



Alaska Health Project South Sudan

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**A message from Jack Hickel
Board President and co-founder of
Alaska Health Project South Sudan
December 2025**



AHPSS Responds to Humanitarian Crisis Due to Flooding and Armed Conflict

I have just returned from my annual trip to South Sudan and I'm deeply affected by what I experienced. The humanitarian crisis, due to population displacement caused by flooding and armed conflict is perhaps the worst I've seen in all the years since my first visit in 2007. At the same time, our "Alaska" team's ability to respond to those in need is at the highest level of all time. It is absolutely amazing to see our men and women, themselves displaced by the floods and fighting, assessing the urgent needs, and within just a few days mobilizing to help those in the direst situations. Number one on our list: provide clean drinking water.

The United Nations asked AHPSS to do a needs assessment of the four areas with the most displaced people. At the village of Kuernyang, I traveled by canoe to an island where more than 20,000 people are stranded without clean drinking water, sanitation, health services, or adequate food. It took a half hour just to cross what before Sep-

tember was the village airstrip. Now it's a lake. Heavy rains submerged almost the entire region affecting over 40,000 people. The floodwater rendered all the key infrastructure including schools, the market, and health facilities non-functional. Only one water source was providing clean water—and it was in waist-deep floodwater.

Targeted Response

After the field visit our assessment team, made up entirely by our trained Southern Sudanese employees, outlined a targeted response to help Kuernyang. Our drilling team was mobilized and within a week material for three new water wells was at Kuernyang. I am so happy to report that all three of the wells are successfully drilled. Each of the new wells will include flood resilient platforms with the hand pumps safely above the flood plain.

While the men are completing the work in Kuernyang, a second drilling team is working in the village of Paguir, one of the other four areas of greatest need. This is the village that is now the home village for Alaska Health Project South Sudan as well as for Dr. Jill's health center. Paguir is hosting more than 21,000 displaced people including all of our field staff. This occurred after Old Fangak was bombed and strafed by helicopter gunships over 3 different days in May, killing 7 and injuring scores more, causing most of the village

Flushing one of 3 new wells at Kuernyang.

to evacuate to Paquir. With the absence of men to maintain the dikes, the dikes failed and water flooded the entire village on August 30th. Everything including the hospital, tuberculosis clinic, and our staff compound now have six feet of standing water inside and out. All but a handful of people fled Old Fangak and every home destroyed.



Crossing the flooded airstrip at Kuernyang during assessment.



The only water source at Kuernyang was surrounded by contaminated floodwater.



The village of Jaibor overtaken by floodwaters from heavy rains.



AHPSS compound in Old Fangak

It was eerie to visit Old Fangak. Together with Executive Director Todd Hardesty we explored what was our AHPSS home for 17 years. The only sound was the paddle of our canoe moving through the water. Our work compound, with the offices and storage areas, is halfway submerged. The market silent. Before the dike broke, the market was a vibrant center of activity. Several hundred people might be here on any given day. But the market along with the rest of the community is now part of the river and swamp.

Christmas 2025 “Miracle”

I will say that seeing everything we’ve built in Old Fangak now inundated by floodwater was shocking. But after the initial shock I quickly realized that nothing of true substance was lost. The village and all the inhabitants safely moved to other areas. We made a quick adjustment, relocated all the key equipment and supplies to nearby Paguir, established a new compound, and hardly missed a step.

Our most lasting investment has been in the men and women who make up our team in South Sudan. They are committed to helping their own people

and communities. They are strengthened by years of training as well as the strong support coming from all of us here in the United States. They are all displaced from their homes, and at the same time working to help others in need. They are my Christmas 2025 miracle.

The United Nations Asks AHPSS To Take The Lead For WASH

Everything we are doing has gotten the attention of the United Nations and the people coordinating the UN response to the flooding and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. At the request of the United Nations AHPSS has taken the lead for WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) for Fangak County. But more recently, the UN coordinators asked if AHPSS would be willing to take on an additional leadership role in water and sanitation activities for all of Jonglei State—the largest state by area in South Sudan. Why?

First of all, we have demonstrated a proven ability to work in one of the toughest areas in all of South Sudan. Secondly, our work is privately funded which means we will not be interrupted by changes in government sourced funding.

When we first started out, we had hoped to drill one or two water wells as well as helping Dr. Jill. Today we’re being asked to sit at the table with those coordinating the humanitarian response by the United Nations and take a leading role for WASH for the Jonglei state. I did not see that coming.

I am so grateful that you have chosen to support this work in South Sudan. Many tens of thousands of people are benefiting from your kindness, trust, and financial support. Thank you for being a part of the Alaska team. Sharing our blessings, and love, with less fortunate people is the true meaning of Christmas. Thank you.

Jack Hickel



Beneficiary of our work in Kuernyang.



AHPSS drilling team at Paguir, South Sudan.

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AHPSS is a 501(c)3 registered as Hope and Health Intl. EIN 26-2862955