

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



OLD FANGAK. I am walking atop a dike which surrounds the entire village. This is the only protection that keeps the flood waters of the Nile and the swamps of the Sudd from overtaking Old Fangak. Just a few years ago we could go on a “walk about” exploring nearby villages. Today many of those villages are gone. Flood waters displaced tens of thousands of people. Causing loss of homes, land, crops, and livestock, possibly permanently. They are moving to areas where there is limited access to clean water, health care, and schools.

The dike is made of mud, sticks and when available plastic tarps. It hardly seems like it’s enough. But for today it is. Barely. This afternoon the youth of Old Fangak are gathering to work on the dike. They are singing and marching. Energized by an important mission. To

protect their town. Supported by NGOs (including AHPSS) with food and some supplies, this youth group gathers each weekend to tackle the weak spots in the dike. It is great to be here and experience this raw emotion as they march the length of Old Fangak and fight to save their village.

Inside the dike, life goes on. Children play. Dogs and some livestock roam on the elevated paths. People shop in the market. There are also flooded areas as well. The dike prevents water coming from external sources, but in also holds in the rainwater. Many homes are surrounded by water a foot deep. Families build smaller dikes around their huts and then use buckets to move the water out.

Since I first came to Old Fangak in 2007, people here have experienced droughts, floods, famine, epidemics, and civil war. It’s a constant struggle for survival. And so as I’m walking atop this dike, I see that all the good work we’ve accomplished over the years has built a strong foundation—for better health, and something even more powerful.

As one woman told our team, because of “Alaska” she has hope for the future. **Hope.** Your giving to help our mission in South Sudan has provided this powerful emotion throughout all the uncertain times.

Old Fangak youth preparing to repair the village dike.



Working with Dr. Jill Seaman at the clinic in Old Fangak.



With Old Fangak Chiefs and AHPSS Board Member Mark Melchert, and Executive Director Todd Hardesty.



Accessing clean water at New Fangak.



The dike at Old Fangak provides the only protection against flooding.



Group photo after a team meeting at the AHPSS compound in Old Fangak.

One of the highlights of my trip to Old Fangak was time spent inside a meeting room between two Conex storage containers. It was hot, I was experiencing jet lag, and it was amazing.

It was here that our field team went through trainings, team-building exercises, and time spent bringing their concerns, ideas and questions to me and the leadership from Alaska.

As you can see in the above photo, the real face of Alaska Health Project South Sudan is African. They are the boots on the ground doing the good work of the “Alaska Team”. Men and women dedicated to bringing clean water and fighting food insecurity with small family gardens. I am so proud of what they are accomplishing.

As of today we’ve completed 98 successful water wells. This includes four water yards with solar pumps and multi-tap delivery systems. We work with over 1,000 households across the region providing seeds and seedlings for gardens. The flooding has changed our approach, but we continue to find ways to help people grow vegetables, fruits, and rice.

The humanitarian agencies working across South Sudan have taken note of what “Alaska” has done and can do. While in Juba, the nation’s capital, we met with several partner NGOs, and United Nations coordinators, to discuss how and where we might work to bring more clean water, improve sanitation, and bring our expertise to regions and people in great need.

It is an exciting time. While the exact path forward is still being drawn, we expect to be expanding our reach in 2025. Here’s what I do know. It will be the most difficult places, facing the greatest need. We are going to those areas where the people displaced by the floods are moving to, so we can provide them with clean water and support agricultural production.

If the face of our team is African, the heart still remains in the United States. Without you, none of what we’ve set out to accomplish would be done. It takes a team. I am so grateful for your generosity and support over the years. We have accomplished a lot. I am amazed, humbled and grateful. And yet there is still so much more to do. Thank you for helping us do it.

May God bless you and your loved ones this holiday season. Merry Christmas!

Jack Hickel



Water yard for elementary school students at Old Fangak.



AHPSS farmer selling oca at Old Fangak market.

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