

Support Trust for African Development

NEWSLETTER

Issue 2 | December | 2017



*"Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."
~Mother Teresa*

IN THIS YEAREND ISSUE, STAD REFLECTS ON THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK IN 2017. IN ADDITION, OUR CHAIRPERSON AND VOLUNTEERS PONDER ON WHY WE CONTINUE TO BE WORKING FOR STAD DESPITE DIFFICULTIES AND SOMETIMES HEARTACHES. OUR CONCLUSION ECHOES THAT OF MOTHER TERESA: NOT ALL OF US CAN DO GREAT THINGS, BUT WE CAN DO SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

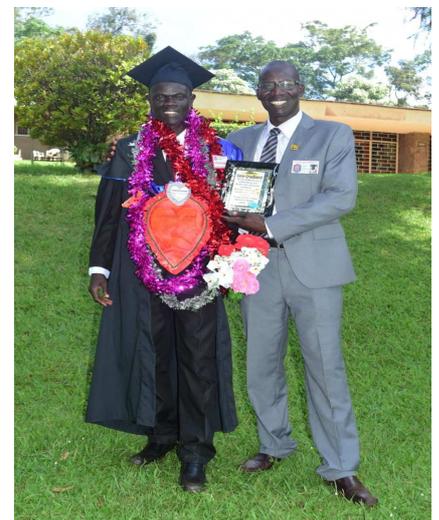
- Highlights of STAD activities in 2017
- Hear from STAD volunteers and concerned individuals why they are involved with STAD
- Most of all, feel the heartbeat of our dynamic and inimitable STAD founder and chairperson, Ms. Florence Andrew

NOT ONLY THE RICH & PRIVILEGED CAN ACHIEVE! STAD-SUPPORTED STUDENT **KHEMIS BEN MANOAH** OBTAINED FIRST CLASS HONOURS!

If the poor and under-privileged are given a chance, they too can achieve. This is what STAD strongly believes in, and that is why we source support for students to continue their studies at the tertiary level. These students often treasure the opportunities given to them and work very hard to excel and succeed.

Khemis is just a case in point. He is a South Sudanese national who left the country in the wake of the civil war which erupted in mid-December, 2013. Later, he found solace in Uganda and subsequently joined the Uganda Christian University in January 2015 as a full-time student on self-sponsorship. While in year 3, STAD identified him as a high achiever and talented student with great motivation to excel and thus supported him to carry out an academic research. More recently, STAD fund-raised for his graduation ceremony which took place on 27 October 2017 at the Uganda Christian University.

Khemis achieved First Class Honours in Social Work and Social Administration. Congratulations, Khemis! STAD is very proud of you, not only of your achievement but more so, of your determination to overcome the odds and all that went against you in order to succeed. You are truly an inspiration to South Sudanese children and youths (and for that matter, all of us) - not to look at our difficult circumstances but to strive on in spite of them.



"I ATTRIBUTE MY WHOLE SUCCESS TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD, THE MASTER CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE AND HIS DEAR SON JESUS CHRIST. "

It has been a long struggle but I drew courage from the Holy Bible, the living word of God. I was scared that I wouldn't perform because I stayed home for 7 years after completing high school. I discovered a Christian book entitled "Tough Times Never Last but Tough People Do" which allayed my fears and motivated me to work extra hard. I learnt to conquer my fears by turning the impossible into the

possible. I was so happy to be the only international student to have obtained First Class Honours in 2017. My next step is to find a scholarship to study a master's degree in an African university or diaspora.

I thank STAD so much for the enriching support rendered in the struggle for success. Long live STAD for supporting Africa's poor through education and other programmes.

I challenge all South Sudanese students and others affected by conflict to rise up and shine wherever they are. Education is the master key that unlocks and liberate us from extreme poverty and clutches of conflict. Above all, if a country's population is literate, there will be peace and economic prosperity. The peace of Christ be with everyone!

~Khemis

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BORN DURING SUDAN'S FIRST CIVIL WAR (1955-1972), RAISED AS A REFUGEE IN NORTHERN UGANDA, STOPPED SCHOOL AT PRIMARY 7 BECAUSE HER PARENTS COULD NOT AFFORD THE SCHOOL FEE OF 9 UGANDAN SHILLINGS (ABOUT 0.2 EURO CENTS!), THEN CAME ALONE TO THE NETHERLANDS IN 1996 TO PURSUE A MASTER'S DEGREE ONLY TO BE STRIKEN WITH HODGKIN DISEASE/ LYMPH NODE CANCER WITH NO IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS AROUND TO TAKE CARE OF HER.

SOUNDS LIKE SCENES FROM A MELODRAMA? NO, THAT IS THE LIFE STORY OF **FLORENCE A. ANDREW**, STAD'S FOUNDER & CHAIRPERSON! THANK GOD, THE PLOT IS STILL DEVELOPING & THERE IS YET HOPE FOR A HAPPY ENDING. READ ON TO HEAR FLORENCE'S STORY!

FLORENCE'S STORY...OVERCOMING ILLNESS AND FOUNDING STAD



Despite her misfortunes during her younger days, Florence was determined and fought hard to continue her studies, which was made possible when the Addis Ababa Peace Accord was signed in 1972. She did well enough as a Teaching Assistant at Ahfad University for Women (AUW) Omdurman, Sudan, earning her the opportunity to pursue a masters programme at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) under the Nuffic-Netherlands fellowship.

“Before I became ill, I was introduced to some South Sudanese living in or in the process of applying for asylum in the Netherlands. I became involved and used to attend some of their community activities. In the process, I discovered that the Southern Sudanese Women wanted to form an Association but failed. Amidst all the hassles of heavy medical treatments/appointments, I carried out a survey in 2009 to find what was hindering the formation of the Association and how many women were interested, etc. After several meetings and discussions, the Southern Sudanese Women Association in the Netherlands (SSWAN) was formed in 2001. I became the founder and chairperson from 2001 – 2007. At the same period, the Sudanese Orphans Support Trust (SOST), now Support Trust for African Development (STAD), was formed in 2000 but officially registered in 2002.”

“I first met Florence in 2015 and was immediately won over by her sincerity and passion for the work for South Sudanese. Energetic and exuberant, with an inimitable personality, one would never expect her to have been through so much hardship and struggles in life. If there are wounds and scars, Florence doesn't show them. There is no bitterness in her that questions why life has dealt her such a bad hand. Instead, she is a fighter, one with a never-say-die attitude. Her faith in God and her passion for her fellow-countrymen who are suffering because of the civil war give her the undaunting determination to do the work of STAD. May God bless you, Florence, and the work of your hands.”

~ Debbie Yip, STAD volunteer

WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY CHALLENGES?

“Such sad experiences, including surviving a life-threatening disease in a foreign country without a single immediate family member, though surrounded by and receiving utmost care, love and encouragement from loving friends, colleagues and staff at the ISS and strangers I will never get to know, became a very strong driving force to help others. I can't repay those who contributed to my education and survival.

I am who I am because somebody worked hard to improve health services, provide education or school fess for the less privileged and marginalized groups in society, through physical material items and/or by becoming their mouth-piece. So, all I can do to thank them, is to give back to society regardless who receives it. I don't want another person to undergo the same experiences that I did, especially dropping out of school

because of a few cents. If I can make one person smile, it is more than having 100 euros in my bank account.

I am convinced beyond doubt that God has a purpose for me. He is using me through organisations like STAD to show His unlimited love and care that nothing is impossible with Him. Even at your lowest point in life, God will use you to help someone. God needs to be the victory in your life and distress.

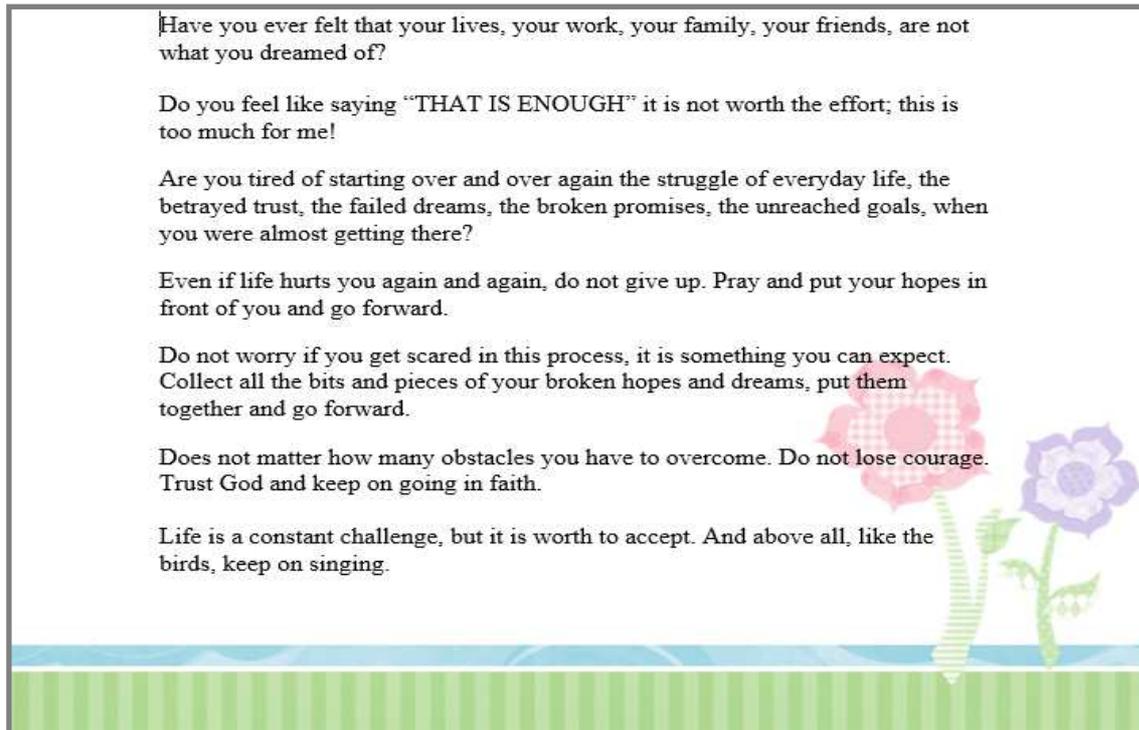


When I feel like giving up, the Apostle Paul's words “**Don't Worry, But Pray**” springs up. (Philippians 4:6-7) Paul knows best about anxiety, the unknowns of life and challenges. His words encourage me during life's uncertainties – from major life-threatening sickness, family issues, financial troubles, displacement, refuge, political persecution etc.

However, despite all these difficulties & challenges, I enjoy doing

what I do. I am happy to say that I have been and still am a very active person amidst constant health problems, by striving to stay positive and contribute especially to the empowerment and capacity building of the marginalized groups – women, orphans and the elderly in Africa and also migrants or diaspora communities in the Netherlands.”

"I would like to end my story with an extract of a poem sent to me by a friend which summarizes why I keep doing what I do."



A FOREIGNER IN LOVE WITH SOUTH SUDAN...DEBBIE'S STORY

What does a person from Singapore holding a normal office job and who has never worked in the field before have to do with STAD? How did their paths across thousands of miles cross in the first place? Well, volunteerism knows no ethnicity or boundary. Heaven has it that Debbie was to meet Florence (Chairperson of STAD) in one of the family lunches in St John's and St Philip's Church in the Hague in 2015.

"Having visited Uganda and South Sudan in 2013, I have since felt a special interest in the countries, especially South Sudan. I recall looking out of the

plane as it flew into Juba and having this surreal feeling that I had the privilege to visit the newest country in the world (South Sudan was recognised as a sovereign state in July 2011) and seeing the lush green and fertile land of South Sudan compared to the dry and arid landscape of Sudan in the north. I even commented to my colleague sitting beside me that there was so much potential in this land.

Then in Juba itself, I noticed roads being built and buildings flourishing all around us. Our driver proudly commented to us that a year ago, those

roads were all mud paths and there were few buildings and business activities.

Yes, I know I am reminiscing out loud, but why am telling you all this? It is because I saw so much potential in the country and its people. It was almost like looking at a new-born baby and feeling the joy and pride it brings, and wishing and praying that the baby will grow up to achieve his/her fullest potential and to serve the world. This was truly my feeling and wish for the new-born state of South Sudan.

Now turn the clock forward to when I met Florence in 2015, and now in 2017,

"I pray for reconciliation and healing for the people and progress of the country"



Debbie in Juba in 2013



South Sudan has since been embroiled in internal conflicts and fighting, far from the flourishing country with happy people I had hoped that it would grow into. That was when I decided that I would volunteer with STAD, who works with refugees and the most vulnerable people in South Sudan and Northern Uganda.

I am not trained in SGBV, gender issues, human rights, etc. but I try to avail myself to tell the stories of South Sudanese individuals who

were and who will be helped by STAD, to share their hopes and dreams, and also to spread news of the good works that STAD has been doing, under the capable leadership of Florence and the commitment of multitudes of volunteers, partners, sponsors and well-wishers. I also help to do the less interesting bit like writing annual reports and doing the finances and accounting, whatever is needed that is within my ability to do.

I tell myself that as long as I

am able to, I will do my small part in helping STAD and the people of South Sudan with the hope that the beautiful country and its people will move away from conflicts and move towards a future of hope and destiny.

I still have the image of the fertile land I saw on the plane etched firmly in the recesses of my brain, and I hope that one day in the near future, I will see the country and its people realising their great potential."

~Debbie Yip

CHAMPIONING FOR GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS...JOHN'S STORY

STAD has been working with Equatorial Women Organization (EWO) since 2012, and we have a long track record of working together in project development, implementation and organizational capacity development, within and outside South Sudan. Hence, it would be nice to hear from John Kubako, Programme Manager of EWO. Below is our interview with John:

What made you decide to do what you do in the first place?

It is in my best interest to serve the most vulnerable and marginalized, and also because I am trained in the field of gender and human rights, I took it as an opportunity for me to explore my talent and experience in that field.

Describe some of your experiences, the fulfilling ones, the frustrating ones, etc.

I have worked for over 10 years in human rights and gender-related issues, with both the young and adults. My effort is in trying to raise funds and for raising people's awareness on the concept of human rights and gender for peaceful co-existence instead of continuous violence. One of the most frustrating challenges is having to deal with women-related issues as a man; it is sometimes looked upon negatively by my fellow-



men who see me as more defensive to women rights than I could support men as a man. Secondly, dealing with women is challenging because they have diverse needs which I may not be able to address as a man. Thirdly is the lack of appreciation from some women on my efforts exerted to build their capacities or to improve the living conditions in the community. Finally, it is the negative culture and traditional norms from the community that affect my work.

What is one highlight in 2017?

Continuous running of the Organization despite the insecure situation in South Sudan and besides, we have become a regional organization working in both South Sudan and Uganda. Nobody pays me in the

organization; I get my pay from the project I develop and the organization cannot raise money for my position.

Most important, why are you still volunteering and what keeps you going?

In fact, I am working as a volunteer because I can sometimes go for several months without salaries but I have never given up. Instead, I dedicate my time to ensuring that the organization keeps running by lobbying for more organizational development. I would like to leave the organization only when I can see that it can stand on its own, with people like me who are ready to sacrifice their time to work, with or without being paid, in hardship or in happiness, but at the moment such is lacking.

Any advice for new volunteers?

The volunteers should dedicate their time to try to offer services that improve the lives of the most-at-risk group of individuals like women and girls, regardless of getting material benefits or not. However, if they do get some support, they should equally learn to appreciate that little they get and maximize their efforts in trying to offer services.



In these pages are stories of individuals from different walks of life but with a common thread that binds them together - the commitment to the work and mission of STAD and her partners in serving the vulnerable in South Sudan and Northern Uganda. Hope their stories have inspired you to be involved!

YEAR IN REVIEW - 2017

CONSORTIUM PARTNER IN SOUTH SUDAN FOR THE 3-YEAR UNSCRN 1325 (NAP-3) PROGRAMME

PEACEBUILDING, TRAUMA COUNSELLING, HEALING AND RECONCILIATION TRAINING

TRAININGS & DIALOGUE SESSIONS (PARTNER WITH EWO)



YWCDO's (YOUTH & WOMEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION) PEACE HALL — FURNISHED HALL, BUILDING A NEW VENTILATED IMPROVED PIT LATRINE (VIP) TOILET

CONTINUAL STUDENT SPONSORSHIP

EASTER CELEBRATION FOR SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2018:

- * Continuation of the UNSCR 1325 NAP 3 Women Girls 4 Change Alliance (WG4CA) project
- * Completion of the YWCDO VIP toilet project
- * YWCDO peace hall roof ceiling
- * Continual sponsorship of students
- * Follow up on peacebuilding, trauma counselling and reconciliation training
- * Easter and Christmas celebrations for the refugees (becoming a tradition)
- * Social Gender-based Violence (SGBV), HIV/aids and peacebuilding awareness raising in schools with school children
- * Capacity building of partner organization's local staff etc.

GRATITUDE...

STAD and its partner organizations are grateful and thankful to all stakeholders: NGOs, MoFA donors, individual contributors, friends and relatives for all your support (in kind and financially). Without your support, trust & confidence in what STAD does, the achievements mentioned above would not have been possible. To all its volunteers, a Big Thank You. We look forward to the same cooperation and support in 2018. May God bless you and your families with good health & more resources to share with the needy.

STAD is looking for **volunteers** to help in updating & posting data unto its website & social media (Tweets, Facebook), writing blogs and project proposals, etc.

If you are able to help, please contact us at:

Support Trust for African Development. Postbus 13089, 2501 EB Den Haag, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0) 61.85.65.766. Email: Florencete@live.nl. Website: www.s-t-a-d.org. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Stad63429022>

Or send your contributions to:

IBAN: NL49Rabo 0157370615 (Pls. mention the specific project you are supporting)



STAD wishes our readers a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

PLS. RESPOND!