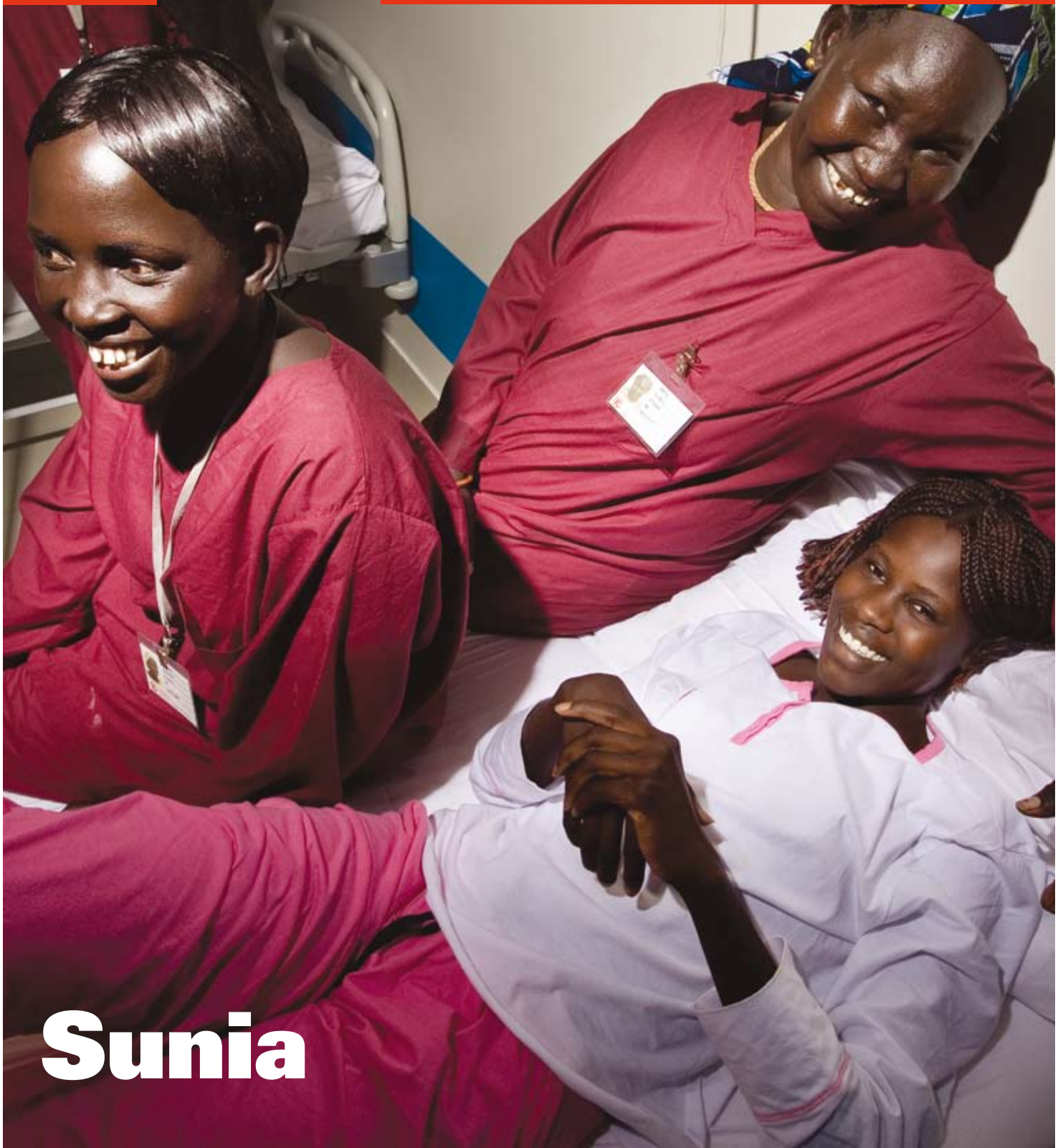




FROM N° 43 • JUNE 2007 •

EMERGENCY



Sunia

EMERGENCY MILAN

Via Meravigli 12/14, 20123 Milan
T +39 02 881881 - fax +39 02 86316336
info@emergency.it - www.emergency.it

EMERGENCY ROME

Via dell' Arco del Monte 99/a, 00186 Rome
T +39 06 688151 - fax +39 02 68815230
roma@emergency.it - www.emergency.it

EMERGENCY UK

PO Box 62437, London, E14 1GA
T +44 (0) 333 340 6411
info@emergencyuk.org

EMERGENCY USA

info@emergencyusa.org
www.emergencyusa.org

A New Season



With an operation to replace a cardiac valve, a new life begins for Sunia, and for this hospital that we constructed on the shore of the Nile, and also for EMERGENCY.

April 18, 2007, Night Shift

This is an even more evident sensation at the *Salam* Centre in Khar-toum, EMERGENCY's hospital in Sudan that, after immense work, finally began the activity for which it was constructed. Tomorrow morning, Sunia, a beautiful, young 14-year-old girl, will cross the threshold of the operating room to have a cardiac valve replaced. We, medical and technical staff, have all been waiting for this moment. Now it has finally arrived. The emotion is intense, as well as the fear that something may go awry, even after completing check after check each day for two weeks. It must only be a bit of superstition, but we are all a bit tense.

This hospital, since its conception, has always been under the magnifying glass of the public in particular those who never believed us and would hesitate to believe, if they did not see the photographs proving this hospital in fact exists and is so beautiful that it takes your breath away. EMERGENCY forged ahead despite criticisms: from enormous foundations dug more than two years ago, a “monster” of beauty has arisen, white and red, with a garden around it that renders it even more beautiful.

Together with our Sudanese shift colleagues we go to see if Sunia is still sleeping in her clean hospital bed in a room of a hospital where she probably never dreamed of entering. For her especially, it is an exceptional night: she is the one who tomorrow morning we will have to wake early, shave,

wash, disinfect, pre-medicate, and change into an operating room gown.

She is not sleeping...who knows what her thoughts and worries are. I only manage to ask her “Taman?” (Is everyone okay?) in my terrible Arabic. And she, extremely thin and almost longer than the bed, responds with a smile. She cannot imagine the abundant resources, the many people, and the countless sacrifices scores of people have made in far away countries in order to permit her to be operated on in an extremely specialised surgical facility like this one for free, in keeping with EMERGENCY's ethics.

She does not know that thousands of people are thinking of her tonight. Tired people who, having finished working, with daily problems, without ever having seen a project of EMERGENCY “in person”, give their time freely to educate other people and collect the funds that are essential to the maintenance of our projects. My young colleague, Areech, looks at me and says, this hospital “is very important for our people”....

April 19, 2007, first morning

The sunrise arrives early to illuminate our hospital. Areech gently wakes Sunia and takes her into the medication room, prepares her, helps her take a shower, covers her with disinfectant and gives her a blue operating room gown. She is given an injection to calm her down: any type of stress is dangerous for a heart patient. The stretcher is already ready outside of her room, awaiting the call from the operating room.



In the meantime her mother, Jaqueline, arrives, one of our talented “cleaners”, a huge woman who always has a smile on her lips, except for a few seconds in which she catches Sunia’s gaze. We leave them alone; it is their moment.

The wait starts to become unnerving, and by now the morning shift has arrived, with the whole team in apprehension. These are the moments at EMERGENCY when we feel connected, as if we are in the same boat, and this sets us apart from all the other hospitals in the world.

We reassure her mother and she, who has worked with us for a month, lets us know that she trusts us.

The call from the operating room, delayed by one hour due to an unforeseen problem with the air conditioner, finally arrives. .

I enter the room, and Sunia understands as she hides underneath the sheet. Her mother goes to pull her out. Sunia gets up onto the stretcher and we cover her with a sheet as the other patients in the room say a warm goodbye.

We cross a seemingly unending corridor, we enter the filter area to the operating room, the doors open, and many people masked in green welcome us, perhaps more emotional than us. We look each other in the eyes for a second and say a “good luck from the heart”, perhaps even a mutual thanks for having prepared this moment that is finally arriving. Sunia is transferred to the stretcher in the operating room. Now it is the turn of anaesthetists, the surgeons, and the professionals. We await her return to the ward in a few days. She must first undergo intensive treatment where international and national staff will care for her 24 hours a day to ensure her stability even in difficult moments.

To see her smile again, even fatigued and in pain but with a better future ahead of her, will be like a dream.

Thank you, Sunia. Thank you everyone.

MATTEO DELL’AIRA
Translated by Elizabeth Meihaus