

REFUGEES OPEN TO CHRIST'S LOVE

Sudan

story by Christmas McGaughey
photos by Safe Harbor International

IN TERRORIZED DARFUR, SUDAN

In a Muslim-against-Muslim conflict that has killed thousands of unarmed villagers and children in Darfur, Sudan, many people have fled from their native land and their native religion into the arms of Christ.

The political and racial conflict, in which ethnic Arab Muslims are killing ethnic African Muslims, prompted Safe Harbor International to respond with basic needs like food, water and medical aid. "Other organizations had assessed the area but deemed it either too dangerous or too difficult to get to," said Pastor Gary Kusunoki, pastor of Calvary Chapel Rancho Santa Margarita and founder of Safe Harbor International. "When we heard of their plight, we knew that these were the least, the last and the lost." By showing Christ's love through meeting basic needs, Gary said they have also been able to share the good news of Jesus Christ with many who are spiritually searching while the conflict rages on.

Prior to the conflict, Gary said, the area was 99.9 percent Muslim and basically "unreachable" with the Gospel. "At one time, these people were known as the fiercest Muslims in all of Sudan," Gary said. "We see God opening their hearts. These people are looking for answers; all of their lives they have been Muslim, and now they realize there must be something else."

Darfur, an arid desert region in the western part of Sudan, has been torn by this conflict for the past three years. Entire families have been killed, women raped and villages burned in the night. The Associated Press reports that an estimated 180,000 people have died, many of hunger and disease, and some 2 million have been displaced since rebels from Darfur's ethnic African popula-

tion revolted three years ago, accusing the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum of discrimination and decades of neglect. The Sudanese government is widely alleged to have unleashed Arab militias, known as Janjaweed, who have been carrying out sweeping atrocities against ethnic African villagers, according to AP reports.

Gary and the Safe Harbor workers have met face-to-face the victims of the terrifying Janjaweed—which means *crazy man on horseback with a gun*—and have shared Christ's love with them. The Christian workers see God's protection displayed, as people have been drawn to them as a refuge. "Our presence in the area kept the militia from attacking," said Gary, "and people began to flock to the area for assistance.

"We thought we'd be there at least a year before we were able to share the Gospel with people," Gary said. "But they were totally open. Everywhere we go and share the Gospel, they accept the Lord." Many have accepted Christ, from children to respected leaders. In the large village of Faina, with a population of about half a million people, Gary witnessed a radical transformation. "The sultan of the area, who is

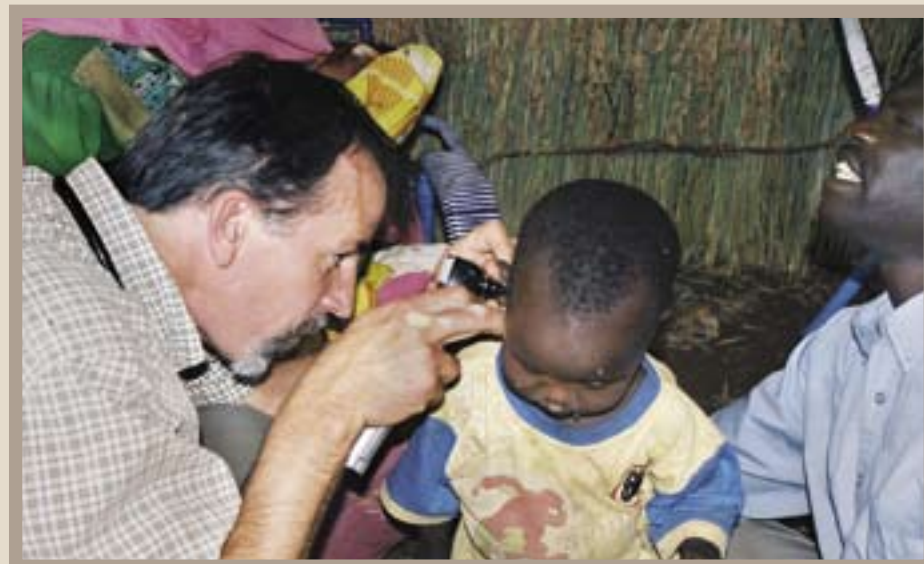


Sultan Suleiman, a political and religious leader in Darfur, was first to come to the Lord. He has been a vibrant witness for Jesus ever since.

the political and religious leader, was the first to come to the Lord. He has been a vibrant witness for Jesus ever since." In a letter he wrote from the field, Gary said, "In just a few short months, Faina had been transformed from a hopeless and desperate village—whose residents hid in fear at the sound of every vehicle or aircraft that approached them—to one that was full of the hope and joy of the Lord."

With unprecedented favor from Sudanese government officials, Safe Harbor has been sharing the Gospel in the country of Sudan for the past few years. They received permission from the Khartoum government to minister and openly share Christ in Darfur. "Now," Gary said, "the Lord is doing an incredible work, moving through the Holy Spirit. I've never seen anything like this." He added, "I believe this is only temporary—a door that will be open for only a short time. We need to get in there and make an impact while we have the opportunity."

Safe Harbor continues to provide safe water, food and regular medical care, as well as share the Gospel. In Faina, Gary wrote, "Now these people want to bring Christ to the entire region. They have asked for training in the Bible and also to have churches planted in their area." ☞



A Christian doctor tends to a boy with an ear infection.



Refugees wait in line to be seen at the Safe Harbor medical clinic in Darfur.



Safe Harbor International Relief

www.safeharbor.us

info@safeharbor.us

800-797-HOPE (4673)