

# Chapter Six

## ESSCA-USA Special Projects

### Introduction

Very early in its inception, ESSCA-USA envisaged development of some special projects. The projects became the first plan of action by various office bearers in order to fulfill the objectives of the community association to unite the people of Equatoria. The projects were aimed at supporting Equatorians both in the United States and in South Sudan.

To some people, the projects were ill-conceived and difficult to implement or at worst, were only in existence on paper and never saw the light of day. This chapter explores the various special projects leaders of ESSCA-USA set out or planned to execute in their design and expected results. While the implementation of some of the proposed projects were never started but not completed, others were never implemented due to many challenges ESSCA-USA leaders faced and continue to encounter today. The projects include “the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) Victims Emergency Fund, Juba Library Project and Equatoria Scholarship Fund.”

### The Lord Resistance Army (LRA) Victims Emergency Fund<sup>112</sup>

This project was set up in the period from 2003 to 2005 as one of two projects highlighted by the leadership at the time. According to Robert Odeke, on July 19, 2004, Lucy Kitoi Lomodong the Secretary for Information, informed members of the Equatorian community via E2K, the online Equatorian discussion forum, about the LRA Victims Emergency Fund. At that meeting of ESSCA-USA and Iowa organizing committee on July 17-18, 2004, the following were agreed upon:

- ESSCA-USA collects contributions from individuals to help the victims of LRA atrocities in Eastern Equatoria. The money is to be used to provide materials such as food, clothing, tents, etc.

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<sup>112</sup> The LRA, a Ugandan-based armed resistance movement was operating in some part of Equatoria region at the time. General Look on ESCA\_USA from 2003 to 2011 by Robert Odeki.

- All the state offices to collect contributions and send to the national office.
- The [ESSCA-USA branch] office in Kampala to be in charge of following up the distribution of the relief to the victims of the LRA atrocities.
- The Secretary of Finance to open emergency [bank] account for the contributions for the victims of LRA atrocities.<sup>113</sup>

Besides helping the victims of the LRA atrocities, the funds would also be used to help needy families in United States (such as, in case of death) to cover funeral expenses, for example. Since the the launching of the project, there has been no documentation on the achievements of the project, if any.

### Juba Public Library

Records show that The Juba Public Library Project was proposed during the sixth ESSCA-USA Annual Conference of 2006 in Phoenix, Arizona. ESSCA-USA leadership identified Juba Public Library Project as one of many projects to be implemented in 2006/2007. The Juba Public Library was to be one of three public libraries in Equatoria proposed by the association under the leadership of Martin Abucha. Beside the Juba Public Library, the plan was to build a library in Eastern and Western Equatoria states as well. These libraries according to the association's leadership are to serve the citizens of Equatoria and those who reside in the areas where the libraries are to be located. Rebuilding the educational and learning institutions in the region were some of the association's proposed plans as well.<sup>114</sup> ESSCA-USA office of Women, Education, Culture, and Youth Affairs, under the leadership of Rose Anek Oduho and Micklina Iboi Kenyi played a crucial role in advancing the public library initiative. The office conducted several meetings in 2006 and 2007 with community members intended to operationalize the Juba library project proposal. Most of the meetings focused on how to collect books, logistic issues or how to ship the collected books to South Sudan, who should be the point person to reach out to the office of the Governor of Central Equatoria, Clement Wani Konga, etc.

Equatorians in the Diaspora were encouraged to contribute financially, organize book drives, participate in fundraising activities, or reach out to other entities like churches, schools, or workplaces to help in making the project a reality. ESSCA-USA leadership also appealed to Equatorians in Europe, Canada, Australia, the

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<sup>113</sup> Summary of ESCA-US & IA Organizing Committee Meeting, 7/17/2004 – 7/18/2004, Des Moines, IA.

<sup>114</sup> Vision of ESCA 2005-2010 C1, 2006.

Middle East, Africa, and Asia to support the library initiative. State Coordinators and volunteers were recruited to facilitate the work. A total of five Coordination offices were established in Minnesota, Iowa, California, Colorado, and Arizona in late 2006. Each coordinator was assisted by a number of members at the start of the project. Below are the names of the coordinators and members:

- Hakim Lado, State Coordinator for Minnesota
  - o John Maire, Member
- Ladu Boyo II, State Coordinator for Iowa
- Paulino Paidá, State Coordinator for California
  - o Agnes Hassan Olwar, Member
  - o Silvestro Akara, Member
  - o Josephine Labib, Member
- Sarah Ahmed Siricio, State Coordinator for Colorado
  - o John Omuu, Member
  - o Victoria Martinez, Member
  - o Grace Naboi, Member
- Jane Joseph Abucha, State Coordinator for Arizona
  - o Riya Tingwa, Member
  - o Garang Hassan, Member<sup>115</sup>

Margaret Juan Lado and ESSCA-USA president Martin Abucha met with the [Central Equatoria State] Minister of Education, H.E Lokulenge Lole in Juba in 2006. The Minister was thrilled to know that the South Sudanese in the Diaspora were interested to help renovate and stock the library. Mr. Abucha promised the Minister that ESSCA-USA would work hard to lend support to the revival of the library. On a later visit in 2008 to promote the library, Margaret Juan Lado met with both the Central Equatoria State Minister of Education and the Minister of Information since the library would be under the administration of the latter. Both Ministers were appreciative of the initiative and promised their support and commitment to the success of the proposed library project.

The Minister of Information requested ESSCA-USA leadership to fence the

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<sup>115</sup> Rose Anek Oduho message to fellow Equatorians on the proposed Juba Public Library Project, posted on Equatoian2000 or E2K Discussion Archives, October 2006.

area of the library, given its large size and its potential to attract squatters or unauthorized inhabitants. The State Ministry of Housing put together an estimate of US\$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) for the fencing and the information was communicated to ESSCA-USA President Martin Abucha, for the association to raise the estimated funds. The State Ministry of Housing also made estimates for the cost of maintenance of the whole library building and the information was passed to the President of ESSCA-USA who was encouraged to reach out to friends of the Sudanese in the United States to help with funding the project.

The library project of course demands much more than collection of books. The books alone when shipped to Juba before the library is renovated and with no proper place to keep them, would be damaged. The request for money to fence the library premises did not materialize, leave alone renovation of the building. Margaret Juan Lado also met with the Consul General of the United States and that of Norway in Juba to solicit their support. However, both consulates were primarily interested in reestablishing the Archives Department although they promised to append the Library Project to the Archives Department Project.

Apart from collection of books, ESSCA-USA failed to deliver on the material inputs required to get the library project started. Other unforeseen obstacles, seem to have also compounded the difficulties and the library project gradually faded away from the radar of ESSCA-USA. With the resumption of conflict in South Sudan in 2013 and that prevailing insecurity in South Sudan and Equatoria in particular, it is safe to say the library project may have to be revisited in the future.

## Equatorian Scholarship Fund

The Equatorian Scholarship Fund (ESF) was first proposed in June or August 2004 to assist outstanding Equatorian students to receive a college education. The ESF was intended to pay all educational expenses for selected students for up to four years in any undergraduate discipline. Members of the Board of Directors and the Executive were required to approve the project and begin the process of educating thousands of Equatorians in East Africa. The goal was to award the first scholarship in the beginning of the school year in January 2005.

A Scholarship Committee, consisting of four (4) members of ESSCA-USA Board of Directors and (6) members of the Executive, was to manage the scholarship fund. The Scholarship Committee was headed by the Secretary of Education/ Social Affairs and the committee was charged with the responsible for selecting the scholarship recipients and awarding the necessary funds. The scholarship is to be funded primarily by donations from Equatorians in the Diaspora. Other acceptable fundraising strategies included grants or corporate sponsorship,

charitable donations and other strategies approved from time to time by the scholarship management team.<sup>116</sup>

A similar project was proposed in 2012 under the leadership of Kwaje Lasu, referred to as ESSCA-USA Scholarship Program. Initially intended to fund six Equatorian students, two from each of the three Equatoria States in South Sudan, however, due the breakout of the war in South Sudan in 2013, it became difficult to implement the program. As a result, it was decided that the scholarship should be awarded to graduating high school seniors and students already enrolled in college / university each year in the United States, until the war situation changes in South Sudan. The scholarship is to be awarded to students who demonstrate the capacity and commitment to lead and serve the Equatorian community. Applicants who meet ESSCA-USA's scholarship requirements are to submit their applications with a statement of purpose stating how the scholarship will help them achieve their goal. Children or grandchildren of ESSCA-USA Board and Executive Officers serving the association are not eligible to apply. The amount of the scholarship awarded to each student is dependent upon the amount of funds raised.<sup>117</sup> The first time ESSCA-USA awarded the scholarship to six students in the United States was in 2017, at its seventeenth ESSCA-USA Annual Conference, in Atlanta, Georgia. The scholarship amount was US\$250.00 (only Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars) per student.<sup>118</sup>

In response to ESSCA-USA scholarship initiative for students in refugee camps in Uganda, on November 4, 2019, ESSCA-USA extended financial support for the acquisition of educational material for students at "Atepi Nursery and Primary School," in Palabek Refugee Settlement located in Lamwo District in Uganda. The support was sent to Rev. Edward Kose of ACTIO PACEM (Action for Peace) Uganda (APU), a regional non-political, non-profit making, and multi-racial organization based in Uganda. Some of the school supplies purchased by the ESSCA-USA financial help include pens, pencils, notebooks, erasers, etc. Rev. Edward Kose also provided a final report on how the financial support was used and the school supplies purchased for the students.<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, in April 2020, many Equatorian civilians were displaced by armed

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<sup>116</sup> The Equatoria Scholarship Fund, proposed by Lucy Kitoi Lomodong, 6/8/2004.

<sup>117</sup> ESSCA-USA Scholarship Program, 2017.

<sup>118</sup> 2017 ESSCA-USA Annual Conference Narrative Report Final published in 2018.

<sup>119</sup> "Final Report on Supply of Educational Materials to Atepi Nursery and Primary School in Palabek Refugees Settlement," Uganda. The report is prepared by Rev. Edward Kose of ACTIO PACEM, Uganda, February 18, 2020, pp. 1-15.

conflicts between the government and the opposition forces of the National Salvation Front (NAS). As a result, the association leadership met on May 18, 2020 to discuss the humanitarian situation and to come up with possible ways of how to address the situation. It was resolved that: 1) a GoFundMe account should be created to raise funds for humanitarian assistance and the funds raised should be channeled through the Church. 2) a committee should be formed to manage the humanitarian initiative. And, 3) a general assembly meeting be held to explain the association's decision. Consequently, a GoFundMe account was created on May 23, 2020, and a general meeting was convened on May 24, 2020 to update and mobilize the financial support from the general assembly. An ESSCA-USA Humanitarian Committee or Taskforce was formed to oversee the humanitarian efforts. The Committee comprised of Micklina Iboi Kenyi, Justin Mori, John Philip, and Jackson Lako, Deputy Chair of the Board of Directors.

On June 6, 2020, ESSCA-USA leadership held a meeting with Archbishop Rev. Dr. Paul Benjamin Yugusuk, to discuss ways of how to send the relief assistance via the Humanitarian Committee of the Central Equatoria Internal Province (HCCEIP) of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan; and identify the specific needs of the IDPs. Guidelines on how to account for the humanitarian support to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Central Equatoria State by the association were drafted and shared with the Archbishop, on June 14, 2020. A total of \$14,755.00 (Fourteen Thousand, Seven Hundred Fifty-Five US Dollars) was raised. The financial assistance was sent in three batches.

The humanitarian initiative drive was also successful in the sense that, it brought relative unity of purpose among Equatorians, not only in the United States but among Equatorians in the Diaspora. Similarly, many Equatorian ethnic or tribal, regional and women's organizations, as well as individuals in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, the Scandinavian countries, and in some countries in Africa, such as Egypt, started similar initiatives.<sup>120</sup>

## ESSCA-USA Development Fund

The ESSCA-USA Office under the leadership of Martin Abucha, proposed this initiative as one of the key projects in this vision 2005 – 2010.<sup>121</sup> The purpose of the project was to raise Capital for Investment in Equatoria and any other part

<sup>120</sup> ESSCA-USA Progress Report (September 2019 - September 2020), prepared by Daniel Alexander Secretary General and Dr. Jane Kani Edward, President of ESSCA-USA, December 2020, pp. 1-14.

<sup>121</sup> ESSCA-USA Action Plan 2005 - 2010

of South Sudan. Phase I of the Investment shall be in Agriculture and Phase II shall be used for any other business. It was envisioned that members of ESSCA-USA shall be the primary funding source of all ESSCA-USA programs. However, ESSCA-USA shall also seek financial support from Non-profit organization to support the programs that the association is not able to finance locally. ESSCA-USA would also seek government loans to be invested in community housing through the government of Southern Sudan. ESSCA-USA shall raise its funds through selling shares of ESSCA-USA Development Fund to members of the Equatorian community around the world. Every member of ESSCA-USA shall buy shares of ESSCA-USA Development Fund.

### **Monthly Subscription**

All States are to collect a monthly subscription from members of their state to support the activities of ESCA-USA. This is expected to be the main source of funds for the Association.

### **Diaspora Secretariat and Coordination Office**

The idea of creating a Diaspora Secretariat in Juba, South Sudan was first proposed by Governor Clement Konga during his keynote address at the 9th ESSCA-USA Annual Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2009. In his speech he discussed the role of the Diaspora in rebuilding South Sudan, as well as, encouraging foreign investors to invest and create business partnerships geared toward developing the private sector, and to create jobs for young South Sudanese.<sup>122</sup> Dr. Hakim Moi, Ms. Jane Abucha (RN, MSN), and Dr. Charles Bakheit who were members of the Diaspora delegation to the Equatoria conference held in Juba in 2011 met with the three governors of Central, Eastern, and Western Equatoria on April 18, 2011 to discuss about the Diaspora Secretariat and Coordination Office among other things.

The Secretariat is intended to act as focal point of contact between the Diaspora and South Sudan. To realize this goal, it was proposed that the governors should help ESSCA-USA to secure a plot of land for the construction of an office and resource centre for the Secretariat including a public library space. Indeed, the allocation of a plot for this purpose was a critical first step to establish the presence of ESSCA-USA on the ground, with the help of the government leaders of the three states of Equatoria. The proposal was welcomed and the

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<sup>122</sup> The 9th ESSCA-USA Annual Conference Report Summary, September 5-6, 2009, Hilton Hotel City, SLC, Utah, Report Prepared by John Omunu.

principle of co-ordination and regular contact with the Diaspora was welcomed by the governors. The three governors offered their Information Officers in their respective offices to be the link between the Diaspora and the Governors so that there is direct access to the government leadership in the Equatoria region on issues of shared or public interest. The Governor of Central Equatoria State (CES) Clement Konga, suggested that the Diaspora liaise with his office and the relevant authorities of Central Equatoria for follow up on the application for a plot of land to host the Secretariat. To fund the project, the Equatorians in the Diaspora are to mobilize the financial resources for the construction of the office space in a suitable location in Juba to host the Diaspora Secretariat, which may serve to incubate the seeds of the Equatoria Consultative Council proposed in the resolutions of the 2011 Equatoria Conference in Juba.

In 2018, ESSCA-USA again decided to revive the above project and proposed the establishment of ESSCA-USA South Sudan Branch in Juba. The main aim was to help the association expand and implement some of its programs geared toward engaging with Equatorians residing in South Sudan, such as, community development, mentorship, and youth development. ESSCA-USA leadership initiated contacts with the leadership of the Central Equatoria Internal Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, for collaborative work. Thus, on November 10, 2018, a letter was sent to Archbishop Dr. Paul Benjamin Yugusuk expressing the association's interest to partner with the church in executing the project, and in particular, to learn more about the requirements for registering an association, or a community-based organization in Juba, South Sudan and, how to find a place to carry out its activities, and to identify individuals on the ground who would be interested to volunteer in helping ESSCA-USA achieve its goal.<sup>123</sup> No tangible results have been achieved to date regarding the Diaspora Secretariat and Coordination office or an ESSCA-USA South Sudan Branch due to many challenges including the ongoing conflict, political instability, and poor communication channels between ESSCA-USA and concerned authorities in South Sudan, and Equatoria in particular.

## Other Projects

Other projects proposed by various ESSCA-USA leaders include creation of a database for Equatorians in the United States; publication of ESSCA-USA Newsletter; and securing a physical office for the association in the United States. Although important, these projects have not been accomplished due to

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<sup>123</sup> Letter to Archbishop Yugusuk, November 2018, (Appendix 21).



lack of commitment from the general assembly, ESSCA-USA leaders, and lack of financial resources for implementation.

In conclusion, ESSCA-USA leaders over the past years proposed several projects that were to be implemented in the United States or South Sudan for the benefit of its members and the Equatorian community at large. The degree of implementation of these projects is a matter for debate but clearly, some have never taken off the ground. No documents or reports are available to enable a conclusive assessment of the success or failure of some of the projects discussed above, or what effect, if any they had on the members or community. However, it can be concluded that, lack of resources, members' reluctance to commit to the work of the association, and persistent conflicts and political instability in South Sudan represent some of the major obstacles to the progress or implementation of the proposed ESSCA-USA projects discussed above.