

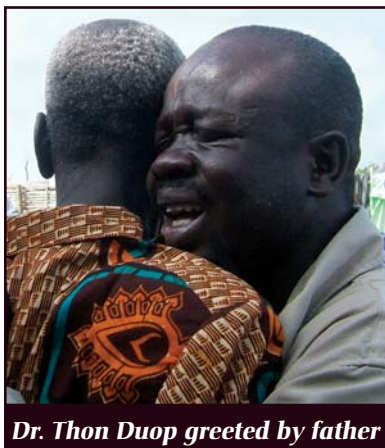
Ready to Rebuild: Sudanese Doctors Return Home

In Southern Sudan, the combined effects of poverty, underdevelopment and decades of war have produced one of the most challenging health situations in the world. "Malaria kills thousands of adults and children every month, HIV prevalence is rising and maternal mortality is the highest in the world," says William Kiarie, a Capacity Project team member in Southern Sudan.

The 2005 peace treaty between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army created a window of opportunity for rebuilding the south's severely damaged health sector. The Capacity Project is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to strengthen its ability to plan for and manage Southern Sudan's health workforce. The need is urgent: there are only 50 doctors to serve 10 million people, and even the capital city, Juba, has just a couple of poorly equipped hospitals with limited electricity and water service.

The effort to rebuild the health sector is getting an important boost from a program to bring back 15 Sudanese-born doctors who are ready to help. Kiarie explains, "An increase of 15 doctors would be small in most countries, including African countries, but for Southern Sudan this is highly significant." The Capacity Project is contributing logistical support to this program initiated by Samaritan's Purse-Canada and the University of Calgary Faculty of Medicine.

The doctors had been living in Canada but not practicing medicine. They were part of a group of 600 young people transported out of Sudan in 1986 so they could obtain educations and someday return to help lead their country.

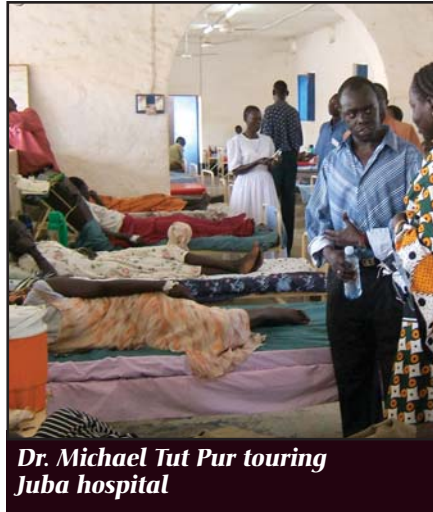


Dr. Thon Duop greeted by father

Daniel Madit Thon Duop, one of the doctors, contacted Samaritan's Purse, which worked with the University of Calgary medical school to create a one-year refresher course in Canada that prepared him and 14 others to return home.

In October 2006 the doctors arrived in Juba to an enthusiastic welcome, including a private meeting with the president of the government of Southern Sudan and formal state dinners. Being home for the first time in 20 years proved an emotional experience for many of this group. After spending three weeks in Juba reconnecting with family and their country, the doctors flew to Kenya to begin a one-year clinical training experience.

Capacity Project partner Interchurch Medical Assistance is playing a primary role in coordinating clinical training for the doctors. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Church Ecumenical



Dr. Michael Tut Pur touring Juba hospital

"This program will not just improve access to quality health services, it will without a doubt save the lives of thousands of Southern Sudanese children and adults."

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Doctors touring Juba hospital

Action in Sudan and Christian Health Association of Sudan are also involved in the program.

“There will be many challenges,” Dr. Thon Duop told Samaritan’s Purse. “But our objective is to help our people.” He is especially concerned with assisting Sudanese children. “I want to help them have the childhood that I did not have,” he said. “I want to watch them grow up healthy—to care for their medical needs, and to care for their mothers’ and fathers’ medical needs. That will make me happy.”

“These doctors have the potential to make a dramatic difference,” says Dr. Scott Shannon, who is coordinating the training program in Kenya. “Not only will they be providing clinical services in areas that have been without, they will also serve as county health supervisors in the public health infrastructure that will be implementing preventative immunization programs and organizing care for women surrounding childbirth.”

Kiarie adds, “This program to train and post 15 doctors will not just improve access to quality health services, it will without a doubt save the lives of thousands of Southern Sudanese children and adults.”

The doctors know that many more health care providers will be needed in Southern Sudan, but they are optimistic about the impact they can make. “If we sent even one doctor to run one health clinic, that clinic would help more than 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 people,” Dr. Thon Duop told the BBC radio program Outlook on December 4, 2006.

For his part, Dr. Thon Duop is home to stay. “I have come back and determined that as long as people need my services, I’ll be working in Southern Sudan.”

For more information, visit www.samaritanspurse.ca. Photos courtesy of Samaritan’s Purse-Canada



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