters took advantage of the surprising decline in violence to help people repair their homes so that they could return safely. When the truly remarkable Loreto Rumbek School for Girls was closed, Sister Orla and her colleagues shifted to use their medical clinic to serve the local community and educate people about safety during the pandemic.

And at the growing Ave Maria Mission in western South Sudan, Fr. Avelino and the Missionary Community of St. Paul the Apostle now have a fresh water well right where it is needed most, serving both local villagers and pilgrims to the shrine dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary.

None of these stories would have happened without your continued, sacrificial generosity. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!

I am encouraged by this wonderful example of the Church in action, which is really about giving the hope of Christ to one another. Your generous gifts help to both save lives and bring hope in South Sudan, where already-impoorished citizens have had to adjust to life under lockdown. And our amazing partners are taking your generous gifts and multiplying them with great, lifegiving effects.

I'm humbled to share in this mission with them and with you.

Yours in faith,

Neil Corkery, President

PLANNED GIVING, LEGACY GIFTS, BEQUESTS, WILLS & ESTATE DONATIONS

What will your legacy be?

Planned giving or legacy gifts are one of the most generous ways you can help the desperately poor people of South Sudan. At Sudan Relief Fund, we are blessed to have the most generous donors in the world. Please consult your investment advisor, accountant, or lawyer for details on remembering Sudan Relief Fund in your estate plans.

Please consider remembering Sudan Relief Fund in your estate planning. For questions contact Brendan Gotta, Director of Stewardship, at 330.461.3356.



SUDAN RELIEF FUND

P.O. Box 7084 • Merrifield, VA 22116 • 1-888-488-0348
www.sdnlrf.com

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SUDAN RELIEF REVIEW

Bringing the Gospel of Christ, and providing food, clean water, shelter and medical care, to the people of South Sudan

Pandemic Closes a Refugee Camp in Wau



In South Sudan, where the economy was already in shambles after years of war and continued insecurity, COVID-related lockdowns have led to increased difficulties. Sudan Relief Fund and our partners have managed to work through challenges and obstacles to continue our mission, but as we've reported recently, in many ways, things have gone from bad to worse.

One of the effects of the coronavirus has been that many refugee camps have been closed due to the increased risk of virus transmission in what are often cramped quarters. Combined with a surprising decrease in violence, many refugees have made tentative steps to return to homes and villages that they were forced to abandon as they ran for their lives.

Aiding many returning refugees have been the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa, a Catholic religious order committed to a Gospel Way of Life in the service of the poorest and least privileged.

These brave Catholic religious women serve all people regardless of faith or ethnic background.

Through their witness of Prayer, Word, and Action, the sisters bring the compassion of Christ to all

they serve. In the Wau region, the sisters focus on health, education, religious education, and retreats, as well as interreligious dialogue and collaboration. Recently, this has included educating as many people as possible about how to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus—a true challenge in a system with poor hygiene standards and literacy, as well as almost no medical infrastructure or protective supplies available.

Since they arrived in South Sudan in 2010, the Franciscan sisters have worked closely with the local diocese, and this relationship is proving fruitful as authorities decided to close many refugee camps. About 1,700 people being cared for at camps near local parishes were given one week to leave, leading many to return home. But upon returning, they often found their homes destroyed or in poor repair.

Because of your generous support of Sudan Relief Fund, the sisters were able to launch a home repair fund. They formed a committee to identify those who are unable to repair their homes, help them get estimates, and then pay for the repairs. Sudan Relief Fund has repaired numerous homes that are now safe for habitation,

though many more families are applying for help.

"Many people have been sleeping under mango trees near their home sites, while others have been able to make smaller repairs and move back in," said Sister Anne Wandia Mbithi. "Because we have been serving closely with our friends, we are trusted collaborators, and we are so grateful to help them return to their homes."

All of this continues even as the sisters continue caring directly for two particularly vulnerable groups, elderly who have lost their families, and lepers who have nowhere else to turn. With the added threat of COVID descending upon an area that is so familiar with hardship, and many questions about how security and aid will evolve in coming months, the sisters press on.

"We pray and we work, and we trust in our Lord to do the things we cannot do," said Sister Anne.

The Sisters expressed their gratitude to SRF donors and ask for prayers, especially that the violence in the Wau region does not return as the lockdowns are rolled back, and families are able to begin rebuilding their lives.

Featured SRF Project Locations



School Responds to the Coronavirus in Rumbek

When Loreto Sister Orla Treacy, Principal of Loreto Rumbek Primary and Secondary School, heard that eleven graduates were returning to help the medical clinic serve the local community, she responded “What a blessing!”

The school has become one of a few nascent signs of hope in the region, as the remarkable all-girls school (students aged 5-20) has produced graduates who are already beginning to excel in a number of fields. Sudan Relief Fund has been instrumental in the school’s success, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

When the COVID lockdowns went into effect, however, the school was forced to close down. Most of the students returned to their families, while others remain in a loose

community that serves those in the surrounding area.

Thus it was to Sr. Orla’s great surprise when she learned that the nursing students were returning, just as the focus was shifting to the school’s health clinic, which has begun serving the local community and educating as many as possible on lowering the risk of virus transmission. The graduates have joined the center’s six nurses in providing as much care as possible with limited resources.

“Our clinic team is doing their best to continue supporting the most vulnerable in the community and also the sick,” said Sister Orla. “With the rains coming, malaria will return as well, and we want to be sure that we are able to welcome and serve as many as possible.”



With an increased demand for medicine from the community, increased staff levels, and the need for more protective clothing and equipment, however, they feel the strain.

“The journey of the pandemic is becoming very real for us. In Juba, many political leaders have tested positive for the coronavirus, and some have now been found positive in Rumbek,” said Sister Orla.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have

testing services in our state, but we all assume that the virus is present and spreading fast. Our graduates are doing a great service, speaking on the radio and to large groups, while others are out and about in the community teaching about coronavirus. While masks aren’t widely

available, our graduates are learning how to make their own and provide some for the community.”

It is this kind of industry and compassion that reminds Sr. Orla and the entire Loreto community of the necessity of their mission.

Water for a Rapidly Growing Community

Located near the border of the Central African Republic, Ave Maria Parish’s church is the largest in the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio. It is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and has become a steady pilgrimage destination for Catholics throughout Western South Sudan.

The Ave Maria Parish is under the care of priests from the Missionary Community of Saint Paul the Apostle. Father Avelino Bassols has become a local leader who is developing a reputation for getting things done.

In 2019, the Missionary Community launched a secondary school, as well as the St. Joseph the Worker Vocational Training Centre, where young people from the area can learn a profession in carpentry, plumbing, and mechanical engineering. At around the same time, the Ave Maria Emergency Room opened its doors and is already serving an average of 60 patients daily. Next, the Missionary Community is planning to open the St. Isidor the Farmer College of Agriculture, also in Ave Maria.

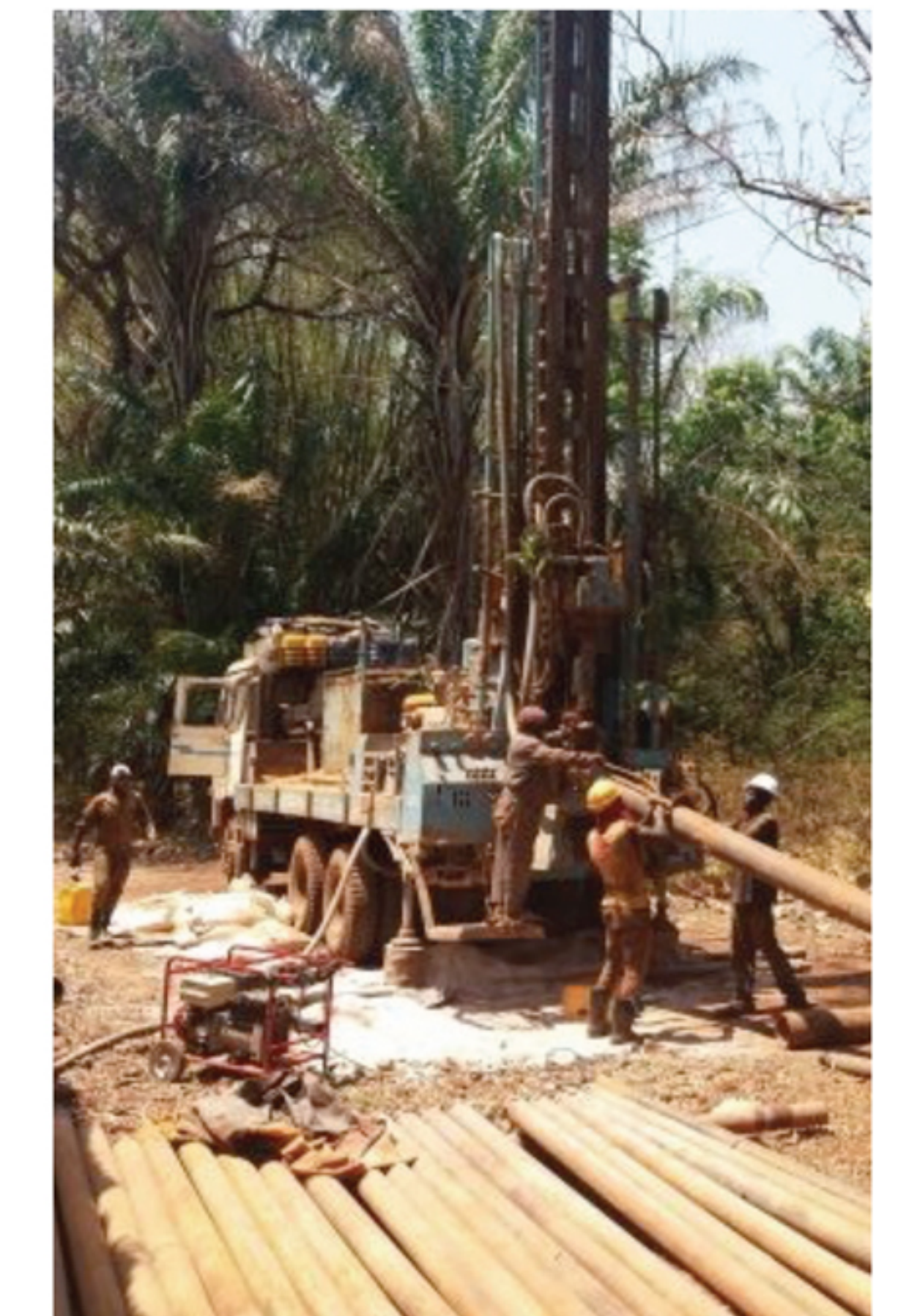
These services are needed even in this remote location, both to serve the local community and to serve the large

crowds of pilgrims who visit Ave Maria. In January of this year, for example, choirs from all of the surrounding parishes descended upon the shrine, with 523 young people staying in Ave Maria for an entire week. They came to pray at the shrine of Our Lady and to receive faith formation and encouragement.

With all of the growth, the Missionary Community reached out to Sudan Relief Fund for help installing a fresh water well. And it was a major effort—the drilling truck had to come from Juba (a two to three day drive away), and it had to be done before the rainy season returned. Drilling while the rains are falling not only makes the well structure less stable, but it can also give a false depth at which water can sustainably be found. And that’s only if you can get the truck all the way to Ave Maria with roads washed out from the rain!

Father Avelino was more than pleased when a well within the Mission compound was successfully dug, and today yields over 900 gallons per hour with its solar powered submersible water pump.

“We are very thankful to Sudan



Relief Fund for making this project, which may secure all other projects in the future, possible for us,” said Father Avelino. “With increased prices for everything due to the coronavirus, we could not have finished this lifesaving project without you and your kind supporters. God bless you!”

