

## President Jimmy Carter deserves a special recognition for his work to eradicate Guinea worm in South Sudan

Dear Editor,

President Jimmy Carter (also called James Earl Carter), the 39th President of the United States of America from 1977 to 1981,<sup>[1]</sup> died on 29 December 2024 at the age of 100 years. He was an extraordinary humanitarian worker who dedicated part of his post-presidency life and the Carter Center to the eradication of the Guinea worm globally, especially in South Sudan.

The Carter Center deserves special recognition and appreciation from the people of South Sudan. It could have chosen to invest its efforts and resources elsewhere, including in the US or other parts of the world, but instead, it chose South Sudan.

Guinea worm disease is an infection caused by the nematode roundworm parasite *Dracunculus medinensis*. It is a serious disease that incapacitates patients, making them unable to undertake activities of daily living, work, or attend school.<sup>[2]</sup>

Based on concerted efforts of global and national partners, including The Carter Center, Guinea worm is on the verge of elimination. The incidence of the disease has been reduced by 99.99% from 3.5 million cases in 1986 to seven cases in 2024 (three were reported in South Sudan between January and November 2024).<sup>[2,3]</sup>

We greatly appreciate the efforts of public health professional colleagues in eradicating Guinea worm in South Sudan.<sup>[4]</sup> They have shown a strong focus on controlling the disease by establishing a community-based surveillance system in the country.

The real lessons and implications of The Carter Center for the people of South Sudan are not only to finish the mission of eradicating the Guinea worm in South Sudan but also to continue working towards the elimination of other water-borne diseases.

Together with international partners, the people of South Sudan need to build a country where its people have access to safe drinking water, can avoid contaminated water, are educated about the risks involved, or are protected if they have to come into contact with contaminated water. If we do this, we would have indeed honoured the legacy of former President Jimmy Carter and the work of The Carter Center.

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Guinea worm emerging from the foot of a patient in South Sudan  
(Credit: Makoy S. Yibi)

### References

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