



**FRIENDS OF
IBBA GIRLS SCHOOL
SOUTH SUDAN**

**SPEECH BY NAGOMORO BRIDGET, COMMISSIONER FOR IBBA
COUNTY,
AT THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION FOR THE OPENING
OF
IBBA GIRLS BOARDING SCHOOL, SOUTH SUDAN,
ON SATURDAY JUNE 14 2014**

**THIS IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE LET US REJOICE IN IT
AND BE GLAD, ALLELUIA, AND ALLELUIA!!**

“The story of Bridget, or ‘Pen and Hoe’”

My name is Nagomoro Bridget. I was born on the 15th of June 1972, from the family of Baba Philemon Ndawa and mama Margret Maingba Baangba. We were five; four girls and one boy, and I am the second last born. We were all sent to school by my late parents. My father did not want to show favoritism towards any of us, and his motto to us was pen and hoe, since we came from a background of poverty.

I started my primary one in Ibba and continued up to primary two, when my parents moved nearer to the border of Maridi County. I continued with primary three up to primary six in Itri Primary School in Maridi. I joined the Upper Primary in Maridi two for one year and then moved to Manguo Comboni School, where I completed my Intermediate.

As a youth in the Catholic Church choir in Maridi, late Bishop Gabriel Duatuka talked to us about Religious vocation and I chose to go to Mupo and join the Religious Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I completed my secondary school education in the Convent and left with the Sudan school certificate. Thereafter, I continued with the religious vocation and had my first profession in 1994 in Uganda. I served in the Catholic Church for nine years as a professed Sister, leaving aside the six years of formation, and then I decided through the help of the community to leave the religious life and join the outside world. As soon as I left the Convent, I went straight away to Nkumba University, where I completed Diploma and Degree in Education.

While at home my life experience, as an adolescent was very difficult. Poverty was the order of the day; there was no money to pay school fees, and so relatives advised my father to cater for the single boy only and leave the four of us to grow up as wives to men. My father rejected this idea. My parents had special trust and love for me among their children. During holidays, my father used to give five stock of bitter cassava and my mum could give two trays of millet and both of them would say, “Daughter that is your school fees.” I was

happy to brew local alcohol to sell and get a little money only for school fees, which were paid once a year, school uniform, pens, pencils and exercise books. I had no shoes and I was happy to walk barefoot to school. I ran small businesses like selling firewood along the road, collecting red pepper to sell to the Arabs' shops. I would also sell local cookies (Tamia) in schools during breakfast.

There was heavy domestic work after classes and I would throw my books down once I arrived home to do house work. Farming was compulsory on Saturdays, and Sunday was a day for worship in the morning and carrying foodstuffs from Rubu Boma to Sugu Amal in Maridi. I would wake up at five o'clock in the morning and go to the stream to fetch water, sweep the compound, wash utensils and then run to school after having eaten the leftovers from the previous day.

As I reached to Primary four and five, I was in serious danger from boys. Most of my colleagues began to drop from school due to early pregnancy. I was afraid perhaps I will also fall victim. I was very stubborn with boys and those who were stronger than me I would defeat them by running faster than them, since I was so lean.

In 2001 when I came to Ibba for a visit, I saw there was no light for the women in particular, with no future in terms of Education, self-sufficiency, and liberty. I felt that I must do something to educate and groom the young women of ten years old for tomorrow. I wanted the school to start from Nursery, through Primary and up to secondary, with those who may be unable to go to University, branching off to Vocational school. That was my vision and a flame of fire or burning bush for girls.

In 2008 as I was working in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment when Hon. Anthony Lino Makana was the Minister, and he had invited Prof. John Benington and Prof. Jean Hartley to conduct a series of workshops for the staff for management capacity building. I attended the first and second workshop, but during the third workshop, which was about Project Management, I decided to approach Prof. John Benington and requested him to listen to me for at least five minutes. Prof. John accepted and we sat along the River Nile at Juba Bridge Hotel at 2:00pm, lunchtime, on 22nd July 2008. I appreciated his effort for the Government of South Sudan, and I shared my vision for a girls' boarding school in Ibba village. I persuaded him to support the vision. Prof. John listened very keenly and wisely, then he assured me with these words, "Bridget, your school project dream will become true in your home village Ibba." I also persuaded him to visit Ibba village.

On the 25th of June 2009, Prof. John, Rev Pauline Walker and I travelled from Yambio to Ibba. He saw the village and believed in my words - and since then I have disrupted his life and many other people's lives! I promised to donate this family land where we are now for girls' education. A quarter of this land

has been donated by former Boma Chief of Namarabia, Chief Severio Atoroyo Anasi.

In the UK John Benington had helped to set up a new charity Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS). In October 2011 Friends of Ibba Girls School invited me and other local community leaders to go to the U.K for a study trip about girls education. I politely counted on Bp. Wilson Kamani (ECS) and Fr. Stephen Kumyangi (RC) as church leaders to make the trip to England and to proclaim the Gospel of girls' education in Ibba County and Western Equatoria State. Fr. Stephen Kumyangi had lost his dear mother just a week before the trip to the U.K. Fr. Stephen, with the love in his heart for girls' education, was able to swallow the bitter pill of his mother's death and to travel to England to help raise funds for the school. On my way back from England, I met Hon. Joseph Bol Kuel at the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs in Juba, and I shared with him the vision for Ibba Girls School in WES. He was happy to hear and quickly he donated 5000ssp for the school.

In May 2013, I was invited by Friends of Ibba Girls School for a second study visit to England with Pastor Emmanuel Lomoro, ECS education adviser, based in Juba. Unfortunately, he was not able to go, so I had to find someone else for the trip. Hon. Pia Philip had planned and was ready to go home and spend a holiday with this family in Kampala. I requested him to go on the trip to England. He accepted and we worked hard and lost some weight, all for the sake of Ibba girls' education.

Major objectives for my vision are:

1. Women to be filled with the Holy Spirit, self-esteem and confidence, as leaders of this Nation.
2. To transform and empower women for the development of their communities and to burn like a candle in their homes and everywhere in South Sudan.
3. To liberate themselves in all aspects of life and to walk with dignity and with their heads held high.
4. To provide high quality of education rooted in Christian values, and open to all faiths and none.
5. Women, who will inspire their children and husbands, fight poverty, and raise educational and living standard in societies.

I earnestly appeal to the entire congregation present here to have gut of ownership for this school, commitment and for the sustainability. Almost all African women nurture life in their homes on three stones. Hence, the quality of this school will depend on three main stones:

- A. Parents
- B. Teachers
- C. Children

I will continue to offer my personal commitment to this school, and will do all I can with god's grace and your support to realize the success of this vision. I thank the almighty god and our Lord Jesus Christ for accomplishing his mission through me as an instrument.

My sincere thanks goes to my late parents and may they live in this school forever.

From the depth of my heart, a big thanks to Prof. John Benington, Prof. Jean Hartley, all the trustees and Friends of Ibba Girls' School in the UK who have worked hard and tirelessly to raise funding for these buildings, all the equipment, human resources/staff, and all the running costs of this school.

To the British children who donated for this school, thank you!

My sincere thanks to Malcolm Worby for the beautiful design of these buildings, and to his wife, Caroline. Thanks also to Anisa Construction Company for building the school.

Lots of thanks to all the Board of Trustees in Western Equatoria State for your good will to support Ibba Girls Boarding School.

A big vote of thanks to the Roman Catholic Church and ECS/Ibba Diocese for their full support for girls' education and for having mentored me in my spiritual formation.

Thanks to our volunteers from Australia, Paula and Jamie, and to all the staff of this school.

Thanks to the parents of these forty pioneer girls whom I declare now as leaders of tomorrow.

I thank the entire community of Ibba County for having accepted and supported the vision for girls' education.

Thanks to every single one of you present here to witness this occasion.

Last but not least, Hon. Governor of Western Equatoria State, your leadership is exactly like that of King Solomon: full of wisdom. In your regime this vision has gone through hooks and thorns, with a lot of storms, but you stood firm and made sure this dream must come true. Thank you very much!