



Catholic University of South Sudan,  
Rumbek Campus



# Report for AmSudán

On ongoing teacher training  
June 2024



(Above: Photo of our students in Bachelor of Education Degree Programmes 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024)

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## Context

At the heart of the mission of the Catholic University of South Sudan, Rumbek is transformation. The work we do and the courses we deliver are designed to not only to educate the most marginalised in the community, most notably women, but also prepare to help build a South Sudan that is economically and socially more prosperous for those who follow in their footsteps.

The journey though is a long one and there have been plenty of challenges on the way. As you are aware, South Sudan has been in a precarious situation for some time.

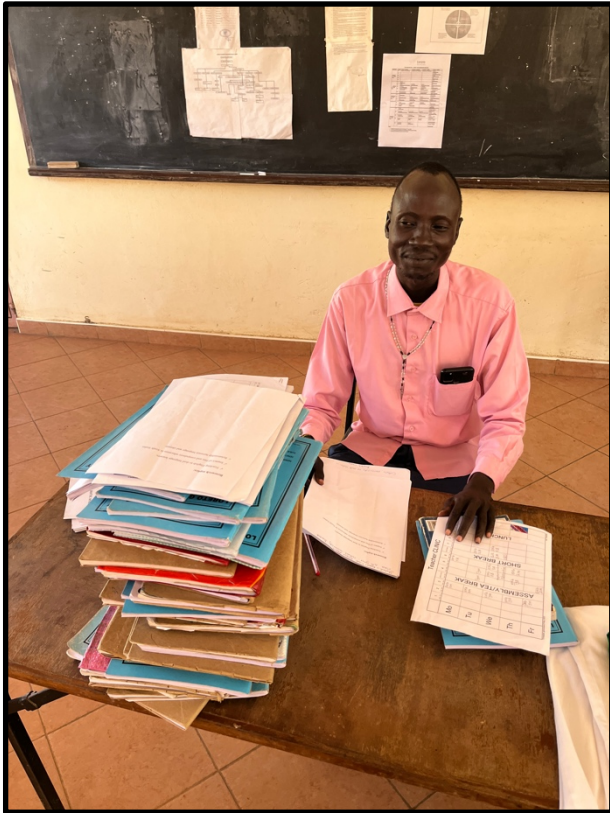
Historically, the Government of Sudan operated a deliberate policy of underinvestment in all essential services in the South. The consequences of five decades of fighting for independence culminating in Independence in 2011 and the subsequent Civil War in 2013 are still being felt today.

According to the latest United Nations' Human Development Index<sup>1</sup>, South Sudan is designated a country of Low Human Development sitting at No. 192 out of a list of 193 countries. The country is larger than both Spain and Portugal combined, yet outside of Juba, there is less than 1,000 miles of tarmacked road in total. None of this is in Lakes State. The average life expectancy is only 55.



**The average number of years that boys will spend in education is 6.7 years.  
For girls it is just 4.5 years.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>



Education remains a key challenge. Attendance and perseverance in school is abysmally low, most notably for girls. In addition, teachers are inadequately trained, and the poor quality of their work perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment. On the ground in Rumbek, it would appear that many figures published by the UN are overly optimistic and the reality is far starker.

The work of the Catholic University of South Sudan,

Rumbek, offers a real opportunity to support people to move from an emergency footing to a sustainable development approach. Research has consistently shown that the rate of return on education, especially third level education, has helped people lift themselves, their families, and their communities out of poverty. (Photo above: Laat, a final year teacher training student on placement in Loreto School for Girls with a pile of corrections).

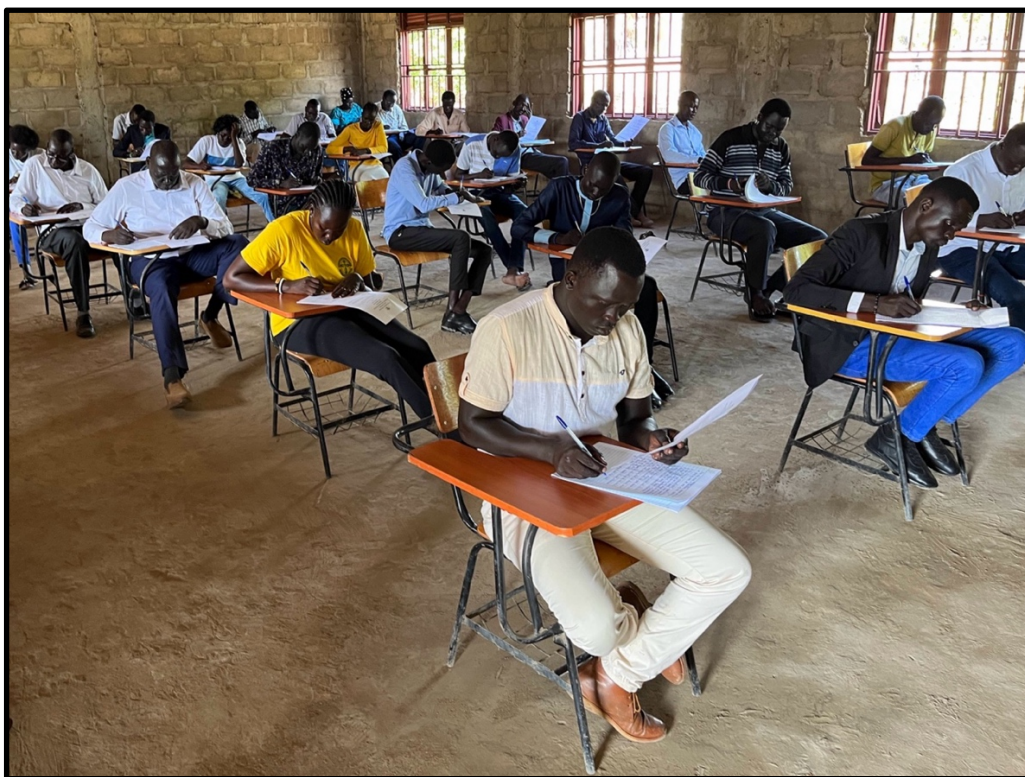
## Current Reality

The University began in 2019 working out of a local secondary school, before moving to its current location in an unfinished youth centre. It is an afternoon university, operating intensive lectures that allow students to earn wages for themselves and their families in the morning. Our annual student fees are low, just 150,000SSP. In December of 2023 this was the equivalent of \$120 for the entire year and was designed encourage meaningful commitment from our students. However, the volatile nature of the economy and rampant inflation means that it is

now worth less than \$50. The vulnerability of the economy, increased unemployment, and a high incidence of poor health has meant that we have to take an flexible approach to fee payment.

While the University offers business qualifications, our central focus is education. To this end, we run two full-time, four-year education degree programmes:

- Bachelor in Education in English and English Literature
- Bachelor in Education in Commerce, Religious Education, and Citizenship



These courses were chosen in consultation with the local community and the Bishop of the Diocese of Rumbek to meet the needs of the population. All our qualifications are granted by the Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, through our mother campus of Catholic University of South Sudan, Juba.

The South Sudanese national economy is almost non-existent and is largely dependent on the volatile NGO sector and oil reserves in the north of the country that are subject to both greed and corruption.

Since the conflict in Sudan began many of the oil pipelines from South Sudan have been compromised, worsening the economic crisis. Instead, we work to foster the local economy, promoting future sustainability, and generating opportunities for South Sudanese people for employment and growth. Aside from the University Director and two lecturers, all of our other staff are South Sudanese.



The standard of teaching in primary and secondary schools is low, with most teachers working without even a basic qualification. Consequently, students can finish school without a basic grasp of maths and with substandard literacy skills. This only serves to perpetuate a cycle of poverty. Our specific emphasis on education degrees aims to tackle this through high quality lecturing by experienced educationalists and placements in Catholic

schools like Loreto or La Salle to model how things could be done differently. (Photo above: Suzan, one of our teacher training students, is currently on teaching placement in La Salle School for Boys and is due to graduate this year).

The Catholic University is a growing institution and we have doubled our enrolment to over a hundred students in the last two years alone. People really want to get ahead and the only way for that to happen is through education. There is already significant interest in our next intake. This has been the first year we launched a multi-faceted approach to promotion for new students on social media, through flyers, and on local radio talk shows. We used student ambassadors to promote the University's programmes and had several of our female students speak about how it was possible to undertake a full degree programme with us despite the challenges they faced.

## Education for All: Female Students

In the latest UN Gender Inequality Index out of 193 countries assessed for equality among men and women across health, employment and education South Sudan came in 192<sup>nd</sup> place after Somalia. It is regarded as one of the most difficult places in the world to be a woman, especially with challenges around forced early marriage and polygamy. Men in their family can operate strict control over women's access to education on a daily basis. In a culture where bride price and forced marriage is common, women are seen as resources to be traded, not people with a future of their own.



**It is statistically more likely for a South Sudanese girl to die in childbirth than to finish a basic secondary education.**

The number of students who do manage to graduate and make it to University is vanishingly small, but they are nothing short of *fierce* in their determination to get ahead, creating opportunities for themselves, their sisters, and their daughters. We are working with them to make this happen. For the past two years we have operated a scholarship programme for women in all our courses, which gives a 50% reduction in fees. This has resulted in the growth of the percentage of female students enrolled from 19% to 34% in that time. We plan to continue to build on this. We have consulted with a representative group of female students to see what we can do to support their studies. We continue to expand our efforts to help mothers returning to education, through the provision of dedicated spaces for babies and children and other practical resources.



We have also made the campus fully accessible and have constructed a wheelchair accessible toilet, so that any student with a disability will be able to study here with ease. Our goal is to open third level education to those with the ability and passion necessary, who might have been excluded before. There is no one more motivated to effect change than the people of South Sudan themselves, who understand their local setting, will be equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and are determined to make a difference.

### Current Teaching Statistics

In total, we have thirty-eight students in our Bachelor of Education programmes. This number has been growing steadily since we began. This is especially impressive considering that teaching is not a well paid profession in South Sudan and at the moment teachers, along with nurses, doctors, and other public service employees, have been paid



nothing at all for almost eight months. There is, however, a commitment to the value of teaching in its own right. Our students are clear that it will be through quality education that a more sustainable and equitable peace will be built in South Sudan.

The ratio between men and women in our Bachelor of Education programmes is 2:1, in line with the participation levels in the University overall. While this may appear low by European standards, it is considerably above the norm in South Sudan. It is as a result of our proactive recruitment policies for women, especially our partial scholarship.

#### Male and Females in Teacher Training

	Men	Women	Total
BEd English and English Literature	19	6	25
BEd Commerce and CRE	8	5	13
Total	27	11	38

It is also apparent that the number of people interested in education as a career is growing. The support given by AmSudán last year has been instrumental in making this possible. Previously, business courses were added to University curriculum as a way of covering the costs for the less popular education courses. Now these courses are becoming sustainable in their own right due to greater student uptake.

#### Number Enrolled in Teacher Training Since 2019

Class of	Men	Women	Total
2019	3	1	4
2020 / 21	6		6
Closure due to Covid			

2022 / 23	3	5	8
2023 / 24	15	5	20
	27	11	38

## Collaboration

Given the challenging nature of the learning environment here and the lack to access to resources, for example there is not one bookshop in the country, we work at creating partnerships. We are currently collaborating with the Univeristy of Salerno to improve our teacher training. A senior lecturer from the Department of Human Sciences, Philosophy, and Educational Sciences offers online courses to supplement our existing curriculum with up to date topics like working with students with special needs, classroom design, and the Universal Design for Learning Programme.



(One of our more recent classes on Universal Design for Learning)



## Testimonials

Here are some of the testimonials of our Bachelor of Education students:



*"I would like to be a teacher who will change and develop our country, not through revolutions, but through intellectual ways, through education. I want to enable women to gain courage and trust themselves as important elements of change in fighting illiteracy and bring change in society, and think more of themselves as tools of change."*

Akiema (left)

2<sup>nd</sup> Year BEd English and Literature

*"Mothers like me are natural teachers. By setting an example, I can instill good values in our students. I believe that by educating a girl you can educate a nation."*

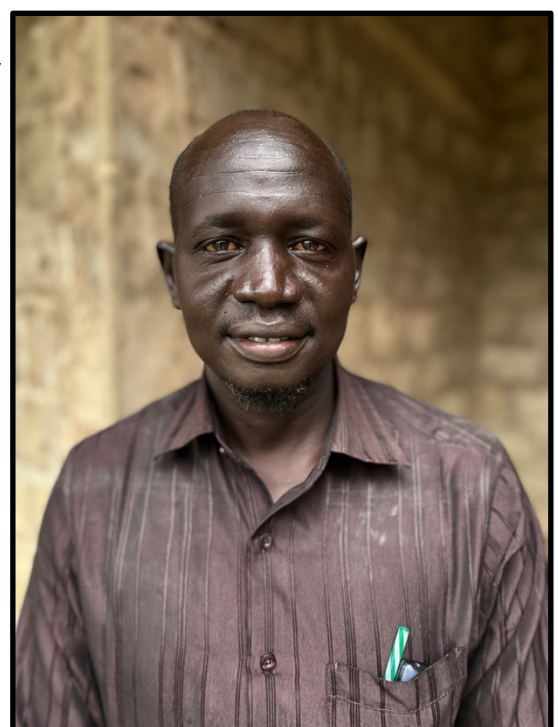
Aruai (right)

1<sup>st</sup> Year BEd Commerce and CRE

*"I want to be a teacher to become a role model in South Sudan, improving our education system. I also want to be a writer, like Chinua Achebe, to promote a greater understanding of African values and life."*

Albino

2<sup>nd</sup> Year BEd English and Literature





*"Teacher training helps me to improve as a person. The human mind needs expanding through the new things that are taught to the students."*

Emmanuel  
1<sup>st</sup> Year BEd English and Literature

*"Becoming a teacher is a challenging profession, that will help me to correct educational challenges, install quality education, and create a conducive learning environment."*

John  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year BEd English and English

