

When it doesn't add up: Help needed at the clinic in South Sudan

By Tohru Inoue | Sudan and South Sudan in East Africa



Photo by Neil Sandoz of one of our health workers in the clinic in Doro.

The disciples would have told you, “It doesn’t add up! Take all our income for a year and you couldn’t feed the 5,000 gathered in that deserted area even just a simple lunch.”

The SIM Doro clinic in rural South Sudan seems to be in the same situation. The clinic serves the host population, as well as thousands of refugees who have fled war just across the border. Patients also come from the thousands of internally displaced peoples who have been forced to abandon their homes, many of whom are out in the open, under trees, or living in relatives’ crowded houses throughout neighbouring villages.

It's currently the rainy season, and malaria is in full swing. People are sleeping outside with no mosquito nets to protect them from malaria carrying mosquitos. They're going to bed with damp clothes, looking for a dry patch of ground to weather the night.



Photo

by CH of internally displaced people.

The SIM clinic seems to be chronically understaffed. There are never enough workers for the harvest, with only one doctor, two nurses, two clinical officers, four community health workers, one translator, and a handful of specialized assistants. Last month's outpatient department numbers were over 4,000, which is almost double what they have been over the last few years. But there are also some long-term issues on the horizon.

In the last year, a number of international health organisations have articulated their intention to pull out. Perhaps donors are unable to continue funding work in a refugee camp that's been there for almost a decade. The nearby referral hospital has also changed management and the services it provides have been affected. This has meant that

more people have come to the SIM clinic. Our staff have tried to do more work on the front end with triage, but even when we turn non-critical patients away, some opt to just sit there and wait. Waiting seems better than their odds elsewhere.



Photo

by CH of internally displaced people.

People even show up at the mission workers' homes, desperately looking for help. And what can the staff do? Turn them away? That's not an option.

Looking at the whole situation, no matter how you slice it, the math just doesn't add up. I wish I could solve it ... Make the numbers miraculously match ... That our capacity would somehow meet the needs. That in a sea of more than 5,000 faces, little loaves and fish would somehow find a way to satisfy them all ... even if it's meeting the needs just one day.

Where is the God of the loaves and fish? The one who touches and people are healed. The one who speaks and things come to life. The one who satisfies needs we can't meet. We need him.

If you ever thought mission workers were the ones changing the world, think again. We're all of us just scanning the horizon in search of the Master, just as much as the next person; just as you do when the finances at home don't add up; just as the refugees do when the pain of losing home is too much. We all just need Jesus because what we have just doesn't seem to be enough.

Could you do this for me? Could you pray? Could you call out for the Master? Tell him we need him. Tell him we have a few community health workers and a handful of others, and we're looking at a sea of needy faces and the math just doesn't add up. Tell him we've scraped together everything we have, and we want him to take it and multiply it.

And we can all wait together and see what he says.

Pray:

For the health staff at the Doro clinic to continue to find their strength in God.

Consider serving at the Doro clinic

Are you a medical professional? Please consider serving at the rural clinic in Doro, South Sudan. [Contact us](#) today!

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