

The Sudan Project.

Br Anton

The plan is to empower personnel in the Southern Sudan. The focus is on teacher formation and the training of nurses and paramedics. The enterprise involves the cooperation of several religious institutes from the outset. Some 30 institutes have already committed themselves to contribute either money or personnel, or both. A further 300 institutes have expressed interest and registered for further information.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools have agreed to be the lead institute in the teacher training. Brother Amilcare is overall responsible for the shaping of the project and Brother Pedro Arambide is lending his expertise in the raising of funds. Three Brothers were named to begin the work.

Subject to the clarification of certain property rights, the Comboni Sisters are disposed to accept the leadership in the health services training.

Historical note.

The Sudan became independent of the Anglo-Egyptian administration in the early 1950s. Tension between the Arabic, largely Muslim north, based in Khartoum and the ethnically African, religiously Christian and Animist, south, issued in forty years of fighting interrupted by a 10 year moratorium and finally, in January 2005 a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Under the terms of the agreement the southern region was to have its own Government of South Sudan (GOSS) and would have a referendum in 2011 in which a choice was to be made between independence and federation with the north.

The local Church and the Delegation.

During the civil war the clergy were scattered. The leadership devolved onto the catechists. The catechists kept the faith alive in the far flung parishes for more than 40 years. After the signing of the CPA the clergy regrouped. The bishops of the 7 dioceses wrote to the Joint Commission for Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Unions of Religious Women and of Religious Men, inviting them to send a delegation to the Southern Sudan to see the plight of the people there and to re-

spond with assistance. The delegation visited during March, 2006. After four weeks in which all the dioceses were visited the delegates reported to the Unions.

Education levels and health provision in Southern Sudan.

Education.

Only 15% of the population is literate.

Only 7% of teachers have received any professional training

Only 6% of all teachers are women (with attendant lack of education opportunities for girls).

Only 30% of the existing schools are housed in 'permanent' buildings. (A school might be no more than a chalk board propped against the bole of a tree)

Even where opportunities for schooling exist, tracks are impassable during 4 months of the year.

The present shortfall of teachers is estimated at 100,000.

Health provision.

Death rate of women in childbirth is eight times higher than in the EU.

Only 30% - 40% of the population live within a day's walk of any medical facility.

While HIV/AIDS is not yet a major problem, malaria, tuberculosis, dengue fever and other tropical diseases are everywhere present.

No recognised health training was accessible between 1983 and 2005.

Teacher training and distance learning.

Travel being so difficult and the political situation remaining so precarious, a single, large training college is not favoured. The present plan is to have modest units in each of the 7 dioceses linked in a distance learning network. This is an approach which has already proven successful in Kenya. The Comboni Sisters and Fathers have already agreed to cooperate with their FM radio.