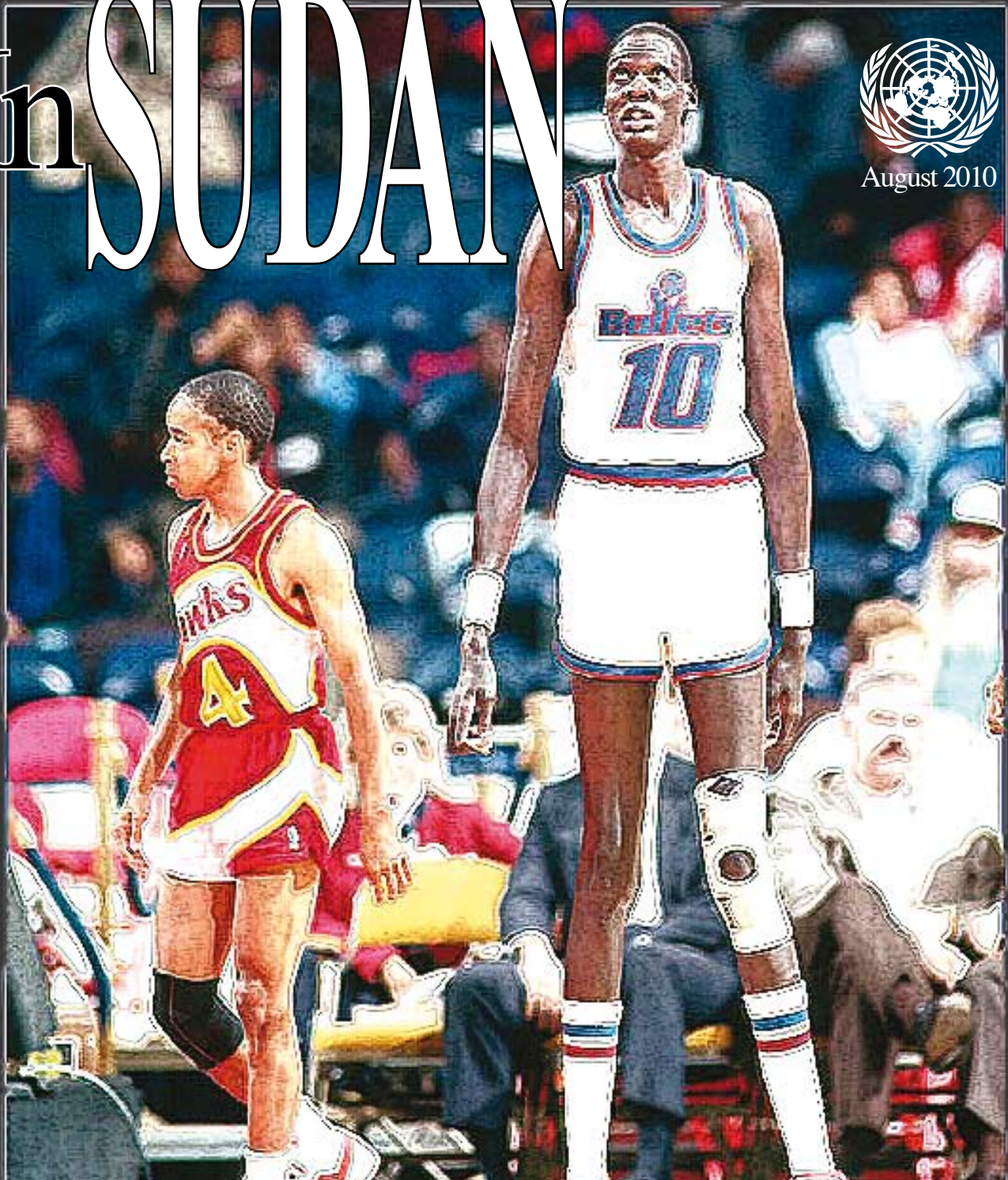


United Nations Mission

In SUDAN



August 2010



From baskets to schools



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FRONT COVER: Basketball star Manute Bol.

BACK COVER: Roseires Dam, Blue Nile State.

Diary

6 July: UN Police concluded a three-day training course for 200 anti-riot police officers in Malakal, Upper Nile State. The officers, including 50 women, were trained in crowd control, should it be needed during demonstrations taking place during the referenda period.

10 July: The Gender, Child and Social Welfare Ministry in the Government of Southern Sudan awarded grants of over \$2 million to 54 women's groups across the region. Earmarked for livelihood improvement under the Economic Empowerment of Women programme, the awards are a component of the \$10 million Gender Support and Development Project financed by the World Bank-administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Southern Sudan.

11 July: Egypt announced it would give the Government of Southern Sudan \$300 million for water and electricity projects. Egyptian Resources and Irrigation Minister Mohamed Nasreddin Allam said the grant would be used for potable water complexes, wells, river ports and electricity as well as water networks.

12 July: The International Criminal Court (ICC) added genocide to the list of charges for crimes allegedly committed by Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir in Darfur. The three counts of genocide against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups included killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting conditions of life meant to destroy each target group.

18 July: The Arab League asserted that the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Al-Bashir came at an unsuitable time, reiterating its rejection of the Court's decisions. Arab League Special Envoy for Sudan Ambassador Salah Halima said the focus at this stage should be on support for peace efforts in Darfur.

18 July: The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) launched a 12-day referendum mass awareness-raising campaign in all 10 states of Southern Sudan, with the slogan "The March to the Promised Land".

19 July: UNMIS held an introductory meeting with the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission aimed at exchanging preliminary views and discussing ways the UN could support the Commission tasked with organizing and conducting the January 2011 referendum.

20 July: The Sudanese government and UN agreed to establish a mechanism to address food gaps and secure movement of aid workers against repeated attacks and kidnappings in Darfur. Humanitarian Affairs Commission official Suleiman Abdurrahman said the agreement reached understanding on the need for aid delivery, including in areas controlled by armed movements.

21 July: UNICEF signed a child protection agreement, which includes ending the recruitment of child soldiers, with the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Darfur. Under the memorandum of understanding, JEM committed itself to "actively support UNICEF's work on the protection and well-being of children affected by the conflict in Darfur".

24 July: Shooting broke out at Kalma internally displaced persons camp in Nyala, Darfur, amid friction over recently concluded peace talks in Doha. No fatalities were reported, but one person sustained a gunshot injury and two suspects have been arrested over the attempted assault of a *sheikh*.

26 July: A meeting hosted by Southern Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun announced the establishment of a national taskforce of 10 Sudanese experts and academics for Popular Consultations in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

27 July: Head of the Technical Border Demarcation Committee Abdullah Al-Sadiq confirmed that work on north-south border demarcation would be finalized before the referenda scheduled for next January. Mr. Al-Sadiq, speaking to *Miraya FM*, denied any delay or halt of work due to the rainy season.

27 July: Heavy rain in Southern Sudan's Jonglei State caused floods that killed two people and destroyed more than 130 homes. The Walgak Rapid Floods Assessment Report also noted that one person was paralyzed by a lightning strike, 43 goats died, and five schools were demolished in the flooding.

2 August: Four Sierra Leonean peacekeepers serving in UNAMID died in a road accident in Nyala, the capital of Southern Darfur State.

3 August: The European Commission allocated an additional fund of €40 million (\$53.1 million) to tackle what it described as "the worsening food crisis affecting Sudan and the Sahel region", a statement released by the organization said.



A democratic right

Guang Cong

With popular consultations just around the corner in Blue Nile State, In Sudan spoke with UNMIS Ed Damazin Head of Office Guang Cong about this special Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) arrangement for those two areas.

In Sudan: Can you briefly explain just what “popular consultations” are?

Guang Cong: Popular consultations are a democratic right and mechanism to determine how the people of Blue Nile feel about Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation in their states. The process, conducted through their democratically elected legislatures, will look at issues like power and wealth sharing as well as security to see if any further actions might be needed.

What will be the first step in moving the consultations forward?

According to the CPA and the Popular Consultation Act, a state parliamentary commission will be established immediately after state legislative assembly members are elected to assess and evaluate CPA implementation.

The commission will consider the opinions of the people of the state, the political parties, and civil society organizations through forums, conferences and questionnaires. It will then prepare and submit a report on the results of popular consultations to the state assembly within three months of its establishment.

Civic education workshops, led by the Technical Committee for Popular

Consultation with funding from USAID, have already started in Blue Nile State and are gradually expanding to all its localities. The workshops will focus on raising awareness of the CPA and popular consultations.

What will be the key aspects of consultations in Blue Nile State?

If the state legislature decides that the CPA has not met the hopes of the people of Blue Nile State, it shall deliberate to point out the shortcomings in detail. The legislature will then negotiate with the national government to rectify shortcomings in the constitutional, political, administrative and economical arrangements within the framework of the CPA to ensure faithful implementation of the agreement.

Who will be the main people taking part in the exercise?

Popular consultations will target all people -- down to the grass roots level -- in Blue Nile State. It has been agreed among all political parties and civil society organizations in Blue Nile that consultations should be transparent, inclusive, participatory, social and consensus-building.

How will the public – i.e. the average person on the street – be involved?

There will be consultations at different levels, including state, locality, community and village. It is the democratic right for all people in Blue Nile to actively participate and freely express their

views on whether the CPA has met their aspirations in Blue Nile State. They will do this through workshops, conferences and questionnaires.

How will the parties coordinate in holding the consultations and implementing any final decisions?

A technical committee with equal members from both CPA parties has been formed to guide civic education for popular consultations in Blue Nile. When the state parliamentary commission on popular consultations is formed with membership from both parties, it will coordinate all issues related to popular consultations, as stipulated in the CPA and the Popular Consultation Act.

What will UNMIS' role be in the consultation process?

The Popular Consultation Act has invited the international community, including the United Nations, to supervise the consultations. This is one of the most important milestones in CPA implementation in Blue Nile State. Since UNMIS has a clear mandate to support CPA implementation, and consultations are a vital milestone in the peace accord, the mission will assist with the entire process. We are already providing advice and logistics support.■

As Blue Nile prepares to hold popular consultations on progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in the state, In Sudan asked a few politicians and educators about the mechanism and how it would benefit people in the area.

What will popular consultations do for Blue Nile?



“With popular consultations, Blue Nile State is bound to benefit from its (the CPA's) implementation. Popular consultations are an outlet for development. Therefore, as members of Blue Nile State Assembly, we have the responsibility to work for the people.”

Seham Hashim Ibed
Blue Nile State Assembly member
(National Congress Party).



“The people need to be made aware of and actually understand the content of the popular consultation law. The media just mentions popular consultations without informing the citizens what they are and how to exercise that right. Therefore, this main agreement of the CPA as well as its provisions for the Three Areas is not clear.”

Bushra Abdallah Saeed
Secondary school director, Ed Damazin.

“Popular consultations are a cure for this region's problems, found in the CPA. If implemented well, they will restore the rights that have been denied its citizens for a long time. Blue Nile State is a region blessed with both human and material resources. When these are utilized well, prosperity and development as well as political and social stability will be realized.”



Bederdin Gamerdin Kamin
Primary school Arabic teacher, Bok town,
Tadamon locality.

“Popular consultations for me mean the right allocated for people in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states to exercise their political, social and economic rights. The consultations will contribute to the development of Blue Nile by building on available resources within the area, such as electricity, mining, agriculture and animal wealth.

This will then benefit the people of the state socially as well as politically and give them more room for self expression. The national government will give more power to the state government, so that it can realize the aspirations of local people.”



El Sadiq Hassen Saad
Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)



“Civic education on popular consultations has begun. In a meeting we had, the African Wise Men Committee informed us about all aspects of the CPA and popular consultations. Popular consultations will satisfy the aspirations and needs of Blue Nile citizens. What we are aiming at is full implementation of the CPA for permanent peace and development in Sudan.”

Kojli Ahmid
Popular Consultation
Technical Committee member.



“Popular consultations shall lead us in achieving a greater proportion of our rights, which will be the only gain for people in Blue Nile State. For the last four years, we have not seen any tangible changes. This exercise is a mechanism used to ascertain the needs of the people in Blue Nile in resolving their grievances, as stated in the CPA. It will go down in the history of Sudan as the first of its kind, whereby people are asked to say what they want and need.”

Amna Mamuon Abu Thieb
Blue Nile State Assembly member (SPLM).

Livelihoods and languages

While education has recently blossomed in Blue Nile State, the sector still suffers from negative attitudes towards schooling, a lack of qualified teachers and poor salaries.

A major obstacle to learning is the much higher value some communities place on activities producing income or putting food on their tables.

The nomadic Umbororo tribe, for example, feel that animal-rearing is more important than sending their children to school, while the Fallata and Hausa view farming or fishing as more vital to their livelihoods.

Terming these communities "special needs groups", the government has opened schools for nomads and formed a special department within the Ministry of Education's section on compulsory education, said Azhari Madani, coordinator for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the ministry.

"This special department will make sure that these groups are assured and convinced about the importance of education for their children, and how it will help preserve their wealth and improve their livelihoods," the NGO coordinator said.

The department is supported by the government-run Blue Nile Radio, which began in coordination with the UN and NGOs in 2002 to air information every morning and evening in local languages on social topics like education and health.

"Blue Nile radio has a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF, CDF (Community Development Fund) and other NGOs to address education, health and other issues ... to help change the attitudes of some communities for development to take place," said Rami Awath Gawi, deputy coordinator of the radio project.

To ensure that NGO messages target community needs, UNICEF and the CDF have formed 15 community listening groups within six state localities, which monitor the broadcasts in their languages.

Each group has a "secretary", who takes note of findings within the community on the radio topics and provides feedback to the government or concerned authorities about needs in their particular areas.

"Big changes have been made as communities started to cooperate with the government and NGOs ... and responded

positively towards educating their children," Mr. Gawi said.

The success of the government's programme as well as a recent influx of returnees to the area has helped more than double the number of primary students from 61,954 for the 2004-2005 school term to 127,561 for 2010-2011, and the number of basic schools for the same period from 209 to 411.

Curriculum language

While returnees may have helped increase student numbers, many of them face another challenge confronting the school system in Blue Nile and other states.

With the exception of Giessan and Kurmuk localities, the state's school curriculum is taught in Arabic, but returnee students from East African countries studied under English ones.

The state has no teachers qualified to teach an English curriculum, according to State Governor Lt. Gen. Malik Agar, although it planned to rectify the problem. "We have already ear-marked a budget to bring in 10 teachers from East Africa so that they come and teach these students."

Finding teachers to work for the low salary the state pays is another obstacle facing the sector, noted Bushra Abdallah, director of an Ed Damazin school. "The

teachers find it difficult to cater for their basic needs in the form of transport to work, family members and other social duties."

While teachers' salaries are low at about 230 SDG (\$97) per month, prices for local goods are high. A kilogram of beef, for example, runs 10 SDG (\$4), while the same amount of goat meat is a bit higher at 12 SDG (\$5).

Students from poor families also have difficulties paying the 43 SDG (\$18) school fees and 15 SDG (\$6.30) for uniforms.■

Story and photos:
Francis Shuei Diu



Azhari Madani Idriss, Blue Nile State Ministry of Education NGO coordinator.

Ibn Jahraha Secondary School students, Blue Nile State.



The long trek home

Back in Blue Nile State after years in exile, Peter Manyjal said his hometown of Kurmuk had altered greatly since Sudan's civil war ended five years ago.

"There is freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and freedom of decision-making," said the 37-year-old Uduk. "I am very proud that I am back in my country of origin."

Mr. Manyjal's pride was 20 years in the making. Alongside thousands of other members of the Uduk tribe, he spent this time as a refugee in Ethiopia and internally displaced person in Upper Nile State.

The Uduk's trials began in the early eighties, when Kurmuk was devastated by an African drought stretching from Senegal to Sudan. Crops failed, cattle died and many people fled in search of pasture and food.

With resources scarce, conflict broke out in 1985 between the Uduk and nomadic herders over cultivation rights (Uduk) and grazing needs (nomads).

By the mid-1980s, Kurmuk had also become a battleground between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which recruited Mr. Manyjal and others into its ranks.

"At the age of 15 in 1986, the SPLA took me together with the other new recruits to a six-month military training in Billfam, Ethiopia," said Mr. Manyjal. "That same year, we came back to fight against the government forces, the Sudan Armed Forces, in Kurmuk and Geissan," he said.

In 1987, violent attacks between the SAF and SPLA forced Mr. Manyjal and many residents from Kurmuk to flee to an IDP camp in Asosa, eastern Ethiopia.

Many families also left the area to escape conscription of their children into one of the opposing armies, according to UNMIS Damazin Civil Affairs Officer Mamoun Ghia.

Others fled to escape loneliness back home, as the Uduk exodus involved almost the entire tribe, the civil affairs officer added. "A lot of the population joined the trekking because they wanted each others' company."

Little to eat

Life in Asosa was tough, Mr. Manyjal recalled. "We depended entirely on the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) for food. Yet the food was insufficient for the huge populace. Consequently, many elderly people died of starvation."

Mr. Manyjal came back to Sudan in 1990, settling in Upper Nile State's Dangazi IDP camp. Life in Dangazi was characterized by a severe lack of food, insufficient medical care, countless deaths and lack of shelter.

After four months, the entire IDP camp of some 20,000 people left for Ethiopia on foot, a journey that took three months. They settled in Itang (Gambela) Refugee Camp.

The mammoth march took its toll. "I lost my elder brother to yellow fever, one month after arriving. The disease was escalated by the long, fatiguing journey," Mr. Manyjal said.

After a nine-month stay, civil unrest in 1991 between Eritrea and Ethiopia forced Mr. Manyjal and his family to return again to Sudan. This time, they settled in Nasir, Upper Nile State, where life was also grim.

"We ... depended on honey, fish, and wild potatoes in Nasir," Mr. Manyjal said. "The potatoes had to be boiled for six hours to remove their bitter taste."

The next year, due to conditions in Nasir, the elders sat down and decided the group should move back to Kurmuk, but the journey ended in Maiwut County, Upper Nile, when the IDPs received reports of insecurity in Kurmuk.

"After three months, we left for Itang (Gambela) once again. I lost four of my maternal uncles to famine on the way. I nearly passed away myself at Itang due to famine," Mr. Manyjal said.

In search of sufficient food, they moved to Karmi, another IDP camp

in Ethiopia. There, the UNHCR gave each person 20 kilograms of flour, pulses, corn and oil, along with items like blankets, carpets, and saucepans.

By January, 1993, the group was on the road again. "We moved to Bonga, western Ethiopia, and lived there until 2004, when I decided to quit the camp for Sudan as a spontaneous returnee," said Mr. Manyjal, who left with his family of eight.

After Sudan's peace accord was signed in 2005, many other Uduks returned to Kurmuk, said Hassan Elsadiq, deputy director general of humanitarian affairs in Ed Damazin. They started with nothing, cutting trees to erect shelters where they could pitch their UNHCR carpets.

But all that has changed now. "In Kurmuk today, more than a half of the workers in both government and nongovernmental organizations are from the Uduk tribe," the humanitarian affairs official said.

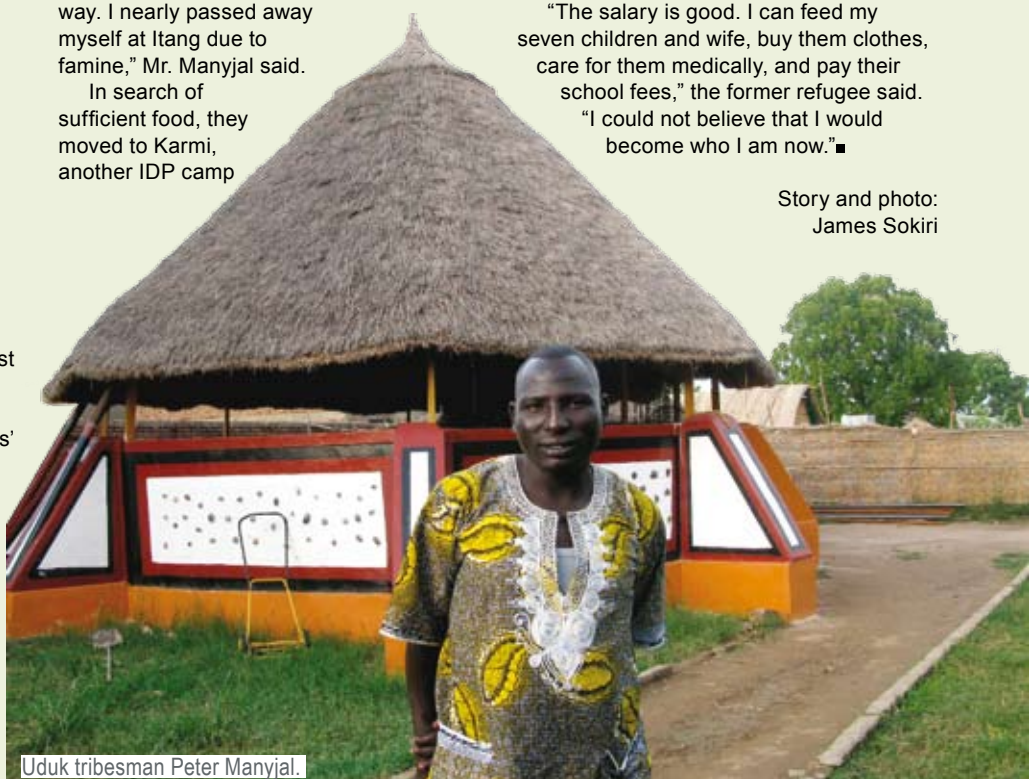
The tribe was helped along by its language skills. "The Uduk are quick to learn because their dialect shares many of the English and Amharic (an Ethiopian language) alphabets, and they are coping with Arabic now," said Mr. Elsadiq.

Having earned his high school diploma, Mr. Manyjal himself now works as a programme facilitator for the State Customary Land Rights Organization in Kurmuk.

"The salary is good. I can feed my seven children and wife, buy them clothes, care for them medically, and pay their school fees," the former refugee said.

"I could not believe that I would become who I am now."■

Story and photo:
James Sokiri



Uduk tribesman Peter Manyjal.

Beds, nurses and drugs

Devastated by Sudan's long-running civil war, the health sector in Ed Damazin is struggling with limited space, medical staff and drugs as well as a disease-infested environment.

An estimated 600 patients arrive at the Blue Nile State hospital each month, but the facility is ill-equipped to treat them, according to its director general, Fat'h Arraman.

"The hospital only has 300 beds," the director general said. "This means that the other 300 patients go without."

Due to insufficient space, patients suffering from different diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and typhoid are sometimes placed in the same ward, said the hospital's tuberculosis (TB) director, Saad Ahmed.

As TB is a contagious, airborne disease, patients recovering from it could be re-infected, or could pass the life-threatening illness on to someone with a different ailment, Mr. Ahmed said.

The hospital also suffers from a lack of medication to effect cures. "On several occasions, the drugs the hospital gets from the Ministry of Health and UNICEF are in short supply," the director general said.

And it has few qualified medical personnel to administer treatment. "The facility is hampered by inadequately trained staff, especially nurses and midwives," said Mr. Arraman.

Despite the lack of staff, the hospital encouraged pregnant women to give birth in the hospital, rather than at home with traditional or ill-skilled midwives, said Sherein Osman Sheikali, hospital training officer of reproductive health.

"If an expecting woman attempts to labour at home and experiences difficulties, it becomes hard for us to assist her because there are no ambulances and roads are terribly inaccessible to motorbikes and bicycles," the training officer said.

The 2008 Sudan Household Survey put maternal mortality in the state at 515 deaths per 100,000 live births, said Ms. Sheikali.

With sufficient training of many midwives in antenatal and surgical services, however, the maternal mortality rate would drop from 515 to 127 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015, according to director general Fat'h Arraman.

"We want to change the mindset of the village mothers from their belief that giving birth at home is safer than giving birth at the hospital," said Ms. Sheikali.

Environmental challenges

Another problem facing the health sector is the state's poor drainage network.

"The land is relatively flat. That means that holes dug in town (such as those for moulding bricks and those for quarrying the earth for road development) fill up with water during heavy downpour," said Monsier Elias Abdalla, chairman of the Sudanese Environmental Conservation Society (SECS) in Blue Nile State.

"These holes become a breeding ground for malaria-infected mosquitoes," the chairman said, adding that the Ministry of Physical Planning was working on a rainwater drainage system to alleviate the problem.

As the town continues to expand, its need for improved garbage collection and disposal increases. Lacking garbage collection trucks, the state uses donkey-driven carts instead.

"Given the huge garbage load of 60 metric tons per day, the town becomes littered with plastic bags, rubbish and animal dung that provide favourable habitats for (disease-causing) vectors," the environmentalist said.

Another challenge is the heightening of Roseires Dam, he added. "The heightening project of one of Sudan's largest dams, the Roseires Dam, is also creating concerns about the displacement of those who live in its environs."

Ward with patients suffering from different ailments, Ed Damazin hospital.



Fat'h Arraman,
General Director of
Ed Damazin Hospital



Monsier Elias Abdallah,
Chairman of Blue Nile
State SECS.

Such displacements are often associated with health problems due to insufficient shelter, food shortages and outbreaks of epidemics, said Mr. Abdalla.

Roseires Dam was originally built in the 1960s. It is the main source of Sudan's hydroelectric power generation capacity and provides irrigation water for the Gezira Plain.

In a public speech in 2009, President Omar Al-Bashir promised that those affected by the heightening project would receive compensation and relocation assistance.■

Story and photos:
James Sokiri



Battling malnutrition

Although Celina Poni's young son has now returned home after spending five months suffering from malnutrition in a Torit hospital, his ordeal has continued.

The 18-month-old boy still visits the hospital for treatments. "My child was thin and suffering from malaria. I have to come to the hospital to get food for my child," said Ms. Poni.

A tape measuring the circumference of his upper arm indicates "yellow", meaning "malnourished needing outpatient care". If the tape shows green, the child is fit and healthy, while red points to severe malnourishment requiring inpatient care.

An annual needs assessment carried out by the Eastern Equatoria State government and UNICEF in April showed that 15 per cent (30,600) of children under the age of five

malnourished children to boost weight gain.

"We supply the Ministry of Health in the Government of Southern Sudan with plumpy'nut on a quarterly basis," said Edwin Mindra, UNICEF Health and Nutrition Specialist for Juba Zone. "The ministry manages the distribution of the nuts to the states according to the demand."

Enderiko Bago visits Torit Hospital every Tuesday to collect plumpy'nut rations for her twin boys. "I don't have enough food to eat in order to breastfeed my babies. I sell firewood in the market, (but) if the firewood is not bought ... I have nothing to eat," the young mother said.

Hospital in Ikotos and Kapoeta Centre Hospital. And the state government plans to open additional ones in Lopit West, Lopit East and Chukudum.

Despite the assistance, children continue to suffer and die of malnutrition, said State Ministry of Health Director for Nutrition Rachel Awadia Ezra. "Some mothers do not bring their children to the hospital when they are sick."

She added that limited prenatal care for mothers, access to drugs and medical personnel were also undermining efforts to end child mortality.

"Many people in Eastern Equatoria state, especially in the rural areas, do not know the signs and symptoms of some diseases," the ministry director said. "Communities have poor health care



Children receiving plumpy'nuts at Torit hospital, Eastern Equatoria State.



Worst malnutrition

Having suffered severe food shortages since last year's drought, Eastern Equatoria has the worst indicators of malnutrition in the equatorial region, according to Mr. Mindra.

"Families do not produce enough food, nor do they have the money to buy enough food for a well-balanced diet," the UNICEF specialist said.

The biting hunger is threatening returnees to the area, according to the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Faced with starvation, 70 families have fled back to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Another 60 have gone to Uganda.

Other feeding centres have been opened in Nimule Hospital, Isoke Mission

habits -- that is, they don't go to doctors when children are sick and (they) are left in the care of old people."

Reinforcing the battle against child malnutrition, UNICEF has deployed two nutrition consultants to Torit for six months.

"The consultants will support the partners, train health workers on proper management of children brought to the health facilities on malnutrition cases and strengthen the capacity of the health department in the counties," said UNICEF specialist Mindra.

The consultants will also train county teams to work with all communities in eradicating infant mortality and improving maternal health. ■

are malnourished. Some 5,500 of those children have acute malnutrition needing hospitalization.

In partnership with UNICEF, the state government and non-governmental organizations, all children brought to Torit Hospital are now being tested for malnutrition.

Torit hospital has been running two feeding programmes for malnourished children in the state. An inpatient therapeutic feeding centre treats the severely malnourished and an outpatient therapeutic programme gives children daily rations of plumpy'nut.

Plumpy'nut is a high-protein, high-energy peanut paste fortified with milk and vitamins used for famine relief. It is given to

Story and photos:
Emmanuel Kenyi



Sedigah and her mother, Ashadom, at eye clinic in Mornei, West Darfur. Photo: UNHCR

Twelve-year-old Sedigah saw her mother, Ashadom, for the first time in eight years when she woke up from an eye operation at a hospital in Mornei, West Darfur.

"Mother, I see your face, is it real or am I dreaming?" the young girl exclaimed, hugging Ashadom and beginning to cry.

Blinded at age four from an illness, Sedigah had now regained sight in one of her eyes. In a month, the medical team would operate on the other.

To obtain treatment for Sedigah, the mother and daughter, members of a nomadic pastoralist tribe, made an arduous, five-day trip by donkey across the arid semi-desert of West Darfur.

"One night in my dreams I had a vision and spoke with God - will my daughter be able to see again in her life? I never thought those people in white vehicles would make my dream come true," said the grateful mother.

Seeing the happy face of Sedigah, Director General of Alwalidian Charity Eye Hospital Dr Isam Babiker said nothing could have given him more joy.

"All we need is a small room to do the eye surgery and a committed team - and people will regain their sight," said Dr. Babider, an ophthalmologic surgeon by profession.

More than 11,000 people have received treatment from mobile eye clinics this year in West Darfur. Funded by the UN High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the clinics are run by implementing partner HelpAge International.

Described as "windows to the world", eyes allow us to experience our surroundings and move around with ease. But care for these vital organs is difficult

"All we need is a small room to do the eye surgery and a committed team - and people will regain their sight."

to obtain in much of the world, and people suffer from treatable ailments or even go blind from preventable illnesses.

Sixty-seven-year-old Abdollah Yahya, a refugee from eastern Chad, underwent surgery last year at Um Shalaya refugee camp near Mornei, which greatly improved sight in her right eye. Now she hopes to repair the vision in her left eye. The medical care, she said, will restore independence and make it easier to care for her family.

Eye care at the mobile clinics is provided free of charge to internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities, pastoralists and refugees. The mobile teams with their experienced staff from Alwalidian Charity Eye Hospital in Khartoum and El Geneina Eye Hospital in West Darfur include one ophthalmic surgeon, a medical doctor, and an

anesthetist.

The conditions they treat may be infections, allergies, cataracts, trachoma, and glaucoma. More than 9,850 people have been treated this year and 1,133 have had intraocular lens transplants as a result of cataracts or failing vision. Another 293 people have been operated on for trachoma, an infectious disease that is the world's leading cause of preventable blindness.

Adam Abdalla Noreen, a 74-year-old Sudanese man living at Krinding internally displaced person (IDP) camp, was blind until a cataract was surgically removed from one eye. "Now I can do my five prayers in the mosque easily. I will tell the people in Krinding to pray and thank God for their eyes."

In addition to improving their sight or restoring vision to blind people, the clinic also brought communities together and boosted co-existence, according to Abbas Haidarbaigi, UNHCR Head of Office in Mornei.

"This includes co-existence between host communities, IDPs, nomads, refugees and tribes - particularly at the local level. The patients who were examined and had surgery were a combination of these groups, with most of them being elders," the UNHCR official said.■

Karen Ringuette
UNHCR

Photo Gallery



Wadi (dry river bed), West Darfur.



Sudd swampland, Unity to Jonglei states



Sobat River Corridor, Upper Nile State



Aerial view of Khartoum.





Village in Shilluk Kingdom, Upper Nile State

From desert to wetland



From the sweeping northern, semi-desert to the lush greenery of the south, Sudan plays host to a myriad of dramatically altering vistas.

Ancient Nubian ruins near Dongola in Northern State show evidence of the country's rich heritage, contrasting vividly with the rapidly developing, modern city of Khartoum.

To the south and west, *wadi* or dry river beds run through the arid landscape of

West Darfur, awaiting the rainy season to become flowing watercourses.

Further south and to the east, the Sobat River Corridor and White Nile of the Shilluk Kingdom, Upper Nile State, offer views of tranquil, life-serving waterways.

Below the Sobat, stretching south from Unity to Jonglei states, runs the vast Sudd swampland with its meandering channels, lagoons and papyrus fields, which cover one of the world's largest wetlands.■

The forgotten land

Any residual effects of development trickling out of the booming Southern Sudanese capital of Juba seem to have avoided Terekeka County, located only 51 miles away.

Home to the Mundari tribe, Terekeka ("the forgotten" in local dialect) continues to suffer high illiteracy levels, poor roads, dilapidated buildings and rife insecurity.

"The rate of literacy is less than 20 per cent," said Terekeka County Education Director Abdullagadir Juma. "Some parents do not want their children to go to school, but to look after animals."

Some 6,000 children who actually enrolled in the county's 49 primary schools in 2010 had the benefit of only 52 teachers. "We badly lack teachers. I have to go in the morning to teach and come back in the afternoon to do office work," Mr. Juma said.

Classroom space and furniture are

"The rate of literacy is less than 20 per cent."

also sadly inadequate, according to Gideon Vitale, an English teacher at Terekeka Basic School. "A single class accommodates over 80 students. There are no chairs, some students sit on the floor and others on window (sills)...this makes their work untidy and illegible."

Only four of the 49 schools had been rehabilitated and many others desperately need a face lift.

Once out of primary school, children

have a choice of only two secondary institutions, graced with just five teachers. Total attendance in 2010 for both came to no more than 300 students.

The county's ministry of education is ill-equipped, lacking basic modern equipment like computers. "When the state ministry of education in Juba receives hand-typed documents, they already know without thinking that these are Terekeka County's," Mr. Juma said.

Despite these setbacks, Terekeka performed well in this year's Sudan School Certificate, noted Mr. Juma. St. Mary's Secondary School was among the top 10 in the south.

Economically challenged

Students graduating from Terekeka schools are met with a less than thriving business environment when they enter the job market.

Economic growth in the county has been greatly hampered by the overdependence of Southern Sudan on imported commodities from Juba, the north and neighbouring countries.

Traders' Union Information Director Joseph Malarapie noted that it took eight days to bring goods from Khartoum to Terekeka by road, reducing turnover. "We buy a 50-kilogram bag of sugar from Juba at 150 SDG (\$70), and transport

plus taxes brings the cost to 179 SDG (\$76). Yet we sell it for 180 SDG (\$76.1). Is there any profit?"

Another hindrance to area finances is the lack of banks, vital in any developing economy. "If you work here, you have to devise your own avenues of keeping your money safe," Mr. Malarapie said.

The hospitality sector is also faring poorly, with some hotels struggling for days without a single guest.

"Sometimes we go a week or so without customers. Nonetheless, we charge customers only 20 SDG (\$9) per night," said Naivasha Hotel Acting Manager Moses Kenyi.

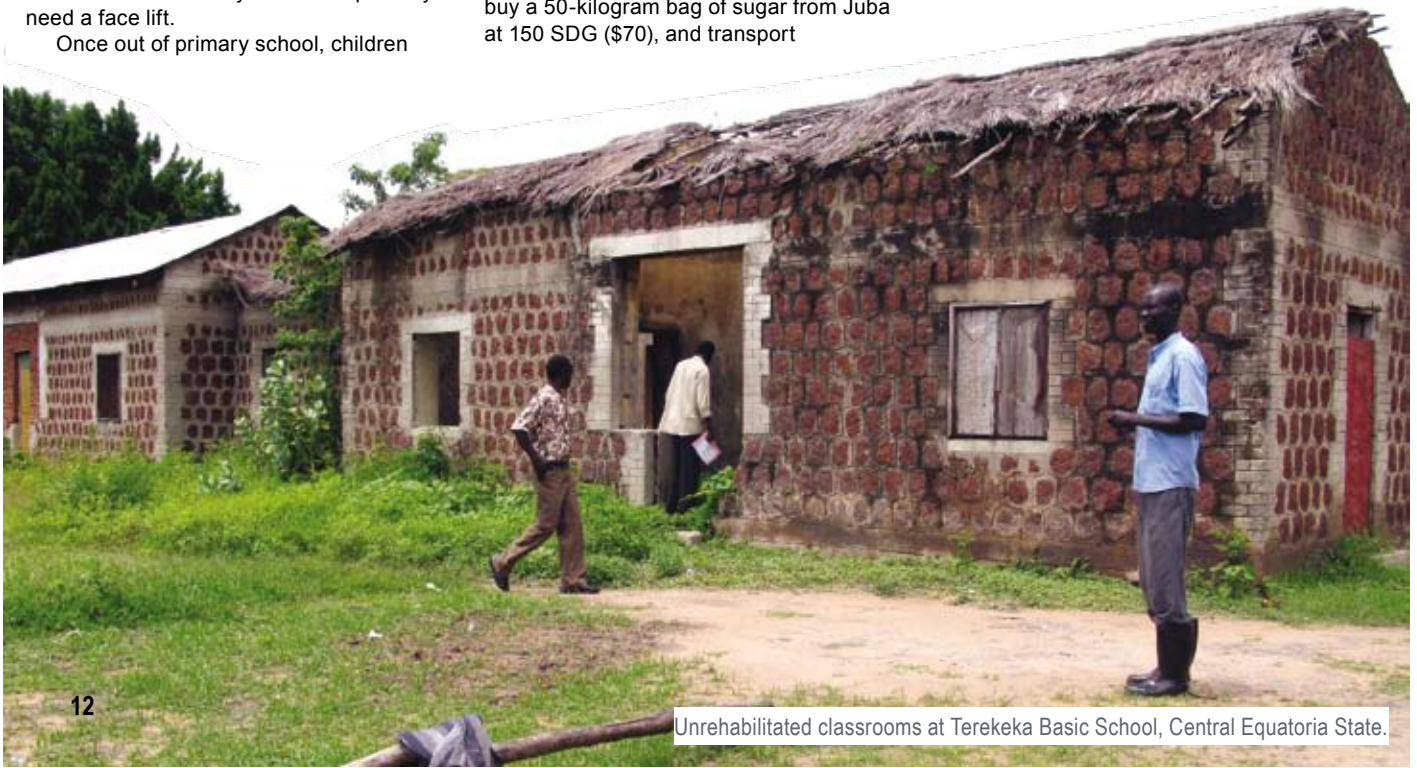
Limiting communications to the area, Terekeka receives no radio signals.

"The referendum (on whether Southern Sudan will continue unity with the north or secede) is at our door, but we do not have any radio station airing in the area," said Mr. Juma. "How do we get information about what is going on in Southern Sudan?" ■

Story and photos:
James Sokiri



Students at Terekeka Basic School, Central Equatoria State.



Unrehabilitated classrooms at Terekeka Basic School, Central Equatoria State.

A proliferation of FM stations

On a sunny afternoon, Samson Deng and his buddies are listening to a radio in the shade of a tree in the Hai Malakia district of Juba, jumping from one FM station to another depending on their shifting moods and tastes.

"We have many choices," says 28-year-old Deng. "We can listen to news and programmes about various social issues or to music."

It wasn't always this way. UNMIS security guard Robert Lemi can recall a time during the country's second civil war when no privately-owned radio stations existed and residents of the Southern Sudanese capital relied exclusively on a state-owned broadcaster called *Radio Juba* for their news and entertainment.

"There was no radio station that provided reliable and unbiased information during the Sudanese war except those government-owned stations that focused on airing propaganda and one-sided information," said 31-year-old Lemi.

That started to change in 2003 when the Nairobi-based *Sudan Radio Service* (SRS) began to produce balanced news coverage of issues of public interest to Sudanese living inside and outside the country.

"Before SRS started its broadcast, people in the Sudan used to tune into foreign stations like the *BBC* (for) unbiased information," said SRS deputy chief John Tanza. "That is why SRS was established."

But it was only after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 that FM radio stations really began to proliferate across Southern Sudan.

To date, over 25 FM stations and community radio stations have been licensed to operate in Southern Sudan, according to Paul Jacob Kumbo of the Government of Southern Sudan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Residents of the major cities in

Southern Sudan are reaping the benefits of this explosion in radio broadcasting.

In the Upper Nile capital of Malakal, the radio station *Saut Al-Mahaba* airs a range of programmes that address religious issues and educational initiatives focussing on health, youth, women and children, according to its director Sister Elena Ballati.

One of seven FM stations belonging to the Sudan Catholic Radio Network, *Saut Al-Mahaba* – which means Voice of Love in Arabic, English, Shilluk, Nuer and Dinka.

Residents of Malakal and environs give the radio station a big thumb's up.

"It carries a message to its listeners inspiring society to live in peace and love each other," said Majwok Akay Deng. "This radio (station) also mostly addresses its messages in local languages so we can understand them easily."

Juba alone boasts five FM stations -- *Liberty*, *Capital*, *Junobna*, *Bakhita* and *Miraya* – which broadcast a wide variety of news and entertainment programming.

Owned by private Sudanese and foreign partners, *Liberty FM* took to the airwaves in December 2005. The station gives its audience a diet of newscasts and programmes that discuss social problems, family matters, and community issues and invites listeners to call in with their live, on-the-air commentary.

"We do not only provide our audiences with educative information," said Albino Tokwaro, the station's general manager. "We also ensure that their ideas are heard and shared among others through opening our programmes for discussion."

During the run-up to last April's historic general election, *Liberty FM* aired two hours of election-related programming every day for two months to inform the public about their rights and responsibilities. Mr. Tokwaro plans

to repeat that during the countdown to the Southern Sudan referendum scheduled to take place in January 2011.

Bakhita FM is the flagship station of the Sudan Catholic Radio Network, taking its name from St. Josephine Bakhita, a native of Darfur who was kidnapped by slave traders at the

age of nine and later became a nun after obtaining her freedom as a young adult.

Launched in December 2006, the station specializes in various spiritual and social programmes and also serves as a discussion forum for promoting behavioural change and raising awareness about issues of public interest.

The trailblazer among independent radio outlets that target Southern Sudanese audiences hopes to begin broadcasting on an FM frequency in early July. To that end, *Sudan Radio Service* recently built a studio in Juba.

Founded by the U.S.-based non-governmental organization Education Development Center, *SRS* plans to broadcast English, Arabic and 10 indigenous Sudanese languages. Listeners living within 150 kilometres of Juba should be able to pick up its FM signal.

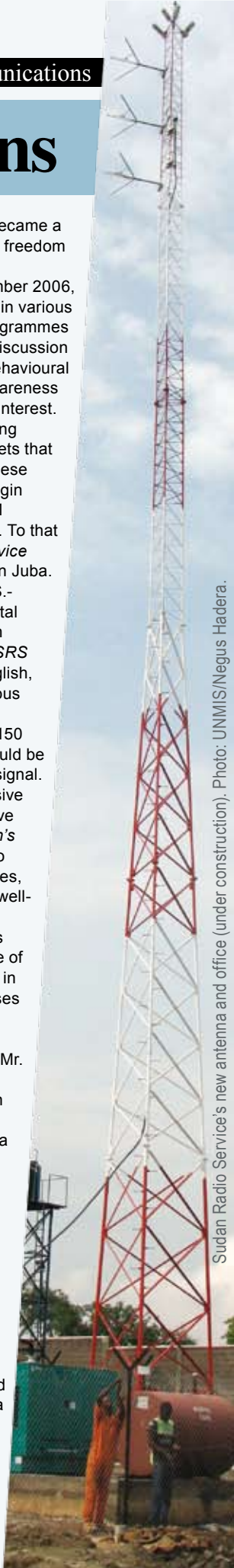
For all their impressive growth over the past five years, *Southern Sudan's FM* stations continue to face daunting challenges, such as a shortage of well-trained journalists.

Another handicap is the continuing absence of press rights legislation in Southern Sudan exposes independent media to problems with security services, according to Mr. Tokwaro.

In early March, both he and *Bakhita FM* directress Sister Cecilia Sierra were arrested and detained by the authorities, and both stations were closed temporarily after *Liberty FM* aired an interview with an aide to an independent gubernatorial candidate. ■

Negus Hadera and Imelda Tjahja

Technician on duty at *Pakhita FM* studio, Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Negus Hadera



Sudan Radio Service's new antenna and office (under construction). Photo: UNMIS/Negus Hadera.

Force Commander Maj. Gen. Moses Bisong Obi

A critical period in history

Bringing with him a wealth of experience, Maj. Gen. Moses Bisong Obi of Nigeria arrived at UNMIS in May to become Force Commander of the mission's military component, taking over from Lt. Gen. Paban Jung Thapa of Nepal. *In Sudan* spoke with Maj. Gen. Obi to learn about UNMIS' military role in the coming period.

In Sudan: How does it feel to be leading a 10,000 strong peacekeeping force in a country the size of Sudan?

Maj. Gen. Obi: First, I thank you for granting me this maiden interview and I also wish to acknowledge the good work of *In Sudan* in informing the public about the activities of UNMIS.

I appreciate the challenge ahead of me and I am pleased to be part of a great working team in an integrated mission with all hands on deck.

Sudan has the largest land mass in Africa. Southern Sudan, the mission area of operations, is vast and the troop level relatively low. There is a general lack of road networks and the terrain is difficult to traverse. The logistic challenge is, therefore, huge. However, the UNMIS force has continued to execute its mandate

effectively, which contributed to the absence of major incidents during the recent elections. We are generally well-positioned for the referenda.

Can you point to any particular experiences in your military background that have prepared you for this position?

I took part in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. I was Commanding Officer of battalions in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. I was also Brigade Commander in ECOMOG operations in Sierra Leone and Acting Commander of the ECOMOG Ground Task Force (Brigade equivalent) in Liberia. I commanded a battalion in multi-national operations on the Lake T Chad Basin. I also held other appointments during these operations.

In peace time, I commanded two reconnaissance battalions and an armoured brigade. And I commanded 1 Infantry Division of the Nigerian Army. As Chief of Training and Operations in the Nigerian Army, I managed army training, exercises and operations. In this appointment, I generated and prepared the army troops for peace support operations. I have found these and other numerous

experiences in the course of my 32 years of commissioned service as an officer most useful in my current assignment as FC.

What do you see as the country's main challenges from a military point of view?

The country has been at war for most of its history since independence in 1956. The issues in contention are varied and suspicions are bound to be high. This poses a challenge for the peacekeeper, sometimes leading to obstructions.

Much effort is required to get the parties to abide by the terms of their agreement and this makes the task of the mission in the areas of stability and civilian protection more difficult. Sudan is the only country with two UN peacekeeping missions due to its different challenges. The CPA addresses the challenges in terms of UNMIS. But much logistics are required for the force to be able to execute its mandate.

As Force Commander, what will your primary focus be in the coming period?

Mission area stability, protection of civilians, non-governmental organizations, UN personnel/resources and humanitarian assistance and other areas are all being given the utmost attention.

The force is being repositioned for agility and flexibility in discharging its mandate. Patrolling is being intensified and mobile reserves will ensure our flexibility.



Maj. Gen. Moses Bisong Obi addressing UNMIS troops in Abyei.

Contingency plans have been developed and will continue to be updated with flash points and protection of civilians as areas of our utmost concern. Key leadership engagements and Civil Military Cooperation activities are also being given adequate attention.

How will UNMIS military be assisting with the referenda?

UNMIS has been requested by both the Government of Sudan and Government of Southern Sudan to play a bigger role (than during elections) in support of referenda activities. Referenda offices will be set up down to county levels. The security challenge will be greater, compared to that of elections. We have developed an integrated security plan for this phase of CPA implementation.

Does UNMIS military have a strategy for possible outbreaks of violence before, during and after the referenda?

Yes. Our contingency plans are meant to address such challenges. We are also ensuring the effectiveness of ceasefire monitoring mechanisms to manage conflict and putting additional ones in place. Extensive patrolling activities ensure out presence and deter violence. Mitigation through leadership engagement, activities of all the other pillars and post referendum negotiations have all been put in place with a view to facilitating management of crises.

What will be the key role of UNMIS military after the referenda? Will its deployment and force size remain the same?

The mission's mandate does not end with the referenda. Our role will remain the same until the end of the CPA lifespan six months after the referenda in January. Our deployment will remain flexible and will depend on operational necessity.

How is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme going in Sudan? What has UNMIS military done to assist?

The DDR programme is under the control of the host nation. UNMIS military continues to support it through technical advice and provision of logistics. We also carry out de-mining activities and protect mission DDR staff. The DDR programme requires structures to assist with reintegration of ex-combatants into civil

society. These are generally non-existent now.

What kind of cooperation exists between UNMIS and UNAMID military? Is there any plan to tighten or change this in the near future?

UNMIS and UNAMID have always cooperated and there will always be room for more. It is unique to have two UN missions in one country and we are making the best of this opportunity. The two missions share a common boundary between Southern Darfur and Northern Bahr El Ghazal. Conflict in one mission can easily have a spill over effect on the other. We exchange liaison officers and share information.

You mentioned CIMIC activities. Could you throw more light on UNMIS military in this regard?

These are humanitarian services, which UNMIS military has been rendering diligently. Recently, they have included providing medical support to more than 2,577 Sudanese nationals, 1,745 animals, construction of eight toilets in Yambio, repair work on roads in Maridi as well as the Kurmuk to Dyam Mansoor route.

Training sessions are also organized by the contingents on the control/management of HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and malaria. Other training has been given in the areas of nursing and use



Maj. Gen. Moses Bisong Obi at UNMIS Abyei.

of the English language. Also, donations of clothing and food items have been made to children and the elderly in Wau. A football match organized between UNMIS and Juba University team was attended by over a thousand spectators and was well received.

On a lighter note, what attracts you the most about Sudan so far?

I must say the Nile Rivers. The Blue and White Nile traverse the whole of Sudan with the confluence being in Khartoum. The rivers are major arteries for transportation and are sources of livelihood. A majestic river cutting across the desert, the Nile is a great gift from God.■

Photos: UNMIS Military

Maj. Gen. Moses Bisong Obi at UNMIS Abyei with Officer-in-Charge Nelly Sabarthes and Brig. Gen. Topply Lubaya.



From baskets to schools

Before his untimely death earlier this year, former basketball star Manute Bol had become a legacy in Southern Sudan for more than just playing the hoops.

Most recently, the famous athlete built the first of what he hoped would be 41 schools. "My dream is to build schools everywhere in Southern Sudan," he once told *BBC*.

It all began with a 2008 visit to his hometown of Turelei, Warrap State, where Mr. Bol pledged to build a school for 300 children then studying under trees. The project became reality through a partnership with Sudan Sunrise, an American non-profit organization raising funds to build schools in the country.

Before falling seriously ill in May, Mr. Bol was in Turelei to inaugurate the first building of Manute Bol Primary School, which was completed in January 2010. The second building is still under construction.

Born in 1963, the basketball player's parents named him Manute, or "blessing from God". As a young boy, Mr. Bol never attended school, as his parents sent him instead to tend cattle. Nevertheless, he acquired a belief in the power of education.

"Bol was a tremendous advocate for education for the people and children of Sudan," commented Sudan Sunrise Operations Manager Janis Ricker.

From cattle herder to NBA

Mr. Bol's entry into world basketball began with a visit to local chiefs in Turelei by Abel Alier, first President of the High Executive Council of Southern Sudan, in 1975. Encountering the teenager, Mr. Alier was stuck by his impressive height.

"Wow! This boy is too tall," the council president exclaimed. "It is a miracle for me

to see ... such a giant height." He then persuaded Mr. Bol to go with him to Wau, Western Bahr El Ghazal State, where he introduced him to a local basketball coach, Martin Apokich.

After learning basketball fundamentals from Mr. Apokich, young Bol was in no time dribbling and shooting into hoops all over Western Bahr El Ghazal State. "It was like a miracle to see him quickly adapt from herding cattle to playing basketball," said his cousin, Nicola Nyuol Bol.

Mr. Bol travelled in 1979 to Khartoum, where his popularity continued to soar. But he got his big break in 1982 when Don Feeley, then a basketball coach at Farleigh Dickinson University in the United States, took notice and persuaded him to move to the US.

A year later, with all preparations complete, Mr. Bol left Sudan for the United States to become a basketball star.

Two years later, the Washington Bullets of the National Basketball Association (NBA) signed up the Sudanese giant, whose height then reached 7 feet, 7 inches. During his decade-long career, Mr. Bol went on to play for the Golden State Warriors (California), Philadelphia 76ers (Pennsylvania), and Miami Heat (Florida).

After he left the NBA, Mr. Bol played for Italy and Qatar before rheumatism forced him to retire permanently in the mid-1990s.

Celebrity turned philanthropist

Meanwhile, the basketball star had already begun pouring some of his celebrity earnings back into Sudan.

"It was 1991. This was the first time



I had seen Sudan on TV ... the Sudan government were killing my people," Mr. Bol said in an interview the magazine *Sports Illustrated*. "I say no, this cannot be right. I have to do something, you know? ... I feel I made a lot of money. I should give it back to my people."

The same year, Mr. Bol began visiting Sudanese refugee camps and mobilizing humanitarian organizations to assist those under dire conditions. He also assisted many "Lost Boys" by flying aid to refugee camps as well as those immigrating to the US to settle there.

"Manute's (philanthropic) contribution was great to the Southern Sudan," said Ms. Bol, who practices law in Upper Nile State.

In 2001, Mr. Bol set up the Ring True Foundation to fundraise for Sudanese displaced by war, contributing an estimated \$3.5 million of his own money to this cause.

He took part in April 2006 in the Sudan Freedom Walk, a three-week march from UN headquarters in New York to

Manute Bol





Washington, D.C., which aimed to raise awareness of alleged human rights abuses in Sudan.

Mr. Bol at one point ran a basketball camp in Cairo, Egypt. Loul Deng, one of his former pupils in Cairo and today an NBA player, described Mr. Bol as a visionary person who struggled to end oppression and create equal opportunities for all.

"It is because of Bol that I am playing basketball right now," Mr. Deng said. "Manute Bol had such a big heart and helped a lot of people."

A life cut short

Despite his failing health, Mr. Bol responded in April to a call by then Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) presidential candidate Salva Kiir Maryadit to join voices calling for zero corruption during the country's historic elections.

When Mr. Bol finally returned to the US in May, he was immediately rushed to the University of Virginia Medical Centre in Charlottesville.

On 19 June, surrounded by family and friends, 47-year-old Manute Bol succumbed to kidney failure and complications from Stevens-Johnson syndrome, a rare skin disorder, at the centre. He is survived by three wives and 10 children.

During a catholic requiem mass in Juba on 3 July, President Kiir acknowledged the support Mr. Bol had given southern region during its civil war with the north. "He was

with us during the time of our difficulties," the president said.

Mr. Bol's body was laid to rest on 5 July in his ancestral village of Turalei beside his grandfather's grave.

"He was a symbol of devotion and determination to us, who contributed countless things during and after the war between the north and south," Warrap State Governor Nyandeng Malek said during the funeral. "It is devastating and a huge loss to all of us."

The governor noted that Mr. Bol's first vision was peace for Sudan in general and Southern Sudan in particular. "He spent most of his wealth and energy for the cause of the country."

Akec Akhoc, Ambassador of Sudan to the United States described Mr. Bol as a "person with a great heart for his country and people".

"He did everything to support anybody in need of shoes, health service, (gave) food to people who were struggling and encouraged them to continue their struggle for rights and freedom," the ambassador said.

Tom Prichard, Executive Director of Sudan Sunrise, called Mr. Bol an extraordinary person who gave his life to the people.

"Sudan and the world have lost a hero and an example for all of us," Mr. Prichard said. "He is beloved in Sudan and will be missed."

Manute Bol may go down in history as the first African player to be drafted by the US- based NBA and one of its tallest members. But he leaves a far greater legacy back here in Southern Sudan ■

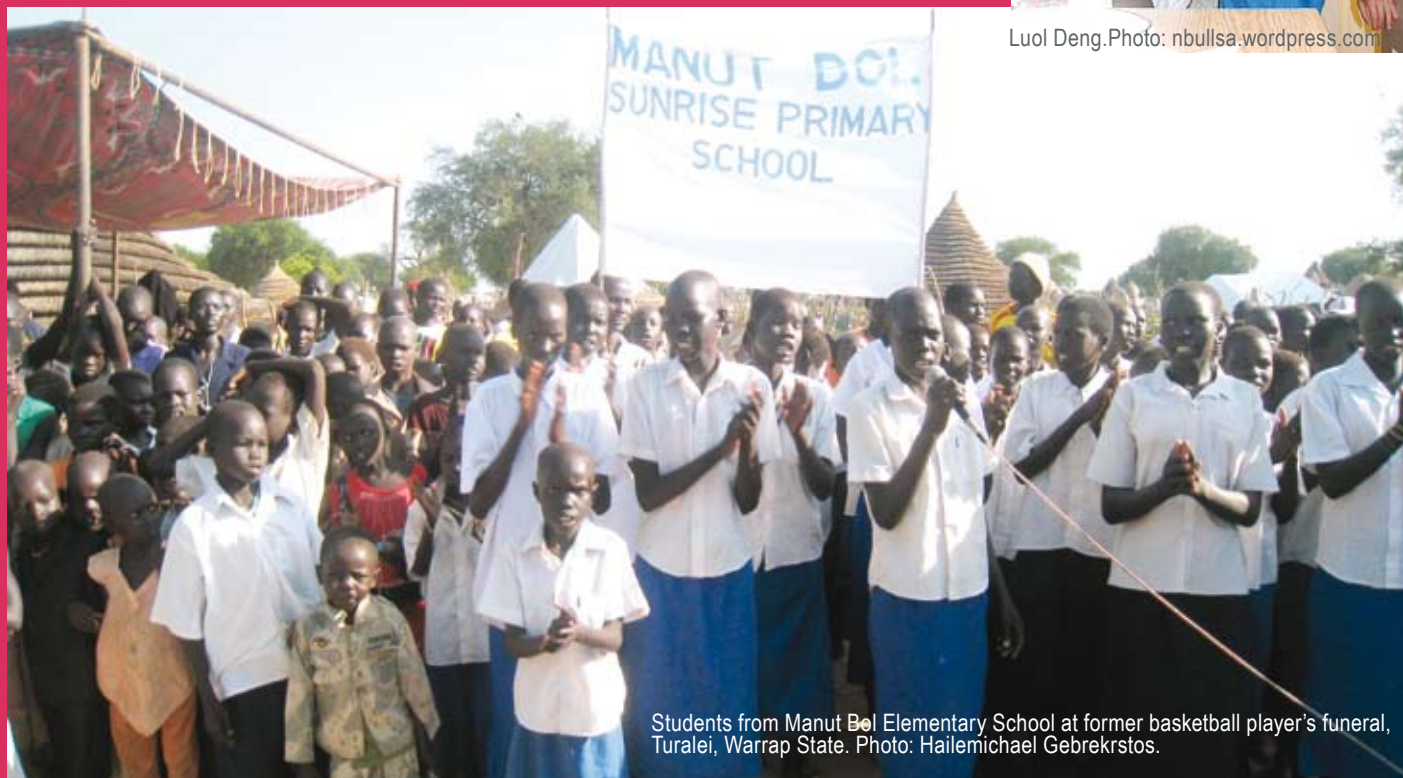
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos



Manute Bol and Muggsy Bogues.
Photo: nbulls.wordpress.com.



Loul Deng. Photo: nbulls.wordpress.com



Students from Manut Bol Elementary School at former basketball player's funeral, Turalei, Warrap State. Photo: Hailemichael Gebrekrstos.

Someone else's words

Less than 10 minutes after approaching one of several men equipped with pen and paper in their street stalls, Nadia Omer had her official alimony appeal written up for her.

The divorced lady, clad in dark *thob* (northern Sudanese veil-like garment), needed *nafaqa* (alimony) to cover her children's school fees and had to present an official petition at court. Thus, she used the service of an *ardahalji* or official letter writer.

"I don't know the procedure," said Ms. Omer, explaining why she opted to pay someone for the letter instead of writing it herself. "I am unsure about the legal document's format."

According to history professor Ahmed Diab, Sudanese letter writers have been composing official petitions as well as personal letters since the mid-19th century.

The institution was introduced to Sudan during the Ottoman Empire by the Turks who borrowed it from the Egyptians, said Prof. Diab, adding that the word *ardahalji* comes from the Turkish language.

Letter writer Attahir Mohieddeen's "office" of the past 24 years is located on a walkway in front of Omdurman Civil Court. It consists of a wooden desk with a shade and a plastic chair placed next to it for customers.

Former government clerk Mr. Mohieddeen said he had about 20 customers per day who asked him to compose official court appeals, mainly

marriage and divorce letters, but sometimes personal notes as well.

According to Mr. Mohieddeen, some of his customers were illiterate, although those who could read and write often employed him due to the puzzling ways of the judiciary.

"I am a professor, but if I want to write a letter to the court, I go to the letter writers or to a lawyer," admitted Mr. Diab.

Another reason for commissioning an *ardahalji*, the historian said, was confidentiality. If a woman wanted to file a divorce petition, she would likely employ a professional rather than asking a family member who might interfere with the letter's contents.

"They won't tell your secret to anyone, while your family might influence what appears in the letter," Mr. Diab said.

Mainly found near courts and government offices, letter writers need a



Attahir Mohieddeen composing legal letter for Nadia Omer.

license to operate. On average, they make about three to five Sudanese pounds (\$1.2-\$2) per letter, said Mr. Mohieddeen.

Many are pensioners, but some must supplement their letter-writing earnings to provide for their families. Ahmed Bakhit, for example, performs *imam*'s duties in a mosque after finishing work outside Omdurman Civil Court at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. Bakhit once worked in the textile industry, but after his company went bankrupt 16 years ago, he became a professional letter writer.

"The money I make by letter writing is not sufficient," Mr. Bakhit said, adding that he complemented his salary with the 16 Sudanese pounds (\$6.4) he received from the mosque per month.

Luckily for Mr. Bakhit and his fellow writers, Sudan's rapid development over the past few years has failed to affect the *ardahalji*, who seem as popular as ever.

"We have the same number of customers as before," said Mr. Mohieddeen, welcoming a potential customer by offering up his services before any of his six colleagues could. ■

Story and photos:
Eszter Farkas

Letter writers Attahir Mohieddeen (left) and Ahmed Bakhit waiting for customers.



NEWS BRIEFS

Yei group wins AIDS award

A Sudanese women's non-governmental organization -- Widows, Orphans and People Living with HIV/Aids (WOPHA) -- is one of 25 community-based bodies to win the coveted Red Ribbon Award for its work in reducing the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS.

"These organizations clearly demonstrate that effective responses to the epidemic require the full participation of front-line, community-based groups," UNDP Global Director of HIV/AIDS Practice Jeffrey O'Malley said as the winners were announced in New York on 12 July.

The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS grants the biennial global award, which celebrates outstanding community leadership and action on AIDS.

Eight Southern Sudanese women from Yei County in Central Equatoria State began WOPHA in 2003, after responding to a call by the American Refugee Committee (ARC) to be tested for HIV.

Since then, the group has worked on income-generating activities, counselling, sensitization and creating awareness about HIV with the help of ARC.

The association now has 300 members and a presence in three counties, including Mororbo and Lainya.

The award, which attracted 720 entries from over 100 countries, is worth \$5,000. It will be presented to WOPHA during the World Aids Day celebrations on 1 December.

Over 500 animals treated in Pibor



Acknowledging the pivotal role livestock play in the lives of Southern Sudan people, UNMIS Malakal Veterinary Hospital, in cooperation with the State Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, organized a one-day free veterinary camp in Pibor village, Jonglei State, on 22 July.

A total of 554 animals, including cows, sheep, goats and horses, were treated with antibiotics and other drugs for ailments like chronic bovine pleuro pneumonia, parasitic disorders, tick-borne skin diseases, injuries and eye infections.

To protect the animals from internal parasites, mass deworming was also carried out. Weak, debilitated and malnourished animals were administered with multi-vitamins, minerals, liver tonics and appetizers to improve their health.

The animals were treated by Lt. Col. Yogesh Dogra and his Indian vet staff, local vet officers and paravets. The event also provided an opportunity for young local vets, Community Animal Health Workers and others to learn about the prevalence of endemic diseases in the area.

Referenda must be stepped up, says UN official

A senior UN official recently stressed the need to speed up efforts to resolve key referenda issues, including citizenship and border demarcation, ahead of the upcoming ballots.

A commission for the Southern Sudan referendum had been established, but still had no secretary general or operational capabilities, Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Affairs, told reporters in New York on 4 August.

A similar commission, he noted, had yet to be set up for the Abyei referendum.

[Sudanese are slated to vote early next year on whether the south should secede from the rest of the country and also to determine whether Abyei will become part of the north or south.]

The functioning of these commissions is "absolutely crucial if we want to have a peaceful sequence in the Sudan for the coming months," Mr. Le Roy said, especially if the referenda are to be held simultaneously, as stipulated in the country's Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Asked whether the UN would appoint a panel to monitor the referenda, Mr. Le Roy said the National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement had requested such a body. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was considering a three-person panel, supported by 10 to 20 people on the ground, who would report directly to him, to perform the monitoring.

On Darfur, Mr. Le Roy cited the lack of a "real" ceasefire between the government and rebel Justice and Equality Movement, despite the Framework Agreement signed earlier this year, as a reason for increased tensions in the region.

Mr. Le Roy expressed concern about the recent violence in Kalma internally displaced persons camp, warning that this could "unravel" to other camps in the region.

Violence erupts in Kalma camp

Shooting broke out on 24 July at Kalma internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Nyala, South Darfur, with some groups claiming they were unrepresented in the latest round of Doha peace talks.

No fatalities were reported but one person sustained a gunshot injury and two suspects were arrested over the attempted assault of a sheikh. Five other sheikhs have sought refuge at a nearby African Union--UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) site.

The camp, one of the world's largest with more than 100,000 IDPs, was the scene of violent protests prior to the shooting, in which hundreds of IDPs demonstrated.

The mission was negotiating with Kalma's leaders through a reconciliation committee to avert an escalation of the violence, as *In Sudan* went to print.

Discussions with the government were also continuing about six local leaders -- five men and one woman -- who sought protection at the mission's community policing centre outside the camp following the demonstrations.

Government officials in South Darfur state have demanded that the mission hand them over.

