



Christian
World Service



Peace:

I lost my husband and fled from conflict

Jenty's warm smile hides a life of suffering and pain. She is grateful to the local people in a village in Maridi County who have given her and her children shelter.

In February this year she fled her home in Landili Payam (next layer down from a county) when the army chased rebel soldiers who had come to her village.

Life was already hard. Last year her husband left her for another woman, leaving her pregnant and with four children to raise by herself. She had good land and could grow enough to feed her children, although it was a struggle. When the war came to her community, she had no choice but to flee.

"We survived with our hoes and the soil that we dug by hand in Landili," she said.

In February, she and her five children arrived in Maridi after walking on foot for seven days along with thousands of others who had fled the conflict.

"The already difficult life became worse. I reached here alone with the children, no one to build a house for me or support me in caring for the children. I got this small old house that I pay some small rent to stay in with my children. I struggle to feed and provide medication for my children single handed. It is tough for me, but I have to struggle," she says.



Jenty and three of her children sit outside their rented home. She wants them to have enough good food and live in peace.

When they fled the family had to rely on wild food like yams and leaves but sometimes there was nothing to eat. Seeing her plight, the local people allocated her a small plot of land, asking MSA to help.

This land is the only source of food for her family. It will provide some food and much-needed cash now she has a hoe, slasher and a *panga* or machete and vegetable seeds to plant from MSA. Before this help, she had only a small old hoe that a neighbour gave her.

Jenty is not the only mother needing garden tools, some seeds and gardening support. MSA wants to help 300 more mothers start their own gardens. A staff member will provide agricultural support to this

new group. This year's Christmas Appeal will contribute to these costs and all of MSA's work.

"My message to the people of New Zealand is thank you so much for helping us, the single mothers and widows in Maridi. I request you to keep helping us with small capital to start businesses and also do our farming. **Your support can give us a reason to have hope again!**"

Jenty's crops are growing and because of MSA's support she is confident for the future. Her plea is for other women like her to have the same opportunity.

Support the 2020 Christmas Appeal to give hungry families good food and the basics of a sustainable life.

South Sudan

Since political tensions in December 2013 sparked conflict that flared throughout South Sudan, its citizens have experienced widespread violence and hunger. Nearly four million women, men and children have been displaced, of whom 2.2 million have fled the country, making it the third largest refugee crisis in the world. In February this year, President Salva Kiir formed a new government which reinstated former vice president and rebel leader Riek Machar along with three other vice presidents. Not all rebel movements supported the agreement and some continue to fight the government. While the main conflict has been averted for now, the situation remains volatile.

Today 7.5 million of South Sudan's 11 million people need food assistance. The United Nations [estimates](#) 1.3 million children under the age of 5 years risk malnutrition. It says hunger is being used as a weapon of war. Nine humanitarian workers [have been](#) killed this year, making a total of 124 since conflict broke out in 2013. Former MP, David Shearer leads the United Nations mission in South Sudan.



Maridi women cook their longing for peace into the food they share.

The South Sudan Council of Churches is championing peace at every level and advocating for the majority of its citizens who want an end to war and deprivation. Decades of war have left the country with very little infrastructure and few resources with which to create the new state. Sadly, political and economic ambition has deprived the people of the little they had. Ultimately, the solution to the country's humanitarian crisis is peace.

The Maridi Service Agency is keenly involved in civil society discussions and is actively promoting the new South Sudan they dreamed of before independence on July 9, 2011.

Maridi Service Agency

Maridi lies on a major road crossing the country and is used to sheltering individuals and families fleeing violence. The Maridi County is in the state of Western Equatoria, traditionally more peaceful than much of the rest of the country. The land is fertile and most people can grow the food they need if their crops are not destroyed by warfare.

Maridi Service Agency was founded in 2000 by students returning from studies in Uganda wanting to improve the education of what was then southern Sudan. It quickly expanded the work to meet

growing needs among residents and to assist with the steady stream of new arrivals, some child soldiers and families often with only one parent.

Through all of South Sudan's troubles MSA has focused on giving young people opportunities through education, protection and empowerment.

MSA manages two preschools and the Maridi High School with a special focus on education for girls. For decades many children missed out on schooling because of the conflict, and few girls attended High School. Last year MSA awarded 67 scholarships of which 49 went to girls. After a decision to limit the number of students enrolled at Maridi High School because of overcrowding, 280 passed their exams. After schools were closed late March in response to Covid-19, MSA reported significant increases in student pregnancy.

MSA operates the only HIV and AIDS clinic in Maridi offering free testing and counselling. Those infected are referred to the hospital for treatment. They took HIV and AIDS education into Maridi's schools.

MSA operates the only local radio station, Maridi FM. The station is a primary platform for education in the community. They regularly run programmes on HIV and AIDS, access to education, early and forced marriages, hygiene and sanitation, child care and protection, health, youth issues and for women.



Community gatherings encourage peace and goodwill in Maridi.

After clashes in the Landili Payam (the next layer of local government below a county) between government and rebel forces early this year, over 9,000 people arrived in the town, many seeking safety for the second time in months. They are the most recent group seeking assistance. Community leaders have given some families a small piece of land for a garden but they need help and resources to get started. MSA is responsible for this new group and has asked CWS for funds to provide tools, plants and training. It has a wealth of experience in resettling families like Jenty's and helping them start small businesses like food or tea stalls, and plant gardens.

Thanks to Wadalla Peter and the Maridi Service Agency for the images and story.