



Breastfeeding and Dying in Sudan, Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan
A Report on Experiences in Word and Pictures

Rosmarie Werbeck

Waldstrasse 1 B, D-33175 Bad Lippspringe, Germany
Tel. +49(0)5252-989624
E-Mail: rosmarie1412@gmx.de

Rosmarie Werbeck, registered nurse, IBCLC works as a nurse and an IBCLC on the maternity unit at St. Vincenz Hospital in Paderborn and on a free-lance basis in the Birth House in Paderborn. In 2007 I worked as a nurse for six months in Sudan, South Kurdufan, Nuba Mountains for the German Organization Cap Anamu. It was always my wish as a young woman to work in Africa. Now I was able to achieve this. Many pictures which I took in different situations are witness to what I experienced there. There was no running water, electricity came only from solar energy which, during the rainy season, often failed. The hygienic conditions were thus unspeakable. Providing adequate medical help under these conditions was a challenge that created new problems daily for our four-person team from Germany. The small "hospital" in Lwere, the only possibility for medical care for many hundreds of thousands of people in a huge area, was the point of contact and island of salvation for many people. They often had to take into account a long journey on foot to seek our help. We treated tropical illnesses, injuries and internal illness and, over and over again, we helped children from this so different world, in this so very different life. Impressed, I experienced daily how the mothers breastfeed their children as a matter of course, because this alone ensured the survival of these little ones. I gained considerable insight into the centuries' old breastfeeding culture of the local women, into their beliefs and their convictions. All too frequently a baby was born too early and was too weak to suckle. This almost always meant the death of the baby. I was also confronted with the techniques of medicine men and had to look on as he – not infrequently – condemned small and big people to death with his treatment. Genitally mutilated women give birth, the attitude of the men towards women and their role in society and much more – all these were completely new experiences for me. In my brief time there, I tried, with the help of home-made demonstration objects (i.e. a knitted uterus) to explain to the women the anatomy and physiology of the female body, so that they learned to better understand these processes in pregnancy, birth and the breastfeeding period. My talk will be illustrated by some 80 photos that I took during this time, which should give an idea of what I experienced.