



# NEWSLETTER

ICRC SOUTH SUDAN - OCTOBER 2016

## Healthcare in South Sudan: Beating the Odds

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. In South Sudan it works with the South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) to respond to the urgent needs of the communities severely affected by the conflict and help them face the future with more confidence. With 14 field bases covering the Equatorias, Greater Bahr El-Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile, South Sudan is the ICRC's largest operation on the African continent.

Decades of violence in South Sudan have shattered hopes for a functional medical system. Many health centers across the country closed down because of violence or a lack of funding. To reach the nearest clinic, people often have to walk for hours and sometimes days. The insufficient number of medical structures and medical personnel is made worse by the absence of roads. When a patient has to reach the hospital in an emergency this can be a death sentence.

The ICRC is supporting primary healthcare facilities in Akoka, Waat, Motot, Kodok, Udier and Maiwut to ensure that people affected by conflict have access to basic health services. The closure of many health facilities increased the pressure on those that remain.

«The Waat Primary Healthcare center we support was originally supposed to provide services to some 45,000 people, but it is currently serving between 60,000 and 70,000 people with only two clinical officers to attend to them. Many patients come to us from far away» says Patricia Maina, ICRC Health Delegate.

Maternal mortality is one of the severe consequences of the lack of access to healthcare. Preventative measures can improve a mother's chances for a safe delivery, but a lack of awareness and difficult access mean a limited number of women reach assistance. The ICRC works with traditional birth attendants who try to persuade women to do prenatal checkups at the early stages of pregnancy.

«We try to identify high-risk pregnancies early and tell the women to go to hospital before the labor starts» explains Nyawech Sammuel, a midwife assistant at the Waat Primary Healthcare clinic.

But even this approach has its limits. Advanced medical devices like ultra-sound machines are extremely rare. Health workers' abilities to detect abnormalities are limited. «In Waat clinic at least every three months we register a maternal death. This is the minimum. Often there are more» says Patricia Maina.

In the absence of roads, all the medical supplies are delivered by airplane or helicopter. Finding skilled personnel is another big challenge. Most of the healthcare workers never received any formal training, and instead learn on the job. Many lives depend on skill and dedication alone.

Tens of thousands of people have died in fighting since late 2013, though no one knows the exact number. What is certain is that this unknown figure rises every day, even when the guns are silent.



ICRC

# FACTS & FIGURES

JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 2016

**To respond to people's most urgent needs and to help them build resilience, the ICRC together with the SSRC have:**



Distributed over **10,000** metric tons of food to over **750,000** people  
Provided household essentials for **205,000** people  
Provided nearly **212,900** people with seeds and tools for farming, and over **69,600** with fishing kits



Vaccinated more than **550,000** heads of livestock  
Treated **220,000** animals, benefitting nearly **95,000** people  
Trained over **180** community animal health workers and provided them with drugs



Improved access to safe drinking water for over **100,000** people through the rehabilitation of **12** water facilities  
Installed emergency water units benefitting more than **45,000** people

**To help improve access to health and provision of surgical care the ICRC has:**



Performed nearly **3050** surgeries  
Conducted more than **119 900** outpatient consultations  
Provided medical materials to **150** first-aid and other healthcare facilities



Provided antenatal care for almost **7,000** women, safe deliveries for nearly **700** and some **11,900** vaccine doses for children under one year old



Assisted over **1,900** people with disabilities  
Evacuated **325** weapon wounded  
Conducted First-Aid training for more than **490** arms-carriers and 68 civilians, and distributed **124** First-Aid kits.

**To The ICRC visits places of detention and supports the authorities to help improve the conditions of detention:**



Visited almost **5,000** detainees throughout the country  
Improved living conditions for some **3,000** detainees and implemented preventive measures against malnutrition



**To help reconnect family members separated by the conflict the ICRC and SSRC have:**

Facilitated more than **42,000** phone calls between family members separated by the conflict  
Distributed more than **1,800** Red Cross messages



Reunited **11** children and vulnerable people with their families.



**To promote knowledge and respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the International Human Rights Law (IHRL) the ICRC has:**

Trained over **2280** weapon bearers on IHL and IHRL and trained over **1500** weapon bearers, health staff and community members on first aid and safe access to health care.

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