

THE HARD ROAD TO HOPE FOR GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN

50 years of war have devastated lives and communities, and disrupted the schooling and skills of generations of South Sudanese people - especially girls

Only 1 in 3 girls currently get to go to school at all in South Sudan – **the 8th lowest primary school enrolment in the world**

Of those who do go to school, most girls drop out around 10, because of family duties, domestic labour, childcare or early marriage/ pregnancy

South Sudan has the highest level of maternal mortality in the world, **and one of the highest levels of infant mortality (67.5 per 1000 live births)**

By the age of 15 a girl in South Sudan is more likely to have died in childbirth than to be in secondary school.

BETTER TO LIGHT A CANDLE THAN CURSE THE DARKNESS

South Sudan faces many political, economic and social challenges, following its independence in 2011 after 50 years of war with the largely Arabic Muslim North

It has one of the fastest growing populations in the world, with the second highest fertility rates (7 children per woman in the population), but one of the lowest life expectancies (57 years).

South Sudan has the lowest economic growth rate of any country (minus 8.4%) and one of the lowest GDP's per person, highest consumer price inflation (12.9% annually).

The economy is heavily over-dependent upon oil (98% of GDP) and defence (8.8% of GDP) and much too low expenditure on health (2.2% of GDP) and education (0.7% of GDP – the lowest in the world)

Ibba Girls School is a small beacon of hope in this darkness

PENCIL POWER: LITERACY CAN LIBERATE LIVES

Education is one of the proven paths to peace, healing deep conflicts

Education for girls is a particularly productive investment in the future

Teach a woman to read and she'll inspire her children, her friends and neighbours, and get the whole village buzzing.

Educated girls learn about personal and public health, and help to reduce maternal and infant mortality

Educated girls contribute to social and economic development by learning and sharing their skills in running small business enterprises

Educated girls help to cultivate the cultural life of the community through music, dance, drama, arts and crafts.

Educated girls contribute actively to peace making by appreciating other people's histories and points of view, and not escalating conflict

Women are key to fighting poverty, to promoting peace, and to raising educational and living standards

BRIDGET'S VISION BY THE NILE: HOPE THROUGH EDUCATION

Bridget Nagomoro's dream (below) has inspired us to think big and aim high – to build and develop a school in South Sudan which will act as a beacon of hope for disadvantaged and impoverished girls, empowering them with the knowledge, skills and values to become the leaders of their communities and of this newest nation

Nagomoro Bridget was the first girl from Ibba ever to have had schooling beyond the age of 10, in the history of the human race

After graduation from University in Uganda, she went to work in Juba for the government of the newly emerging Republic Of South Sudan

When Bridget's father died she inherited the family land in Ibba, and had a dream calling her back to Ibba to use the land to build a school so other girls could have the same opportunity. (Read her story and watch the video at ibbagirlsschool.org)

On July 22 2008, sitting beside the Nile in Juba, Bridget told Professor John Benington (who was leading a workshop for government officials) of her dream and asked him to help her translate the school into reality.

In June 2009, Bridget invited John to visit Ibba, to meet local community leaders and to discuss plans for the school – the first of many such visits and discussions in Ibba over the next few years.

In 2010 Bridget returned to live and work in Ibba, soon being appointed as Commissioner for Ibba County. Trustees and Board of Governors were appointed to steer Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS), including representatives from the state government, churches, teacher training college, the paramount chief, and UK Trustees

Our plan is to build a boarding school for girls aged 10 to 18, in 9 stages, with an intake of 40 ten year old girls into Primary 4 each year until Feb 2022, when the school will reach its initial target of 360 girls.

The school is designed to serve the needs of girls across the whole of Western Equatoria State, and provide a home for people from all tribes.

FIGS: FIRST FRUITS

In Oct 2011 Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS) was registered as a UK charity, with a number of Patrons and Trustees with knowledge and experience in finance, law, girls education, evaluation and South Sudan.

Architect Malcolm Worby has been appointed to design the 73 acre site and buildings on green and sustainable principles, using local materials and labour as far as possible – mud bricks; indigenous wood; solar energy

So far FIGS has been able to raise over £500k in donations from over 600 generous individuals, churches, schools, and small family trusts.

This has financed the building of the first classrooms, dormitories, staff accommodation, kitchen and toilets, plus solar powered water pumps, solar electricity, a 4x4 vehicle, and satellite internet

Ibba Girls School was opened to its first 40 girls in June 2014, and now has 83 students, in Primary 4 and 5, with an excellent team of African teachers, matrons, cooks, a nurse, cleaners and security staff

A strong leadership and management team has been appointed - Head-teacher Richard Aluma; Director of Studies Vicky Dratia; Finance Manager Sonaa Santino; and classroom teachers Yoane and Agnes.

We plan to enrol the next 40 ten year old girls in Feb 2016, so are all working hard to raise funding to build and furnish an extra dormitory, wash-block, assembly hall, and hire an additional teacher and matron.

SHARING THE LIGHT OF WISDOM ON THE JOURNEY

IGBS aims to provide high quality education rooted in core Christian values, and open and welcoming to people of all faiths and none

We aim to provide access to all girls with the potential to learn, whatever their background, status or finances.

The school aims to cultivate skills with "both the pen and the hoe" – both academic and vocational knowledge. We grow much of the school's food.

We follow the South Sudan curriculum but supplement it with other cultural activities like dance, drama, sport and debating.

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Continued political and economic volatility in South Sudan means that the first priority has to be to make sure that students and staff can study and live in safety and security. Detailed measures are in place at IGBS.

IGBS is a drop in the ocean of need, but is already sending out strong ripples into the families and local communities from which the girls come.

The school is already seen as a small beacon of hope in the darkness of South Sudan, a practical demonstration of good schooling, and of what peace might look like in practice.

IGBS and FIGS are working carefully with the state government, the churches, NGO's, local communities and other schools to try to share our learning through knowledge exchange with other schools, and to act as a hub and catalyst for wider social and economic development.

We are exploring the potential for developing a number of co-operatives and small enterprises to help generate income for the school e.g food; fish farming; honey; livestock; woodworking; repair trades.

SUPPORT PENCIL POWER: HELP A COUNTRY TO HEAL

Join the growing network of Friends of Ibba Girls School, who support the school and its students by volunteering time, expertise, or money

Sponsor a cohort of students through their schooling – sign up to a standing order for £27 per month

Run, climb, eat, swim, surf, sing, pray, and organise lively events to raise funds for the extra school classrooms, dormitories, teachers and matrons

Visit Ibba with one of our FIGS teams of volunteers, to work shoulder to shoulder alongside the African staff and students

Contact us and find more details at www.ibbagirlsschool.org