

The fresh Start Initiative was started 2017 to provide a platform for mission agencies, churches, non- profit organizations and relief organization to network with churches and agencies working in the refugee camps in Africa. Our work in Yei South Sudan ended abruptly in 2016 and we were forced to follow our partners to the refugee camps in Uganda. The vision was necessitated by the enormity of the needs of the refugees at the camps. Using our relational equity with the Churches and partners on ground at the camps, the agencies and organizations can work through the platform of Fresh Start Initiative to encourage, educate and empower the refugees. It is to give the next generation a fresh start.

We have been actively engaged in missions since 1976. Fresh start Alliance Houston Texas.



**YEMI AYODELE- DIRECTOR**

## **FRESH START INITIATIVE**

In 2017 Yemi Ayodele made four trips to the refugee camps to listen to the stories and encourage the Pastors and community leaders working at the camps. Some of the issues raised here are part of the findings from the survey carried out during the visits. Other issues not mentioned here are those related to the health of the churches. The local churches at the camps are very strategic to the healing and empowerment of the refugees.

Some of the issues require lobby with Ministry of Education and Sports to ensure appropriate policy is in place and monitoring for compliance; while others relate to implementation and prioritization in programming.

### **1. Lobby and Advocacy Issues**

Practice of DEOS requiring all schools/Headteachers to purchase exams for end of term assessments that have not been set by teachers teaching the learners. The exams are set by the Association of Head Teachers and it is more a money generating activity than actual assessment of what was taught since different learners/schools are at various levels of learning. However, learners who fail to pay the mandatory payments get excluded form assessment. In the Settlement schools, UNHCR currently picks the bill for exams while in other schools the refugees struggle to comply. What is desirable is for the teachers to set own assessment items during the year (and get trained to do this) and a general harmonized exam could be given once a year.

**Need for agricultural land** or off-farm IGA for parents of children in schools to ensure economic empowerment so parents have capacity to support education - as is the practice in Uganda. Funding through the Government capitation grant is too low and ceiling on wage bill means not all required teachers are recruited by government in schools

Activities to reduce conflict with local communities, conflict transformation and peace building using the faith-based organizations, SMCs and school structures. Could be a platform, etc

## **2. Program delivery Issues**

Need for capacity building for teachers in the following areas:

Curriculum interpretation

Techniques for teaching large classes

Training in assessment and item setting -

Psychosocial support (trauma, stress, life skills, etc )

English language training

Need to identify ways of enhancing teaching by Teaching Assistants/Volunteers (as volunteers not paid up staff) through appropriate short-term training opportunities

## **3. Acute shortage of trained south Sudanese teachers at the refugee camps.**

Currently, there is a serious lack of trained teachers in the refugee settlements. It is urgent that this need is addressed as soon as possible, to improve education. Most community primary and secondary schools are staffed with poorly trained teachers.

## **4. Teacher Training within the camps**

Founded in 2001 initially to train in-service teachers, **Yei Teacher Training College (YTTC)** expanded its efforts significantly in 2006 to include pre-service training. As a key national player in education and teacher training in South Sudan, YTTC has been instrumental in establishing movements to advocate for improvement in teacher quality, equity and access issues. The staff are currently exiled in Uganda. They can be engaged to develop tailored responses to the education needs of the refugees.

## **5. Our experience in Yei South Sudan**

In 2013, we had a teacher's conference at Yei South Sudan with our partners and the ministry of education. We found out that over 90% of the teachers at the conference, had no teacher training. We spearheaded a scholarship program [**'gudnebor scholarship'**] at the Yei teachers college for in service teachers. Our first set of 40 students were to graduate in December 2016 but the war broke out in July and they were forced to refugee camps in Uganda. Yei teacher's college was forced to close. The students and staff are currently in different cities in Uganda and the refugee camps. Some of the teachers can be trained at the Arua Core Teachers Training college. We are working with our on-site partners to hold a teacher's conference in May 2018. We hope to search and find teachers that can be sponsored for the in-service certificate course. Cost of training for two years is \$2000 and \$1000 for books and travel per student.

## **6. Skills acquisition training centers**

Robust Skills development for P7 and S4 graduates linked to market trends and desirable trades to support.

Current options for Skills development target very vulnerable out of school youth and caters for less than 10% of needs in the Refugee Youth. Desirable would be to deliberately provide the skills to learners while in primary and secondary school, so they are equipped at the time of graduation. For e.g. **In 2017, over 4,500 children sat for PLE and 70% of these passed to transition to the next level. Available places and schools could only take about 500 of these in secondary school. What happens to the majority in the settlements? How to make them productive?**

## **7. Accelerated Education.**

Need to support Accelerated Education within the settlement schools to target overage learners in both primary and secondary school and provide effective avenues for those who either do not wish to continue or are constrained by family obligations. Related to this, ensure an effective tracking system to find out how the children progress and address barriers that kept them out of school in the first place. These are varied and could relate to heading a family, access, etc. Beyond this, **also provide for Catch up classes for those who have missed school for a few months or bridge classes for those who need language training or curriculum update to access education**

## **8. Economic empowerment for families**

How to effectively support families of children in schools and address SGBV and conflict issues. (Current initiatives do not fully penetrate to address the root causes and give handles to the refugees to begin on learner and Sudanese Madi one. Entire communities went on rampage over this showing how deep the roots lie.

## **9. Educational Broadcast**

How to use development in technology to provide access to teaching learning opportunities, remedial classes through Radio or film; Provision of community libraries/resource centers with digital access or mobile digital libraries/literacy centers and opportunities for online studies.

Radio broadcast in refugee camps can be used for continuous education and community development. New micro technology has improved quality and reduced the size of components. An entire radio station can fit into one suitcase and studio equipment in another. Installation takes only a few days. Also, in very remote areas a low powered station can run completely off solar or wind generated power.

- Typically, a low powered radio station broadcast will reach a 20 to 30-mile radius depending on terrain, the wattage of the transmitter and the height of the transmitting tower. Distribution of solar powered fix-tuned radios can blanket an area surrounding the radio station reaching thousands of people up to twenty-four hours a day in their own language. We are in touch with a manufacturer of the equipment in USA. This project can be executed as soon as funds are available.

## **10. Playgrounds and Sports training facilities**

Children at the camps have very little to engage them after the few hours some of them spent at school. Much of their time is spent idling around the markets and getting into unproductive activities. The need for playgrounds and mentoring programs for the youths is very much needed. One of our partners has agreed to provide playgrounds equipment for some of the camps. We need funds to ship the equipment and install them at the camps.

## **11. Library for the Camps**

There are no libraries or bookstores where books can be bought or loaned at the Camps. To increase literacy and encourage better performance, students need libraries where they can loan books and study. We have access to used text books from the schools in the USA. The books can be obtained and used in setting up libraries at the camps. We need shipping structures for the project. Each major camp should have a library.

## **12. Media files.**

These videos were recorded in Yei South Sudan. Please watch them and listen to the stories of the students. These are my sons and daughters that scattered in refugee camps in Uganda.

### **a. Alemi Jackson: [Vimeo.com/14172334](https://vimeo.com/14172334).**

He is the fortunate one. He finished a year before his classmates. He is in the university in Uganda. We are monitoring his progress.

### **b. Jaguru Jenifer: [Vimeo.com/115792297](https://vimeo.com/115792297)**

I met Jenifer six months ago at Koboko, Uganda. She was pregnant and later gave birth to a baby girl. She was one of my best students. Some of the girls end up having babies or getting married.

### **c. Race for life: [Vimeo.com/131121188](https://vimeo.com/131121188)**

The '**Race for life**' inter school's marathon race was one of the highlights of the secondary school's activities in Yei South Sudan. Started in 2012, Students from all the secondary competed for the prized trophies and the tuition scholarship for the first fifty athletes in the race. The winners are enrolled in a discipleship and mentoring program for a year, they return to their schools and pioneer youth groups, Bible study groups and sports training.

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