

Refugee stories from Allary, Pochalla, Sudan July 26-27, 2004

Male #1

I am 25 years old. My current wife is 18. In Ethiopia I was a member of Pastor Thuol's church. I fled to Pochalla with my wife. My children, ages 8 and 7, remained in Ethiopia with my former wife. I feel very worried. Neither my wife nor I finished high school in Ethiopia and I would like to continue my education now. I feel miserable. It is impossible to return to Ethiopia.

Male #2

Ethiopian troops killed our community. Troops and highlander traders attacked us with pangas. We ran through the bush for seven days. Some of us were shot with guns. Some of the children died due to the lack of food and water. On the eighth day we reached Pochalla, thinking that maybe the UN would save us. But we stayed for a long time without food except wild fruits. When the fruits were finished we ate leaves. Even up to now we are eating leaves. Sometimes small amounts of food are dropped in Pochalla but we get very little of that food. It is used up within a few days. Some of us try to go to Pochalla to work fetching water for others, selling firewood, cleaning houses, beating grain, in exchange for leftover food for our children. **We thank God for your coming. It gives us hope.** There is no pure water in this area. We have to walk a long distance to fetch water. We feel a little better now that it has rained. But we lack containers to collect the water. We lack cooking pots. **We lead a miserable life.** We have no shelter. When we arrived here the grass had already been burned. We had to use green grass for thatch, which is no good. We have no plates so we just eat out of our cooking pots. We have no utensils so we just use our hands.

Female #3

The Government of Ethiopia killed a lot of people, so we ran here to save our lives. We walked for eight days. Some children died on the way. We arrived at Pochalla. It was our first time to be here. We arrived with nothing—no food. We went to the bush to find fruit. There was a shortage of food. The leaders of Pochalla brought us here. We ate leaves. No one has visited us here in the bush. We thank God for your coming to visit us. We suffered a lot. We live in a critical situation. There is no shelter. We suffer when it rains. We got a small amount of food but nothing to cook it in. We thank God for your coming.

Female #4

We thank God for your coming to visit us. When we see you we feel very glad. There is hope. We suffer a lot due to the shortage of food. We have no cooking materials. Getting water is very difficult. There is no clinic, and no school for our kids. We each only received one pot of food. For a long time we didn't have anything to eat. The food we received now will only last a short time. We depend on the leaves of trees. Some of us were killed.

Female #5

We suffered a lot on the way. The Ethiopian troops concentrated on the men. We left the women behind. The Government of Ethiopia would come during the night to collect the men and kill them. Early in the morning you would see your boys are gone and you wouldn't see them any more. We became very worried and tried to run away. After that the Ethiopian troops killed not only men but also women and children. We ran to save our lives. The children followed us until we reached Gok village. When we arrived in Pochalla we thought we would get help from the UN. They give a small amount. We got one pot each and one week's food. We suffer with no shelter. Some got nets but not all. When we see you we feel very glad—we hope we will get pots and mosquito nets. We hope God will do something for us through you. We came here without anything in our hand. I thank God for your coming to see our condition. Our aim in the future is to have help come directly to our camp. Otherwise we don't get anything. Thank you for listening. It is only God that helps us to continue.

Male #6

Thank God for your visit! We thought our suffering was not known in the Western world. We are very few. The Government of Ethiopia attacked the Anuak community but we don't know why. Some years back they opened a primary school. After that we went to work. When the better educated saw, they were

attacked. When some completed high school, they scattered. They know the Anuak community has fertile land. We are attacked so they will control our land. They are targetting the well-educated (those who completed primary school, Grade 6.) They target young people. They want to finish our community so they can control our land. We have had little school; we are backward. The Government of Ethiopia wants to kill us. On December 13 a massacre took place in Gambella. They left the women. They didn't know that God is still with the Anuak community. A lot of people were killed. Some of us ran to save our lives. A lot died on the way. Some turned back while fleeing because there was no food—they preferred to die in Ethiopia. We thought that no one knew about us. We stayed here a long time and some of the women wanted to go back to die in Ethiopia but we tried to give them hope. We told them to rely on God. **We thank God for your coming. When we saw you we got hope.** We know faithful Christians are praying for you. Some of our women went to Pochalla to collect remnants of food which spilled on the ground. The Government of Ethiopia for 100 years gradually planned to attack us to finish our community around the world. May God bless you.

Male #7

I have hope today. I thank God for your visiting us here. We know help comes from God. God does not neglect us. Because of your coming God has opened the way to save our lives. We feel a little bit of joy. When we arrived in Pochalla the leaders told us to go to Allary and the UN would provide what we need. The UN is the agency concerned about refugees. Whatever you need they will provide. So we obeyed, trusting the UN. We came here with our wives and children. We came here like sheep without a shepherd. We may die this afternoon. Nobody knows about us. We know the Government of Ethiopia wants to kill our whole community. But now we depend mainly on eating leaves. We hope that God will do something for us one day. The Government of Ethiopia attacked us for many years. We didn't have any opportunity to go to school, to learn to read. Even our kids have no opportunity for education. There are no schools here. There is no clinic. We said maybe this is the end of our lives. We thank God for your coming. We will tell you our burdens. We came here approximately five months ago. The river is far, and it is difficult to fetch water. It is so difficult to get food. Mostly we collect firewood to sell in Pochalla to get food. Most of us rely on God. We rely on God because we know God will make our future bright. If we didn't rely on God, most of us would be dead. We don't go anywhere. The Government of Ethiopia killed us in the land of our ancestors. Our land is fertile, and has oil and gold. The Government of Ethiopia is controlled by the highlanders. We live in the low lands. God made a border between us. We didn't go there, they came to us. Even now they come very close to Pochalla. If a husband and wife quarrel the man will not beat his wife long—he will listen if someone intervenes. The Government of Ethiopia put lots of food near Pinyaduk as bait. When we go they will kill or imprison us. We know even though the Government of Ethiopia neglected us, God didn't. We will die here with our children. God does everything. **God will save us. God is with us. God will protect our lives.** God himself brought you here to hear our history. Most visitors only reach Pochalla, not here. I didn't expect someone like you from the Western world to talk with us. This is the will of God. We know God is the one who provides everything. I know I am poor but God will take care of my life. God will bless me one day. Nobody knows how or when God will bless me. The Government of Ethiopia killed a lot of Anuak but they didn't know God would bless us. This is our ancestors land. We will not move from there. The UN is responsible to save the refugees. Why do they neglect us? The UN will come. Why don't they bring medicines; food; school, clinics, water, shelter, cooking pots. If the UN provided all that I would be so happy!

Male Pastor #8

Thank God for your coming. Our community is very small. It used to be bigger, but gradually our numbers have been reducing due to wars and murders. Some tribes don't want us to live peacefully together. I fear they have a plan to completely finish the Anyuak tribe, starting with those who are well educated. The soldiers were in every village, looking for the men. A lot of us were killed. By the will of God the rest of us escaped. If God was not with us, no man could remain at all. We fled from critical conditions, only to find misery and no hope here. We worry a lot. Most of our fathers are dead. Some of our women and girls also died on the way. Here we face food shortages and a lot of suffering. We rely on God alone. We will not move from here until God sees us here. We know God will one day open the door for us. We know God works through human beings. We know God sent you here. The condition of our women is so difficult. My brother was killed; I will never return to Ethiopia again. Here we are drinking

dirty water. Those who die will die. On a typical day we get up early to pray. Then the women go to fetch leaves. Some of the men look for firewood, or fetch water to help their wives.

I am an evangelist and pastor. When we were comfortable back in Ethiopia we didn't pray as much as we do now. In addition to our Sunday services we now have church services on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, when it is not raining. We have no building, so we meet under the trees. Our attendance is about 50-60. If it rains we don't meet. Pray for us. We feel tired.

Male Pastor #9 (Abobo)

We arrived here in January. We have 1,744 refugees here in Abobo. Back home our people attended the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Assemblies of God churches but here we all meet together. Our attendance is between 200-300. We can't go back to Ethiopia. If we did, we would die.

Male Pastor #10

I am from the Pinyudo district in Gambella. Even before the current hostilities broke out, the Ethiopian Army mistreated us, arresting us, killing us. It was dangerous to travel between villages. We did not know why we were targeted. As a pastor I had to move around a lot but it was difficult. Over a two year period I faced numerous death threats. When the December 13 massacre happened in Gambella town, the military was ready. They opened fire on us without notice. We ran, fearing for our lives. We stayed in our home village for a while. Then they attacked our village, and my brother was killed. We fled directly to Sudan. My brother's widow and her children also came, but due to the desperate situation with no food they returned to Ethiopia. Generally the army attacks the men. If the women and children don't run they are not killed, although the boys sometimes are. They even killed an old blind man who wasn't even running. They hate the Anuak and want to kill us all. We don't know why.

Male #11

The problems started in 2003. In the church the different ethnic groups used to worship together but after the problems started we separated. The men had to flee more than the women. I was arrested. One of our regional leaders disappeared. Then I was arrested for two months, then released on bail.

Male #12 (Abobo)

The most critical problem is in Pinyudo. Since the EPRD took power, they have been killing our people. They accuse someone of being a thief, then kill him. They instigated some Sudanese refugees (Dinka and Nuer) to kill us. These murders were never investigated. The perpetrators act with impunity. When unknown persons killed the UN officials who were traveling by car from Pinyudo to Gambella, the Anuak were accused.

They used to go out on patrols. They attacked any farmers' gatherings. Anyone out at night was liable to be arrested and killed. Finally, we escaped. My father died, as well as one of my cousins.

Male #13

I was in Gambella town. On Saturday December 13 at 1:00 p.m. I was at school, eating and drinking tea. I heard gunshots. I saw highlanders coming carrying pangas (machetes). They targeted the Anuak. They were clearly supported by the military. The civilians were organized in the front, with the military following behind. I fled to my home. Then they surrounded my home, and started to set the house on fire. We prayed to God. They burned down my home. Then they left, thinking everyone was dead. But God saved us. Any strong Anuak were to be killed or beaten. Any men or boys were to be killed.

Male # 14

I am from Abobo, but I worked in Mutu, in the Highlands, for two years as a journalist. I was back home in Abobo when the killing started. The telephone lines were cut off the Friday before the massacre. No cars were allowed to pass. On Saturday the massacre in Gambella happened, but we didn't hear about it. Two days later our kids were preparing to go to school. When they reached the school the kids were locked up in the school, although some managed to run away. When they saw the military surrounding the school they realized something was wrong so they managed to hide. Rumors started to spread about what had happened in Gambella. Then the military arrived in Abobo. All communications were closed. When I

returned to Gambela I found homes burned, people dead, and everything destroyed. This was obviously planned. There is not a good hospital in Gambela. We used to go to Mutu although the doctors there mistreated us as inferior. I decided not to go back to Mutu. I decided to save my life. I didn't give any thought to my property, I was just worried about saving my life.

Male # 15

We came here for safety. When we reached here we had no food. The authorities shared with us the little they had. Some of us had suffered so much. We went to the bush to look for food. We faced a cruel decision: to go back to be killed, or to stay here and die of hunger. Even here some people have disappeared when they went to the bush. We are so close to the border that we can easily be killed. So we appeal to the international community. We need humanitarian assistance, and we need protection.

Male #16

I have been here in Sudan for seven months. I would not stay here if something bad had not happened back home. As refugees we lack many things. Some of us have died. We receive a small amount of food assistance but not enough. The food is allocated for 6,800 people but we are actually 14,631. So we share the little we receive among all of us. UNHCR has no local presence. There is no monitoring of food assistance. Some of us did not receive anything at this month's food distribution. We are eating the anado leaves. Some of us are farmers, but others are students, government workers, and teachers.

Male Pastor # 17

We have no water. There is no proper clinic—we have to walk all the way to Pochalla. Even there, there is not enough medicine. We were given maize seed, and we planted, but then the rains didn't come. Now we are waiting for September to plant again, but we don't have seeds.

Health clinic

We lack many things. We have no scale for growth monitoring. Some of the children who come here are malnourished. We don't have enough cloroquin to treat malaria. We have twelve traditional birth attendants waiting to be trained.

Gok and Itang villages

Male # 18

It was a horrible situation in Gambela. Men were targeted, especially those who were young and strong. Some died. Others were arrested and imprisoned. We had to leave some relatives behind when we fled. Our relatives are at risk for having family members who fled to Sudan.

Male # 19

Thank you for coming. There are many mosquitoes here and little shelter. We left everything behind. We wouldn't have come here if things weren't so bad at home. Our major problem is that there is not enough food. They need to count our numbers accurately. Still, nobody is even dreaming of going home. You have seen us, now please go back and report on what you have seen.

Male # 20

I walked a long way to get here. I have been here seven months now and am still suffering with not enough food. We are in the bush. We came here to save our lives. Besides the shortage of food, we have problems with water. We also need seeds to be able to cultivate the land and feed ourselves. In the meantime we would like to have the relief food dropped here in Allary rather than in Pochalla town. We also need cooking utensils. We are suffering so much.

Female # 21

I fled because of the war and killing. I escaped. My son was arrested there. All our sons were either killed or arrested. I am very hungry. My husband has died. I have a child in the USA.

Female(widow with child) # 22

I am very happy that you have come to hear us and see our conditions. You see our needs. We have had many problems these seven months. It feels like we are being ignored. We just want to be safe. Our women came carrying their children. Some were pregnant. A very critical situation brought us out. Now we face a very horrible situation: not enough food to give to our children. Shelter is also a big problem. In our first month here we received a small amount of assistance. After two months, though, we were forced to sell our cooking pots and other possessions so we could feed our kids.

Some of us are alone. Our husbands are jailed in Ethiopia. We are now caring for our kids alone. But now that you have come we have hope that we will receive some of the assistance that we so desperately need.

Female (mother with four kids) # 23

We didn't think a team like yours would reach here to the bush. We were being massacred—our husbands were targeted. The first people to arrive here received some assistance but those who came late got nothing. We have had to share cooking pots, water containers, which is hard to do. The food we receive doesn't last the whole month. When it is gone we have nothing. It would at least be better if the food could be dropped here in our village so we didn't have to walk so far .

There is only one water pump. There is little shelter. We thought of going back to Ethiopia but fear for our lives there. But hunger itself is killing us here. We sold everything—even our clothes, and now we have nothing.

Female # 24

I thank Jesus Christ our Creator. We are facing so many problems. We pray to God to help us. We thank you from our heart for coming. We have had other visitors but not a big team like yours.

Our big problem is the clinic: it has no medicines. We cry out to God. It is very far to walk to Pochalla when we are sick. There is no one to carry the sick who can't walk. We have no stretchers. There is no fresh water.

I especially want to ask for prayer for my neighbor, **xxxx**, who is sick at home with no one to care for her. May God help her.

Names are not included.