

Report from Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron

In February 2007 I visited South-Sudan and Peace Village in Kuron together with my students from the Norwegian school Borgund folkehoegskole. The school supports Bishop Paride Taban and his unique development project Peace Village through Stromme Foundation. This was my second visit to Kuron, and in the following I bring my report.

The road to Kuron

The road from Narus to Kuron is still in poor condition with no improvements from the last time we traveled there. We experienced rain the day before we left for Kuron which resulted in several difficulties with mud, and we spend about 10 hours to reach Peace Village. The road is built by Bishop Paride him self – and the government in Juba has promised him that the road will be a priority. The standard of the road combined with late and unstable rainfall the last months have resulted in that the planned and financed construction of the new school building is not accomplished.

Improvement at the school

We experienced the school as the main project and it seems like the school is improving.

Approximately 130 children attend the school in Kuron. The number of children is increasing and will soon pass 140 children. Today, there are two school buildings. One is a permanent building in masonry with three classrooms and there is also a building with a more temporary character with straw and a plastic cover, with a large classroom for the youngest children.

An expansion of the school area of two additional wings are already planned and financed. The expansion will soon be carried out. A firm from South Africa is ready to do the job.

We visited all the classes, and our impression was that the teachers are very qualified and dedicated for their jobs. The teachers are now being paid thanks to support from Stromme Foundation.

Qualified teachers are of great importance for the development of Kuron. Salary and residence for the teachers is very important. The teachers are lacking permanent residence and this should be a priority in the nearest future. Today, the teachers are living in temporary solutions inside the existing area in the Peace Village.

Many of the students are from villages around the area of the Peace Village. Some of the students have longer distances to walk from their home to the school, up to 5-6 hours walk from their home. This was a situation that we were not aware of, and it was a shock for us to experience the fact that more than 50 boys were spending the night outside in the school yard. Every morning they walk down to the river to get washed and they receive their school uniforms which they return to the school again, every afternoon. They are served two meals per day at the school. A priority now is to build a simple dormitory and a simple sanitary installation.

Most of the students are boys. It is difficult to get the parents to send their daughters to school. It is also difficult for the school to keep the girls after they turn 11-12 years old. It is expected of the girls that they stay home to watch over their younger siblings before they are to be married in a very young age. The school in Kuron has as one of many important goals, to try to change this pattern. It was distinctly that many others trough speeches under the large public occasion which was hosted under our stay, also had this opinion.

Bishop Paride also wants to arrange evening lessons for adults. This was one of the Bishops main points under his speech to the adults and parents. This will have to be depended on resources of teachers. A development of the school buildings will make this possible. Many parents show great interest in the school. Women and men sit outside the classrooms many hours each day while the

children are being educated.

The teachers and the children show us proudly their books, work and tests. Still, the school is lacking interior, equipment and school uniforms.

They use what they have but an expansion of the school building, more students and teachers will result in the need to invest in desks, chairs, books, pens, chalk boards and clothes for the children.

The challenges to come are many, but the success of the school so far is an inspiration for further achievement in Kuron and with the donors and partners in other countries.

Peace Village is growing

Bishop Paride received 10 km² for the development of the Peace Village. The main focus so far has been on Kuron by the Kuron River. Paride has also built up an airstrip 6km west of Kuron, and it is in this area that he sees the further development come to place.

Paride has built up a bridge over the Kuron River and this bridge connects these two areas together. In a larger perspective, this is a bridge between the two districts Eastern Equatoria and Upper Nile. This is also a symbol for Parides vision. He wants to build a bridge between different people and cultures.

Not far from the airstrip is also a new windmill. This windmill can pump up to 40 000 liters of water each day, and there is enough water here. Parides vision is that people from different tribes are to come together to this area, settle down, live together in peace, receive education, get access to health, church, water and agriculture. The windmill is therefore very important for the further development of this area.

A health center is planned built up in the same area as the windmill and the airstrip. The further plans for this area are comprehensive.

We find new facilities also in the key area of the Peace Village. In the administration building we find an impressive access to internet for four computers. We also find a new shower and sanitary installation. In the center of the village is an open hut made of straw. This is a place for eating, conversation and relaxation. The guesthouse is ready, and we can see that many things are happening in Kuron - and this makes the everyday life a bit easier for our friends who live and work in the Peace Village.

Summing up

We have growing faith for the project after this visit as donors and guests for the Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron. The project is a positive contribution for development, peace and a future for South-Sudan. The Peace Village is definitely important for the area around Kuron, but the project can also be of great importance for larger areas in South-Sudan. The development locally can give optimism and spreading positive consequences for others outside of Kuron. This way of development can be a model for similar projects other places in South-Sudan.

By Ole Reinlund, 20th February 2007

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