



Fleeing Home, Finding Hope

By Arada Polawat, Former Communications Officer at ADRA Thailand

As of last summer, more than 1.5 million people have fled South Sudan. Most are women and children. Hundreds of children have been discovered traveling alone, displaced from their families, with no adult among them. At first, people fled on foot through the bush, going days without food or water. Now they arrive in neighbouring countries by the busload. Stella and Rhoda were among them. This is their story.

Not long ago, “when there was peace still,” Stella recalls, “That was our land. You could do anything you want[ed].” Stella, a teacher, earned enough to support herself and her son, and even help her parents, who also lived with her.



Rhoda, a student at Stella's school, lived with her mother, a tailor, and grandfather. "I really like[d] going to school," Rhoda says. She attended school in the mornings, helped out at home in the afternoons, fetching water and firewood and doing chores, and afterwards played with the other kids. "Back in South Sudan, life was really good," Stella says.

But then the war broke out. Rebels marched in and violence ensued: "People were killed. Young girls were raped. Young boys were [taken]. Men were killed. Women were beaten and raped." Then, Stella says, "Life became hard."

One day, Stella and her son went to school, as usual. Stella's father, a headmaster at another school, also went to work while her mother stayed home. Without warning rebels stormed the school and village. They "started shooting around and people scattered," Stella remembers.

That day divided families. "My parents went one way and we went another," Stella says. Acting quickly, she emptied her bank account, found a vehicle and returned home to gather belongings. There, Stella heard Rhoda crying next door. "When the soldiers came," Rhoda says, "I got separated from my mother and grandfather. I was home by myself for three days. Then my teacher found me." Stella, her son, her sister and Rhoda piled into the car together. Stella says, "The closest person [Rhoda] knew was me, so I said, let us go together to Uganda. So that's why...we are together [in] the refugee life."

The foursome got only ten miles before rebels took their car, money and belongings. "That day, only women and children [were] allowed to move," Stella explains, so they walked the dozens of remaining miles to the border. There, they were welcomed by ADRA: "They gave us food...mats and blankets."

Shortly after, Stella learned that Rhoda's parents are still in Sudan, hiding "deeply in the bush." If they tried to go home or

reach the border, they would have been killed by rebels. "That was last year," Stella says. There has been no word since. "When I first got to the camp," Rhoda says, "all I could think about was my mother. But it is better now." Stella agrees, saying that now "she is coping. She is more friendly. She respects me now as a mother." The four are now a new kind of family.

Refugee life is full of challenges. As Stella explains, "It is very difficult...because you have been leading a life which is fair but [then] you have nothing...[and] you start from the grass. You have to work hard, building everything." When Stella arrived at camp, she volunteered with ADRA right away. ADRA supplies a little monetary aid, which Stella uses to help feed the family and build them a home. She has laid over 1,000 bricks herself. Every day, she waits in line for hours to fetch water from the community's single bore hole. "If you are a woman, it is so challenging," she says, "But what do you do? You just try. Try and cope with life. I use the small money from ADRA for building and buying [food]. And that is why today you see [us] fairly fine."

Life is difficult but improving. Now, there is room for hope, even dreams. "There are many children in the camp," Stella says, "so we have a dream of opening a nursery school, and if God can help, even a secondary school." Rhoda, too, is excited and letting herself dream again: "I hope to be able to continue going to school and one day to university. I would like to become a teacher [for] young children."





The Gift of Clean Water

“Why did you read us such a sad book?” asked one of teacher Michelle DeSilva’s 2nd graders. Mrs. DeSilva had just finished reading the Water Princess, a children’s story book that movingly illustrates the struggles children face around the world in their search for water. These struggles include walking long distances, missing school, and the dangers of unclean water.

“Because we can do something about this,” answered Mrs. DeSilva. The 2nd grade class at College Heights Elementary School responded enthusiastically. After brainstorming, all 19 students decided to make a movie that would teach people about the struggles for clean water around the world. After sharing their movie, they would then ask fellow students, their teachers, families, and friends to join them in giving the gift of clean water to families around the world through ADRA Canada’s water projects.

Over three weeks, the students raised \$1,800! Some of that money was generously given by the students from their own piggy banks. With the \$1,800 they purchased five wells, five water pumps, and 10 water filters from ADRA Canada’s Really Useful Gift Catalogue. They made a world of difference to children like them and their families by giving them the gift of clean water.

“I’m astounded,” said Mrs. DeSilva. “Kids are just waiting to give back, to be inspired. We talk a lot about how no one is too little. We all have gifts; we all have things we can do to make a difference.”

ADRA Canada wholeheartedly thanks the 2nd grade class at College Heights Elementary School for their compassion and the life-changing difference they have made.

SHARE YOUR ADRA STORY

We’d love to hear from people involved in ADRA’s mission. Why not send us a few lines about what you and/or your group are doing? Send 200 words, a picture* of your activities and your contact details to stayintouch@adra.ca.

*Digital photos should be a minimum of 3 megapixels.

By sending photos and stories to ADRA Canada you give permission for either to be published at the discretion of ADRA Canada.

WHY DO PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HAVE CHILDREN THEY CAN’T AFFORD?



Children are a blessing. Most people agree on this. But views about children—whether or not to have them, and how many to have—in developed versus developing nations differ vastly.

In developing countries, a larger family helps rather than hinders survival—more children means more people who can support the family. The world’s poorest people live in the most remote areas, making access to health care and education minimal to nonexistent. Child mortality rates are high, and obtaining the knowledge to prevent this is next to impossible. Several children will not make it to adulthood, so having many is the only insurance policy a family has. There are no pension plans, no social or health services, no nursing homes—having enough children to do the work of the family and care for its aging members is the only means of survival.

Beyond this, cultural context, religious beliefs, and superstitions are very different and play a large role in views on children, family and contraception. In many cultures, children are status symbols—the more, the better. Women do not have the rights or power to refuse to bear children, and misconceptions about birth control are rampant. Many women in Asia, India and Africa

do not seek contraceptives because it is believed they cause infertility and even disease.

Most significantly, people living in poverty have little to no access to contraception or the education necessary to use it effectively. The most obvious reason for this is lack of funds. Providing these resources requires multi-level supply chains that cost millions of dollars to implement. Even when countries can provide funding for this, reaching remote areas—where the three-quarters of the world’s poorest people reside—is a huge challenge, and traveling to a nearby facility is often too physically difficult or expensive for poor families.

The idea that people are poor because they have kids they can’t afford is a myth. “Rather,” as one Global Citizen writer explains, “they can’t choose to have fewer kids because of poverty.”

ADRA EMBRACEs Mothers and Children: Myanmar

By Engagement Coordinator



During a visit to the clinic near her home, 18-year-old Ma Htet learned that her pregnancy was not normal. At 38 weeks, a midwife discovered that her baby was breech.

The situation was grave: a breech delivery is both difficult and risky. A Caesarian would be necessary if the baby did not move into position on its own. The midwife

begged Ma to deliver in the hospital five miles from their home. Ma and her husband U Tun were poor farmers and could afford neither transportation nor hospital charges. They decided that they would have the baby at home.

Two weeks later, Ma went into labour.

A birth assistant repeated the midwife's advice: go to the hospital. The couple refused, but they agreed to invite the midwife to help.

The midwife hurried to Ma's side. Again, she explained the situation was life-threatening but still the couple would not go. The midwife told them that ADRA's EMBRACE project supports emergency cases—covering the costs of transportation, care, and meals for the mother and accompanying person. They agreed to go.

The next day, Ma's baby was delivered via C-section. While the baby was a healthy weight, she was suffering with a liver condition. After ten days' treatment with antibiotics and phototherapy, both mother and baby were healthy enough to go home.

Without the EMBRACE project, Ma's story likely would have had a tragic ending. Ma and U Tun were so grateful that they invited the EMBRACE staff to their home for a celebration.

Response to Hunger Crisis in Africa

Please join us in praising God for our partnership with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank that is enabling ADRA to respond to the food crises in Somalia, South Sudan, and Kenya. Please join us in thanking God that we are able to provide life-saving food to those affected. Please pray that these projects will move forward smoothly and that people's needs will be met in a timely way. Please pray for all those caught in the hunger crisis in Africa. May they experience the mercy of God as their needs are met.

ADRA's Emergency Responses

Please pray for our emergency responses to refugees and internally displaced people in Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Myanmar. As the people in each of these countries face unimaginable circumstances, may our response be timely, meaningful, and effective. May the people also experience God's surpassing peace, love, and protection. And please pray that the dangerous circumstances which have caused these people to flee their homes will be resolved and that the people may return home in peace soon.

Ongoing Conflicts

We remember the many conflicts that are still raging in the world, such as in Ukraine, Yemen, South Sudan, and Syria. Please pray for all those caught in the violence. Please pray for the countries, such as Uganda and Sudan, which have opened their hearts to the refugees streaming across their borders. May those affected be kept safe. May they know the peace of God that transcends circumstances. May their needs be met in a timely manner. Please also pray that these conflicts will come to a close and that peace will be restored.

Floods & Hurricanes

Please join us in praying for those affected by severe flooding, particularly in Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. These floods have killed hundreds and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Please also pray for those affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Please pray that the survivors of these disasters will be kept safe from further harm or disease. Please also pray for those responding to these crises, that they may be swift and effective. Please also pray that the process of recovery will be smooth.

Home-front Supporters

Our hearts go out to our supporters right here at home who are facing their own battles. Some of our supporters are fighting cancer. Some of our team members' family are also facing cancer. Please pray for these individuals. May they be strengthened. May they be healed. And please pray for their families. May their anxieties be replaced by God's comfort and peace.

Peace and Safety

As we reflect on the uncertainty that abounds in the world, let's pause together and thank God with all our hearts for the blessing of living in a safe society. Let's praise him for placing us in a country where we can not only provide for our own needs, but can also make a difference in the world by sharing our blessings. Join us in praying that we may be protected from callousness and entitlement, that we may always be open-hearted and open-handed.

ADRA's Mission:

ADRA works with people in poverty and distress to create just and positive change through empowering partnerships and responsible action.

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