



# Nicci Maxwell

Link Letter no. 24 | March 2025

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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 family and friends,

Greetings from an exceedingly warm Juba! Daytime temperatures have exceeded 40C every day for the past few weeks and there's no sign of it cooling down for a while. It's pretty warm at night too, with temperatures not falling much below 26C. Thankfully the humidity is low and I have more than one fan at home... it's just incredibly hot at work! The heat has been just one of the many challenges of the past few weeks.

Workwise, the neonatal unit renovation was eventually completed and we moved back in at the beginning of December. There were a few initial snags, like fans that didn't work and beds that had to be dismantled to fit through a newly narrowed doorway, but we've settled into our refurbished space. It took weeks for the staff team to get used to the idea of the new high dependency room but now that they have begun admitting patients to it, they seem to appreciate having a space where the sickest babies are all within easy reach plus there is some better equipment and a few electrical sockets to plug it all in! The ward is consistently busy and there are very few days when I notice an empty bed. Most days there are "floor beds" with mums and babies lined up on mats along the corridor because there is no other room for them.

In the face of a seemingly endless stream of very sick babies, many of whom have arrived too late or for whom we have no proper treatment, I praise God for some wonderful successes with patients that were extremely small or sick and people thought would not survive. My special "favourite" (yes, I know I'm not supposed to have favourite patients!) at the moment is a little girl, H, who came to us from another health facility at one week of age because they felt there was nothing that could be done for her. She weighed just over 600g at that point. H's mum was initially very unsure about our care for her daughter but after a couple of weeks, little H was not only alive but had started gaining weight and H's mum told me that she thought I probably knew a few useful things and she had decided she would stay in hospital with H until I told her she could go home! Well, H seemed to thrive, even through the ward renovations and relocation and she went home in December weighing nearly 1.5kg. She has been brought back to visit us each week since discharge and seems to be growing and developing beautifully. I have repeatedly offered her mum the option of not coming back each week, especially as H weighs almost 4kg now, but she seems to enjoy the visits and the staff make a fuss of her. Please pray with me that there will be many more who recover and thrive like H in the coming months.



*The new neonatal high dependency room at Al Sabbah*

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



Looking back, Christmas seems like ages ago! I had a wonderful break with my family. In mid-January, I quickly got back to the reality of Juba, when we experienced a very difficult few days of protests, accompanied by looting and shooting, following the deaths of several South Sudanese nationals, allegedly at the hands of Sudanese armed forces in Sudan. The protestors targeted Sudanese homes and businesses and many Sudanese were forced to flee to the safety of police stations and military barracks. Those who continued to feel too unsafe to return home were relocated to Gorom, adding to the busyness and strains of the refugee camp. Please do pray for the security situation in Juba and in South Sudan more generally. Growing

economic hardship is adding to an already volatile environment where violence has been seen as a solution for too long.

The refugee work at Gorom was going well, even with the arrival of hundreds of new residents, and I was really enjoying the work and feeling like I was building some good relationships with the team and the refugee community. The UN were apparently very pleased that my presence had reduced the number of children being referred to hospital. Unfortunately, some members of the neighbouring host community appeared to be jealous of the services offered to refugees (although we don't discriminate between refugees and host community) and threatened the safety of any ACROSS staff in the camp. We have been unable to go to Gorom since the beginning of February and, in spite of some high level negotiations, the situation remains unresolved. Please pray with all of us at ACROSS for the Gorom situation, so that both refugees and host community can receive the health and education services they desperately need.

Many people have expressed concern about the impact of current changes in American and, more recently, British aid funding. We know that around 60 per cent of UNHCR services to almost 1 million refugees in South Sudan are funded by American donations. Many of ACROSS's other projects receive indirect American and UK aid money and instructions to reduce or freeze services are arriving almost daily. Please do pray that creative and sustainable solutions will be found to the current crisis.

Looking ahead, I am already beginning plans for a period of home assignment in the UK autumn. Although I haven't got firm dates yet and it isn't going to be a long spell (I will have more people to see than Sundays available!), please get in touch if you'd like to arrange a visit... especially if I wasn't able to see you before I came to South Sudan last year.

Thank you for all your prayers and support.

Every blessing,

Nicci



*Photos from top to bottom: The future of neonatal care in Juba – our new nursing team pose with the hospital director and me; staff admitting our first baby to an incubator; Juba from the air in December; everyone helps to fetch water for the family at Gorom*



## 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](https://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)

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