

Coming home

South Sudanese share their stories of LWF support – November 2011



'For I was hungry and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you took me in ...'

Matthew 25: 36



Introduction

During the first part of November 2011, Chey Mattner and Jonathan Krause from Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) visited the Republic of South Sudan for monitoring and communications purposes. The team visited Ikotos and Panyagor.

Also present were Glenice Hartwich from the Board for Mission of Lutheran Church Australia, and Anna-Maria Sandstrom from Church of Sweden.

What follows are interviews with members of the community, sharing aspects of their life and their interaction with LWF.

There is no development thinking behind what is presented here, and interviews as documented as best as possible through process of translation. All I have done is rearrange the order of comments a little to create a more coherent narrative.

For most of the interviews there is a whole range of supporting photographs. Feel free to use this material as you wish, and to request further photos. Just contact me at jonathan-krause@alws.org.au

Jonathan Krause
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Front Cover Image

Runway' at Ikotos. Here, goats and sheep can be indistinguishable, giving a new angle to Jesus' story of 'Sheep and Goats' in Matthew 25. The image on this page shows Arie den Toom (LWF Director South Sudan) and Chey Mattner (ALWS Program Manager) with the goat given to LWF by the Mariol community in lieu of a feast of thanks for the new primary school built by LWF.

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Chainis

Location: Lohihe Village, Ikotos County, Republic of South Sudan

Permission: Sought, and granted, 2.11.11

NB: This connects to 'Borehole against Guinea Worm' story

Mother: Chainis Ingasi

Baby: Longasi Ichina

Brother: Loboro Mutufeji (7 years old)

Child: Lohide Robert (deceased, one year old)



"My child died suddenly. We don't know why. I was not happy when this happened because I did not know why he died.

My life is this. In the morning I go to fetch water from the borehole. Then I make food for the children. Then I go to the field for agriculture. Then I must come home and again collect water, and cook food for the children.

I grow sorghum on the flat land here, and in the mountain I grow maize. It is two hours to the mountain. We also cultivate cabbage and beans.

My husband helps me cultivate. But in this community it is the woman who must do most of the work. I am not happy about this. It is important for men to help prevent hunger. Men should help more because in case of hunger they should care for the family too.

Sometimes when the weather changes, and we are affected by the dry, then we do not have enough food. This can be for some months. I do not have money for food so then I cut wood, and burn charcoal, and sell this for food. Sometimes we also sell cabbage and beans. We must carry the cabbage and charcoal to Ikotos. This takes three and a half hours.

Before we had the borehole we had to get water from the spring. The borehole makes a big change because it saves a lot of time walking to get water.

I wish for my boy to grow up and go to school. Then he can continue and can do other work like the military or health.

If I am chief of the village, there are four things I will do:

I will have meetings with people. We will address the issue of water. We will also work for hunger. And for sickness.

Then we will continue to visit the government office and talk to them until they help."

Susan & Angelina

Location: Lomwo Village, Ikotos County, South Sudan

Permission: Sought & granted for photos, stories & publication (1.11.11)



When I first met Susan three years ago she told me three of her children had died of hunger. Angelo. Teresa. Baby Mary.

To escape her grief, she said she tied a rope around the branch of a tree, and hanged herself.

It was only because her fellow villagers of Lomwo saw her, and cut her down, that she survived.

At that time, Susan asked me to take a photo of her and her daughter Angelina, her only surviving child. In that photo you see Susan smiling. But somehow I think you also see her cry.

Three years on, I meet Susan again.

She seems smaller, and younger. But not a lot happier.

"I survive on my own. I cultivate. I plant cassava, sorghum and green vegetables like cow-peas. This year we have cultivated the land, and if the rain continues we will have a harvest.

If the crops are destroyed by drought, we depend on green vegetables we find in the forest.

I compare my life to those who live on the mountain where the soil is fertile. Here life is not easy. You must work hard to open the land, and plant the crop. But drought can come and you lose your harvest. Then you must go to the mountain and do work for the people there.

During the hunger gap I go to the forest and collect firewood and carry it to Ikotos. This is many hours walking. Here I try to sell the wood. If it is sold, I buy flour. I get green vegetables in the forest. I will not steal food.

Since my husband died, his brother must stay with me.

He works to help support me, but not like my real husband. He comes sometimes, but then goes away for many days.

I will not marry again. I will remain in my house and care for my young ones. Since independence, there is difference in my life. I can move freely to the garden with no interference. There is freedom.

When I look at my life sometimes I do not feel OK. There are other people married in the same year as me – they enjoy the peace. But for me, my husband is gone. If he were here, he would have a salary and we would have a different life.

The future I cannot determine, but I put it as a prayer to God. I ask that I can live long enough to take care of my children until they grow up and can take care of themselves.

In my lifestyle it is my prayer that God will take care of me.

There is sickness in this village, and it is difficult to treat. The nearest dispensary is far away, more than 35 kilometres. If someone falls sick, if you have no one to carry you, you just lay in the house.

If you have a goat, then you give that to the youth, and they will carry you.

When my child falls sick, I use local medicine. I go to the bush and get the roots. If this does not work, I go to the witch doctor. If it is still bad, then I must go to the hospital.

If I am chief of the village, one thing I will do is call regular meetings, so I can be advised of any sickness, so the person can be helped to go to the hospital.

I will also bring all the community together to do rituals to make us peaceful together. I would love the community to stay in peace. They should stop robbery and raiding and killing innocents.

God has blessed me. The children make me happy. I am also happy with the peace, and the independence takes us away from the days of war. I am so happy when we have a good harvest, and there is enough food for my family. Then I can take care of my children.

When I think of LWF I am happy. When I see them coming, I know they come with positive things like the school. This school has relieved us from cutting grass each year to replace the old classes.

The big change in my life is from this school, here in the village.

The children who go this school will be educated, and will come and help our community. In the future there is hope that some of these children will become doctors, some drivers, some teachers.

I still want Angelina to be a doctor.

You can take my report to Australia that we are still lacking primary health care. That is the first thing. We are still very poor, so people should keep on helping."

Regina by the River

Location: Chorokol Village, Ikotos County. Republic of South Sudan

Permission: Sought, and granted, 2.11.11

NB: This story connects to 'Borehole at Lohihe Village'

Mum: Regina

Baby: Nathalie

Regina walks one hour each way, twice a day, to the river. Here she washes baby Nathalie, washes clothes, and collects water for household use. Women here use 20 litre jerry-cans they carry on their head. Just 20 metres upstream from where Regina is bathing Nathalie, a flock of goats is standing at the edge of the water drinking.



"The children get sick in the stomach from this water.

The children also get hungry. We have only sorghum.

A borehole would make a difference to my family because this water makes us sick."



This is upstream from where Regina is washing Nathalie, and women collect water.

Guinea Worm Lady

Location: Panyagor, Republic of South Sudan

Lady: Aluel Ater

Permission: Sought, and granted – 5.11.11



This lady has suffered guinea worm 10 times. In previous times it was prevalent in this area. LWF has installed a new borehole to provide safe clean water.

"Before I had to go so far to collect water. This is four hours walk.

At that time children died of disease from the water. I myself have suffered guinea worm from the bad water. I had this ten times. We must turn it on stick. There was no medicine by which I could reduce the pain. It was hell. It lasts two months.

The new borehole means we have less disease. I am happy because it means the people may no longer die easily."

The borehole supplies 160 households, up to 1000 people.

Borehole against Guinea Worm

Location: Lohihe Village, Ikotos County. Republic of South Sudan

Permission: No people images, 2.11.11

NB: This story connects to 'Regina at the River'



The borehole is 61 metres deep. The water table is at 35 metres.

Population of this village is 7062 people. It is located in an area where guinea worm remains a problem. (Confirmed with LWF staff, and Village Chiefs.)

The pump can produce 700 litres of water per minute.

It is open from 6am to 6pm, only being closed for an hour from 1pm.

Therefore, at 700 litres per minute, the daily capacity approaches 500,000 litres.

For 7,062 people at the Sphere standard of 15 litres per day, around 100,000 litres per day is needed.

Lifespan with good maintenance is 20 years. Total cost is \$11,000.



Rebecca of Water Committee

Location: Panyagor, Republic of South Sudan

Lady: Rebecca Adit Thon

Permission: Sought, and granted – 5.11.11



"During the war I was still young. Life was very bad.

My mother passed away, and my father was in the north. It was very difficult, but God helped. There was lack of something to eat, lack of water, and lack of clothes. Even though I had lost all human things, God kept me alive.

I went to Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1997. I know about LWF in Kakuma – they gave me education, and taught us about peace.

When I live in Kakuma, I was not cultivating. Now I am. Life is different here. Kakuma was good, but it is not your homeland. Home may be bad because there are many things we lack, but home is home.

Before we had the borehole here, people were drinking from the ground. The washing, bathing, cooking, everything.

During this time people were getting sick. There were insects in the water, and when you drink it you get very sick. The children get diarrhea and cholera. This can kill people. There was a small child which died of diarrhea – Abuk.

I had one child, but he died after delivery.

During my pregnancy there was no treatment. The child wouldn't come out alive. I had to give birth to a dead child. Later they said it was malaria.

The women are suffering because we deliver the children. We suffer because we have no examinations at all, and there are women dying every month. There is anemia. Some are delivering in the community. And because we are not vaccinated, our child gets sick in the womb.

Now we have the borehole, life is different. We are taught about hygiene. Now we drink water from the borehole, and there are much less people who get sick.

I am a member of the Water Committee for the borehole. I benefit from the borehole, that's why I join the committee. Our role is to take care of the borehole. We protect it from the children, because they may break it, or they may hurt themselves.

When I knew we received independence, even though we lack hospital and classroom, and feel insecurity, we look forward to the government delivering.

If I head this community, I will educate them to stop domestic violence in the households, so people can live in peace. I also tell people to send their children to school for their future life. I am a teacher, and I have 80 children in my class. Some have 200. I like these children to be educated.

What I will say to the people in Australia is that we appreciate your borehole, and I pray God bless you. We have had war for twenty-one years, and we could not get this by ourselves."



Children now safely drink fresh clean water.

Notes

- 160 households benefit from borehole – 1000+ people
- New fence is being built, as old one eaten by termites
- Lever kept down so children don't jam fingers
- Each H/H pays one pound (30 cents) per month toward pump maintenance
- They bring money to house of a member of committee; if they don't, she goes to them
- Money is used for repairs: community pays government mechanic
- There is no LWF involvement: the people 'own' the pump

Nikodemus at Marial PS

Location: Marial Primary School, Pibor County, Jonglei State, South Sudan, 980 students with 12 teachers

Young man: Nikodemus Akur Akien (23 years old, class 8)

Permission: Sought, and granted – 4.11.11

NB: Nikodemus was injured in an attack by the 'enemy'. He was struck around the eye with a panga (machete). The enemy is from the Murle County. He was taken to hospital, but forced to leave before the end of his treatment because he had no money. He is now virtually blind in this eye.



"The war started in 1983, and our country got independence on 9 July 2011.

There is a lot of conflict here, and we are worried our brothers will come and attack our parents and take our cattle. The enemy also takes the children. They even take my

uncle. When this enemy comes, I will fight against them. We try to defend ourselves, but we don't have guns. The other community does.

What I saw during this time is a lot of people died. Even my father was killed. Some of our mothers were displaced. During the wars some of the people died because there was no food at that time.

Right now we do not have enough food in our families because there has been too much rain, and the crops have not grown. The children are hungry, and they cry. I have to leave from school to go look for food. Yesterday I got only small fish, and the children cry. Today may be a little better. Tomorrow I do not know.

I could go hunting, but I do not have a gun. I use a spear for antelope during the dry season. I can use a net for fishing.

I also eat grass.

Before we had only this old mud school. With this mud school it is like we are cattle.

But now I am very happy because my school is here and built by LWF. This school is the first time we have a school here. If you find any school in this area, it is built by LWF. If it is a good structure, you know it is LWF.

When I finish school I cannot do more school because there is no one to pay my fees. During the conflict our cattle were looted, and my father was killed, so now I must be father to my family. But I wish I could do education, and be a teacher to help our people and our dear children.

Because our cattle have been taken I do not know how I can take a wife. If I do, it is only wife. As for children this will be what God gives me.

We are very happy this year that we have independence. I am so happy for the future life. I am happy when there are no worries in our country.

I hope that most of all someone can help us build a hospital, and a house for the teachers at the school. The other problem is our school does not have a fence, and we fear the enemy may attack us, and there are also wild animals.

If I am chief I will tell this community to let their children go to school. And some of the parents to cultivate the food. I also tell the people that no one can take someone else's property.

I will tell the community you are to build the office for teachers, and a kitchen. We can cut the grass and trees for them. The only problem is the ants come, they destroy it. When the rain comes, it destroys it. Even wind can destroy a house of grass.

I say to the people in Australia thank you very much. I am a Christian and my name is Nikodemus."

Handover of Primary Schools

Location: Panyagor

Permission: Not needed, public speeches

Three schools, built through LWF, were handed over to the government in a public ceremony. The schools include Marial PS. The meeting began and ended in heartfelt prayer. The following are quotes from various speakers.



"The school is the life of everything."

"We want to eradicate illiteracy. We are also human beings."

"The way we take care of our own cattle is the way we take care of our school. Our people fought and died for the future, and education is the future."

"We have to educate ourselves."

This year is the year of excitement.”

“Someone who gives you assistance is like your father.”

“Now the children who study in these schools will know that it is the Lutheran who brought this education to them.”

“We give thanks to the donors because they have done the impossible work to help us make life better. Don't be tired – the time will come when we will be like you, and give to other people.”



Commissioner to Group:

“Your role is to send your child to school, and to keep this school alive.”

School Garden Club at St Matthews

Location: St Matthews Primary School, Ikotos

Teacher: Okot Denis Junger

Boy: Simon (age 18, P7)

Girl: Josephine (age 15, P7)

Permission: Sought, and granted, 3.11.11

- 700+ students
- 15 teachers
- One of a dozen school garden clubs supported by ALWS
- Club has 24 students – it is voluntary
- Teach agricultural knowledge
- Bore 40 metres away from school garden
- Teacher 'office' under tree



Simon

"We learn many things in the School Garden Club. We learn planting in rows, and watering, and pests.

We are having a problem with caterpillar pests in the tomatoes, and we also need an irrigation system. We lack seeds and tools, and would also like hoes, rakes, pangas and jerry-cans. Also watering cans.

At home my family lack food because this year the sorghum did not grow. This is why hunger happens.

When I was a child I saw the aeroplanes come and drop bombs. People ran away and some have not yet come back.

Now it is good to be independent because people are living in peace.

I want to be an agriculturalist. I would bring people and teach them about vegetable gardens.

I say thank you to the people in Australia for giving us the seeds and for training us. This is why we are now happy."

Josephine

"Sometimes we are hungry when crops don't grow because there is lack of water. Then we are suffering.

LWF has brought to us very many things. They give us the seeds for this garden, and taught us how to plant the seeds. They also organize a workshop.

I want to be an agriculturalist."

Crops to be grown

Sorghum

Rice

Soya beans

Groundnuts

Peas

Maize

Tomatoes

Kale

Eggplants

Teachers from Kakuma

Location: LWF Compound, Panyagor, Republic of South Sudan

Teachers: Diing Makuol (stripey shirt)
Akol Khor John (African shirt)

Permission: Sought, and granted 6.11.11

Many people from Panyagor became refugees during the civil conflict, and ended up at Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. There many received education via LWF. Some of them have returned to the Republic of South Sudan, and are teachers, using the skills they received from LWF.



“LWF is our father.”

Akol

“LWF gave us schooling at Kakuma. It is what opened our eyes. We received twelve years of education. When we completed secondary school, we were taken to Teacher’s Training College. Two years there gave us our Primary Teacher certificate.

We would like now to do degree and diploma, but unfortunately we have no money for further study.

When South Sudan became independent, we were told the children had no teachers, and that is why we came back. We were born here, but we hesitated because of the insecurity, and we were not sure the war was over.

I have 200 children in my class. I teach five subjects, across many year levels. All our teaching for upper grades is in English. This year we have no books for the children. Even the chalk for the blackboard does not work. Perhaps it has expired, it does not write.

These children are our brothers and sisters, and that's why we keep teaching. The Government says we are a new nation, and things will get better. There is no other alternative for the children but us.

Now here in South Sudan we see LWF still constructing schools, and giving education. They are still working with us.

According to us, LWF is our father, because it opens our eyes. We can not ever forget this, and we are very happy about this. LWF are doing the best in Southern Sudan."



"We like LWF because it is from the church..."

Diing

"We got our education from LWF, and education is the key to life. The language we got, the English we have, this comes from LWF. We got our knowledge from them.

At Kakuma we were told that South Sudan was now independent, and that all the services were there, and that we would be paid, and there would be freed education and university. Not all of those promises have yet come true.

We feel confident about the future. We have seen the histories of other countries like Kenya that have gained their independence, so we know things can get better.

We like LWF because it is from the church, and we are all Christians.”

Peace Committee at Chorokol Village

[Glenys image of Women Peace Committee]

"The conflict started with men, but many women lost husbands and children. Now there is peace, the women are regaining their life."

Peace Committee women communicated that the two communities are now joined by touching Chey's heart and touching her own, and indicating they are now together.

- conflict between the two adjacent villages from 2003 to present has taken 100 lives
- conflict caused by:
 - stealing (particularly cattle)
 - wayside robbery
 - unnecessary killing
- the communities now live in peace, and are proud of it: "People are now free to move."
- some fear remains of revenge and 'justice' issues
- remaining needs are church, school and feeding programs in school
- "What brought the conflict first is starvation."
- Life has improved now: freedom of movement, greeting each other, sharing the market, no one is raiding cattle, cattle can be moved directly across areas, share a borehole.

Mary Abuk Dau

Location: LWF Compound, Panyagor, South Sudan

Person: Mary Abuk Dau, LWF Peace-building Officer

Permission: Sought, and granted: 5.11.11



“When the conflict arrived in 1991, I was still young and living on the cattle farm, depending for life on milk.

The conflict started from the Government of Sudan, and then civilians were harmed. People were dying, even the animals. All the resources were destroyed. The soldiers came and killed some people while I was looking. Some of my relatives were killed. My uncle died. It is only to God that we are saved.

I have two sisters and three brothers. The elder children went to Ethiopia. They were the Lost Boys. I stayed with the young children. I was ten years old.

Then, when the conflict became worse, we were footing with no clothes and no shoes. We go from Panyagor to Bor. We didn't go to Juba because the people from the north were still there. This is two days. Many people died of disease and hunger.

The road we took was one the soldiers also followed. So we took another road, and went to a refugee camp. The rebels were near to us.

We were on foot for four years.

We may stay in a camp for one month, but then the attacks would come again, so we would move again. For all this time until then we were footing. There was no food for us to survive, and we did not know where the water is. If a child got tired they must be left behind, and they die.

When you see this you don't cry because you know you may die also.

If a person die we could not bury them because we did not have the time or strength. But even though we had nothing, we knew God was there.

We reached Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1995 when the Government of South Sudan gave us permission to go there. When we reached Kakuma we felt a little bit safe, but the local people from the Turkana also attack us.

It was at Kakuma that I learnt about LWF. They were the ones who supported education. They brought the teachers, and they also do work with the youths. Now you can see these people here in Panyagor using the skills they learned from LWF.

I did peace-building with LWF at Kakuma. I was trained for my job now by my time at Kakuma.

The life at Kakuma was good because we saw education as something good. It was good because it was free – as our parents were illiterate, and poor, and could not pay for school fees.

We were at Kakuma for twelve years, and our family decided to come home when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005. Others were lucky and went to

places like Canada and Australia, but we were not lucky for this. But we are lucky to come home to Sudan. We did this in 2007.

When we left South Sudan life was very difficult, and people were dying of hunger. But now when I come home I see people were moving quietly, and I felt safe and knew I was at home.

Changes are now coming because we have education. We can see the goodness of education. Now we see girls going to school, and women standing before men. Life is different now, and women are involved too.

The reason I have come to work for LWF is because of the education they gave me at Kakuma. I want to give this same education to my community. I cannot simply stay home and keep quiet.

We feel confident about the future, although we know we also face many challenges. Now there is opportunity. We have our independence, and now we have our own country.

I am married with two girls. Angok is six, and Abul is one year. Angok goes to school in Kenya. I can call her on the weekends, and I hope I can save enough money to see her at Christmas.

I was 15 years old before I had any education. But with the help of God I got a little education. But I see a good future for my daughters. They can start education at kindergarten. There is no displacement they face, so it is good for them.

My job at LWF is in peace-building. I want to help take peace to the communities after we have 21 years working for peace. I will love this peace to go to all the people, because peace affects everything. Peace touches everyone. And with LWF we are really in the community.

What I can say to the people in Australia is to tell you that our people are still in need. They have nothing. They need education and capacity-building.

To every person who is willing to support us, we say thank you. We really appreciate what you are doing. Please don't give up on us, we are still in need."

Journey

Panyagor

Bor

Muhale

Magwi

Central Equatoria

Magwi

Kakuma