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Landed in Sudan - but with lingering thoughts of children's poetry in my head

Christina S.N. Lewis | Jan. 8, 2011

I?ve touched down in Juba, Sudan. This photo was taken at the airport, entering the country.

But before I begin to write about the happenings here, I want to share with you some heartbreaking lyrics which I gathered before leaving Nairobi. They come from a poem recited by young girls at the Tunza Children's Center, an orphanage founded and run by a woman named Dimina Machanja, popularly known as Mama Tunza. It?s been written that Mama Tunza has had no formal education, but has successfully run the center for more than a decade.

When asked once why she does this, Mama Tunza (which means ?take care of?) replied ?? I have seen so many, many children suffering out of no fault of their own, child labor, molestation, HIV ...?

She is married with four children.

The Tunza Children's Center serves roughly 200 children, including those with disabilities and HIV or other trauma. It's located in a rural area of Nairobi.

The girls came up with the words themselves, but had never written them down until I asked.

We recall the days we had with our parents
Everything could be possible for us
We used to have parental love,
And anything we needed from them

Things turned upside down when our parents passed on

We had sleepless nights and no place to stay
We competed with dogs for food in the dustbins
Because we didn?t have anything to eat
Nobody was there to provide for us
So we begged out in the streets

We thank God for Mama Tunza, for having taken us in
She cares for us, and helps us
Therefore we call upon other mothers to have motherhood in them
Hence we will be building our nation

Without forgetting our teachers, they have done much for us
They have taught us how to read and write
And also to Obey God and those before us
Ewe mola tubarika utuongoze maishani mwetu x2
(English: Oh God, bless us and be our guide in life)

We pass our cries to the government to lend us their ears
And listen to our cries
Because it is the only weapon we have at hand

Where and how shall we be in the future?
Thank you

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