

## **Sudan Medical Link**

### **Good News from Wau**

The NHS in crisis. Planned surgery cancelled for January. Hospital A&Es overwhelmed.

We are becoming used to such scenarios in the UK but, in South Sudan, it's normal. Previously active hospitals have now shutdown, patients cannot access healthcare because the roads are too dangerous and the overall situation has deteriorated rather than improved as trained doctors flee to more stable countries in Africa.

So imagine the good news received since Christmas that a team of surgeons from Germany is visiting Wau! The newly constructed private hospital there will host them and allow them to perform much needed free operations. Many who have suffered too long and those who had given up hope of ever being well again will be restored by effective surgery.

The Sudan Medical Link has supported the training of clinical officers and midwives in Wau for many years. These officers have proved to be the backbone of the 'bare foot doctor' brigade who offer their expertise and knowledge to the beleaguered villages in that unstable country.

It's a daily struggle for clinical officers not knowing if they will have the appropriate drugs or if they will be faced with a clinical condition they have never encountered before.

So the visit of surgeons with their anaesthetists and trained nurses will be an enormous boost to that area and particularly to the clinical officers who will already have identified cases for the surgeons to operate on.

In October a UK/ South Sudan Alliance was launched in London. The aim is to encourage post graduate training in South Sudan. This is essential if newly trained doctors and nurses are to be retained in the country and not to travel overseas for further training. Many of those who travel for further education never return to South Sudan.

Less than 5% of surgical cases are operated on in Africa. A shortage of facilities and personnel have contributed to this appalling statistic.

SML continues to raise money for training and the provision of essential drugs to many parts of South Sudan. The clinical officers have been trained to identify those patients requiring surgery and the visit this spring by the surgeons will be hugely appreciated.

John Rennie