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Traumatized families arriving in South Sudan need food, water and emergency supplies

With a gunshot wound to his arm, 40-year-old Ngong walked 60 km over three days before arriving in Gogrial, a town in Warrap State in South Sudan. Ngong is one of more than 100,000 people who have fled the Abyei region since violence broke out there in May.

Ngong said he and his family fled their home in a village near Abyei on May 19. He and five other men returned to retrieve some clothing and belongings from their home, but were shot at by soldiers.

“We left everything that we carried and ran. The five colleagues were shot and died instantly. I was shot in my right arm but kept running, holding my arm until I reached a village where I slept for a night without first aid,” Ngong said.

Thankfully, Ngong had been reunited with his wife and three children on the way to Gogrial. Many families have not been so lucky.

“It was such a terrible moment that most people ran with nothing,” one woman named Mary said. “Others even forgot to carry a container for water, which caused deaths, especially to young children. My heart ached for one mother with a two-year-old baby that died due lack of water and food. She had to leave the baby’s body in the bush and continue running.”

World Concern is distributing a one-month supply of food rations to displaced people as they arrive in ill-equipped and already strained host communities in the south. In addition to these new arrivals, hundreds of thousands of returnees have been migrating south in advance of July 9, when South Sudan will officially become its own country.

“This crisis is complicating an already complex problem,” said World Concern Sudan Country Director Peter Macharia. “Those displaced from Abyei and those returning from the north require urgent help to start their lives once again. Some have vowed never to go back. But even those who may want to stay for a little while and watch things unfold before they decide if they will go back, will also need help as they have no idea of when they will be able to return to their former homes.”

In addition to food and water, Macharia said people are in need of mosquito nets, cooking sets, soap, blankets, buckets and jerrycans.

Food and fuel prices have skyrocketed and are hindering the transportation of food and supplies. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the cost of staples, such as sorghum, has increased by 40 percent in local markets. Forecasted heavy rains could make some roads impassable, further limiting the arrival of supplies.

World Concern has worked in South Sudan since 2005, providing food security and economic development opportunities. In addition to meeting immediate needs for food, water and sanitation during the current crisis, World Concern is planning to open temporary schools using tents to allow 4,800 displaced students to return to school in host communities.

For more information about World Concern's response in South Sudan, please contact **Derek Sciba at (206) 713-5564**. You can also visit www.worldconcern.org/feedsudan.

Photo captions:

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