



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 reach their God-given potential

Dear friends,

Sometimes it's almost as if these link letters write themselves – I have an idea or a theme in mind and the words come easily. Other times, like today (and the past few days), I struggle to find the right words and I'm not sure what to say even though life here has continued to be full and busy. Perhaps too busy and too much to say for just this short letter?! There's more on my blog (niccimaxwell.wordpress.com) if this letter piques your interest.

My "multiple part-time jobs" at Al Sabbah, Gorom and Ustratuna have continued to fully occupy most of my days so I took a short break away from Juba at the end of April. Unfortunately my already short break was shortened by a day due to delayed flights and when I eventually got to Kenya I felt really unwell for most of the time. Even so, it was lovely to get away from the pressured environment of Juba and be in my happy place (anywhere near the ocean) for a few days. Since returning to work, I have continued to feel unwell and, in truth, work has felt exhausting and difficult over the past few weeks, despite being able to make a positive difference for many babies and their families. I think I am probably getting better now but please pray that I will be back to full strength to manage all my different activities.

We have recently introduced CPAP (a form of respiratory support) on the neonatal ward at Al Sabbah for the first time. I've wanted to do this for a while and I'd set a date of July this year for its introduction after some staff training. I was hoping that, by July, our oxygen supply would be more reliable to make using CPAP safer but a baby girl with severe pneumonia hastened the decision for me! I made a simple CPAP circuit out of oxygen tubing and a plastic water bottle (yes, it's a recognised method!) and watched as a baby who was almost certainly not going to survive, began to improve within hours. Within another 24 hours we were using CPAP on two more children and the nursing team, who had been very reluctant to try something new, were asking how to make the set-up themselves. Praise God for unexpected progress.

Medical staffing remains a huge challenge at Al Sabbah. I would love to have at least two really enthusiastic medical officers that I can train up over a year or so. This would improve the standard and continuity of care



The ward has been incredibly busy but a gift of plastic chairs keeps some of our mums comfortable

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



for sick babies. Sadly, there are no salaries for doctors in the public service at the moment so finding doctors willing to work for no pay for a year or more will be absolutely miraculous! Still, I believe God can “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20)! Do pray with me for this staffing need.

Life in Juba has been impacted by events in the wider world recently. The war in the Middle East has affected our fuel price, much like in the rest of the world. A litre of petrol now costs close to \$3, which is an increase of 140 per cent since March. South Sudan depends on imports arriving by road from its neighbours, especially

Uganda, so prices in the shops and markets are soaring. This has been made even worse by crime and conflict at the border, a truck drivers’ strike and insecurity on the main road leading to the capital. South Sudanese people are struggling more than ever.

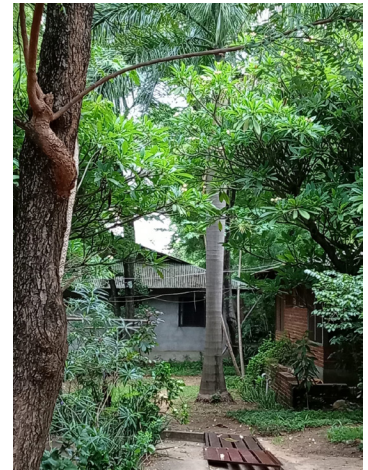
In recent days, an outbreak of Ebola in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been announced. The area borders both Uganda and South Sudan and it appears that many hundreds of people have already been infected. This is a very rapidly developing situation for which the health system in South Sudan is almost completely unprepared, unlike DRC and Uganda who have successfully managed such outbreaks in the past. By the time you read this, it is very possible that Ebola will have become a huge public health issue in the wider East African region. Do pray for DRC, Uganda and South Sudan – for the wider health response and for people to be responsible in implementing and complying with public health advice, especially around travel to affected areas and across borders, hand hygiene and safe burials (contrary to many traditional cultural practices) to prevent infection spreading.

I’m already in the very early stages of planning a period of home assignment in the UK at the end of the year which will mean I will be away from South Sudan over the potentially turbulent period of the planned general election. There have already been threats of disruption if the election goes ahead and if it doesn’t! I have begun contacting people that I know I need to visit while in the UK but if you or your church would like to see me, please get in touch, especially as the Advent and Christmas period is extremely busy for most people.

I remain incredibly grateful for your prayers and support and especially love getting email from you with your news from time to time. Thank you for all you do to help show God’s love to children and families in South Sudan.

Every blessing,

Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: Along with MAF and Usratuna, we sent another 10 children to Uganda for neurosurgery (photo credit: Jenny Davies, MAF); a picture from my break in Kenya; the rainy season makes the area around my house beautifully green; storm clouds gathering over Gorom



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I hope that you’re inspired as you read about Josephat in Tanzania who has changed his future through a CMS-linked project. And, see how mission partner Ann-Marie has changed global policy impacting women at risk of female genital mutilation. Read their stories and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower