

Frontline Action

WCF Food Aid Serves Internally Displaced People in South Sudan Living in a Cemetery



Helping Children in a
World of Need

World Children's Fund is disbursing food aid and providing medical relief to displaced children and families surviving in makeshift settlements throughout South Sudan, including Juba, the capital city. WCF teams disbursed beans, Maize flour and other staple items in the Konyo Konyo cemetery, home to an estimated five thousand people that are subsisting among the graves in Juba's walled cemetery.

"The case of six-month-old Lodule Laku demonstrates the overall severity of the suffering, hunger and sickness of the people trying to survive here in cemetery and other crude settlements like this. These settlements are filled with families and children that fled their villages because of the war," said Johan Claassen, liaison in South Sudan. During the food disbursement in the cemetery, the team met Keji, a mother whose young son was severely malnourished and dehydrated. Claassen said he feared the baby would not live much longer without urgent medical attention.

Keji was sobbing and deeply distressed. She said she knew her son was very sick and feared he was dying, but like others who lived in the cemetery, she had no money for food or medical help. The ground team immediately arrived with medication and intravenous fluid for the baby. "The child's veins were so collapsed, it was nearly impossible to find a viable vein in his skeletal arm," said Claassen.

Albino Alwin, a south Sudanese medical student who works with the WCF team in South Sudan said after receiving hydration, baby Lodule was taken to Al Sabbah Children's Hospital where he was admitted for two weeks and received care.

"We thank those who remembered our suffering and we ask God to bless them."

"A big thank you to World Children's Fund donors for rescuing Lodule's life," said Alwin. "There are many children in the same condition here in South Sudan, some of them die. Help to children like Lodule is not wasted."



Lodule Before and After





One man who received food at the cemetery said he would make porridge and his children would eat it with the beans. He said since coming to live in the cemetery, his wife had died, and he had buried her in the dirt among the other graves.

A pregnant woman with four young children received maize and beans and expressed her thanks. She said there was no work or jobs for her husband in Juba and the staple items would help the family survive.

Alwin described the conditions in the cemetery as a “complete horror” and said he was concerned for the health of the people that were subsisting surrounded by flies and disease caused from the impoverished conditions like no toilets, no clean drinking water and insufficient food. In addition to malnutrition, he said the people commonly suffer from pneumonia, diarrhoeal illness, malaria, and typhoid. Some have built shelters in the cemetery using bits and pieces of tent material, discarded pieces of plastic and metal and others sleep out in the open without tenting, blankets, or mosquito netting.

The cemetery is near the largest rubbish site in the city where waste from the local market is dumped. Families living in the cemetery pick through the rubbish in search of any scraps of leftover food. The food is rotten and contaminated, but scrounging is frequently their only means of survival. Women and children also dig through the rubbish looking for items they can sell for food.

“We thank those who remembered our suffering and we ask God to bless them,” said one leader of a group of about 120 households that lived in one section of the cemetery. Their group included around twenty orphans.

An estimated two million people in South Sudan were forced from their villages and cities from violence and war and remain internally displaced subsisting in settlements like the cemetery in Juba. ■



Web site: www.worldchildrensfund.org.uk