Emergency healthcare for mothers and children

Six months after the outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan, the crisis has led to thousands of deaths and produced over a million displaced persons and some 400,000 refugees. These displaced populations, coupled with the destruction and looting of health facilities, have seriously undermined access to healthcare services that were already precarious. The vulnerability of women and children has worsened, due in particular to acts of violence and to children’s separation from their families or loss of their parents. We support Amref Flying Doctors in their efforts to improve access to basic healthcare for displaced mothers and children in the district of Reggo, in Terekeka County.

**DURATION:** 2014-2016  
**CHALLENGE:** Emergency Response  
**COUNTRY:** South Sudan  
**PARTNER:** AMREF

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**CONTEXT**

In six months, the conflict that broke out in December 2013 in South Sudan has led to thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of wounded and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees living in extremely precarious conditions. The January 2014 ceasefire has never been applied. Access to basic healthcare for displaced mothers and children is limited in this political and humanitarian crisis, and totally non-existent in certain regions. Basic healthcare interventions are essential to prevent further deterioration in the health of these women and children. Before the outbreak of the conflict, both the maternal mortality rate and the infant mortality rate for children under 5 were among the highest in the world. The UN estimates that 50,000 infants could die as a result of illness or malnutrition by the end of this year.
**ACTION**

The humanitarian actions launched in the field of healthcare in the Reggo district of Terekeka County are as follows:

1. **Emergency strengthening of reproductive and children's healthcare provision**
   - Training community health agents in the treatment of children's illnesses, including the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition in women and in children under 5.
   - Supplying community health staff with basic equipment and medicine (especially for preventing malaria and diarrhoea, antibiotics, fortified food and micro-nutrient supplements).
   - Providing support to set up and maintain a child healthcare provision monitoring system.
   - Identifying children who are unaccompanied or separated from their parents, and referring them to the appropriate authorities.
   - Training or strengthening the skills of health staff in the 9 clinics providing maternity services.
   - Undertaking monthly health missions to difficult-to-access camps for displaced persons.
   - Resuming or stepping up the vaccination of children under 5 years of age and of pregnant women (anti-tetanus vaccinations).

2. **Emergency strengthening of community healthcare systems and of healthcare uptake**
   - Assisting healthcare teams at village level to increase community awareness of maternal and children's healthcare, nutrition and hygiene, and to provide information about available health services in clinics.
   - Providing training for mothers' support groups.

**EXPECTED RESULTS**

- A 30% increase in access to and the use of maternal and children's healthcare systems in the Reggo district by October 2014.
- A 30% increase in the uptake of maternal and children's healthcare services in the Reggo district by October 2014.

**LONG-TERM STRATEGY**

Skills building, health education and training of local health staff are the key aspects of this programme, which is being implemented in collaboration with the government of South Sudan. Amref also works closely with the Regional Health Services, the healthcare staff of the medical facilities, and the communities in the targeted regions.