

Loreto South Sudan

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

LOOKING BACK, LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE FOCUS





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Message from the Director

Dear friends and partners,

2024 has been a very special year for us in Loreto, Rumbek. In 2023, five graduates living in Aweil in the north of South Sudan requested that we consider opening a new Loreto mission. We have accepted the new mission after much prayer, consultation, and discernment. In December, we blessed the land, and preparations are underway to start the construction of the new schools. Instead of referring to ourselves as Loreto Rumbek, we will address ourselves from now on as Loreto South Sudan.

When we launched our fundraising programme for Aweil, we were delighted to be able to bring some of our team in South Sudan to Ireland in 2024. Their trip across the country helped to highlight the challenges of life in South Sudan and the dream of our new mission in Aweil.

Our annual report highlights the many programmes that we are involved in. We graduated from our largest secondary school class, and the primary school is growing in quality with beautiful art and poetry displays. Meanwhile, more and more mothers are availing of our health programmes in the clinic. The clinic offers nine different programmes. Health education is a core aspect of health programmes.

Alongside the formal classes, we also encourage all our students to engage in practical agriculture. While the country suffered from severe floods in Rumbek we were blessed with a good harvest. This will help our feeding programme well into 2025. Tailoring is another practical subject that the students love. Their creative designs in dress wear are evident throughout the compound.

Sustainability is a word on all our lips as the economic crisis continues throughout the country. We encourage our students to engage in paid work over the holidays. Some students cultivate seedlings and sell them to the school at a later date. Others care for the animals, water the vegetables, and engage in the maintenance programme. The students are learning to become more self-sufficient and creative when faced with the challenges of finding funds.

We are grateful for your support over the past year. This mission would not have been possible without your support, encouragement, and prayer.

Blessings to you and all close to you.

Happy reading.

Sr Orla Treacy, Director





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 of school going age in South Sudan. This mission was to establish a girl's boarding secondary school located in the community of Maker Kuei, 8km from Rumbek town Centre. The local community offered the land for the Sisters to begin their ministry.

Over the years, the mission has expanded significantly. Today, Loreto Rumbek has four core programmes: a community based co-educational Primary School, an all-girls Secondary Boarding School, a woman and child focused Primary Health Care Centre, and an Education Centre. Our other projects such as agriculture, internship, and vocational training serve to support the four core programmes. All projects in Loreto hold education as the central focus.

Loreto works closely with the local community who have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that their children have a chance to study at Loreto schools and access our healthcare facility. 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. These have not only impacted on how members of the community live, but have also helped shaped their aspirations and dreams for the future.



Our Programmes

Loreto Primary School

Loreto Primary School admits boys and girls between the ages of 4-13 from the local community of Maker Kuei. The school encourages active participation of learners in all the school programs and strongly encourages parents to register their girls in the school. The education of vulnerable learners is supported through the provision of partial scholarships, as well as access to daily meals and healthcare for all learners.





Our Programmes

Loreto Girls Secondary School

Loreto girls Secondary School admits young South Sudanese women between the ages of 13–18 in Transition class to their Senior Four. The students are admitted through a thorough enrolment process which considers their vulnerability, ethnic background, and academic performance. While in school, the girls are actively protected from common threats in the community including conflict, hunger, and early marriage.





Our Programmes

Mary Ward Primary Health Care Centre

Mary Ward Primary Health Care Centre provides much needed health care services for students, staff and community members of Maker Kuei. The facility is women and child focussed and runs programmes meant to promote wholesome development of children in the community who face significant health related challenges in their early years of development. In addition to consultancy services, the facility also focusses on health education for both adults and students as a key strategy to promoting positive health practices.





Our Programmes

Loreto Education Centre

The Loreto Education Centre is the newest programme in Loreto Rumbek following its launch in June 2024. It targets youth who have completed their secondary school to help them gain practical skills that would improve their knowledge, such as computer competency and English language proficiency as they move into tertiary education or full time employment. The programme also provides in-service training for teachers from community schools who wish to improve their knowledge of teaching methodologies, English, and computers.





Year in Review

2024 has largely been a successful year for Loreto Rumbek, despite challenges at the beginning of the year with the community experiencing an extreme heat wave. As the year progressed, the tough economic conditions manifested with the South Sudanese Pound losing significant value prompting a steep rise in inflation.

Despite these setbacks, the Loreto Programmes continued to ensure sustained access to quality education and healthcare for the young and growing population of South Sudan in line with our strategic plan as well as the global Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, Loreto Rumbek made significant contributions towards the attainment of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, and 16 as detailed in this report.





2024 Key Metrics

1,598

(62.14% female) learners
attending school in Loreto Rumbek

78

young women graduate
from our Secondary School

10

former students of Loreto
Schools graduate from
university

97

students currently in university
through scholarships

6.5

tonnes of fresh
vegetables produced
from the school farm

> 1 Million

cooked meals
provided through the school
feeding programme

13

tonnes of groundnuts
produced from the
school farm

4,549

children under age 5
accessed healthcare
at Mary Ward PHCC

25,686

clinical consultations done at Mary
Ward PHCC

38

(30 female and 8 male) interns
enrolled in the Professional
Internship Programme

8,982

cases of malaria diagnosed
and treated at
Mary Ward PHCC

566

participants in English and computer
courses, teacher training, tailoring
and other short courses



2024 in Review

Loreto Primary School

According to UNICEF statistics, up to 2.8 million South Sudanese children of school-going age are still not enrolled. Loreto Primary School is dedicated to providing quality, holistic education for the pupils enrolled in our institution. The school actively promotes the enrolment of girls and advocates for their continued education. By offering protection from early marriage and supporting structures such as healthcare and school meals, Loreto ensures that children remain in school. Additionally, Loreto Primary School works to enhance the capacity of local teachers through training programmes that update their skills with the latest insights and professional techniques.

In 2024, Loreto Primary School enrolled 667 boys and 548 girls, ranging from Kindergarten to Primary 8. Students participated in various co-curricular activities, including sports, drama, peace building, agriculture, and music. All students benefited from daily school meals and access to healthcare services at Mary Ward PHCC.





2024 in Review

Loreto Girls Secondary School

Loreto Girls Secondary School is committed to facilitating educational opportunities for young South Sudanese girls aged 13-18. The school provides a secure learning environment, shielding students from challenges such as early marriage, conflict, and hunger that typically disrupt their education. This year, Loreto Girls Secondary School enrolled 385 girls, offering them access to holistic and equitable education, accommodation, daily meals, health care, and protection.

In 2024, Loreto Girls Secondary School welcomed 100 new students into our Senior 1 and Transition classes. These new entrants were warmly received by members of their school community and provided with an orientation to familiarise them with the Loreto way of life and the school's ethos. Students also participated in co-curricular and clubs activities including Peace, Environment, Culture, and Journalism Clubs.

Additionally, 78 students from our Senior 4 classes sat for their national examinations in 2024. They are currently awaiting the release of their results.





2024 in Review

Mary Ward Primary Health Care Centre

Access to quality healthcare is still a major challenge facing both adults and children in South Sudan. This has led to many preventable deaths or serious illnesses particularly among children and other vulnerable groups. The Mary Ward Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) adopts an integrated approach to healthcare by implementing both preventive and curative programs.

In the year 2024, over and above the consultation services provided to the community, Mary Ward PHCC expanded the Hepatitis vaccination programme beyond Loreto Secondary School. The facility, invited willing adults enrolled at the Catholic University of Rumbek, as well as those taking courses in the Loreto Education Centre, to take tests and get vaccinated. About 500 vaccines were administered.

Regular testing and treatment of patients suffering from malaria was a constant activity in the Clinic affecting both children and adults. More than 65% of cases treated at the facility were malaria related. Early diagnosis and treatment ensured that students were able to get back to class faster.

Immunisation of babies through the Expanded Programme on Immunisation administered over 4500 vials of essential vaccines to children in the community. When presented to the facility, children were also tested and treated for other illnesses while those who were under-weight were enrolled into the nutrition programme where they received nutritional, as well as medical support, to speed up their recovery.





2024 in Review

Loreto Education Centre

A significant contributor to youth unemployment in South Sudan is the lack of relevant market-oriented skills. Over 50% of the youth population is currently unemployed. This is partly due to limited technical and communication skills. The low availability of opportunities for the youth is a key contributing factor in fanning conflict in both urban and rural areas.

In June 2024 Loreto Rumbek opened the Education Centre which targets the youth, recently graduated from secondary schools and empowers them with skills in computer use and application, as well as certified English language courses. The Centre also offers training in tailoring, as well as education methodology for unqualified teachers.

At the Education Centre, interns have the opportunity to practice and hone their computer skills prior to joining university and to attend professional English courses. In addition to these courses, we offer short courses for young adults in mental health, peace building, and career guidance.

Since the launch of the programme, 566 students have enrolled for courses at the Education Centre. This includes 50 teachers from local schools who finished the teacher training course with a certificate, while 67 participants have benefited from a short tailoring course.





2024 in Review

Loreto Professional Internship Programme

Loreto's professional internship programme provides a platform for young women who have recently graduated from secondary school to gain practical internship experience. Through this programme, they can enhance their skills and knowledge by working in various departments, learning basic computers, and obtaining English language accreditation. Supporting these recent graduates in the one or two-year programme has proven effective in increasing their awareness of available career opportunities post-secondary school and preparing them for the challenges of university life.

In 2024, the interns continued to provide essential support across various departments at Loreto Rumbek. 38 Interns, consisting of 30 women and 8 men, were enrolled in the programme. Through their time there, the interns gained clarity around their career choices, with many opting for professions in healthcare, education, or development studies. This year, 15 interns completed the programme and enrolled in universities in South Sudan and East Africa.





2024 in Review

University Scholarships

Through the Loreto Rumbek scholarship programme, 97 students are currently pursuing various professional courses in South Sudan and East Africa. By attaining university level skills, the graduates will be expected to contribute to the development of South Sudan in the future by adding to the small pool of professionals here. The lack of trained personnel is limiting the growth of the country.

In 2024, 10 university students supported by Loreto Rumbek graduated with degrees in nursing, education, development studies, and human resource management. The graduates have expressed a deep motivation to engage in community service and local development for several reasons. For nurses, the drive often stems from a passion for healthcare and a desire to improve public health in their communities. For teachers, the motivation lies in their dedication to fostering education and empowering future generations, particularly vulnerable girls.

As the graduates return to their communities, they continually share their knowledge and experiences from outside South Sudan and inspire students to pursue their educational goals, much like they were once inspired. Overall, these graduates view working in their community as a way to give back, support their communities, and make a lasting impact.





2024 in Review

School Feeding Programme

The school feeding programme has been an integral part of working towards sustaining the educational projects at Loreto Rumbek. Through the food provided at school, primary students have an incentive to regularly attend, especially in periods of extreme food scarcity. They also have the requisite nutritional and physical wellbeing to actively participate in class. For boarding secondary school girls, the daily meals are an important component for their continued stay in school as well as for their physical health and growth at that important phase of their lives. Through the school feeding programme, over one million cooked meals were provided to students, staff members, and vulnerable children. Many of this last group were initially diagnosed with malnutrition. Students in our primary school received at least one meal every day, while girls in our secondary school received three meals on a daily basis. The meals were prepared by certified cooks.





2024 in Review

Agriculture Programme

Internal production of grains and fresh vegetables has been key in ensuring sustainability and all year access to food. The Loreto School farm, through the use of irrigation and a green house structure is able to produce fresh vegetables which are consumed by secondary school students on a weekly basis. At the same time, during the rainy seasons, which are the traditional planting seasons, students and farm workers plant groundnuts in the school farm which are later harvested and consumed by students until the next harvest. This year, the farm realised significant harvests of both groundnuts and vegetables, harvesting 13 tonnes and 6 tonnes respectively.

In order to avoid wasting food, pigs are kept in the school farm to eat the leftovers from the school meals. Goats are also kept to keep the grass in the compound short. The animals, in turn, provide a welcome addition to the students' diet and are slaughtered and eaten especially on feast days.





Beneficiary stories

“This year has been full of learning and has had a big impact on my life. I have learnt many valuable lessons, including public speaking, tree planting, sports, and prayer. I have also learnt to treat others with justice, be kind to my fellow learners, forgive my classmates, and maintain peace with others in class and at home.

Since becoming a prefect this year, I have become more respectful and obedient to my teachers. I appreciate the importance of creating peace in my school and home, so that we can all live together in peace. These are some of the things that we learn here at Loreto in addition to studies. I am delighted to be going on to Primary Six next year, and I owe this to my teachers and classmates.”

Thon, Loreto Primary School Pupil.





Beneficiary stories

“The internship programme has created growth for me both personally and professionally. It has trained me to uphold professionalism in my work and studies here as we prepare for life post secondary school. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this programme which has enabled me to improve my skills in English and computers, as well as tailoring. This has been a great opportunity for us who have graduated from secondary school and will be important for us as we prepare to join university and become professionals.”

Ayen, Intern at Loreto Rumbek.





Strategic Wins in 2024

At Loreto Rumbek, learning is embedded in our everyday life. We strive to improve our processes and structures to ensure that our programmes meet the ever changing demands of our beneficiaries and supporters. In 2024, we made significant steps in improving our efficiency and at the same time align with the requirements of various supporters. Key gains made include:

- A renewed focus on sustainability: An independent consultant carried out a feasibility study on financial sustainability of the Loreto Rumbek Programme. The study identified various ways in which the mission could cut down on expenses and identified possible areas of revenue generation while maintaining the identity of the mission as a Catholic institution. Following this study, various departments have been identifying and applying internal measures that align with this objective.
- Loreto Rumbek policy development: For the past few years, we have been formalising various policies and manuals for internal use. This year, six policies were approved by our board of management. Training was carried out among the staff members and other concerned parties. More policies and manuals are in the final stages of development and will be applied in our everyday practices and processes.
- Organisation structure: As we grow, the need for more elaborate internal structures and key personnel was identified. In 2024, the human resource and the procurement offices were established to streamline operations and oversee the implementation of relevant policies.



Looking ahead into 2025

Sustainability: Our goal is to lower our dependence on outside support by 6%. We hope to do this by several strategies: Giving part-time work to the students to help them contribute more to their education, encouraging parents to contribute more to the schools, and seeking out more local partners to support our programmes.

Security: As the country continues to experience tension, we hope to ensure the Rumbek compound is secure. We are also establishing a security wall around the compound in Aweil to protect our students.

University: Our goal is to send and support fifteen interns and graduates to university in Nairobi. We will focus in particular on education and health care courses. Other courses in law, journalism, and business will also be supported. We also look forward to ten graduates completing their university in Juba and Nairobi later this year. We will welcome some of the graduates back to join the team in Rumbek. We continue to assist the local Catholic University by providing them with interns to assist in the office and part-time lecturers from among our staff.

Spirituality and Peace Building: As we have done over the past three years, we will work with the Diocese and the youth in our schools to help promote their participation in different faith-based activities such as organising a nine-day youth walking pilgrimage for peace, training youth leaders to lead the youth pilgrimage, facilitating five different days of peace in parishes and schools, supporting the youth in organising the Good Friday drama in Rumbek town, facilitating two residential youth retreats, organising three individual days of reflection for youth, and running peace training for young people with Pax Christi



Looking ahead into 2025

Quality Education: We aim to offer our older primary students a longer school day, so that they have time to complete their curriculum and have a good environment for their studies. In the Secondary School, we intend to welcome one hundred new girls. Most of the girls will be accepted into the foundation class, called Transition Year. This year will emphasize mathematics and English, allowing them to lay a better academic foundation.

Construction: Our two compounds have different needs. While the Rumbek compound is almost completed, a few buildings remain to be settled. Aweil is just beginning and many new buildings will be needed.

Rumbek: We plan to construct two additional classrooms and a toilet block for our kindergarten students, additional toilets for students in our Primary School, stores for maintenance and storage areas, and five rooms for workers in the compound.

Aweil: As a larger project we need to construct the convent and welcome the first sisters to reside in the new mission, hopefully later this year. We will also need to build toilets and showers, a number of classrooms, and a dormitory block. The land for the school compound has been marked out and now we are ready to erect the security wall. Finally, we will provide ten boreholes and water points in the school compound and around the community, so that all can access water easily.

Environment: Following the success of last year's tree planting project, we hope to plant 1,000 new trees in Rumbek and Aweil. Students are being taught to reuse plastic and be creative with other materials. Old clothes will be collected, washed, repaired in the tailoring department, and donated to those in need.



Loreto Aweil

In 2022, five graduates of Loreto Rumbek, now professionals who work in the north of South Sudan, returned with an exciting proposition. They invited the Loreto Sisters to establish a new primary school for boys and girls, as well as a secondary boarding school just for girls, in their hometown of Aweil, which is approximately 400 kilometres north of Rumbek. Among these graduates were Mary Nyanarop Ameklai and Regina Ajok Deng.

In response to this call, the Sisters agreed to take on this initiative and broke ground for the foundation of the mission. The community in Aweil was grateful and has welcomed Loreto to set up the school. They have donated land for the mission and the Loreto Sisters have already started building the convent and compound fence, which will be quickly followed by the construction of the schools and dormitories.





Spirituality

At Loreto Rumbek, we not only focus on academics, but also on holistic development including spirituality. Every week, students and staff members take part in Catholic Mass in the school compound. In addition to this, our resident chaplain, Fr. Alan Neville MSC has been actively encouraging our youth to explore and grow in their faith. Students from both the primary and secondary school have been taking part in sacramental preparation classes and in 2024 40 students were baptised and received their First Holy Communion and 43 were Confirmed.

The interns are invited to join weekly Bible sharing groups with the Sisters and several weeks of the year they also invite the secondary students to take part in the experience of Bible sharing. Loreto Rumbek hosts two annual retreats for the young people of the Diocese and is involved in the organisation of the Diocesan Peace Pilgrimage.





Support Loreto South Sudan

The Loreto Development Office is responsible for fundraising, as well as maintaining relations with donors and partners of Loreto in South Sudan. The Development Office works closely with the Finance Office to ascertain 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.

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

Loreto continually strives to improve and formalise its processes and policies to match donor requirements. Implementation of the approved policies is also strictly monitored to ensure that both the beneficiaries as well as the donor interests are protected. Regular updates on events in Loreto Rumbek and Aweil are available through our monthly newsletter, on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, and on our website.

To support the Loreto programs in South Sudan, please donate to:

Bank:	Bank of Ireland
Address:	College Green, Dublin 2
Account Name:	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Irish Province – Loreto Rumbek
Account Number:	60775342
Sort Code:	90-00-17
IBAN:	E78 BOFI 9000 1760 7753 42
SWIFT:	BOFIE2DXXX
Currency:	Euro
CRA Name:	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary– Irish Province
CRA No:	20014186
Loreto Ireland Address:	Loreto House, Beaufort, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, +353 14935463

For more information about supporting our programmes, for potential projects and/or partnerships, please contact: director@loretorumbek.ie or visit the Loreto website on www.loretorumbek.ie.

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