(Singing and clapping)
NARRATOR: This remote corner of southern Sudan is the home stretch of a 20-year campaign led by former President Jimmy Carter that could soon eradicate a scourge that dates back to biblical times.

PRESIDENT CARTER: We will not stop the efforts of the Carter Center until there are no cases of guinea worm left in southern Sudan, ( ), or Ethiopia. That's the only places we have a few cases left.

We have been working on it now for more than 20 years. We reduced it, the incidences, from more than two and a half million cases down to about 2,500 cases in the whole world. The last major holdout will be here in the southern Sudan.

NARRATOR: In southern Sudan ravaged by decades of Civil War, fewer than half the people have access to clean water. Many most drink from the same open ponds as livestock animals. Of all the diseases from unclean water, perhaps none is more disabling than Dracunculiasis, better known as guinea worm. The parasite grows up to three feet and lives just below the skin often crippling its human host. There are no vaccines or medicines to treat it. The only cure is to slowly, painfully extract it over days.

The Atlanta-based Carter Center has trained thousands of fieldworkers and volunteers. It's been a grass roots effort to spread the word on how guinea worm is transmitted and distribute simple tools to prevent it: a personal filter that's used like a drinking straw or a specially treated cloth which can keep the parasite out of water people gather from ponds.

SPEAKER: It's in ponds like this that the guinea worm life cycle begins and gets renewed and renewed. Human beings consume the water that contain the worm larvae. The larvae grow in the body. It takes them about a year to become mature into a worm that grows to about a meter in length, three feet. When it's ready to emerge from the body, it causes painful blisters, oftentimes of people's feet and ankles. In order to seek relief from that pain and burning, the human sufferer immerses his or her feet in the same pond, and that's the opportunity for the worm to release larvae again, starting the cycle all over.

(Singing)
NARRATOR: How did this campaign succeed in breaking that disease cycle in so many places? How did it succeed where so many other aid projects had struggled in developing countries? Don Hopkins, the physician and epidemiologist in charge, credits former President Carter's personal involvement, key to raising some $225 million for the cause.

More critically, at the community level, Hopkins says, the
approach has been respectful and collaborative.

DR. HOPKINS: People are very, very astute at picking up condescension. Unfortunately, there is a lot of that, especially Westerners coming into the country. I think you have to approach people with the idea that we're here to help you. No, we don't have all the answers. You know your own community far better than we ever will. But here is this information, use it to help yourself get rid of this disease. Not I'm coming from wherever with whatever degrees and stuff, and we've got the answers.

NARRATOR: Former President Carter says local beliefs were respected and incorporated into the campaign. For example, some communities unaware of how the parasite is transmitted didn't like the idea of spraying ponds with chemicals to kill the guinea worm larvae.

PRESIDENT CARTER: In fact, the ponds of water were looked upon as sacred. If that particular rain-filled pond hadn't been there, the village wouldn't have existed. They wouldn't be alive.

Of course, we said that the pond wasn't sacred, but there was a curse on that pond. And if they would just help us remove those guinea worm eggs from their pond or from the drink of water that they took out of the pond then that curse could be removed from that pond and that village forever.

So we had, you might say, not only a philosophical but also a theological explanation to make.

NARRATOR: Eradication efforts have been so successful, it's now down to the surveillance and dogged pursuit of the last few cases, making sure they are treated before they can spread the disease.

On this day fieldworker Simon () set off to treat a patient named Garbino (). At his thatched home, Garbino's wife said he had gone to the regional market town of () several miles away hoping to sell his goats. She worried that on his long walk to town her husband, who had a worm emerging from his right leg, might stop to take a drink and a dip to ease the pain he likely was feeling. So a hunt began in the town and in the market. They asked people who might know his patient, asked after a man who should have had a bandage on his foot. Though we worried, because a previous patient had taken his dressing off.

SPEAKER: He said he looks awkward by moving with a bandage on his leg.

NARRATOR: Half an hour later a lucky break. A mutual friend in the market had seen Garbino by the river. Not only did they find him there, but the bandage was still on him.

They negotiated. He want to bring his patient back for treatment, but Garbino could not leave his goats which hadn't sold. They wound up coming back on the roof of the vehicle that brought our TV crew.

Back at the health center, Garbino's leg was placed in a
bucket of water. It's called a controlled emersion, cooling the skin blister, allowing the worm to release larvae which can then be thrown away. It would take several days before the parasite could be extracted from his leg. It felt like pins piercing from all directions, said the stoic patient.

SPEAKER: Did he try to put his leg in any cold water to stop it from hurting as he walked to town?

TRANSLATOR: No. I asked some kids near a pond to get me some water to drink. I used my filter straw to drink it and poured the rest of the wound.

NARRATOR: That kind of patient awareness and behavior is music to the ears of fieldworkers. With their success in dealing with guinea worm, former President Carter said communities can now take on other challenges.

PRESIDENT CARTER: When guinea worm is prevalent, the mothers and fathers can't go into the field to work. The children can't even hope to attend school. And so there is a dramatic reduction in overall health of a community, not only in physical health but also economic health. So guinea worm is a key.

NARRATOR: Now 85, Jimmy Carter may outlive guinea worm, which would be the first disease since smallpox in the 1970s to be eradicated.

(End of video.)

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTION

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcription is a true and accurate verbatim record of the recorded proceedings.

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