

peacemail

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 2

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Sudan has long suffered from a vicious civil war between its Northern Arab-Islamic Government and marginalised southern Sudanese. The world's longest civil war has raged on and off for over 40 years. Over two million people died and four million were displaced.

Throughout the entire conflict, the Sudanese churches, both in the north and south were the main institutions for support to the people in providing relief aid and social services, with the support of Act for Peace and other ecumenical agencies. The Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) continues to pursue peace in areas of continuing conflict with their People to People Peace-making Project. The work helps create a culture of peace between warring tribes over issues such as cattle raiding. Tribal boundaries are bridged and communities work together toward the ultimate goal of peace and understanding.

SCC's important new focus is on sustaining peace through the establishment of an effective democratic process. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was reached in 2005 and ended the civil war, paving the way for Sudan's first general elections in April 2010. SCC's work was vital as citizens voted across the country with no bloodshed. The work is continuing as SCC educates the people on their democratic rights in the lead-up to the 2011 Referendum where the South will vote for independence from the North.

\$54 can train a local community leader or church leader with Civic and Voter Education, so they can encourage their communities to participate in the Referendum.

\$250 can train a Youth or Female leader to become a Civic and Voter Education Trainer, responsible for taking the program deep into the towns and villages of Southern Sudan.

\$288 can provide ongoing support for the Civic and Voter Education trainers to continue training communities for the Referendum.

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).

actalliance



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THANK YOU Partners for your commitment to Act for Peace through your prayers and regular gifts. Through your generosity, we are making a real and lasting difference to the lives of many people affected by conflict or extreme poverty.

If you would like to upgrade your regular gift, simply free call Howard or Sarah on **1800 025 101** or email hgraham@ncca.org.au. Also, all feedback and suggestions are welcome, as we love to hear from you and to pass on comments to project partners.

On the other hand, if you are not yet an Act for Peace Partner and would like to be, or would just like to help this project, your call or email will be welcomed! *All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.*

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The Race to Educate the People of South Sudan on their Right and Responsibility to Vote

Dear Act for Peace Partner,

I am Helen Peter Gemma, Peace & Justice Coordinator in Western Juba County for the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC). Civic Education was the major issue in achieving a peaceful result in Sudan's first democratic elections in 26 years and the work continues for the referendum to follow in 2011. The SCC is working with women and youth in eight counties across Southern Sudan.

We trained facilitators at the county level then sent them to the payams (towns). In the payam they trained key people coming from bomas (villages): church leaders, community leaders and local chiefs. The leaders returned to their communities and encouraged them to register for voting and to participate in the referendum.

We continue to tell people about the importance of registering and why they should register. We explain how the democratic system in the country works for them and not against them. If Sudan wants to be a democratic country, then people must use their vote and no longer allow force to determine outcomes.

Without this training, people become confused about the elections and what the referendum means to them. When they heard of registration, people had so many questions. They would say "why would we vote for the same leaders who have not done anything for us". Some said, "we will not register because we have gone for three months without any salary, why should we do anything for the state?" or "we are hungry because the rains haven't been good." They felt the pain of hunger so they didn't want to register.

We completed training in Juba, but in several areas there were conflicts due to cattle raiding and we were not able to leave people there to train the communities. It was much too dangerous. We also needed to move on to other counties.

All the brave people who help us across the vast countryside are volunteers from the member churches of the SCC. We are very grateful that churches have helped us find these amazing people. The volunteers are so interested, really keen and ask almost more questions than we can answer! Aisha, a volunteer from the Presbyterian Church of Sudan said, "We don't want to see our country return to a state of war. We want peace. The war really affected my family and it has taken a long time to get through the pain."

Transport is a problem as the distances are great, there are still unmapped minefields and the roads are not safe to drive on at night. We are very grateful for your gifts which will help us to continue these exercises right through until the referendum. Without awareness, many people will not register. If they don't, the result will not represent the will of the people.

I'm doing this work because I'm working for my country! I'm determined to see that the referendum is free and fair and that the people are given what they need to live freely.

Helen



Partner's Prayer Points:

"Please pray for us, especially during the Referendum. This will have a huge affect on us. We are involved in the peace process".

David – Roman Catholic Church, Torit, South Sudan

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