



From a Gender Skeptic to a Champion of Women's Education – One Man's Fight for the Future of Women's Education in South Sudan

Winrock International

Improving Lives and Livelihoods Worldwide



Mr. Wilson Mbage and Family at Home in Yambio.
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016

“The PTA training has been fantastic - it has really worked! ”

- Hon. State Minister of Education Gender & Social Welfare;
Gbudue State

To Wilson Mbage of Yambio town, South Sudan, educating his six daughters was about securing better marriage arrangements for them — not getting them an education. He often kept them home from school so they could help him with the farm and household chores. “To be honest, I used to lie to the head teacher of their school. I used to tell him that it wasn't me preventing them from school — they were choosing to avoid coming,” Mbage said.

Poverty, violence, underfunded schools and unqualified teachers make it difficult for all of South Sudan's children to get an education, but the country's girls fare especially poorly. Girls often drop out of school due to early marriage and pregnancy, and the dowry associated with marriage can be a lucrative incentive for parents to marry their daughters at an early age.

The USAID-funded Room to Learn (RtL) project has sought to remedy that by educating 2,000 parent PTA members — including Mbage — on the importance of sending girls to school. “After the training, I realized that it was a very grave sin that I was making,” Mbage said. “Now I realize that every girl should have better access to education.”

Mbage promptly called a family meeting to discuss the future of his six daughters. It was decided that his three sons would help with household cooking and cleaning, even fetching water, to allow the daughters more time to attend school and complete homework.

This was not without problems. “We have had negative reactions within the community. People have said things like, ‘Your girls are becoming spoiled and they will decide not to marry. Your family is ending!’ But because of the confidence I have from the training, I have decided not to listen to these negative comments from the community. I want to continue and see the fruits of this for my daughters.”

Not only has Mbage made changes in his own family; he has hosted a community gathering of mothers and girls to encourage others to do so. “Wilson is a role model for encouraging his children to go to school. This has opened my mind and that of other women to practice and follow his example,” says Roda Isaya Basa, who has since sent her daughter Cecilia back to school.

Mbage's newfound enthusiasm for gender equality has meant great changes for his family. His youngest daughters are attending school every day and have received great praise from their head teacher. His oldest daughter got a good job with a security company and sends money to the family that's used to pay school fees. Mbage is seeking scholarships for overseas medical schools for his second oldest daughter, who has long wanted to become a doctor but was previously denied family support. Even his youngest son is thriving in school, despite the added responsibilities at home.

When asked about her future, Mbage's 11-year-old daughter, Aniri Nyamuse, said, "I'd like to be able to work hard and to be able to pass well from school. When I am older, I'd like to be like my older sister and become a doctor." Added Mbage, with a nervous but joyous smile, "This is the first



Mr. Wilson Mbage With Coffee Trees.
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016

time I am hearing this!"

The new regimen is still not easy — Mbage struggles to pay school fees and personal items his girls need — but the struggle is worth it. "I have some coffee trees. I have been thinking lately that I can sell this produce to raise the funds to be able to support the future of my daughter's education."



Cecila Has Returned to School, Thanks to Wilson's Efforts.
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016



Aniri Wilson, Surrounded by Family, Doing Home Work.
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



Principal Offices

2101 Riverfront Drive | Little Rock, AR 72202-1748 | T 501.280.3000 F 501.280.3090
2121 Crystal Drive, Suite 500 | Arlington, VA 22202-3706 | T 703.302.6500 F 703.302.6512

www.winrock.org | information@winrock.org



School Inspectors Become the Students and Pass with Flying Colors

Winrock International

Improving Lives and Livelihoods Worldwide



School Inspectors Assess P2 English Class - Merkolong Primary School, Juba.
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016.

“When I see a teacher performing well, I feel as though I’ve made an impact - I feel fulfilled.”

- Sarah Muja Longa - School Inspector. Munuki, Juba

Sarah Muja Longa, a primary school inspector, has recently become inspired to bring about change in South Sudan. Sarah wants to ensure that the future of teaching in South Sudan is as energetic and effective as she is as a teacher herself. As she internalizes her training and adopts her new found skills, she is overcoming the constraints of her circumstances and becoming an inspiration to teachers and colleagues.

Five decades of war and upheaval in South Sudan has had an inevitable impact on the education system. Numerous challenges remain in implementing education interventions in South Sudan; with less than 40 per cent of teachers properly trained and qualified, educating youth remains a struggle. The responsibility for addressing this gap falls to civil

servants, many of themselves under qualified, to ensure the direct transfer of relevant skills and structured, pedagogical knowledge to these teachers.

Sarah noted: “School inspectors are expected to be role models. Teachers look up to them and depend on them for support. It is so important that inspectors, such as myself, receive training to be better able to support teachers in South Sudan.”

The USAID-funded Room to Learn (RtL) project is working with over 230 County and Payam-level education officials, such as Sarah, to ensure they receive the necessary training to be able to continue providing this support. RtL ensures that these officials are better able to provide adequate, on-going assistance to teachers - including the 1,500 teachers already trained by RtL – while ensuring they are able to participate actively, transparently, and without discrimination in the analysis and monitoring and evaluation of the education process. The strategy goes beyond enhancing the skills of individuals, it is creating an environment in which school inspection can be effectively implemented, independent of continuous outside support.

Mr. John Gowon, the Acting Director of Administration at the Central Equatoria State Ministry of Education, added: “these workshops by RtL are critical; they build up the capacity of both the teachers and officials together, which is essential. Because of the increased

capacity of our teachers and schools, we are expecting the children to obtain better results in the final year exams.”

Mr. Benaiah Duku Enoch, an English teacher at Merkolong primary school in Juba, added: “When you are able to go to work, when you are able to do what is expected of you, you can go home feeling proud and happy.”

In South Sudan, support mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel means the provision of mentoring and counseling; continuous professional development; training on psychosocial support, administration, and management; teacher supervision; and provision of relevant teaching/learning materials. RtL is providing a number of their technical resources to education officials, such as the Teacher Training Manual, Key Information Cards, and the Continuous Professional Development Manual. Having



Sarah Muja Longa—School Inspector, Munuki Block, Juba
Image Copyright Winrock International

completed the training, Sarah received five different resources, stating: “I’m already using the manuals that I received to help me conduct my observations and follow-on trainings. They are very useful and it will certainly help me to be better at my job – they are a very valuable resource for me”.

Sarah concluded: “the training I received from RtL has given me confidence – I realize now the importance of my work, my role within the school system, and just how influential my new skills can be on a learning environment.”



Inspectors Assess for Class Overcrowding
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016



Mr. Benaiah Duku Enoch, English Teacher
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2016

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



Principal Offices

2101 Riverfront Drive | Little Rock, AR 72202-1748 | T 501.280.3000 F 501.280.3090
2121 Crystal Drive, Suite 500 | Arlington, VA 22202-3706 | T 703.302.6500 F 703.302.6512

www.winrock.org | information@winrock.org

© 2016 All Rights Reserved



RtL Exceeds Expectations and Builds Critical Literacy Skills in South Sudan

Winrock International

Improving Lives and Livelihoods Worldwide



Pupil Participates in Reading Competition with an RtL Supplied Level Reader
Image Copyright Winrock International, 2015

Literacy is accepted as one of the most integral of core skills contributing to academic achievement and lifelong learning. However in South Sudan, literacy performance in the primary-level education system continues to be hindered by a restricted access to essential educational resources, under qualified teachers, and a lack of adequate school funding. Through the wide-spread allocation of reading materials and continued training of teachers, Room to Learn has contributed toward increasing literacy levels of primary-level children, helping them to secure a brighter future.

Over the last few years, the number of primary school students in South Sudan has

more than doubled, from 700,000 to over 1.5 million. However, the completion rate in primary schools remains less than 10 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. Additionally, with independence from the North, South Sudan changed from offering instruction in Arabic, to teaching in English. As a result, the country's school system lacks the resources to keep up with the demand for English language materials and to ensure teachers are adequately trained to teach in English.

As a result of RtL's theoretical and practical knowledge of early-grade literacy, children are learning to read and write successfully through regular engagement with innovative and enjoyable reading and writing activities. The RtL teacher training content and methodology, and basic teaching learning aids that were supplied to target schools and learning centers, have transformed the way young children are taught to read and write and have increased teachers' capacity and confidence to deliver curriculum in ways that gradually increase students' learning outcomes. In addition, the training has developed teacher capacity to establish a rapport with students in order to motivate them to stay in school.

The USAID-funded **Room to Learn** (RtL) program aims to distribute over 200,000 books, including leveled readers, textbooks and other reading materials, to primary-level schools across South Sudan, while training over 1,500 teachers, promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development for both the pupils and the teachers.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



Principal Offices

2101 Riverfront Drive | Little Rock, AR 72202-1748 | T 501.280.3000 F 501.280.3090
2121 Crystal Drive, Suite 500 | Arlington, VA 22202-3706 | T 703.302.6500 F 703.302.6512

www.winrock.org | information@winrock.org

© 2016 All Rights Reserved