



# Compassion and Care

December 2017



## Safe Haven – Loreto Rumbek

Susan\* does not know her actual age, but she thinks she is around 23 years old. At the moment, her age is the last thing on her mind. Susan and five children came to Loreto as a refuge from the violence facing their home community of Cuei-cok. When fighting ensued between two rival clans, the Ruop and Pakam, many homes in Cuei-cok were razed, leaving vulnerable women and children displaced. Susan's home was razed during the fighting and now she fears for the safety of her mother who was too weak to travel with her.

*It is really a bad situation, the house is burnt down. [My] mother is sick and she cannot even manage to walk. I have been walking for two days on the way.*

- Susan

Because Susan is from the Ruop clan, she was targeted for violence as she travelled towards Loreto, which is situated in Kuei territory, allies of the Pakam clan.

*The situation on the road is very bad. They were going to beat me and take clothes [and belongings] from the children and me, but a man from here [Maker Kuei] helped me. We have not been eating for 2 days. - Susan*

Susan was hopeful that she would find refuge at Loreto because the school is neutral territory. Her younger sister, Amok, \* is a Loreto graduate and university scholarship recipient currently studying in Kenya. Susan and the children were warmly welcomed by Ajak, \* a Senior 3 student who volunteered at the school to help women and children to survive the crisis. Ajak welcomed them and ensured that they received food and water, and a safe place to sleep. This family has a special place in her heart. Although, Ajak is from the Nyang clan (Kuei allies), she feels strong bonds of kinship for Susan and the children. At Loreto, Ajak is part of the same 'Chukudum' School Family as Amok, Susan's sister. For Loreto girls, the School Family bonds extend across clans and bloodlines, even outside of the school's walls. Ajak laughed with relief as the children received biscuits, their tired faces brightening with smiles.

*I am happy to help [them]. Amok is my great grandmother, we are family. - Ajak*

During this crisis in our host community Loreto Rumbek opened its gates for ~350 community women and children who were in desperate need of safety and support. Over the 5 day period of intense conflict before the government declared a state of emergency, Loreto delivered over 5,000 meals to these vulnerable community members, performed countless clinical consultations, and provided basic health and sanitation training to many of the community members.

\* Aliases used to protect the identity of women and children featured.