



Nicci Maxwell

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Location: South Sudan



What I do: Providing paediatric and neonatal medical care to local and refugee communities, and training and supporting local paediatric teams



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

As I sit down to write this letter, I am, yet again, in awe of God's goodness and faithfulness. I have been very aware of his protection and his unchangeable nature in the past few months, which have been characterised by change and disruption.

Back in mid-March I was very blessed to have a week of rest at the coast in Tanzania. At the end of the week, I was feeling refreshed and ready to return to work. Unfortunately, the security situation in South Sudan, which had been pretty precarious when I left, had deteriorated even further and many thought that a return to civil war was a very real possibility. The team at ACROSS felt it would be unsafe for me to return at that point and most of my friends and neighbours were being evacuated by the organisations they work for. I spent a further week in Tanzania and then, when things in South Sudan remained very uncertain, I flew to South Africa and spent the month of April there until I was able to return to Juba. It was a blessing to unexpectedly spend Easter with my family!

Since returning, the situation in South Sudan remains complicated and fragile, although, on the surface, daily life in Juba hasn't changed very much. There are definitely a few more soldiers on the streets and there are frequent reports of armed clashes from around the country. I recently just missed being present at a shooting incident in the centre of Juba, having driven past the site less than 10 minutes earlier. Praise God for his protection! On a more peaceful note, the rainy season has begun and my garden in the compound is looking green and lush again. Although the daytime temperatures are back down to the mid-30s, the high humidity means most days feel uncomfortably hot and sticky but the work here goes on.

The theme of change and disruption continues in the refugee part of my work too. After a spell of not being able to access the Gorom camp because of threats by the local host community, our return was eventually negotiated in April. A few weeks ago, it was a joy to have a visit from one of the refugee mums and her baby who I had referred to Al Sabbah with pneumonia. The little girl had had a difficult time in hospital but had eventually made a full recovery. Her mum brought her just to show me how well she was doing and to say thank you!

Very sadly, ACROSS had to finish work in Gorom at the end of May as the UNHCR contract went to another NGO. My continued work in the camp is currently being negotiated with the new organisation. Please pray



The neonatal ward looking clean and bright

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



that I will be able to continue to serve the refugees with good paediatric care or, if not, that I will quickly find the right place for my skills to be used.

The neonatal ward at Al Sabbah Children's Hospital continues to provide its fair share of joys and challenges. A particular highlight of the past few weeks is that the ward is really clean. That may not sound like much but it feels like a huge achievement to have the floors free from cockroaches and rubbish. The rooms are looking clean and bright, despite the heat and even with the beds still too close together – unfortunately I can't move the walls or change the weather!

Praise God for Helen and Idah, our two cleaning ladies, who are

doing an amazing job! The clean environment certainly helps in preventing hospital-acquired infection in our patients and it makes the ward a much more pleasant place for patients and staff. There seems to be a more positive attitude among the nurses and I'm looking forward to seeing some ongoing changes, particularly around prescribing and administering medication. Please pray for wisdom to know exactly what needs to happen next and the patience and persistence to implement it.

I have also been spending quite a lot of time in meetings recently. Together with colleagues from Al Sabbah and representatives of the WHO, I am involved in the production of a Paediatric Pocketbook, which will be an accessible guide to the important basics of paediatric and newborn care for health workers across the whole of South Sudan. This is a really exciting development which will hopefully benefit children all over the country. Less exciting but equally important are a series of meetings looking at the data we collect about admissions to the neonatal ward at the hospital and what this can tell us about what we might need to do next to improve the care we offer. At the moment, all the data is telling us is that we aren't really collecting enough data! Other discussions are ongoing around how I might contribute a medical perspective to CMS-Africa's work in Wau, in the north west of the country, and I've also been asked whether I could help to start a follow-up clinic for the babies and children that return from spina bifida surgery in Uganda. There are so many needs here!

Plans for my home assignment in the UK are progressing well. I hope to be able to visit friends and link churches during September and October. My diary is filling up fast, so if you haven't heard from me and would like to arrange a visit, please send me an email... soon!

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing prayers and support.

Every blessing,

Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: My garden loving the rainy season; the beautiful Tanzanian coast; paediatricians hard at work developing the national Paediatric Pocketbook (photo credit: Dr Piol Maror); the Gorom health team ready for the journey back to Juba



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I've been encouraged to hear recent mission stories from around my wider area of work. In Ukraine, families are being assured they are not alone amid the hardship of war, and my colleagues in Paraguay have seen a young man overcome challenges to learn academically and spiritually. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/empower