

# TOGETHER FOR SUDAN-The Bishop Mubarak Fund

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March 2005



Dear Friends,

Many of you know the joy of living among, working with, the creative and compassionate Sudanese people. Sadly, degradation and desperation seem as much a part of Sudanese lives as is the transcendent hope which keeps Sudanese mothers moving forward for the sake of their children. In Sudan both powerlessness and grace paint with unusually broad brush strokes. I found this again during my early February visit.

As usual on this visit I spent much of my time visiting TFS-BMF projects in the Khartoum area, conferring with partners and supporters in Khartoum and working with colleagues in our Khartoum office. But this time I also made a brief trip to Nyala in southern **Darfur** to explore the possibility of offering assistance to women and children there. Security is precarious, particularly in the settlements where thousands of displaced people are without adequate food, medicines, shelter or safety. I was not allowed to photograph the women with whom I spoke but I will never forget what they told me.

Their first two priorities, the women said, are for more **water** (most of their critically important livestock have died for lack of water) and **food** (everyone is hungry and food shortages are expected to become worse). But, after mentioning these two life essentials, **what the women of Darfur give as their third priority is education**. Together for Sudan is now in contact with partners about opening literacy classes in Darfur. Our plan is to help women learn to read centred around the concerns of their daily lives and this includes caring for the vulnerable donkeys which will be crucial to helping them return to a normal life when peace allows them to return to their home areas.

**An opportunity to help women in Darfur.** Darfur is an area the size of France on Sudan's western border.

Traditionally underdeveloped and politically marginalised, Darfur has been desertifying for over a century. Ironically it was fear of not being included in the benefits of the recent peace agreement between the Sudanese Government and southern rebels which set off present troubles in Darfur. But the growing scarcity of water is also among sources of conflict which now pit Darfurians, particularly nomadic cattle herders and settled farmers, against one another and have brought murderous intervention from the Government of Sudan under the guise of pacifying rebels.



**The Eye Glasses Project:** Howa Suleyman, 28, attended an Eye Glasses outreach in Soba Aradi squatter settlement on Khartoum's outskirts. But it was too late as Howa had been irreversibly blinded by glaucoma. There was nothing to be done but give her medication to reduce the pressure in her eyes and thus relieve her pain. Asked why she had never before sought medical assistance, Howa said simply: "I have no money."

In my last newsletter I mentioned Soba Aradi where last May authorities began bulldozing the shelters of displaced people. Since then the area has undergone a terrible transformation. Having no resources to find shelter elsewhere, tens of thousands of homeless people, already displaced at least once from Sudan's south and west, remain in Soba Aradi living with their children under plastic, cardboard and salvaged corrugated iron sheets.



The Eye Glasses Project began in mid-2002 in order to provide glasses to women in BMF literacy classes and children in BMF-sponsored self help basic schools. But we had not considered the emergency medical needs of displaced communities in the Khartoum area. The work of Sudanese ophthalmologist Dr. Nabila Radi who leads this project for Together for Sudan is not only sight saving but also life saving for scores of individuals. It is also enormously beneficial to communities of displaced people and very expensive for Together for Sudan. During the second half of 2004, Dr. Nabila examined the eyes of 1,675 people, 1,219 of them women and children, many of whom required medical or surgical interventions.

I met Howa Suleyman on the day I visited Soba Aradi. Then I watched in amazement as, in rapid succession, Dr. Nabila examined an old man whose right eye would not close because his face is being eroded by leprosy, people with bilateral cataract, a woman with trachoma who faces blindness as her in-turned eyelashes scar her corneas, a young mother with an eye tumour. All these will be treated. **Together for Sudan urgently needs your support to continue this vital outreach project.**



**TFS-BMF Sub-Office to Open in the Nuba Mountains:** Increasing numbers of our university graduates are returning to the Nuba Mountains as teachers and humanitarian workers. These 2003 and 2004 BMF graduates recognise that communities must help themselves and that Muslims and Christians can cooperate to build regional and national peace. A TFS-BMF field representative has been hired to open our first sub-office, in Kadugli the better to monitor our growing educational work in Kordofan. A first batch of Nuba Mountains basic school teachers will be trained this summer.

**AIDS: A Matter of Family Priorities.** Eva's husband died of AIDS and both Eva and her 13-year-old son Eliaba are HIV positive. They live in Mayo, another recently bulldozed settlement of displaced people. During a visit we found that Eliaba had broken his leg. It is a compound fracture but no professional medical care had been affordable. Eva may not live to see Eliaba grow up but she should not have to leave him knowing that he has been crippled for life.



Supported by CAFOD since it began in 2002, the Together for Sudan **HIV/AIDS Awareness Project** has grown rapidly. During 2004 our three teams conducted 85 outreaches which attracted over 15,000 people. After leaving Eva and Eliaba, I met Emmanuel and his sisters who have lived alone since their parents died of AIDS. Age nine, Emmanuel was the size of a healthy five-year-old. Children who survive their parents face enormous problems including emotional trauma, feeding and educational fees. This year TFS hopes to add to the HIV/AIDS Awareness Project a small home-based care component including critically important feeding and medical support for particularly vulnerable individuals. Sadly, Emmanuel died in late February. But his two sisters remain healthy and need to be in school. **The TFS-BMF AIDS Orphans Scholarship Project is another expanding work for which we urgently need funding.**

Almost no one in Sudan can afford anti-retroviral drugs and suicide or violence against others are not unusual choices among those diagnosed as HIV positive. But the offer of empathetic, non-judgmental, confidential listening can help people hold on to hope and to life. Palliative care and befriending may be the best available options for many sufferers and these, too, need to be included under home based care. Joseph, Team Three leader, describes befriending as “small mouth, big ears”. **A training course for befrienders** should be possible late this summer.

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**Editha, leader of Team One, and Joseph, leader of Team Three, discuss the value of befriending in caring for people living with HIV/AIDS.**

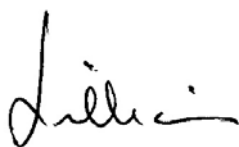
**Together for Sudan-The Bishop Mubarak Fund is an educational charity which includes educational support projects such as school breakfasts for vulnerable children, solar lighting for women learning to read, eye glasses and medicines for the most needy. We seek to build peace and civil society from the grass roots by educating displaced and marginalised women and children. Our work moves forward in response to local needs and local demands.**

There are many forms of education, of course. Learning to read is basic and at present we sponsor 30 women's literacy classes in the Khartoum area and in Kordofan, western Sudan. University education is critically important to produce the women leaders of tomorrow and we now have almost 200 women at university in Sudan. Teacher training is likewise vital. But we have also recently trained volunteers in First Aid and in Health and Hygiene so that they can support other aspects of our work. And we are in conversation with Sudanese medical and educational professionals on the way forward to meet Sudan's critical need for nurses and paramedical specialists.

Education provides women with hope for the future and a chance to help themselves and their children. **Our work and our needs are growing and we invite you to partner with us in preparing Sudanese women for a better future.** One way to do this is through a **named university scholarship.** A one year scholarship requires a donation of **£400.** A permanent named scholarship can be set up for **£2,000.** We are pleased to honour the parents of Dr. Halcyon Leonard in this appropriate way:

**Permanent Scholarship in Honour of Anthony and Joan Disney.** Anthony Disney joined the Sudan Political Service in 1926 and served in Kurmuk and Wad Medani before becoming District Commissioner (DC) in El Fasher (1937-42). He was DC in Singa from 1942-46 and then joined the Department of Economics and Trade, becoming Director in 1950. After Sudanese independence he joined the Blue Nile Brewery. Joan Disney taught at the Girls Training College in Omdurman and served as Provincial Education Officer for Girls at Singa. She was a strong advocate of women's education and served as Chief Commissioner of Girl Guides for the Sudan.

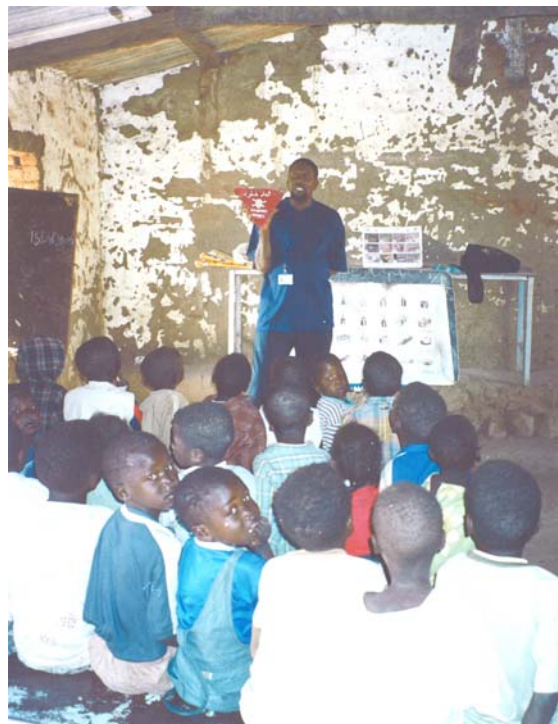
With appreciation for your support,



Lillian Craig Harris  
Director

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to The Bishop Mubarak Fund and sent to Norman  
Jackson, 47 Taunton Ave., London SW20 0BH**



Kindergarten children in a TFS sponsored school at Tillo, the Nuba Mountains, learn to avoid unexploded landmines.