



INCLUSION OF ALL Nursery School HOLY TRINITY PEACE VILLAGE

“All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.” Isaiah 54:13

Holy Trinity Peace Village has a policy of integrating any and all people of good will who would like to be a part of the program. With this in mind, many are those who carry their burden from birth. These individuals who are disabled in some form, are doubly at risk due to the harsh nature of their culture and climate that they live in. Traditional Toposa culture scorns those who have physical or mental disabilities remarking that they are useless to the family. However, HTPVK believes otherwise.

To date, there are a little under 200 total learners. The St. John Paul II Nursery Schools accepts all students regardless of their conditions. Normally these disabled children are kept at home and one rarely sees them. However, in the HTPVK programs there are some notable exceptions.



Figure 2 Head Teacher Chandia with Evaline

Lokwalup Lokeno (to rt) and Namana Evaline (to lt) are two of the very active Nursery learners. At first, when they enrolled in the nursery program the other children were afraid of them as there are cultural taboos against disabled people. It is thought that they are cursed or that others will assume their disability if they touch them. Some even said the Devil lives in them! However, the teachers were very careful to instruct all the children that there is nothing of the sort to worry about. Now the children have accepted them and there is no problem at all.

Six year old Namana Evaline comes from a village about a days walk away and stays at the nursery as there is no other place for her. Some time ago, Evaline was bitten by a snake and lost some of the use of her right hand. She had to learn how to write with her left hand.

Lokwalup Lokeno is seven years old and there is some confusion about how his leg got injured. His father says he was born that way but the indications are that he fell from a tree. Little Lokeno didn't let the disability stop him as one can see him walking with his stick all over. He is an



Figure 1 Teacher Emmanuel with Lokeno

average learner but understands most of what is said to him in Arabic or English. Lokeno is very social and active and always participates. In fact, he walks about 4 kilometers round trip every day from his village to school. He plays football, swims, and does most anything else other pupils do. He is well liked by his classmates.

Although both these children are shy they did mention a few things about themselves:

My name is Lokeno. I have 4 brothers and don't know how many sisters. I like to read books. The cup is my favorite thing to draw. Yellow is my favorite color. I like to play football at home even if I can't run fast. My favorite teacher is Madam Catherine as she helps me learn.

My name is Eviline. I don't know my real age. I only have 2 sisters and no brothers. I live in Lereboi village which is too far to walk so I stay here at the nursery. I love the color green and I like to look at different shapes and sizes of things. The others say I am funny around the group. My right hand is injured but I have learned how to use it for little things so it is still useful. My favorite teacher is Madam Chandia as she is always so nice to me.



Figure 3 Nursery children eating breakfast

All of these wonderful people are integrated into the work and education programs to the fullest as staff and teachers are able. There is no one at Peace Village who is specifically trained in the education with disabled and handicapped but all the staff and teachers are sensitive to the needs of these fellow human beings. For sure, some of the others will make fun of those with disabilities but the teachers are quick to use these as teaching moments. Discussions are immediately opened on how Jesus treated all those around him with disabilities. Learners are made aware that all lives are sacred and should be seen as equal to us all.

Including those who seem worthless in life is a testimony to God's love of the poor and oppressed. HTPVK sees goodness in all peoples as part of its Vision and Mission in Kuron Peace Village.

(sources: interview with Lokeno and Eviline. Interview with Nursery teachers and workers. edited by Gabe Hurrish: 27.Nov.2021)