



Loreto Rumbek

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





CONTENTS

<u>DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>ABOUT US.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>WHAT WE DO</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>SCORECARD</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>COMMUNITY UPDATES</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>LORETO GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>LORETO PRIMARY SCHOOL.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>MARY WARD PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTER.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.....</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>FEEDING PROGRAM.....</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>PASTORAL, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICE</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023.....</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>HOPES FOR 2023</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>MEMORIAL WALL.....</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>BANKING AND DONATIONS.....</u>	<u>28</u>

Special thanks to our photographers — Mr. Paul Jeffrey and Ms. Emma Walking, as well as the Loreto Rumbek Development Office personnel.

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD



Each year in Loreto Rumbek, we experience new opportunities and ventures. This past year was no exception, as we began by facilitating youth from Loreto and across the Diocese walking to Juba to meet Pope Francis. This journey has brought about a new spirit among our young people. They have tasted peace, seen the beauty of their country firsthand, and encountered the worldwide Church.

The peace has not only been an aspiration of the walk, but we have also enjoyed a year of calm. Our roads are also improving with security, and we can move more easily. People are free to cultivate and enjoy the fruits of their land. The girls have been more committed to agriculture and producing food. However, we did not escape the reality of climate change, with late, persistent rains during the usual dry season of November and December.

Academically, the students are more and more committed to their studies, with all of our Primary and Secondary exam candidates for passing well. We are beginning to benefit from the work of those graduating from university. Among the many former interns who have completed their third level studies, ten are now back on the Loreto staff, working in different departments across the compound.

Alongside our community programmes, many families have been assisted with food support, medical health, and access to water.

We are grateful to all our partners for your ongoing support, and we look forward to all that 2024 presents to us.



ABOUT US

The Loreto Sisters first came to Rumbek in 2006 at the invitation of the Bishop of Rumbek to begin a new mission for girls. This mission was to establish a girls' boarding secondary school. It was to be located in the village of Maker Kuei, 8km from Rumbek town center. The local community offered the land to the Sisters to begin their ministry.

Over the years the mission has expanded greatly. Today Loreto has three core programmes: a community based co-educational Primary School (LPS), an all-girls Secondary Boarding School (LSS), and a woman and child focused Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC). Our other projects, such as Agriculture, Internship, and Vocational Training serve to support the main three programmes. All projects in Loreto hold education as their central focus.

While the parents in our host community did not benefit from formal education, they are committed to ensuring their children have a chance to study and access our healthcare facilities. As our past pupils move into internship, they provide an important service in supporting all our departments. After two years, our interns go on to university with the hope they will return to South Sudan to serve their communities. Thankfully we have been privileged to journey with many of our graduates through third level education.

Over the years, the Loreto mission has catalysed development in the community, encouraging the uptake of formal education for both boys and girls, embracing modern health practices, promoting peace, and fostering sustainable agriculture in the community of Maker Kuei. These have not only impacted on how members of the community live, but have also helped to shape their aspirations and dreams for the future.

WHAT WE DO



Loreto Rumbek adopts an integrated and holistic approach in its programmes by simultaneously promoting education, health, and livelihoods in the local community of Maker Kuei, Rumbek. Our programmes focus on girl child education, health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, agriculture, empowerment, emergency response, and food security. Through them, we create opportunities for the most vulnerable in our community.

2023 SCORECARD

1705

(55% girls)

Learners attending Loreto
Schools in Rumbek.

>1 million

Cooked meals provided
through the feeding
programme.

140

Beneficiaries of the vocational
training program taking tailoring
classes.

76

Former students currently in
university through scholarships.

50

Interns benefited from the
Professional Internship
Program.

5582

Children Under age 5 accessed
healthcare at Mary Ward PHCC.

15.6 tons

Groundnuts produced from the
school farm.

19,992

Clinical consultations done at
Mary Ward PHCC.

COMMUNITY UPDATES

THE SITUATION

In 2023, the community of Maker Kuei experienced relative peace, as efforts by the State Government to enforce security began to bear fruit. There have been significantly lower incidences of cattle raiding, a key trigger for violence and revenge attacks. The relative peace in the community has encouraged formerly displaced community members to return and re-establish their homes. These people are in dire need of sources of clean water, healthcare, and education for their children. Currently, there is little government investment in these basic services, particularly in rural communities such as ours. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is precarious and we are working hard to provide these most basic necessities.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Since its beginning, Loreto has been working closely with the local community and state administrations to promote education. Over time, the uptake of education for girls has improved and an increasing number of community members have been sending their girls to school, a practice that was previously not encouraged. Following increased success and advocacy, the State Government in 2022 passed legislation that criminalised early or forced marriage for girls of school going age. Fittingly, the announcement of the passing of this legislation was done by the State Governor while on an official visit to Loreto Girls Secondary School.

We have also had an impact on the local communities' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to health, education, livelihoods, and the position of girls and women in society. More children, especially girls, are now being sent to primary and secondary school, as well as tertiary education. The admissions to Loreto Girls Secondary School has risen from 34 students in 2008 to 360 in 2022. Admissions to Loreto Primary School have increased from 606 in 2015 to 1296 in 2022. The number of students completing Primary 8 national examinations also increased over time, from just 28 in 2018 to 50 in 2022 (an increase of 79%). However, challenges persist with the relatively low enrolment and completion rates for girls in primary education.



PROMOTING COMMUNITY RE-INTEGRATION.

“Our lives took a different turn in the year 2019 when heavy fighting broke out in our community. Many young men and women were killed or injured during the conflict and those of us who survived had to run with the little that we could gather. When we heard that peace was restored, a number of us gathered the courage to return. However, the place where we resettled we had the challenge of water. The nearest source of water was more than 30 minutes away and the water was not safe for drinking. Recently, we received a new borehole here with the support of Loreto. Now, we are able to access clean water easily and our children no longer have to do the hectic task of fetching water from far. We now feel resettled and ready to restart our lives.”

Maker, a community member from Aber village.

LORETO GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE

Progress in education has faced tough challenges in South Sudan, due to high levels of deprivation, sickness, and violence. According to UNDP, children from the poorest communities are four times more likely to be out of school than those from richer households. Right now in our community, poverty and cultural beliefs remain the biggest inhibitors to girl child education at the secondary school level. At Loreto, our goal is to ensure that young women in South Sudan get the support they need in order to access holistic and quality education.

OUR APPROACH

Loreto Girls Secondary School promotes access to education for young South Sudanese girls between the ages of 13-18. It provides a safe learning environment where they are protected from the common challenges which threaten their education, including early marriage, conflict, and hunger. This year Loreto Girls Secondary School enrolled 360 girls in total into secondary school providing them with access to holistic education, accommodation, daily meals, and protection.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

In 2023, 120 new students joined Loreto Girls Secondary school in our Senior 1 or Transition classes. The girls were welcomed by members of their new school family and given an orientation on the Loreto way of life and ethos of the school.

53 students in our Senior 4 classes sat their national examinations in 2023. They are currently waiting for their results.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 360 young South Sudanese Women enrolled at Loreto Girls Secondary School in the year 2023.

- 53 Graduate students in the year 2023 and more than 400 graduate students since School's inception.

- >90% Pass rate in the national examinations.



HIGHLIGHTS

4 female students actively protected from early and forced marriage within the Loreto compound.

Girls at Loreto Girls S.S encouraged to take STEM subjects in addition to computer classes and practical agriculture.

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



PROMOTING GIRLS' EDUCATION

"This is my first year of study here at Loreto. My experience has been nothing but lifechanging, because I have learnt so much in this year and had an experience which I never thought I would have. First is that I have come to interact with girls from other parts of South Sudan who have different cultures and languages from ours. They have shown me that even if we are different culturally, we are still the same people and suffer the same challenges when we do not work together in harmony. Another wonderful experience that I have had is the sense of independence and empowerment to speak out about injustice. These values are strongly held here at Loreto and are transferred to us junior students from our seniors. Back at home, girls and women do not have a voice, but here I feel that as a young woman I am becoming more empowered to bring change to my community"

Achiek, Senior 1 student, Loreto Girls Secondary School.

LORETO PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE

In the local community of Maker Kuei, access to education for young boys and girls at primary school going age is still low. Traditional gender roles are engrained into boys and girls who take up family responsibilities at a young age, as opposed to attending school. Poverty and the additional costs related to taking children to school, for example purchase of learning materials, are also a deterrent for many parents. While the number children attending school is gradually increasing in our community, reports from UNICEF state that up to 2.8 million South Sudanese children of school going age are still not enrolled.

OUR APPROACH

Loreto Primary School prioritises the provision of quality, holistic education for pupils enrolled in our school. The school mainstreams enrolment of girls and advocates for their continued education. It provides protection from early marriage, as well as provision of supporting structures to keep children in school, such as healthcare and school meals. Loreto Primary School also works to improve the capacity of local teachers through training programmes that update their skills with the latest insights and professional techniques.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

738 boys and 558 girls were enrolled into Loreto Primary School in 2023, ranging from Kindergarten to Primary 8. Students participated in various co-curricular activities, such as sports, drama, agriculture, and music.

Pupils benefited from daily school meals, as well as access to healthcare at Mary Ward PHCC.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1296 Pupils from the local community of Maker Kuei accessing education at Loreto Primary School. We have a gender parity score of 0.75.
- 65 Pupils including 26 girls and 39 boys graduated from Primary School in 2023.
- Active participation of students in co-curricular activities including arts, sports, agriculture, and drama.
- Parents demonstrating improved resolve to support the school through consistent fee payment, attending PTA meetings, and encouraging school attendance.



HIGHLIGHTS

1296

Students enrolled at Loreto Primary school in 2023.

0.75

Gender parity at Loreto Primary School

~450,000

School meals provided to students attending primary school.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



EDUCATION FOR LIFE

“Me and my friends look forward to coming to school every day. In the mornings, my friends always pass by our home to make sure that we go together and that we get to school on time. My mother is also very supportive of me going to school despite the fact that I am a girl. She says that when I finish primary school she would like me to join Loreto Secondary school like our neighbour’s daughter.

Every day I work hard at school and I appreciate my teachers who are very friendly to us and teach us a lot of new things. When I grow up, I would also like to be a teacher, so that I can teach others the things that I know.

Akudid, a Class 6 pupil at Loreto Primary school.

MARY WARD PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTER

THE CHALLENGE

Access to quality healthcare is one of the biggest challenges facing South Sudan. In rural communities, such as Maker Kuei, poorly staffed clinics or inaccessible facilities contribute to the high prevalence of disease and deaths from preventable illnesses. WHO statistics for 2023 indicate that South Sudan still has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the world. Malaria and nutrition related illnesses, particularly for children under the age of 5, are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.

OUR APPROACH

Mary Ward PHCC adopts an integrated approach in the provision of healthcare by implementing both preventive and curative programmes. Health education is a key crosscutting component for all our programmes implemented in the facility including: the Community Outreach Programme, the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, the Under 5 Nutrition Feeding Programme, the Twin's Support Programme, and the Psychosocial Support Programme.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

Mary Ward PHCC intensified its clinical outreach this year by targeting remote and inaccessible villages in the community. Most of the residents in these villages did not visit health facilities when ill, primarily because of distance. By bringing the services closer, the uptake of medical treatment, as well as knowledge of basic health and hygiene practices, was increased.

The Expanded Programme on Immunisation also recorded a significant increase in the number of caregivers bringing their children for vaccination. Previously, most mothers who gave birth at home kept their children there and only presented them to hospital when they became sick. Through intensive health education, use of community mobilisers, and partnerships with other stake holders, the number of children taking up vaccinations has increased. It is hoped that this will reduce the disease burden in the community going into the future.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Approximately 20,000 clinical consultations conducted in 2023.
- 3441 vaccinations administered to children under 5 through the Expanded Programme on Immunization.
- Over 7000 cases of acute malaria infections diagnosed and treated.
- Over 230 children benefited from Nutrition Feeding Programme.
- About 5000 community members in remote villages reached through our clinic outreach.



A HEALTHY START

"I have learnt a lot about my children's health and nutrition since they were enrolled into the Twin's Nutrition Program. In the community, at times we are forced to wean our children early because of the challenges of accessing food consistently through the year. Our inability to properly breastfeed makes the children become weak and malnourished. When we heard about the Twin's Program which supports mothers like me, several of us enrolled and we have since been able to receive assistance in terms of food and medical care for the children. My children's health has really improved and their growth is better. I believe they now have a healthy start in life. As caregivers, we also receive education on how to care for our children and also get treated when sick. This has created a big difference in our lives."

Martha Abol, Caregiver of twins enrolled in the nutrition program.

HIGHLIGHTS

19,992

Clinical consultations
conducted at Mary
Ward PHCC

7,281 (36%)

Number of malaria cases
treated at Mary Ward
PHCC

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS



PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

THE CHALLENGE

Young women who complete their secondary school education face additional challenges in transitioning to third level institutions. In the local culture, access to education is prioritised for male children and a woman with secondary school education may even be considered 'too educated.' This has meant that the professional employment pool in South Sudan is male dominated, as female learners do not get the necessary support to advance their education.

OUR APPROACH

Our Professional Internship Programme provides a platform for young women who have recently graduated from secondary school to have an internship experience. Here they get to improve their skills and knowledge working in various departments, learn basic computer use, as well as obtain English language accreditation. Supporting these recent graduates in the one or two-year programme has proven to help improve their awareness of the available career opportunities post-secondary school graduation, as well as preparing them for the challenges of university life.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

Our interns have continued to provide essential support for the running of Loreto Rumbek throughout the various departments. Thanks to the Internship Programme, interns have enhanced their capacity post secondary school formal education and gained a clearer perspective of their future career paths. By being part of the programme, most are opting for careers in courses related to healthcare, education, or development. 14 former interns have already joined university this year upon completing the Internship Programme.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 50 Secondary school graduates enrolled in the Professional Internship Programme.

- 45 interns participated in our vocational training programmes, including tailoring.

-14 interns have transitioned into university in 2023.

- 14 Interns completed C1 level in our professional English language course.



EDUCATION FOR LIFE

“I have now been in the professional Internship programme for two years. I joined the programme after graduating from Loreto Secondary School and I am always glad that I got the opportunity to come back to Loreto and join the team. I am particularly happy because I come from a big family and my parents were of the suggestion that I had already received enough education, having graduated from secondary school.”

Through the Internship Programme, I got the opportunity to come back and serve as an intern in various departments and also take a professional course in English language. My computer skills have also improved and I now feel more confident as an all rounded person. This year, I will be joining the university in Nairobi and I feel confident that the academic and life skills that I have received at Loreto will set me up for success at the university and beyond.”

Nyalong, Professional Internship Program.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

THE CHALLENGE

Lack of relevant market-oriented skills has been a big contributor to youth unemployment in South Sudan, where over 50% of the youth population is without work. This high unemployment is driven by low levels of education, limited skills among the youth, as well as few opportunities offered by the weak national economy. Lack of opportunities for the youth in South Sudan is a key contributor to conflict in both urban and rural areas, as they become easy targets for recruitment by armed groups and gangs.

OUR APPROACH

Loreto Rumbek seeks to provide a platform for the local youth to chart their own paths to self-sustainability, by linking them with opportunities to learn skills in their areas of interest. Opportunities available in the Loreto include courses on computers, tailoring, block making, as well as masonry.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

The tailoring programme was started in 2022 with just 54 participants comprising of students, interns and community members, working with eight tailoring machines. A professional tailor was recruited to aid in the training of learners. This year, participants in the tailoring programme were able to learn and perfect their skills in fabric measuring, cutting, and stitching. They were able to finish the stitching of over 1000 pieces for feminine hygiene kits that were distributed to school going girls in Loreto, as well as other Diocese of Rumbek schools.

Participation in the English classes, as well as computer training courses, are now mandatory for all interns enrolled in the programme. The English course has been identified as an essential component for improving their mastery of the subject, which is the main language of instruction used in universities in East Africa.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 140 beneficiaries, including 90 secondary school students, as well as 40 interns and 10 community members participated in the tailoring course.

- 45 interns took part in the professional English training course. 14 of them attained level C1.

- All 50 Interns took computer training classes.



“ At Loreto, I have come to appreciate that education is not just what you learn in class, but also the skills that you learn by interacting with others and the skills that you gain through practice. Having gone through the secondary school and now that I am in the internship programme, I feel that I am learning even more. I just finished the tailoring course and I feel that tailoring and dressmaking is a skill that I now possess. I am so proud of this because I can make repairs to my own clothes as well as those of others and I find this so simple to do. Someday I may be able to make some money from it, but what makes me happy is that I possess an extra skill in addition to the formal education that I have received here.”

Laat, Intern at Loreto Rumbek.

FEEDING PROGRAMME

THE CHALLENGE

Prolonged food insecurity in South Sudan, because of changing climatic conditions, inter-communal conflicts, and economic crises have made food almost inaccessible to a majority of the South Sudanese population.

While 2023 was relatively better in terms of agricultural production, due to the prolonged rains as compared to 2022, market prices of processed food, such as flour and cooking oil experienced a significant increase. This was attributed to global forces especially the conflict in neighbouring Sudan and the war in the Ukraine.

OUR APPROACH

The Loreto School Feeding Programme continues to provide regular meals to students in order to promote school going, regular attendance, and active participation in class. Through the programme, students at Loreto received simple, but nutritious meals on a daily basis. In addition to this, identified vulnerable community members received food for work packages to help them meet their needs. Malnourished children under the age of 5 also benefitted from the Nutritional Support Programme, which provides meals and nutritional supplements, as well as medical support to promote their healthy growth and development.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

Approximately 1,000,000 meals were prepared and distributed to students, staff and other beneficiaries through the School Feeding Programme. Meals distributed through the programme were either purchased from the local market or obtained through production from the Loreto school farm. The school farm was instrumental in the supply of fresh vegetables, while groundnuts, white rice, cooking flour, cooking oil, and other food items were purchased from the local market. In addition, this year students received a generous food donation of canned turkey.

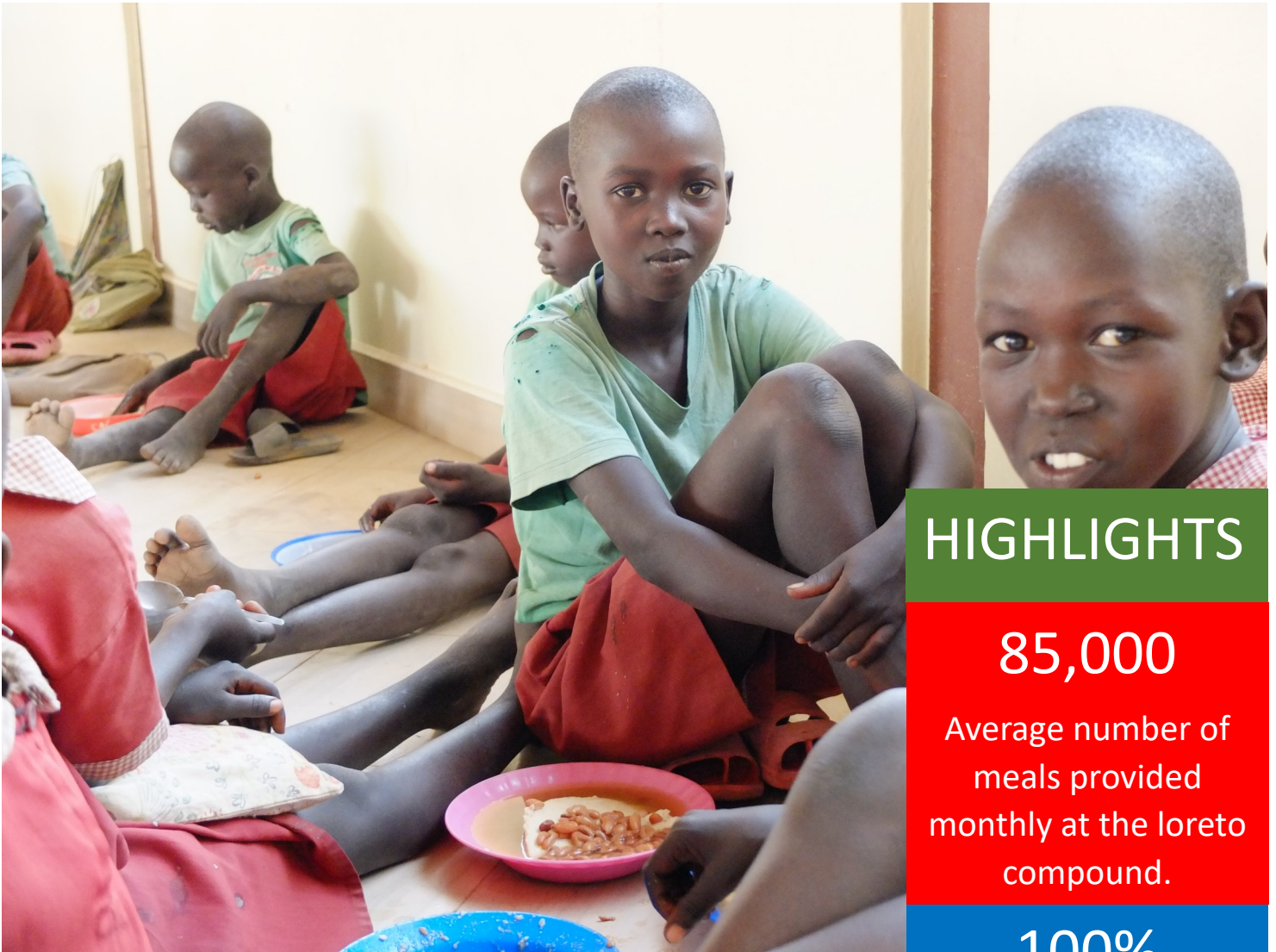
HIGHLIGHTS

- 1652 school goes in Loreto Rumbek benefited from daily meals. Day scholars had one meal each school day and boarding students had three meals each day.

- Over 1 million meals given through the School Feeding Programme in the year 2023 to both staff and students.

- About 230 children under 5 benefited from food support provided through the Twins and the Nutrition Feeding Programme.

- Approximately 50 vulnerable households benefited from food support.



FOOD FOR EDUCATION

“Our school not only provides materials for learning, but also give us food on a daily basis. This is really a big contributor to our success here. We were not able to concentrate fully in class because most of the times we came from home not having eaten anything. At school, we are always motivated and get meals which we can’t get at home. Some of us are orphans and some of us are being raised by single parents who can’t always afford to buy us all the food that we need. Luckily, we get food to eat at school, which keeps us going every day. The meals make us strong enough to play and also pay attention to the teacher in class.”

Mayom, primary 6 pupil at Loreto Primary School.

HIGHLIGHTS

85,000

Average number of meals provided monthly at the loreto compound.

100%

of children enrolled in the Nutrition Feeding Programme showed real progress towards regaining their health .

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

THE CHALLENGE

The local community of Maker Kuei, like all of Lakes State, prioritises animal husbandry, as opposed to crop farming. Animals are culturally significant and are considered a traditional measure of wealth. However, the people are suffering from the challenge of frequent droughts, which limit production for both animals and crops. The impact is that there have been persistent food shortages, loss of livestock due to lack of pasture, and intercommunal conflict as a result of cattle theft.

OUR APPROACH

In order to promote sustained access to food within the Loreto compound and in the local community, Loreto has prioritised crop production as a sustainable avenue to achieving food security. Loreto involves community members and students in practical agricultural activities in the school farm by utilising both traditional and modern methods of agricultural production. In particular, vegetable production during the dry season through irrigation has been a significant achievement and is slowly being taken up by the community members around water points.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

This year, our agricultural production was high, building on the efforts made in the year 2022. Production focussed on the cultivation of groundnuts during the rainy season and vegetables during the dry season. All the produce from the agricultural activities on the school farm contributed towards providing meals for students through the school feeding programme. This year 313 bags or approximately 15.6 tonnes of groundnuts were produced from the school farm. This represented approximately a 50% increase in production from year 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Approximately 15.6 tonnes of groundnuts harvested in the school farm in the year 2023.
- About 70 people worked on the school farm as casual workers. They were selected from the poor and vulnerable in the community in order to help improve their livelihoods.
- With more boreholes drilled in the local area, more community members are setting up vegetable gardens for household consumption, improving food security in Maker Kuei.



HIGHLIGHTS

95%

Contribution of produce from irrigated agriculture to fresh food consumed in the school.

50%

Increase in groundnuts harvested from the year 2022. A positive indicator of improved agricultural practices.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

“Myself and the rest of the students have gained great skills on how to work in a garden and harvest well. The school has made it mandatory for students to participate in practical agriculture, where we get to experience some of the theory that we learn in class. We do this every rainy season, as we cultivate groundnuts which are used for making peanut paste that is added to the vegetables that we eat in school. This is a meal that motivates us to do a lot of garden work so as to continue receiving the meals in school. Having acquired the skills, we help our parents at home with cultivation when we go for our holidays. Our parents are grateful for all the skills the school is making us learn. We have tried growing different vegetables which have yielded so well and made us love agriculture as an essential subject. I believe that if we continue to practice, we will be able to fight the threat of hunger in our school, homes and our community.”

Tina Ariong, S4, Loreto Girls Secondary School.

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**





PASTORAL, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

In February 2023, Peace Club members, Loreto interns, and other youth from the Catholic Diocese of Rumbek took part in a religious pilgrimage to Juba, where they welcomed Pope Francis who was on a visit to South Sudan to spread the message of peace. In total, a group of thirty pilgrims from Loreto participated in the walk, consisting of eighteen students and twelve members of staff.

The pilgrimage took a total of nine days, during which they made stops in various centres and interacted with the people there to spread the message of peace. In these communities the students made presentations in the form of drama and songs to promote non-violent conflict resolution. The pilgrimage fostered a spirit of tolerance, patience, and collaboration among the young people who endured long walks through harsh weather conditions on a daily basis. It also gave them a chance to pass through rural areas on the way to Juba and appreciate the challenges that some of the communities experience in their quest for survival. Finally, the pilgrimage provided an opportunity to contribute towards unity and peace in the country, as the walk culminated in a national prayer service that was presided over by the Pope Francis.

In addition to this, the school chaplain continued to provide spiritual guidance and leadership through celebrating weekly Mass in the school compound, as well as faith formation classes for students who were interested in knowing more about Catholicism. This year, a total of thirty-four secondary pupils were Confirmed, while seventy-seven primary and secondary pupils were Baptised.

Free access to counseling for primary and secondary school students on a referral or self-initiated basis, was an integral part in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing among students. The availability of the school counsellor helped in the provision of counselling for students, as they received regular group and individual therapy sessions. The counsellor took time to have a general understanding of the challenges that students go through in their homes and in school and structured tailored sessions to meet the emerging needs.



ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

Our Top Ten Achievements in 2023 in no particular order:

1. We are currently completing the construction of our Regional Education Center. This building will house the compound administration and offer courses in English, computers, and teacher training for the community.
2. While we have enjoyed great academic success, our tailoring department offers our students a chance to explore their creative side. Tailoring has been a massive hit with the students, with a queue waiting to be accepted into the ten-week course.
3. Maths has long been a challenge for our young people. This year, we have introduced an intensive maths programme for our students. Each evening the Secondary School students and staff spend time revising the Primary maths syllabus.
4. Four boreholes were installed around the local community. The provision of water has been a great blessing for the people. The children spend less time walking to fetch the family water every day. The women can also make vegetable gardens around these water points, allowing for a small source of income for the family.
5. Our Internship Programme has been extended to include non-Loreto graduates. We now welcome twenty new interns each year. Fifteen are selected from among our own graduating class, five are students from other schools, and some are young men, many of whom are graduates of our own primary school. Having a mix of young people in the Internship Programme allows for greater diversity.
6. University graduates: This year, seven of our graduates completed their studies in East Africa. Four are now back on the staff in the development office, secondary school, clinic, and farm.
7. In keeping with our current strategic plan, we are looking for new ways to generate income from within the country. Over the past few months, a small committee has gathered each week to study the issue of sustainable development. Some practical efforts for this year are to open a small school shop and provide students with the chance to engage in income-generating projects in agriculture.
8. As Loreto Rumbek celebrates another year, our graduates are becoming more numerous. With over four hundred graduates spread across the country and beyond, they are now beginning to ask how they can contribute to Loreto's mission in South Sudan. Conversations have begun around setting up their own past-pupils union. We look forward to moving this forward in 2024.
9. The coming of Pope Francis sparked a new interest in pilgrimages and faith formation. Loreto students and graduates have become vital personnel in organising these events. They provide excellent opportunities for our graduates to develop their leadership skills.
10. The development of our policies and handbooks is still ongoing. Our Board of Management approved five new policies this year, while many more are still in draft form.

HOPES FOR 2024

As we start 2024, we have discussed with the staff in the various departments what they would wish for in our school, and these are their responses:

1. Cleaning paths and land around the compound: the goal is to clear a walking path up to 1km long, with trees and benches.
2. In agriculture: Encourage the students to cultivate more of the land and offer them opportunities to engage in the business of planting and selling their own vegetables.
3. In the environment: The students will prepare 1,000 seedlings to be planted in the compound and around the community.
4. The Education Centre will welcome students for English, computers, and teacher training classes.
5. Establishing the Human Resource Management department and completing handbooks on the compound's financial, logistics, and HR practices.
6. In sustainability: Work with the parents on improving parental and family involvement in the schools.
7. Open a school shop to support student needs in the compound.
8. Introduce a second year of Kindergarten for pupils and seek funding to build two additional classrooms for them.
9. Build a staff meeting place for primary school staff.
10. Complete additional accommodation for graduates returning to work in Loreto after university.
11. Complete the extra boarding school buildings, ensuring accommodation for 400 secondary school students.
12. Facilitate more engagement with Mary Ward's spirituality, through the celebration of Mary Ward week, spiritual encounters for the students, and retreats for the youth around the area.

MEMORIAL WALL



Fr Mario Riva, an Italian Comboni Priest passed away in recent weeks in Italy. Fr Mario became a great friend to the Loreto Sisters as they sought to open the school. A fluent speaker of the Dinka language Fr Mario was an excellent teacher of the local language and culture, and pushed us to follow in the same way. The early years were a time of transition for all in Loreto Rumbek. During this time he provided much needed humour and advice. Due to his failing health, he left South Sudan in 2012. He continued to support Loreto Rumbek in any way he could.

We pray that he continues to intervene for the mission from Heaven. May he rest in peace.

BANKING AND DONATIONS

Loreto Rumbek's Development Office is responsible for fundraising, as well as maintaining relations with donors and partners of Loreto. The Development Office works closely with the Finance Office to ensure that grants are well implemented and quality reports submitted. The Finance Office ensures that financial reporting standards for the various partners are met and that project funds are used and reported on as expected.

Donor funded projects have been key to the success of the Loreto mission. Projects over the past years have been many and varied, but generally cover the areas of access to education particularly for girls, access to healthcare particularly for children under age 5, agricultural development and food security, and livelihood support and sustainable incomes for vulnerable community members.

This year, through the support of consultants, Loreto was able to develop its five year strategic plan to guide its vision into the future. This plan was developed following an evaluation of the programme which was conducted to identify the key successes and lessons from the past years of operation. In addition to this, various policies were also developed and approved by the Board of Management, including the child safeguarding, the admissions criteria, and the monitoring and evaluation policy.

Updates on what is happening in Loreto Rumbek are available through our monthly newsletter, on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, and on our website.

To support the Loreto programs in Rumbek, please donate to:

Bank Details

BANK:	Bank of Ireland
Address:	College Green, Dublin 2
Account Name:	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary- Irish Province- Loreto Rumbek
Account No:	60775342
Sort Code:	90-00-17
IBAN:	IE76 BOFI 9000 1760 7753 42
SWIFT:	BOFIE2DXXX
Currency:	Euro
CRA Name:	The Institute of the Blessed Virgin – Irish Province
CRA No.:	20014186

Loreto Ireland Address: Loreto House, Beaufort, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14

Loreto Ireland Phone #: +353 1 4935463

For more information about supporting our programs, for potential projects and/or partnerships, please contact: director@loretorumbek.ie - Or visit the Loreto Rumbek Website on www.loretorumbek.ie

A special Thank You to all of the donors, advocates, and supporters of the Loreto programmes in Rumbek. Without your support none of this would be possible.