



NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, 9 May 2017

ISLE OF WIGHT'S LORETTA MINGHELLA VISITS SOUTH SUDAN AHEAD OF CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Loretta Minghella OBE, the Chief Executive of Christian Aid, has just returned from South Sudan, the most dangerous country in the world for humanitarian aid workers, having met some of the brave people who have fled the civil war that has brought famine to the East African country.

Ms Minghella, who was born and brought up in the Isle of Wight, was visiting South Sudan ahead of Christian Aid Week (May 14-20, www.caweek.org) to see how the work of the charity is helping people there to survive the famine. Since fighting broke out in 2013, 82 humanitarians have been killed in the country making it the most dangerous country for aid workers in the world.

Ms Minghella, said: "South Sudan is a beautiful country full of generous and determined people. Despite the horror stories it has great potential.

"I heard some heart-breaking stories of people having to leave their homes and flee the fighting into the surrounding wetlands. Many of them walked through the water for five days, carrying their elderly and disabled with them. They slept on islands with only waterlilies to eat. At some points the water came up to their necks and tragically, many children drowned.

"Their destination was Nyal in Unity State, an area cut off from the rest of the country by swamp. Although they've escaped the violence, the protection provided by the

surrounding marshes is also the thing that makes trade and food supplies very hard to reach them.

“People have been kept alive thanks to bags of grain dropped by air but it’s vital that we help them find more sustainable sources of food. That’s why it was great to see Christian Aid’s local partner organisation UNIDO providing fishing hooks so people could catch fish as well as developing ‘demonstration gardens’ to show all the different kinds of fruit and vegetables that can be grown once people are given the right seeds and skills. We also visited a clinic where they check for malnutrition and provide special supplements to ensure babies survive their vulnerable early years.

“If peace can be secured then South Sudan has the potential to recover and become a jewel of Africa. It has fertile soils, it has rich deposits of precious minerals and it’s also home to the second largest animal migration in the world – a potential source of tourism, if only the guns would fall silent.

“Until then, the important thing is to keep hope alive and give the most vulnerable the tools to ensure they can build livelihoods which will make them resilient to food shortages like we’ve seen this year. I know from meeting them, and seeing their determination to make a better life for themselves, that with a bit of help, they will succeed.”

This year, Christian Aid marks 60 years of Christian Aid Week and is inviting people to join them in standing in solidarity with refugees around the world. The charity has been working with refugees since the Second World War, and is not turning its back now.

Supporters from across the Isle of Wight are gearing up for their annual Christian Aid Week fundraising activities, including the [Sandown Bay Christian Aid Walk](#) on Saturday 13th May as part of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival. Last year, Island activities raised £18,013 for the Christian Aid Week appeal.

Christian Aid’s regional coordinator, Stephen Dominy said: “We are indebted to the dedication of our local supporters, many of whom have a long-term commitment the work of our partners overseas. The fun activities organised during Christian Aid Week allow people across the island to donate with such generosity. Christian Aid then spends

that money to support the resilient people of South Sudan, and many other countries and communities across the world.”

You can help to change the lives of people fleeing conflict and crisis this Christian Aid Week by donating online at www.caweeek.org calling 08080 006 006, or texting 'GIVE' to 70040 to give £5.

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For more information contact Joe Ware on jware@christian-aid.org or call him on +447870944485. For more information about Christian Aid Week activities on the Isle of Wight, contact Stephen Dominy on 07814131162.

Notes to Editors:

1. Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in around 40 countries at any one time. We act where there is great need, regardless of religion, helping people to live a full life, free from poverty. We provide urgent, practical and effective assistance in tackling the root causes of poverty as well as its effects.

2. Christian Aid's core belief is that the world can and must be changed so that poverty is ended: this is what we stand for. Everything we do is about ending poverty and injustice: swiftly, effectively, sustainably. Our strategy document Partnership for Change (<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/partnership-for-change-summary.pdf>) explains how we set about this task.

3. Christian Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development. Further details at <http://actalliance.org>

4. Follow Christian Aid's newswire on Twitter: http://twitter.com/caid_newswire

5. For more information about the work of Christian Aid visit <http://www.christianaid.org.uk>