



to such a warm welcome by our hosts Reverend Moses, Pastor Tito and Paster Tito Number 2! They took us to our Maridi 'home' at the Episcopal Church (ECS) Guesthouse which was basic, no electricity or running water but very accommodating. The towns electricity had been problematic for the last 6 months and water for a month. Luckily half way through our stay the water supply did start running and this meant they did not have to collect it 1km away at the local river/bore hole, saving cost on fuel and man power. It was a large compound rich with many fruit trees (guava, mango, oranges), vegetable patches, hens and cockerels and the manager looked after us so well and the cook, Esther, made delicious greens, beans, rice and fresh salads for every meal.

Our first morning was spent completing formal visits to the Deputy Minister of Health, the Commissioner, the Police General, the Hospital Director and the Governor of State. It was important they met us and understood that we were there to offer plastic surgery to those affected by the oil tanker explosion. They were all very grateful and it was clear the explosion in Mambe Payam, 18km from Maridi (referred to as the junction) was a harrowing tragedy that had affected everyone. The Governor recommended we sent out a recorded message to the local radio and television and it was quite a thing standing behind a wooden podium on a red carpet! He reassured us we could take photos at the hospital and in the community, there was a lot of advice that photography was not tolerated. Formalities completed and tea drunk we went to visit the hospital, which has one theatre and maternity, paediatric, emergency, outpatient, surgical and medical wards. The facilities were extremely rudimentary and we faced challenges including intermittent electricity, no oxygen or reliable general anaesthetic machine and limited resources. Government nurses reported no pay for 7 months so many of the staff were funded by NGO's including two anaesthetists, Alex and Mathias, who helped us a lot and spent their relentless hours on call with emergency caesareans, orthopaedic or general surgery cases.

Screening was facilitated by Pastor Tito, as he had previously assessed the patients at the Junction and mobilised those he thought would be appropriate. Limited with our equipment still in transit we scheduled injections for the first day. In total 89 patients were screened. The majority of patients had extensive post burn scaring but no contractors and good function. In the initial few weeks following the tragedy large



aid and medical charities had flown over and treated many. The main complaint was itchiness and due to an incredible donation from Nagor we had enough SILGEL to offer. Unfortunately buying/accessing simple emollients was not feasible for the patients and their scars were dry. Many of the males had folliculitis which we could offer antibiotic creams. The women reported psychological and menstruation problems following the incident, one lady reported she could still smell the fuel. They had little, if any counselling, most found support in the church and Pastor Tito held group sessions every morning. 21 patients (5 females and 16 males, age 6-50yrs) were assessed to benefit from surgical intervention and 19 operations took place from Friday to Wednesday, many having multiple procedures for e.g. release and injection. Total number of surgical procedures performed:

- 6 Z Plasty release
- 2 Split Skin Graft
- 5 Full thickness Skin Graft
- 10 Injections and manipulations

Working hours were between 9-3/4 most days and we carried out all preoperative, recovery and ward based care. Post operative analgesia was a nursing concern, with diclofenac suppositories and paracetamol only to offer, however Emmanuel and Omar found an unused ultrasound machine which meant they could perform effective axilla blocks. They were further tested with our youngest patient Joyce and her elbow contracture and Wilma a neck release requiring complex Ketamine infusions.

On Sunday Pastor Tito invited us to the English service at the ECS Church. We very much enjoyed meeting the community and the great choir. Donations were raised for fuel and food for the patients and their families as many had run out. The church had a very important role in the community and provided medical services at a small but purpose built clinic. Intuitively they also seemed to work together and met regularly with other faith leaders. Pastor Tito also arranged visits to the Girls School of Sciences, Don Bosco Catholic Church, Maridi Health Institute (MHI), the ECS Health Clinic and the local dam. He understood the importance of us gaining a balanced insight and it was inspirational to see the work being done and the institutions. Inviting the MHI students on placement at



the hospital into theatre and to watch the dressings was also a welcomed opportunity for all. The medical students and the girls at the school of sciences were all so enthusiastic. Pastor Tito introduced us to a Korean Pastor, who with his wife were establishing an impressive farm, growing rice and keeping 60 chickens. Despite ongoing hardships including eight cases of malaria with an ITU admission they continued to build their dream in Maridi in the hope to eventually support themselves and the community. Although development, peace and stability in Maridi is now present, armed UN Peace Corps doing their routine patrols continue.

During our stay we were very humbled to receive eggs from Joseph and his wife, pineapples and honey from patients and a jerry can of local honey from the Governor. We loved the addition of smoked honey in our tea and all transported some home in old water bottles, Amaron managing to take 16 back to family in Kumi! The Governor also invited us to an informal dinner at his home on the Friday evening. As we enjoyed great local food in the garden with his friends and colleagues he told us about the history of the civil war, South Sudan and Maridi which was extremely interesting and admirable.

This trip would not have happened if it was not for Mr Viva's extraordinary determination and commitment to helping patients. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advise against all travel to South Sudan however, in doing so and doing so safely 19 patients received free medical treatment that should improve their functional ability and quality of life.

A whole hearted **thank you** to the ECS Church who organised, hosted and mobilised the patients along a dangerous road and did everything to ensure we were in the best condition to work. Thank you to Maridi Hospital, we appreciate what it means to give up your theatre, wards and supplies. We are very grateful to Marton Pharmacy and Swann Morton for medical and surgical donations and to Dr Robert

Oluput at Kumi Hospital, Stephen Obonyo at MildMay and Henry Darlington at Mission Aviation Fellowship for facilitating our trip.



Joyce, 6 yrs old,
SSG

Unfortunately due to the lack of internet it has not yet been possible to know how the patients are and the grafts however we hope everything is well, the graft checks we were able to do before leaving were all very encouraging.

Wilson, 25 yrs old, Right Axilla Z Plasty & Right Elbow Z Plasty



Margaret, 30 yrs old, SSG for her chronic wound (not a patient from the Junction)





Kenneth, 34 yrs old, R Elbow FTSG

Eva, 32 years, L Elbow FTSG



Hassan, 46 years, Z Plasty Left Little Finger & Injections & Manipulations



Thank you for your donation of SILGEL from, John, Henry, Bernard, Andrew, Martin, Charity, Fraser, Yusef, Elia, Jennifer, Mariam, Zena, Elizabeth, Eva, Alice, Steven, Mohammed, Esther, Nancy, Doris, Emmanuel, Zenfa, Setti, Elson, John, Martin, Ezra, Steven, Gibson, Rose and Idia

