

A Mother's Love in Uganda

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Would you leave everything you've ever known on the word of a stranger to find healing for your child? Would you go to the edge of your known world and then step further?

This is exactly what many South Sudanese mothers step up to when they bring their babies suffering from hydrocephalus to CURE Uganda. Some have never left their villages before and suddenly find themselves navigating cities, border crossings, and hospitals dealing with languages they don't speak and cultures they don't understand. Many don't even fully understand their child's condition and have been abandoned by their husbands, who can not deal with the child's disability. There are so many things that these mothers are struggling to comprehend. However, what they do know is that some people think their baby is cursed, they are on their own, and that these things will not stop them from finding help for their child.

The types of moms that make it to CURE Uganda aren't the ones who take adversity sitting down. They refuse to believe the lies whispered about their child, and they are undeterred when people do not believe their child can be healed. Somewhere along the line, someone - whether it be a medical worker, a non-governmental organization (NGO), or a previous CURE Uganda patient - at least gave these mothers the basic explanation that their baby has "water on their brain." Hydrocephalus, or "water on the brain," is a condition that is potentially lethal but completely treatable if they can make the long trip to CURE Uganda. Just to get there, many families first travel to Juba from all over S. Sudan and then must make the long journey across the border to Mbale, Uganda.



CURE Uganda receives roughly five South Sudanese mother and patient duos every month. With no hospital capable of treating hydrocephalus in their country, CURE Uganda is the only option for their children to find healing and live. **Multiple times each month, incredible mothers make this perilous trip out of pure, driving love for their children.** And they are rewarded with surgeries that are not only life-changing but also life-saving.

Now, would you just stop and wait for the healing of your child? Stay in place, separated from your family, your other children, everything you know and love?

This is exactly what ten of South Sudanese mothers are doing right now. With the arrival of the COVID-19 virus in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni put the country into a lockdown, restricting both public and private transportation. Now, these moms and their newly healed babies have had no way to return home. They are stranded indefinitely in a foreign country where they didn't know the language and with very little money.



Even in the midst of trying to eliminate any non-essential spending, CURE Uganda did not hesitate to offer these ten families lodging, food, and everything they need until they can get home. **“We had to keep them here,” CURE Uganda Spiritual Director Fred Wangwa remembers. “There is nowhere else they could go and especially with vulnerable children!”**

These mothers, as you might expect, are experiencing a mixture of emotions. There are feelings of anxiety being separated from their families against their will, but also a feeling of security. Hydrocephalus is a terrifying condition where the struggles of the child are painfully visible. These memories of their child's suffering are still fresh in these mother's minds, and to be staying so near to the doctors who have already saved their child's life is a comfort. They figure it is better to be stuck at a hospital capable of treating their children than to be unable to get back to CURE Uganda due to the travel restrictions should complications arise.



Sitting tight in a space that's not your own isn't an ideal option, but the CURE Uganda staff is doing everything they can to make these mothers and children know they are both welcomed and loved. The nurses and doctors check in on them, the kitchen staff makes sure they're fed, and the spiritual staff has an impressive array of resources available to them. The spiritual staff keeps themselves available for counseling and prayer for the mothers. They also keep the playroom open so the mothers can relax in community, while their babies play with toys and interact with various sensory stimuli. Additionally, the spiritual staff has a vegetable garden at the hospital where these mothers can both learn and share farming techniques, giving them back just a small level of independence and control, which is important in times of struggle.

Overall, it's been an interesting time for all involved, but CURE Uganda and these mothers are daily finding ways to live in community, support each other, and draw closer to God. Pastor Fred said it well when he remarked, "I see God working through this situation by a sense of intimacy with Him that we all feel right now. God has been bringing people to Himself as people realize He is the only ever-present help in times of trouble."

As we witness mothers putting their children's needs above their own, we are inspired and filled with hope for the future. They are an earthly example of God's love for us. "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you." Isaiah 66:13