



Compassion and Care

Case Study: Severely Underweight/Malnourished

Name: Monica*

Age: 3 years

Gender: Female

Monica is 3 years old, she is unable to walk on her own, even crawling can be a challenge. While hunger is a significant and growing problem in the community – access to quality, caring, and compassionate healthcare remains a struggle. For families with children facing chronic issues, the situation in Rumbek is bleak. Monica has struggled with an unknown digestive illness for the last 3 years; in her mothers' own words:

“My child has been very sick, even when she was born, she has been having stomach problems. It is hard for her to keep the food in her. We have some small foods at home, but she will refuse or it will not stay down. Sometimes she is healthy but the illness is always returning, sometimes she is okay for 2 weeks and sometimes she is sick for even more. This has been going for 3 years now. She is too small, she has no weight.”



Her family is not unique, having put aside most of their income for food items, there has been less and less left to cover health costs. Still they have tried seeking other alternatives:

“I even went to the state hospital, but they only gave the papers [prescriptions]. When we have taken Monica to town, to the state hospital, and they have seen her and then they told us the medicine, they do not check to see if it works, or do any tests, they only look and give the papers. I have even gone and bought the medicines – the clinic [pharmacy] only had 3 bottles for 1000 SSP. We have bought but it is too much.”

This meager sum of 1000 SSP represents 100 days of work for a menial day laborer at the South Sudan government mandated wages. These wages have failed to increase with respect to the hyperinflation affecting the economy of South Sudan. 1000 SSP is valued at around 5 USD these days; just .05 USD per day of hard work. Besides costs, availability is another problem with pharmacies only stocking what they can easily sell, and regular supplies being unavailable. For people with chronic health problems, the medical system in Rumbek is a desolate place.

“I am bringing my daughter every day and she has not had sickness for any of the days she has been here. My husband has been telling me to bring her every day because the sisters will take care of her, they are here for us. We are appreciating that they are here helping, and that we have money, things could be better – but they are much worse for lots outside [in the community].

Her mother lauded the progress that has been made so far in the last 2 weeks. But was wary when broaching the subject of hope because of the overall food security situation in the community.

“My daughter is gaining weight and she is losing her sickness, she will even be heavy soon! But there are still many problems: one of the problems that we are facing is that we are not able to cultivate because the child [Monica] is needing to come every day. If I am here to make sure that she is getting the feeding, then I cannot be there cultivating. We do not know where the next season [of food] will come from.”

***Names have been changed to preserve human dignity.**



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