



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 family and friends,

Hello again from Juba, South Sudan! I have just returned from a very short visit to my family in South Africa and a very busy few weeks of home assignment in the UK. It was great to meet up with so many friends and supporters but there were still lots of people I would like to have seen and didn't.

It was wonderful to be in the UK in autumn. I really miss the changing seasons when I'm in Juba where we only have "rainy season" and "dry season". I really noticed the cooler weather throughout my time in the UK – even a relatively warm autumn day feels freezing after spending months with the occasional 20°C as the lowest temperature! Since returning to Juba, the daytime temperatures have been well above 30°C every day and the forecast is for a much hotter dry season ahead.

While I was away, work at Al Sabbah seems to have continued quite well overall. The neonatal team have really taken on the infection control agenda, including the restricted visiting policy, and added a rule of their own: visitors must remove their shoes before entering the ward. I am glad they felt empowered to make changes which they deem to be in the interests of infection control, even if they aren't the changes I would have chosen. The ward was beautifully clean when I returned, despite a major cleanliness crisis in the rest of the hospital in recent weeks, but we still have some work to do on hand washing!

Sadly, the staff also managed to break one expensive item of equipment and the lovely improvement in mortality on the unit took a step in the wrong direction again so we have a lot of work to do now that I am back. We have lost three senior members of the nursing staff recently and the two nurses who are now in charge of the ward are relatively inexperienced but they are so keen to learn and have a great attitude to their new role – I think we will be able to work well together. Please continue to pray for the work at Al Sabbah, especially for the new senior nurses (Nako and Christine).

I had managed to get back to my refugee patients in Gorom with the new NGO in June and I had been doing one day per week in the camp. It's usually an absolutely exhausting day in a busy outpatient setting but it's often the highlight of my week so I was glad to return after home assignment. Unfortunately, my first day back at Gorom after home assignment was cut short by some security concerns which led to a decision



*With the CMS-Africa team in Wau
(credit: Lawrence, CMS-Africa)*

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



to return to Juba at lunch time... uneventfully. Thank God for the security teams and advisors locally who try to keep all of us safe in an often rapidly changing situation.

Shortly before I went on home assignment, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of CMS-Africa team members in Wau, in the north west of South Sudan, and to visit some of the community projects they are involved in. We are hopeful that we might be able to develop a health-related outreach programme, especially to refugees and

internally displaced people in that area. I'm looking at ways to do this – hopefully without reinventing the wheel too much, as there are a number of health outreach/ evangelism tools we could adapt and that might allow us to get things up and running more quickly.

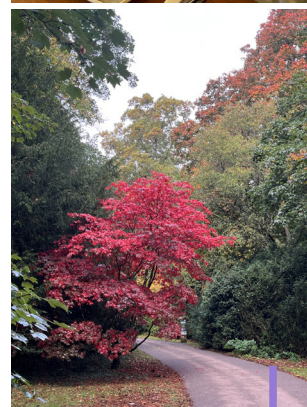
I have begun teaching the Paediatrics for Student Physiotherapists course at the Catholic university again and have also just been asked to deliver the formal neonatal teaching for all the paediatric registrars in Juba. In addition to this, a follow up clinic seems to be taking shape for children who have had surgery (in Uganda) for spina bifida or hydrocephalus and I will probably need to commit at least a couple of days to this every month. Please pray for the establishment of this new clinic, that I will be able to work with the right people to offer a really good service to these children and their families. Do also pray for all the bits of work I'm involved in outside of my basic hospital and refugee camp sessions. There's a lot to do and I need to manage my time and other resources well.

The political and security situation in South Sudan remains fragile. There is a complicated court case going on at the moment involving some very high level politicians, so security around the case is very high and on days when the court is in session (two or three days a week), all the roads are closed around the court (very close to where I live) with a large number of soldiers manning check points. I wish I could take photos but that would definitely get me arrested! The security cordon means a driver can't get to me in the mornings to take me to work, so I'm having to walk to a point outside the cordon to be collected. Please pray that I can continue to do the morning walk safely and that the outcome of the court case, whenever that happens, will not be a reason for security to deteriorate further.

As the end of the year is rapidly approaching, I'd like to wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful new year. My Christmas plans are still uncertain but I think I might be in Juba for Christmas this year. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing prayers and support for me and the work in South Sudan.

Every blessing,

Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: Visiting a CMS-Africa project aiming to make peace between gangs of youths (credit: Lawrence, CMS-Africa); we have a menagerie on our compound, including three tortoises; celebrating Mom's 80th birthday (with my brother); autumn in England



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds my faith when I hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. I hope that you're inspired as you read about Elise and Jon in Thailand who are working to keep families together and children out of care. And about Makol in South Sudan whose life got dramatically saved during a peace rally. You can read their stories, and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

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