Forced marriage, disease and orphaned children face crisis in the developing world

by Becky

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Widows and orphaned children bear brunt of raging violence

The violent clashes between Mrule and Lou Nuer tribes in South Sudan have left many women widowed and children without their fathers.

Arothiâ€˜s husband was killed by armed youths from the Lou Nuer tribe. To try and stay safe she has been hiding in the bush with her 6 children for almost 2 days.

â€œWe heard the Lou Nuer attackers were coming to take our cattle away. My children and I hid in the bush as my husband drove the cattle,â€• says Arothi. â€œWe heard some gun shots and I knew that they were shooting at the men. We saw the attackers returning with the cows, but we stayed under the cover of shrubs. The following afternoon I was summoned by the elders who told me my husband was killed and they had already buried him.â€•

These widows are relying on the relief food supplied by charities and focusing on trying to keep themselves and their children alive. Charities are distributing cereals, beans and other food to the homeless - mostly women and children. Some have already reached 50,000 people. They are also preparing to deliver water, hygiene kits, fishing tools and seeds.

Like Arothi, Adikira, a mother of three from Manyat Village fled to Gumuruk when her village came under attack from the Lou Nuer tribe members. â€œWe owned 300 cattle and depended on them for milk. The attackers looted everything: blankets, clothes and the little food we had,â€• she says. â€œOur children have nothing to sleep on. My second child wakes up and cries at night because we donâ€™t have any blankets to cover him withâ€•.

â€œWe heard that charities are registering people so that they can receive food aid. That is why we are here waiting to be registered so that we can get some food for our children,â€• said Adikira.

Charities are trying to reach as many at-risk people as possible, especially children. â€œIn addition to the physical needs like water and food, providing emotional first aid for young people is a key requirement,â€• said Fikru Abebe, Planâ€™s Country Director in South Sudan. â€œWe are also implemen programmes to keep children safe and help them continue their education during this time of upheaval,â€• he added.

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