

## **Sudans Day 2020 The Medical Link**

### **Covid-19**

As of today's date the statistics according to 'Worldometer' on Covid-19 in the Sudans are 13,653 cases and 836 deaths in the north and 2,715 cases and 50 deaths in the south. These numbers may or may not be accurate but they contrast with UK figures of 460,178 cases and 42,202 deaths.

What have the Medical Link being doing about it? There was considerable soul-searching but in the end we decided our modest resources were best spent continuing the routine primary healthcare we have sought to provide in the past so as to make our many patients as fit as possible to resist the effects of the virus should they become exposed to it.

The heavy-lifting is, unsurprisingly, being carried out by UN agencies, initiatives from the US, the European Union among others and large faith-based NGOs. But most will also know that our recent Bishop's Appeal has elicited a response in its generosity far beyond the £50,000 target. The 'Food and Soap' project is now under way, helping out with coronavirus-related food shortages and encouraging down-to-earth hand-washing hygiene in both north and south.

Yes, but what have the minnow Medical Link being doing in the meantime alongside these leviathan agencies?

### **Medicines**

Within 2019 we were able to send out three consignments to destinations in Western Equatoria. Ongoing security considerations made deliveries by truck unfeasible so health kits were airlifted, often by MAF, to airfield hubs at Maridi and further on to Nzara, mostly for onward distribution to Ezo, Olo, Rasolo, Yabongo, Yabua and Yambio. A further two consignments were delivered earlier this year before the onset of the pandemic. Typically, the kits are made up of painkillers, simple antibiotics, anti-malarials; and drugs against upper respiratory tract infections, worms, diarrhoea and dehydration etc. Supplies of dressings, disinfectant, thermometers, etc are included where space allows. We have encouraged the clinics to approach government outlets to fill gaps in what we can send.

The people involved in this supply chain are crucial – from Ram (the young Indian entrepreneur owner of 'Generous Pharmaceuticals' in Juba and purveyor of long shelf-life, quality medicines at competitive prices) through the aircrew, through the receiving Diocesan Secretary (ticking off the contents of each kit upon arrival), to the clinical officers in the clinics and, finally, the patients. But there is a first, critical link at the outset – our generous donors who make all the above possible.



A consignment safely received

## Training

The successful delivery of medicines is great ... but who ensures that they are correctly prescribed? And how can a condition be accurately diagnosed where there are several possibilities? And who ensures that the next generation of bouncing babies is delivered safely? That takes us on to the training of medical staff.

The Medical Link currently sponsors the training of clinical officers (who typically oversee the running of clinics); of nurses (next on down the chain of care); of laboratory technicians (they stare down a microscope, identifying the exact bug that is causing the problem and enabling the clinical officer to prescribe the appropriate remedy in appropriate quantities); and of midwives (who are in the front line caring for mothers and babies in populations which have some of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world). These precious people are for the most part trained at colleges located in South Sudan – Wau and Maridi – as well as Arua and Kampala in Uganda. Again, the wherewithal comes from generous hearts within Salisbury Diocese.



Medical students ... or angels?

## The Day-to-Day

Back in the UK, we have for some time been a doughty cohort, primarily of retired doctors but with a clergyman and a superannuated lawyer, too, for good measure. Our two longest-serving members – Alison Pinkerton and I – are gradually withdrawing but we are now exploring the roles Anne Salter, Karen Mounce and John Simmons could play alongside Robin Sadler, Sandi Malpas and John Rennie.

The way we would normally ensure that the medical supplies and the training are up to scratch is to go out and visit – the people, the projects – but a couple of planned monitoring trips have had to be postponed: we'll get out there again as soon as we safely can.

But above all, remember that in spite of the encircling political and military insecurity, in spite of the pandemic, medicines are still getting through to the clinics, students still attend classes! For that we thank our ever-loving God.

Mike Maclachlan  
4.10.20

## PS

Like so many other downsides of the pandemic, we are struggling to respond positively to so many pleas for help at a time when our resources are pretty sparse. There's a fundraising initiative afoot so, if you are approached, please, please spare what you can! Many thanks.