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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Back-to-school around the world **Relief ministry Mustard Seed International shares insight on** **school-age children in forgotten corners of the world**

CHARLESTON, S.C., Sept. 7, 2010 – From the dense tropical forests in Southeast Asia, to the inner-city underbelly of Kolkata, India, to the harsh, remote bush region of South Sudan, many children all over the world have a common bond with the children in the United States – going back to school. But that’s where the similarities end.

Relief ministry [Mustard Seed International](#) (MSI) is on the ground in Sudan, India, Southeast Asia and elsewhere, reaching out to families and in particular children, through Christian schools, orphanages and homes for abandoned children, vocational training, medical clinics, hospitals, churches and as-needed relief efforts.

In South Sudan, a place where the situation is so dire it has not yet reached Third World status, MSI established and operates the [Akot Medical Mission](#), one of the best medical facilities in the region. There are a couple primary schools nearby. MSI has been working with them to apply for grants to help provide food for the children who attend those schools. It is not uncommon for the students to bring a few ground nuts or nothing at all to eat during the day. The malnutrition rate in South Sudan is reported to be almost 50 percent and the severe malnutrition rate or wasting is over 21 percent.



“Only 20 percent of children in South Sudan have had access to a primary education and of those able to attend, only 20 percent have been girls,” said Dr. Clarke, MSI medical director at the Akot Medical Mission. “One reason for this is that in a culture where if you want to eat, crops must be cultivated and cattle must be herded. Since these are the main products and means for barter in this region of sub-Saharan Africa, nothing takes precedent over working in the fields or herding the cattle to grass and water.”

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The staff at the Akot Medical Mission is made up of expatriate doctors and nurses and Sudanese workers, providing a full range of medical services, such as in-patient and out-patient care, administering immunizations for diseases like meningitis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio and measles. In a place where losing a child to illness or disease sadly is a way of life in South Sudan, the MSI staff seeks to provide health education to the native Dinka people and quality treatment for those suffering in such a desperate situation. According to UNICEF, the infant mortality rate is at 15 percent and the child mortality rate is 25 percent. On average, there is only one Sudanese doctor per 100,000 people in South Sudan.

The MSI mobile school program, in and around [Kolkata, India](#), transports homeless children via bus to and from the city dumps or their make-shift cardboard shelters on the street



where they live. The most common illnesses in this part of the world include jaundice, diarrhea, dysentery, chicken-pox, measles and influenza. At school, these children receive baths, clothing, food and the books and supplies they will need in the classroom. MSI and their India ministry partners on the ground operate eight additional schools, two homes for orphaned and abandoned children and many after-school programs. Each day over 3,000 of India's poorest children receive access to a quality education that is academically and spiritually-focused.

Many families in [Southeast Asia](#) make less than \$2 a day. Classroom education in the MSI-supported schools give priority focus to practical life skills and innovation. In most of the MSI schools, meals are provided for the children. The students arrive at school by walking or, in the case of the major cities, riding public transportation. While there, students receive notebooks, pencils, pens and textbooks, and in six of the schools computer labs have been established. Common diseases and health problems in the area include malaria, dengue fever, typhoid, high blood pressure, dental hygiene issues, skin rashes and infected wounds.



MSI is training indigenous leaders in the regions where it operates, equipping them to confront the issues facing their people, such as education and health care. This, in turn, allows these leaders to train others and begin a process by which entire communities can be transformed.

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“It takes a considerable amount of funding to keep this organization functioning,” said Bill Deans, MSI president. “But it’s a cause we are honored and blessed to be associated with because, in God’s eyes, each life is precious, whether they live on Main Street USA, the middle of a jungle in Southeast Asia, the desperate streets of India or in war-torn Sudan.”

Founded after World War II by missionary Lillian Dickson, MSI is headquartered in Charleston, S.C., and serves those in Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Taiwan and parts of Eastern Europe. In a commitment to send 100 percent of all contributions directly to MSI mission locations, the leadership and administrative staff of MSI are all volunteers. They are a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). MSI goes to the places where they believe there is the greatest need, following Lillian’s example to “present Christ to all we meet, to heal disease and all manner of suffering and to love sincerely and deeply those whose lives we are privileged to touch.” For more information, visit <http://www.mustardseed.org>.

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Note to Editors: For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Julie Shultz at 972.267.1111 or via e-mail at julie@alarryross.com. Additional information about MSI is available at <http://www.mustardseednews.com>.