

Sliver of hope in Southern Sudan's humanitarian crisis

World Vision Survey

JUBA, South Sudan (July 8, 2011) – A new country will be born this weekend. Southern Sudan, the world's 196th nation becomes the youngest country and Africa's 54th state.

Raising the flag over a new Southern Sudan did not come overnight. The new nation's history has been rooted in 20 years of civil war and a five-year peace and independence struggle. The largest stakeholders in this crossroads have been the nation's children.

Over the last two decades, World Vision has journeyed with Sudan's families helping them survive longstanding humanitarian difficulties ranging from extreme poverty, lack of access to food, and dire child and maternal health problems.

World Vision Canada recently surveyed youngsters across Southern Sudan about independence and what it means for their futures. World Vision staffers discovered the most simplistic desire of children was to have their basic necessities of life met.

Here is a sampling:

10 year –old Joana

"I expect the government to ensure that water is accessible and available to every child in the new country," says 10-year-old Joana.

15 year old Rebecca Achan

"Many women die from childbirth and it is not good; I want to become a midwife so I can help." Rebecca's hope comes from experience. In Rebecca's new country a girl her age has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than of completing school.

James, a young boy who lives on the streets

"I would like to see a good education system in South Sudan after the independence to enable me and other kids on the street to continue with education."

"Ensuring children are at the centre of the country's plans is going to be key to its success," says Rachel Logel Carmichael, World Vision Canada's team leader for humanitarian and emergency affairs.

Facts on South Sudan:

- Independence for South Sudan on July 9 follows January's referendum when southerners voted for secession. The vote was held in accordance with the 2005 North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement which ended one of the longest civil wars in Africa.
- Sudan has been at war for all but just 11 out of 55 years since independence. The civil war raged from 1983 to 2005 and resulted in an estimated two million deaths and four million refugees. South Sudan's total population is 8.26 million.
- More than half of South Sudan's population lives below the poverty line on less than \$1 (US) per day, and only one out of four adults is literate.
- More than half of the population is under the age of 18.
- One out of every seven children in South Sudan will die before their fifth birthday, in a region with some of the world's worst human development indicators.

World Vision's work in Sudan:

- World Vision started work in North Sudan in 1983 and in South Sudan in 1989 operating a number of relief, recovery and development programs that seek to promote peace and reconciliation in Sudan, while improving the lives of children and their families.

PHOTOS, B-ROLL AND INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

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