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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Special Focus: Women

Women in untraditional jobs

Blue Nile speaks

The oldest voter

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Editor-in-Chief: Hua Jiang
Managing Editor: Catherine Waugh
Associate Editor: Joseph Contreras
Assistant Editors:
 Eszter Farkas and Murugi Murekio
Layout and Design: Hussein Ahmed Elrayah

For comments and suggestions contact
unmis-insudan@un.org

FRONT COVER: Woman from Umm Aidan, Sennar State. Photo: Tim McKulka.

BACK COVER: Southern Sudanese celebrating referendum result in Juba. Photo: Issac Gideon.

Diary

11 January: The World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a donation of \$196.6 million from Japan, the largest-ever single contribution to the agency. The WFP will use it to provide food and nutritional assistance in 20 countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger and Uganda.

14 January: Blue Nile State began 21 days of "popular consultations" hearings to assess whether the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement had met people's needs in the state. The public forums were to occur at six different locales each day, taking place at a total of 116 hearing centres across the state.

15 January: Counting of ballot papers for Southern Sudan's self-determination referendum began at polling centres across the country immediately after voting ended late in the afternoon.

16 January: The UN Secretary General's panel tasked with monitoring Southern Sudan's referendum said the process had enabled people of the region to express their will freely. Likewise, the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority for Development observer missions for the plebiscite declared the process free and fair.

17 January: Carter Center-sponsored international and national observer missions monitoring the southern referendum indicated a largely free and fair process. The missions' preliminary statements also noted shortcomings, including insufficient voter education, pre-polling campaigning overshadowing discussions about post-referendum arrangements and some logistical issues.

17 January: Government officials meeting in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan State, agreed on several security-related actions for the Abyei area, including deployment of Joint Integrated (military) Units and protection of returnees passing through. Hosted by the state governor, Ahmed Haroun, the event was attended by Government of Sudan Interior Minister Ibrahim Mohamoud Hamid, Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Internal Affairs Gier Chuang Aluong, UNMIS Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haile Menkerios, state governors and other government officials.

18 January: The UN Security Council welcomed the conclusion of voting in Southern Sudan's referendum, describing the voting exercise as "largely peaceful and orderly", while urging both parties to Sudan's peace agreement to respect the outcome of the poll.

20 January: The Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections and Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections noted in a joint statement that Southern Sudan's referendum had enjoyed high voter participation, peaceful voting and adherence with national legal requirements. But some irregularities had occurred, including voters wearing campaign t-shirts and caps.

24 January: Some 1,463 registration centres for Southern Kordofan State's gubernatorial and state assembly elections, set to take place from 2 to 8 May, opened their doors for a 20-day period.

25 January: Popular consultations on CPA implementation in Blue Nile State reached mid-run of its 21-day process, with many participants acknowledging the benefits of peace but also voicing an urgent need for development and basic services.

31 January: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged both parties to the peace agreement that ended Sudan's north-south war to remain calm as the results of the referendum on the future of the south are finalized, commending the two sides for the peaceful conduct of the plebiscite.

3-5 February: Internal fighting broke out between two factions of the Sudan Armed Forces in Upper Nile State towns of Malakal, Paloich and Melut, reportedly killing at least 50 people and wounding over 70. The conflict was reportedly caused by a recent decision to relocate the entire JIU and its weapons to the northern town of Kosti.

7 February: Following the release of preliminary referendum results in Juba on 30 January and Khartoum on 2 February, the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission officially announced results for the region's self-determination poll, which were overwhelmingly in favour of secession. More than 98 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots in favour of the south becoming a separate nation, while just over 1 per cent voted for unity. More than 97 per cent of the almost four million registered voters took part in the January poll.

Three times higher

Unaware that their teenage daughter was pregnant, Maria Deng's parents treated her with traditional remedies at her home in Malakal, Upper Nile State, when she suddenly became ill.

But when Maria's condition had deteriorated a week later, her parents decided to admit her to Malakal Teaching Hospital. After examining Maria, the doctor told them she was four months pregnant.

Being unmarried, the young girl had been afraid to speak about her condition.

The doctor said Maria had anaemia and jaundice, but unfortunately had been admitted too late to be treated. Sadly, the young woman and her unborn child died 24 hours after entering the hospital.

Maria was one of an increasing number of young mothers who fall prey to maternal mortality, a severe health hazard in Southern Sudan.

The 2006 Sudan Household and Health Survey put the nationwide maternal mortality ratio at 1,107 per 100,000 live births. This is almost three times higher than the world average of 400 per 100,000, as estimated by a UN report based on statistics from 2000.

High abortions

Another problem in Malakal is its high rate of abortions, according to Malakal Teaching Hospital Medical Director Dr. Tut Gony. In 2009, the number performed reached 475 and doubled to 910 in 2010, according to hospital records.

"Abortion is very high in Malakal because there are some women who are unable to keep their babies," said Dr. Gony. "There are various reasons, including conditions of the uterus ... malaria, anaemia, jaundice, and internal bleeding caused by working too hard."

To lower the abortion rate, Malakal Teaching Hospital established an antenatal clinic, which provides free consultation and medication for pregnant women. The facility is supported by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) through the American Refugee Committee reproductive health service project.

"Now pregnant women in Malakal have started to be aware of the importance of their health as well as their unborn," said Dr. Gony.

One of these women was Nyakach Youl Kour, who came to the antenatal clinic to check on her second pregnancy, which was eight months advanced.

"This is my second time to check my pregnancy up in this clinic," said the 23-year-old woman. "The first time I came here they gave me a mosquito net to make sure I don't get malaria."

Originally planning to deliver the baby at home for financial reasons, Ms. Kour decided to have it in hospital after Dr. Gony said she only needed to pay 20 Sudanese pounds (\$8).

If a caesarean was required for delivery, the hospital charged 100 pounds (\$40), the doctor added. "The medicine is free because it's provided by UNFPA."

Unfortunately, Malakal Teaching Hospital is facing several challenges in continuing these services, including limited human resources, equipment and facilities.

"We don't have sufficient equipment to diagnose the pregnancy and we only have three doctors, one pregnancy consultant, and 24 midwives," noted Dr. Gony. "Currently, we only have 60 beds to accommodate more than 1,000 delivery cases every year."

Lack of doctors

Malakal is only one of several areas in the region lacking health services for pregnant women. The teaching hospital in the Unity State capital of Bentiu has a maternity ward for 100 patients, but assisted less than 10 deliveries in 2007 due to a lack of doctors and midwives.

To improve its services, the Unity State Ministry of Health has employed 11 doctors and trained 13 midwives over the past three years.

"There were 280 women who delivered in the hospital in 2010," said Bentiu Teaching Hospital Director Dr. Martin Taban. "Out of 280 deliveries, we had two cases where the mother died and three

cases of the baby dying."

But Dr. Taban believed the mortality rate was still high in remote areas lacking medical facilities. The state's 13 midwives encourage women to care for themselves but are hard pressed to fully cover its nine counties.

Customary treatment is also challenging, as most pregnant women in remote villages prefer this method to visiting health centres.

"They believe that if older generation could deliver at home without any problem, why can't they?" said Nyachoul Deng, a midwife working at Bentiu Teaching Hospital.

Rates for maternal mortality are lower in North Sudan than in the south, with the highest at over 1,000 deaths per 100,000 live births in Kassala State, said Dr. Shiham Amin, Mother and Child Health Director at Khartoum State Ministry of Health.

High levels of maternal mortality mainly result from lack of skilled health practitioners, birth attendants, and well-equipped facilities, Dr. Amin added. The discrepancy in the rates is also due to the low rate of family planning in Southern Sudan, she said, where most women give birth alone, lacking any assistance.

To decrease maternal mortality rates, the Khartoum State Ministry of Health began a skills training programme for hundreds of rural midwives last October, and aim to raise awareness about the importance of seeking antenatal care.

Imelda Tjahja and Samuel Adwok Deng, with inputs from Eszter Farkas

Nyakach Youl Kour being examined the at antenatal clinic of Malakal Teaching Hospital.
Photo: Imelda Tjahja



Women in untraditional jobs

Demining

The only woman serving in a military demining platoon, Capt. Ferdousi Kashan seems unfazed about the dangerous work she does.

"It is not about being male or female," said the 27-year-old bomb disposal and explosive ordnance expert. "It is about the confidence, patience and determination you have."

A high-risk job largely avoided by women, demining means removing mines and unexploded ordnances from areas exposed to them in war.

Capt. Kashan and her colleagues in the UNMIS Bangladesh Military Demining Platoon arrived in the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba in September 2010. An engineer by training, Capt. Fashan said she was attracted to the challenges and new experiences demining offered.

"In Bangladesh, engineers have multi-purpose roles, in construction and demining," she said. "I have had a chance to work in construction many times. This is a new experience for me. That is why I came."

The 40-strong demining platoon is working in Mafao, a 13,000 square-metre farming area located some 20 kilometres northeast of Juba on the Juba - Bor road. Once cleared, the land will be returned to the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries for further development.

On a typical working day, Capt. Ferdousi departs with her team from Juba at 6.30 a.m. in a convoy of six vehicles to arrive in Mafao at about 7.15 a.m. Donning safety gear, the deminers prepare their equipment while the administration party prepares the control point where different equipment, including first aid kits, are stored.

As team leader of one of two demining teams during her one-year mission, Capt. Ferdousi gives

a safety briefing on safety and casualty evacuation procedures before work begins.

"It is a challenging and risky job," the young deminer said. "My under-command depend on me. Whenever they get a signal, I go in front of them and do (the excavation of the mine) myself, so they do not panic. It is a huge responsibility for me."

To date, the Bangladesh Demining Platoon has found no mines in Mafao, Capt. Ferdousi said. "We got two unexploded ordnance. A resident brought information about a 175mm mortar and we exploded that."

The team also disposed of a 17 millimetre rocket found in the Jebel Kujur area of Juba, where the United Nations is constructing new offices.

As Bangladesh has no mines, Capt. Kashan has undergone training and studied demining procedures in books, but has no previous hands-on experience.

"When I started doing it (demining) on the ground, I was thinking that maybe a simple mistake is a life risk matter," she said. "Sometimes it made me nervous, but nowadays I am doing it every day so I have gained confidence."

Encouraging more women to join the profession, she said, "Demining is a job (like) any other. You need to have patience and you need to have confidence in yourself, (know) that yes you can make it, you can do it."

Captain Kashan is married to Capt. Badrul Ahsan Khan, who is currently serving with the Bangladeshi military in the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.



Captain Ferdousi Kashan at UN Mine Action Office in Juba.

Story and photo:
Murugi Murekio

Commanding in the army

Aluel Ayiei Chath Awok was still in her teens when she joined the nascent armed struggle in Southern Sudan in 1983. Today she is the highest ranking female officer in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) as a brigadier general.

The 43-year-old mother of three is the administrator of the SPLA's New Site barracks on the northern outskirts of Juba, which is home to over 1,000 officers and soldiers.

As the vast majority of them are male, Ms. Ayiei admits that she would like to see more Southern Sudanese women in uniform.

"I am proud of being in the army," she said. "But I am alone, and I'm asking more ladies to join me so that we will be many."

One of seven children who grew up in the Jonglei State county of Duk, Ms. Ayiei

was born into a household headed by a veteran of World War II.

Though a policeman by profession, her father, Gabriel Ayiei, was sent by British colonial authorities to fight against Italian forces who had invaded neighbouring Ethiopia.

Ms. Ayiei received her formal education in North Sudan. She was enrolled in a girl's high school in the city of Shendi when the country's second civil war erupted in May 1983 with a mutiny of southern soldiers in the Jonglei capital of Bor.

She soon joined the fledgling ranks of the late John Garang's rebel movement where she met her future husband, Rin Tueny Mabor, who is also a brigadier general in the SPLA today.

The SPLA of that era had more women in its fighting forces, according to Ms.

Ayiei. With the advent of peace in 2005, only active-duty female soldiers with some formal education were invited to remain in the military.

"In the army, everybody is equal," she said. "Many women out there believe that to work in the military is a risky job, that they will be killed when taken to the frontline, but death is everywhere."

Ms. Ayiei was named administrator of the New Site barracks last October and was promoted to her present rank a month later.

"I am responsible for all things that happen in the area like insecurity and sick soldiers, which is not a very easy task for a woman to perform," she said.

Under her stewardship, the troops at New Site have engaged in civic action projects.

Selling fish



Rachael Athieng at Mashwur Market, Bor.

Rachael Deng had to carve out a new life after she and her children narrowly escaped cattle raiders plundering her village three years ago in conflict-ridden Jonglei State.

Aiming to steal cows or abduct children, the armed horsemen swept into Anyidi early one morning in June 2007, driving Rachael and her neighbours into the bush.

"I grabbed my little child of two years and put her on my back," she recalled. "The relatives of my husband helped pick up a few things and the rest of the children."

The 25-year-old woman then walked with her son and two daughters, aged two to six years, 15 miles to the Jonglei capital of Bor.

With her soldier husband away on duty in Lakes State, Rachael and her children settled in the town with five young male relatives who had also escaped the attack.

"There was nothing to eat or use as a shelter at first," she said, adding that relatives and the government later gave her clothes and plastic sheets, which she used for a shelter, and a small supply of food. "(But) the little food we got could not sustain us for long."

On hearing about the devastation back home, her husband came to Bor, using what little money he had to pay the initial advance on a house. After he left, Rachael needed to find 400 Sudanese pounds per month to pay rent and more to continue feeding her children.

Her male relatives went fishing across the Nile in the Jonglei swamps, but this was considered risky and dangerous for a woman, as the waters were full of blood-sucking leeches, snakes and crocodiles.

When she delivered her fourth child in Bor, Rachael was torn between breast feeding the newborn or looking for food. She finally decided to try her luck at collecting fish from the river and selling it at the market.

Leaving the baby at home, she picked up a load of fish from the river and hauled it to Mashwur Market. There, she set her catch on the table of a bamboo stall along a line with other women selling their wares.

"I sell two small fish for 5 SDG (Sudanese pounds – \$2), and the rest ... are sold according to size," Rachael said of her take. "There is a lot of bargaining that goes along with the buying and selling."

By day's end, she has made between 200 and 300 pounds (\$79-\$118), half of which she gives to her five fishing relatives. But she has other expenses, which eat into her take.

"I pay 20 SDG (\$8) to cross the river and come back," Rachael said. "To transport the fish to the market, I pay 25 SDG (\$10) and 7 SDG (\$2.75) for the rate collectors (who claim a daily business tax)."

When no one comes to buy or customers are few, the catch is thrown away. "This becomes a big challenge to ... sellers like me. The only option is to dump them in the garbage place."

Other women selling fish in the market buy it from various other fishermen, including Thuc Young Dut.

"I catch enough fish to sell to customers at the bank of the river," said the 30-year-old father of three. "The customers know when to expect me. Once I am at the bank, they will come into the canoe, grab whatever fish they want and later each one will ... pay for what they have gotten hold off."

Story and photo:
Francis Shuei Diu

"Sometimes I organize my soldiers to clean the town because it is our responsibility to make the city clean," said the brigadier. "The work of the soldiers is not only to fight but do other jobs."

Ms. Ayiei wants to see more women enrolled in adult education courses who were denied an opportunity to attend school during the country's second civil war.

She also sees an expanded role for women in the area of agriculture who might help reduce Southern Sudan's heavy dependence on imported food to feed itself.

But the brigadier is most keen on seeing more Southern Sudanese women follow in her own footsteps.

"We women are the majority," she said. "So it is high time we join the army and take up jobs within the military."

Story and photo:
Taban Kenyi



Brig. Gen. Aluel Ayiei Chath Awok in office at new site in Juba.



Salima: Born whole and healthy

In a society where the gross majority of women are forced to undergo female genital mutilation (FGM) during childhood, being uncircumcised often results in ostracism.

Aiming to counter stigmatization by creating a positive term to replace one sounding like a curse, the Salima campaign was initiated in Sudan by the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) with UNICEF support.

The campaign – incorporating clearly identifiable, vivid colours in its messaging – pursues a change in society's stance towards the harmful practice.

Salima means whole, healthy and intact, said Amira Azhari, coordinator of the national program for the abolition of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) at NCCW in Khartoum.

The campaign uses radio spots, community discussions and hundreds of community members signing a *tarqa* (traditional cloth) to abandon the practice. The goal is to reform a long-ingrained notion that an uncircumcised woman is unclean and worthless.

Calling someone “*ya wad el ghalfa*” or “you son of an uncut woman” is a harsh insult in Sudan, where according to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey, 69.4 per cent of the country's female population, or almost seven women out of 10, are subjected to FGM.

“It's a big deal in our communities ... FGM is about being a virgin,” said singer Abir Ali at a Khartoum conference on reconstructive surgery for women suffering from detrimental health effects of the most severe form of FGM, called infibulation.

Ms. Ali was donning a Salima-coloured scarf as a campaign ambassador, one of 10 prominent Sudanese chosen to engage the public in discussions about the practice through their work and appearances, and promote its abandonment.

One reason why the practice continues is a traditional conviction that a circumcised woman will remain a virgin and after marriage be faithful to her husband. Basically, it is control over a woman's sexual desire, noted Ms. Azhari.

She mentioned other reasons, including unfounded beliefs that FGM results in cleanliness and good health, and that the practice is required by Islam.

Some religious leaders, however, argue that no proof can be found for this requirement in the Quran or in *hadith*, which are interpretations of the words and deeds of Prophet Mohammed.

“Female genital mutilation used to be practiced during pharaonic times more than 3,000 years ago,” observed Ahlam Ali Hassan, professor of Islamic studies at Omdurman Islamic University, adding that FGM stemmed from long before the spread of Islam.

Awareness raising was key in abolishing genital mutilation, Ms. Hassan remarked, adding that imams and religious leaders carried a great role in informing people about its harmful health and social effects.

Educating midwives, who are often also circumcisers, contributes greatly to the cause. They are leaders of rural women, said Ms. Azhari, and having midwives lead discussions about abandoning the practice is as effective as having a Sheikh support the campaign.

Many of them, however, uphold the custom for financial reasons, as FGM practitioners generally make at least 100 Sudanese pounds (\$39) plus in-kind gifts for each circumcision. Encouraging midwives to discontinue the practice, Khartoum State Governor Dr. Abdelrahman Alkhidir initiated job placement of 500 midwives in the state's healthcare institutions last year, according to Ms. Azhari.

The child welfare council began on an ambitious path in 2008 by drafting a national strategy to combat FGM. The strategy, building on six modules – including health, media, law and religion – aims to eradicate the practice in Sudan over the next 10 years or the course of a generation.

However, most Sudanese women still view the issue as private and tend to remain silent.

Story and photo: Eszter Farkas

Top: Singer Abir Ali, anti-FGM ambassador, wearing a Salima scarf in Khartoum.

What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation refers to procedures involving partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia, generally performed in Sudan when a girl is between 8 and 12 years old. The process is often carried out without hygienic tools, thus contributing to infections and the spread of diseases, including hepatitis and HIV.

Besides the psychological trauma it causes, FGM can lead to a wide array of ailments, including excessive bleeding, chronic urinary tract obstruction/bladder stones, urinary incontinence, infertility, painful menstruation, obstructed labour and increased risk of bleeding and infection during childbirth.

(Source: UNICEF)



From insults to beating

Despite six years of peace and persistent efforts to raise awareness about gender-based violence, it continues to plague countless Southern Sudanese women.

A 2009 study conducted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) found that 41 per cent of women in the country's 10 southern states had suffered such violence, yet more than half of the cases were not reported to appropriate authorities.

"Wives are afraid to report violence to the police because they are afraid of retaliation from their husbands," said UNIFEM Gender Justice and Human Rights Specialist Angelina Mattijo-Bazugba.

Illiterate perpetrators accounted for 37 per cent of all gender-based violence, according to the UNIFEM study, but they were outnumbered by literate abusers of women who committed 53 per cent of the assaults and other acts of violence.

The definition of gender-based violence can be quite broad, ranging from insults and physical beatings to flirtatious behaviour towards a woman without her consent.

"If you do not give your wife money as a breadwinner in the family, you have committed economic violence against her," said Ms. Mattijo-Bazugba.

But the more familiar types of violence targeting women are overwhelmingly physical and often occur against the backdrop of armed conflict and cattle rustling.

"Some families of militarized men and women often experience gender-based violence in places where war crimes and

armed domestic violence are hidden from public view," said Regina Ossa Lullo of the Government of Southern Sudan's Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare.

She added that women were sometimes taken as trophies of war in the aftermath of an armed clash when a raiding party seized the wives and daughters of their foes. Other women just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"When cattle raiders go out hunting and come across women who cultivate in the fields, they grab the women and rape them," said Ruth Kibiti, the head of the UNMIS Gender Section in Southern Sudan.

She identified the states of Jonglei, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatoria and Western Equatoria as areas of particularly high levels of armed domestic violence.

The long years of the country's second civil war also warped some attitudes of long standing violence towards women, according to Ms. Kibiti.

In many traditional African societies, the female contemporary of one's mother should be treated with the same degree of respect accorded the mother. And just as a son should not see his mother without clothing, the same goes for any woman of her age.

"To be seeing young boys raping old women in Southern Sudan today shows how the war has negatively affected the social fabric of the country," said Ms. Kibiti.

Attempts to raise awareness about gender-based violence include the annual 16-day campaign of activism against it, which has been taking place during the final weeks of the year since 2006.

The campaign kicked off in 2010 on 25

November with a procession through the streets of Juba, to be followed by a series of talk shows on local radio stations that addressed various aspects of the problem.

About 150 members of the Southern Sudan Police Service have received training on gender-based violence issues from UN Police advisers and staff members of UNIFEM as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Seven special protection units for women have been established at police stations in Juba, Yambio, Yei, Malakal and Wau.

Guidelines for preventing, controlling and responding to cases of gender-based violence have been drafted under the auspices of three ministries of the Government of Southern Sudan, UNIFEM, UNHCR and other UN agencies. The guidelines will be distributed to government agencies and non-governmental organizations after the regional government's Council of Ministers approves them.

But some of the responsibility for deterring violence against women ultimately rests with victims themselves and their readiness to hold their abusers criminally accountable.

"We are working to encourage them to pursue formal justice," said Ms. Mattijo-Bazugba of UNIFEM.

Story and photo: James Sokiri

Top: Marching in Juba, Central Equatoria State, during 16 Days of Activism against GBV.

Blue Nile speaks

Some 500 people gathered at a large tent on a late January morning in Musfa village, Blue Nile State, to air their views about implementation of the country's peace accord in the state.

Participants at the so-called popular consultations public hearing in Musfa, two and a half hours south of the state capital Ed Damazin, acknowledged that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) had brought security, but also pointed to an urgent need for development.

"Since peace has come, we sleep well at night," Osman Ahmed said into a microphone at the front of the tent, where note takers and other staff were sitting. "But there has been no development ... we need a hospital, doctors, electricity, water, schools."

Others noted the lack of a grinding mill for their crops and paved roads, while some claimed that rural women were the hardest hit, as they were forced to "fetch water on their backs" due to lack of working hand pumps in villages.

Mustafa residents were adding their voices to tens of thousands of other Blue Nile citizens complaining about lack of development and services. Consultations, held from 14 January to 2 February, occurred in different locales each day at hearing centres across the state's 116 localities.

Popular consultations are a political mechanism the CPA granted citizens of two Sudanese states along the north-south border to determine whether requirements of the peace accord had been met.

While Southern Kordofan State has been hindered from launching the process by delays in other benchmarks (including contested census results and postponed state elections), Blue Nile established its Popular Consultation Parliamentary Commission (PCPC) last September.

According to UNMIS Civil Affairs Division, turnout at the hearings was relatively at about 70,000 citizens or

only 17.5 per cent of Blue Nile's eligible population above 18 years of age (about 400,000 people).

Before hearings kicked off each morning, an hour-long session at each centre informed participants about the peace process and the aim of popular consultations, according to Amna Mamoun, Chair of the Ed Damazin centre.

She added that the international organization AECOM, financed by the United States Agency for International Development, had conducted civic education three months before the hearings, but that some viewed the awareness raising insufficient.

"This should be a lesson to people in Southern Kordofan," said Mohamed Gibril, advocacy officer with the local organization Paralegal Association, noting a need for improved civic education so that citizens were fully aware of the methods and goals of the process.

CPA versus aspirations

"People expect the outcome to change the (circumstances) we are in," Ms. Mamoun said, adding that some participants advocated for decentralization and a more equitable sharing of natural resources, including revenue sharing from the state's gold, chrome, forests and the Roseires dam.

"Peace meant peace of mind but nothing else," said Sheikh Hassan Hussein from Adar village, adding that his people had only one basic school but still no health centre, midwife or doctor. Villagers had been collecting water from holes dug in the *wadi* (dry riverbed of a seasonal river) since their single hand pump had broken down.

Some officials took a more positive view of peace accord implementation. "CPA implementation has reached almost

80 per cent," Legislative Council Speaker Mohammed Hassan said at National Congress Party (NCP) headquarters in Ed Damazin. "But people's expectations are different."

Besides better services, several participants said they wanted federation for Blue Nile, while others wished for the state's autonomy, the Sudan People Liberation Movement's (SPLM) preferred form of governance. Such political differences led to skirmishes between supporters of the NCP and SPLM at two hearing centres, resulting in one death and suspension of the process in those areas.

"Popular consultation is not an easy process ... and there are no major experiences worldwide," PCPC Chairman Siraj Hammed concluded from his Ed Damazin office.

The Chairman also voiced concern about financing the process, which included collecting and analyzing views from public and thematic hearings as well as report writing. The state budget had not been approved by the start of consultations, and the commission was still largely relying on AECOM and donor funding by January's end.

Upon conclusion of consultations, the PCPC will submit a report to the state assembly, which will then decide whether the CPA has satisfied Blue Nile State. If there are shortcomings, the assembly will negotiate with the national government to rectify them in constitutional, political, administrative and economical arrangements of the CPA by 9 July, the end of the interim period.

Eszter Farkas

Participants waiting to express their opinions in popular consultation hearings, Blue Nile State. Photos: Tim McKulka.





A proper but pricey place

It is easy to forget that the original seat of the fledgling Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) was the Lakes State capital of Rumbek.

The city was captured by the Sudan People's Liberation Army in 1997 and became the provisional capital of Southern Sudan, a status it retained right up to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement eight years later.

Rumbek was also the original base of UNMIS operations in Southern Sudan. But when the GoSS moved to Juba in 2006, the peacekeeping mission followed in its footsteps to relocate on the banks of the White Nile River.

"The city is a commercial hub where locally grown crops are brought to market."

The city is a commercial hub where locally grown cassava, sorghum and other crops are brought to market.

Its modest financial services sector includes the Kenya Commercial Bank Group and the Qaran and Amal Express foreign exchange houses.

Rumbek is home to two water bottling plants, and a factory produces body oil, lotion and soap from the oil of *lulu* (shea nut) trees.

And compared to the anything-goes social climate of some cities in Southern Sudan, Rumbek is a fairly prim and proper place, where the smoking of *shisha* (waterpipe) is forbidden and alcohol cannot be sold before 5 p.m. on weekdays.

But the city's residents must also grapple with deteriorating public services, the high cost of living and a wave of petty crime.

One of the city's oldest schools is Rumbek Senior Secondary, which was founded in 1948. Its alumni roster reads like a who's who of modern Southern Sudanese history, with such names as the late John Garang de Mabior, GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar and the deceased rebel leader William Deng.

But the quality of teaching and facilities at most of Rumbek's 32 schools has deteriorated in recent years, and some of the city's youths today are more a source of concern and worry than of civic pride.

The growing numbers of street children in the city are being blamed for a rising tide of pickpocketing and burglary.

"Many are orphans, and the daily rate of arrest for these children ranges between 15 and 20," said James Magok, director of the city's FM 98 radio station. "There is a fear that if they are not cared for at this point, they will grow up to become big organized gangs."

The Lakes State government is planning to open a youth rehabilitation centre that will target these street kids.

One hospital and pricey food

Rumbek is host to Lakes State's only public hospital, which must attend to the medical needs of a state-wide population that stood at nearly 700,000 two years ago. The city's other two hospitals are operated by Catholic missionaries and the Baptist Church.

Newcomers to Rumbek are often struck by the inflated cost of food and other commodities brought in from Uganda or North Sudan.

Those prices often reflect the taxes levied on goods along the way from their point of origin as well as freight costs that are passed on to the consumer by local merchants.

The state government faces a shortage of resources as well. The Lakes State Legislative Assembly lacks sufficient vehicles, office space and equipment, according to UNMIS State Coordinator Rick MacKinnon, and inexperienced staff has compounded the many challenges facing the administration of Governor Chol Tong Mayay Jang.

Vitale Maya

Top: Freedom Square, Rumbek.
Photo: Tim McKulka.



Rooms for rent

The Equatoria Hotel was the only lodging of its kind operating in what would become the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba when the country's peace accord was signed in January 2005.

Otherwise, the city had little to offer expatriate staff, returning Sudanese or hopeful investors by way of public utilities, restaurants or entertainment.

Six years on, Juba is now host to over 200 hotels, motels and lodges, according to Akur-Mawan Aruai, Deputy Director of Tourism in the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS).

Probably no other industry in the city has witnessed a more explosive rate of growth in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) era than the hospitality sector.

Local restaurants offer a wide variety of dishes from foreign countries as diverse as Japan, Mexico, China, Italy, Ethiopia, Uganda, India, France, Morocco, South Africa, Lebanon and Kenya. Their wine lists and beer selection feature prominent vintages and brands from Europe, Africa and Mexico.

The proliferation of hotels has spawned a sharp rise in the number of entertainment options available to their guests. They can belt out their favourite tunes on karaoke night and show off their best dance floor moves on disco night.

Satellite television and live bands have become standard attractions at many Juba hotels. Some offer amenities like swimming pools and gymnasiums or volleyball as well as tennis courts for their athletically inclined clientele.

Nor have movie fans been ignored. In a city that has yet to open its first cinema, a few hotels now screen documentaries and popular films on a regular basis.

Six years ago

What a difference six years can make. When UNMIS Finance Assistant Berhane Zewolde landed in Juba in 2005, he stayed at a modest guesthouse for visiting priests run by the St. Joseph's Catholic Church parish.

Yet he was lucky compared to some of his colleagues, who shared a tent at the riverside Afex Camp. "It was so difficult to find a place to eat or entertain oneself," he said.

In October 2005, the Afex Camp was one of a handful of facilities offering tents for rent in Juba. Spotting an enticing investment opportunity, some enterprising general traders operating out of the Central Equatoria State town of Yei and began to erect prefabricated housing units that could serve as hotel rooms on a property astride the west bank of the White Nile River.

The Juba Bridge Hotel opened six months later. Its 72 self-contained, air-conditioned rooms, bar, restaurant, conference hall, round-the-clock supply of electricity and modern water purification plant set a new standard for accommodation in the city.

Exorbitant prices

Soaring demand for hotel rooms has kept prices high in Juba's hospitality sector, especially considering the quality of service and accommodation available at some locations.

Rack rates for a double room at a three-star hotel start at 400 Sudanese pounds (about \$154), and buffet meals range from 25 to 50 Sudanese pounds (\$9 to \$19).

"Prices are very expensive because the number of hotels and restaurants is overwhelmed by the number of people

demanding the service," noted Mr. Aruai of the GoSS Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.

"We still import most of our supplies from other countries, even vegetables."

But hotel and restaurant managers attribute the high cost of lodging and eating out to their dependence on skilled foreign employees and the need to acquire most foodstuffs and beverages they serve from outside Southern Sudan.

"We still import most of our supplies from other countries, even vegetables," said Juba Bridge Hotel Executive Director Habte Berhane.

Some foreign guests complain about the spotty internet service, substandard plumbing facilities and the shoddy construction on offer at a number of local hotels.

"Most of the hotels here are built with cheap materials that can get broken easily," said Mohammad Shareef, a Dubai civil engineer who works for the Nile Petroleum Corporation. "I assume that many hotels with concrete structures and standard facilities will thrive shortly."

Industry insiders also foresee a bright future for the sector in the post-CPA period.

"The market is there for more to invest in hotels and other hospitality services," said Afex Camp Manager Sienna Wedderburn. "More people are still coming to Juba for different purposes."

Negus Hadera
Photos: Isaac Gideon

In prolonged transit

Sitting in a makeshift shelter with his packed-up belongings behind him, Saami Noa was working on an African print dress with his old-fashioned Singer sewing machine.

In his late fifties and a tailor by profession, Mr. Noa arrived at the Kosti way station in early January from Khartoum, where he had lived for 31 years.

"I was staying in Khartoum because of the war," he said, adding that he was waiting for the barge to take him and his family of seven to Juba, his place of origin. "But now I am free to go back."

Mr. Noa was one of some 2,900 returnees idling at the way station in Kosti, White Nile State, in mid-January (by 2 February, the number had climbed to over 4,100). Due to its central location on the River Nile, the town has been a main hub in Sudan for formerly displaced persons returning from northern to southern Sudan.

From the signing of the country's 2005 north-south peace agreement until last October, over 2.27 million people had passed through Kosti via organized and spontaneous returns, according to tracking figures by the International Organization for Migration and Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

But just before registration for Southern Sudan's referendum began last November, numbers of returnees passing through

the gateway skyrocketed. In a mere three months, some 170,000 transited through Kosti, amounting to almost 7.5 per cent of the total returnee figure to date.

A journey suspended

Many returnees have had to stay at the way station for weeks, waiting to move on by barge or bus. Some set up shop selling items in demand, including pre-paid telephone cards, canned beans and pasta, soap or sweets.

Twenty-four-year-old James Nikol, who spent two years in Khartoum's underprivileged Soba area with his mother, was aiming to get to Juba, Central Equatoria State. While in Kosti for a week, he was among those charging mobile phones for a small fee with a generator.

Thanks to child-friendly spaces operated by local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), children kept active. They were learning about health and hygiene through songs and role play, and about the perils of unexploded ordnance.

Mine-awareness education was potentially lifesaving knowledge for their return to remote areas that may still be littered with mines from Sudan's civil war.

Thanks to a coordinated effort by various UN agencies, NGOs and Sudanese authorities, returnees at the way station had medical care, received 30-day food rations after registration, and had access to shelter, water and blankets. But their onward journey largely depended on the arrival of a barge that would take them and their belongings to various locations in Southern Sudan, including Renk, Malakal and Juba.

Those aiming to continue onwards by bus had been stalled by security problems along the way, as had a group that had arrived from Khartoum by train.

Due to insecurity in Southern Kordofan State -- on the way to the rail destinations of Aweil and Wau (Greater Bahr El-Ghazal) -- the train was stopped on 10 January. Some 400 returnees were forced to rely on 15-day food rations from the World Food Programme as well as water, blankets

and other essential items handed out by various humanitarian actors.

The train, a meager home for returnees for several weeks, finally left Kosti on 27 January and arrived in Aweil six days later.

South to north

Recent security issues have affected communities living around Sudan's north-south borders as well, resulting in some 4,000 people moving north from Upper Nile to White Nile State.

Some moved to an open, dusty area off the Rabak-Malakal road as early as October 2010, due to harassment from Sudan People's Liberation Army soldiers in Joda Fokhar, a village straddling the two states. To preempt violent conflicts, the mainly farming community of the Nezi (Arab) tribe moved about 50 kilometres north near Hudeib village, where they originated from in the early 1950s.

"As people, we never had problems between the north and south," Sheikh Ismail Asakir said. "We often intermarry ... The problem is with the armed forces."

Along with another group settled further east in Jebelain locality, the number of returnees amounted to over 2,200 people. An additional 1,890 persons arrived from Kweik village bordering Upper Nile and White Nile states, west of River Nile.

They were lingering in remote areas of Al Salam locality about 90 kilometres south of Kosti -- cut off from services, schools or medical care. According to an assessment mission by UN agencies and NGOs in late January 2010, these south-north returnees were in need of safe drinking water, shelter, latrines and a medical facility.

Story and photos:
Eszter Farkas

Top: Returnees waiting at Kosti way station with belongings.

Left: South to north returnees in Al Salam locality, White Nile State.



Schools going digital

Eight years have elapsed since the Sudanese government launched a special project to better acquaint students, teachers and government officials with the use of computers and technology in education.

The project's technical director, Abdlati Omar Ali said that only Juba University had thus far reaped benefits from the initiative -- the National Project for Computerization and Production of Multimedia in Education -- among higher institutions of learning in the country's 10 southern states.

Juba University's computer educational lab is equipped with 60 computers, making it the largest such facility in Southern Sudan.

When its Computer Studies Centre opened in 2005, students were offered only certificate level training. It now offers diploma and degree level courses, according to the university's information and computer technology director, Lado Kenyi, and 61 students graduated from the College of Computer Science and Information Technology last year.

Another 26 students are expected to receive their diplomas in 2010. "We are seeing positive changes and new direction in the use of

information and computer technology in education," he said.

However, the increasing number of students and specialties is taxing the Computer Studies Centre's resources. "At least three more (computer labs) are needed," Mr. Kenyi said.

Digital textbooks

The project led by Mr. Ali is expected to digitize the general education curricula by 2015 into different multi-media platforms that will boost literacy levels and access to education in Southern Sudan.

"The concept of these electronic curricula is also to create interactive, electronic instructions content for all syllabi of general education with use of televisions, radios, electronic devices, computers, and the internet" to deliver information to students, he explained.

The project will also convert some textbooks into digital form and save them electronically or in compact discs to make them accessible over the internet for free, Mr. Ali said, adding that 15 computer books had been digitized to date.

The Government of Southern Sudan's Ministry of Telecommunications and Postal Services is installing internet infrastructure in education centres in various state capitals, and will work with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to provide internet access to remote areas of the region by 2015

The project is also developing translation software to

convert online textbooks into either Arabic or English as the two dominant languages in Sudan.

"This will accelerate the use of information and computer technology in education and increase the learning process across the region in the next four years," said Mr. Ali.

Education through radio

Though online education still has some way to go in Southern Sudan, radio-transmitted education is expanding under the leadership of the Southern Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) programme.

SSIRI is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, funded by the United States Agency for International Development, to provide quality education to children, youth, adults and teachers in Southern Sudan.

According to SSIRI Director Jane Namadi, over 92,000 students in 505 primary schools are tuning into the learning village programme that teaches English, local language literacy, mathematics and life skills.

Another 347,000 adults are participating in the Radio Based Education for All programme of SSIRI, according to Ms. Namadi, and 900 teachers have been trained under its auspices throughout Southern Sudan.

SSIRI also distributes audio tapes, digital devices and compact discs to students and teachers with limited access to the radio broadcasts.

Primary school teacher Evans Sebit Alexander said that the radio-based instruction on teacher guidelines has improved his classroom skills.

"I got new skills and knowledge in terms of handling large number of classes, lesson planning and communication styles among others," he said.

Story and photos: Ojja Bosco

Top: Well-stocked laboratory with new computers in Juba Central Equatoria State.

Left: Computer laboratory in Juba, Central Equatoria State.

Teaching in English

On a weekday morning in early November, William Muluta was standing in a Malakal classroom in front of a blackboard that posed the question, “What is science?”

“There are two types of science, static and dynamic,” the University of Nairobi science professor said in flawless English to the assembled 50 Southern Sudanese teachers. “And each has advantages and disadvantages.”

Mr. Muluta is one of 11 visiting professors from Juba University and the University of Nairobi who came to Southern Sudan to instruct in a programme aiming to improve the English-speaking fluency of primary school teachers.

Six years have passed since the country's peace accord was signed and a semi-autonomous government was set up in the south, but many primary school teachers in the border states of Southern Sudan still conduct classes in Arabic.

The practise is another legacy of an era when educational policy in the south was under Khartoum's control, which the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) is trying to change.

Taking place under GoSS auspices at Malakal Institute in the Upper Nile State capital, the English training programme opened earlier this year with support from the World Bank. Similar sessions are being offered in Maridi and Rumbek.

About 300 primary school teachers from Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei states were invited to the Malakal session, but transportation difficulties and the general security situation prevented 120 from arriving on time for the start of the programme on 26 October.

Gabriel Gony journeyed to Malakal in mid-October with 26 other colleagues from the northern Upper Nile State counties of Melut, Renk and Manyo. A ten-year veteran of the teaching profession, Mr. Gony said the training programme had been very fruitful.

“I have learned a lot so far,” he said. “I was taught to pronounce some English (words) correctly, and these trainers also advised us on some useful tips on how to teach students effectively.”

The programme offers participants a variety of courses ranging from biology, chemistry and math to arts and music, business and social studies.

Participants will be asked to help design an English-language curriculum for



primary school students and draft written course materials.

But the training is facing some significant constraints. Noting that it ended in April 2011, University of Nairobi lecturer Karen Atieno said a two-year time frame would have been preferable to its present six-month duration.

Room and board are free of charge for the primary school teachers, but Mr. Gony said living conditions at the Malakal Institute's dormitories were below standard. “We need more sanitation, beds, mattresses and mosquito nets because some of us have to sleep outside due to limited rooms available. We also need pocket money so we can buy our own toiletries, washing soap, and medicine if we are sick.”

Upper Nile State Governor Simon Kun Puoch visited the Malakal Institute in mid-November and donated beds, mattresses, mosquito nets and volleyballs to alleviate the shortages.

The state government's ministry of education also delivered new equipment for the science laboratory and assigned an information technology trainer to teach basic computer skills.

University of Nairobi Linguistics

Lecturer Juliana Oswago also plans to seek assistance from UNICEF to acquire more textbooks and establish a library at the institute before her time in Malakal runs out.

Story and photos: Imelda Tjahja

Top: Kenyan science teacher William Muluta teaching primary school teachers, Malakal.

Bottom: Primary school teacher Gabriel Gony sitting on his outdoor bed, Malakal.



Denis Kadima

“Everyone had a role to play”

Denis Kadima had his work cut out for him when he landed in Khartoum last July to take over the recently created UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED). At that time, the 340-member UNIRED team had slightly more than five months to help the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its Juba-based Bureau organize the historic vote on self-determination for 9 January 2011. Mr. Kadima spoke to *In Sudan* about the vital roles of logistical support and technical advice that the UN played in that process.

***In Sudan:* When did you know for certain that the balloting would start on schedule on 9 January?**

Dennis Kadima: Technically speaking, I knew that we could make it on 9 January. Everyone was speaking of 9 January, (and when I came (to Sudan), I knew that for me to feel that I've delivered, I had to not only have a credible process, but it had to happen on that day.

But we weren't working in a vacuum. We were working in a context where political parties, the government of Sudan and the government of Southern Sudan, the commission, civil society, the international community – everyone had a role to play. I knew essentially that it would happen on 9 January only ten days before.

Only ten days before voting would begin?

It became clear (only then) that all the lawsuits against the Commission were not going to derail the process. On that aspect, we didn't have any control. In my mind the Constitutional Court must be independent so I thought, okay, if (the judges) don't understand the process very well, maybe they'd be under political pressure (and) they could have said, “delay this to allow additional people to register”.

How often did the possibility of delaying the start of the voting arise?

All the time. The Commission's chairperson (Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil) was anxious that because of a lack of time, the process might lack credibility and there would be a lot of lawsuits against the

Commission.

We, of course, politely listened to him and told him that if you have reasons for the delay, be specific in terms of what more you need to do and how much time you need, and then we'll advise you accordingly. And when we engaged in that discussion, it was always clear that with a little bit of effort, we could still do it within that short a time frame.

You have been involved in over 45 electoral processes in Africa and elsewhere. How did the Southern Sudan referendum compare with those previous elections?

This process has been different in many ways. It was the first time I was involved in a process of self-determination, where a part of the country would have to decide whether they wanted to remain a united state or split into two parts.

Also, it is a sensitive issue. The continent is very nervous about the prospect of having this kind of referendum because we have many countries with borders that were decided on in an arbitrary manner. There have been many places where attempts at secession have been made like my own country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As an African coming from a country which also has been subjected to many such challenges, it made this process unique and also emotionally difficult.

What would you have been done differently as you look back on the last six months?

A number of things. If I had come to the UN earlier, I would have negotiated the integration between UNMIS and the UN Development Programme (into UNIRED) a little bit differently to give even a better chance to this integration, which otherwise was quite successful.

Of course, if there's anything I would



Denis Kadima. Photo: Paul Banks.

have done differently, it would be to have had more time. But we didn't have that time, we had to accept the situation and work accordingly.

Roughly two-thirds of your UNIRED staff consisted of UN Volunteers (UNVs). How vital was their contribution?

UN Volunteers were the backbone of our work. What made the biggest difference between the UN and other (international organizations) was our presence down to the county level, and the UNVs were the people who were running the show under the supervision of Khartoum and Juba.

Were you surprised by how smoothly things went during the actual voting?

I was not surprised because ten days or one week before the poll, we were actually worried that everything seemed to be so ready that we might have forgotten something. We were just too ready. The last week we just found that we didn't have much to do, and it's because everything was already done in advance.

The oldest voter

Sitting on her bed with her frail legs supported by the nylon cords of a footstool, the oldest registered voter in Southern Sudan could scarcely hide her delight over having cast a ballot in the region's historic referendum last month.

"There is no problem even if I die today because I have played my role," said Rebecca Kadi, a grandmother of eight who claims to be 115 years old. "I am a witness of this referendum."

Her thinning hair has turned gray, and Ms. Kadi is no longer able to move around on her own.

But she is still lucid at her advanced age and has a clear understanding of why she voted for the separation of Southern Sudan from the rest of the country.

"It is high time I cast my ballot to...bring freedom to (southerners) after I am dead," said Ms. Kadi as she sipped her morning cup of tea in the Juba residence she shares with her granddaughter Sara Peter Modi.

When asked to describe her expectations about the referendum, she hoisted a placard marked "secession" with her right hand and waved good-bye with her shaky left hand to North Sudan.

Her granddaughter, who also serves as Ms. Kadi's caregiver, concurred.

"Voting for secession is a deep, lasting foundation for our future generations so that peace prevails forever and ever," said Ms. Modi.

A native of the Central Equatoria State payam of Lokurubang, Ms. Kadi was introduced to her future husband by her own father but cannot remember the year when the arranged marriage took place.

In her youth, Ms. Kadi's favourite hobby was a local dance called *kore*. And she used to enjoy a swig or two of a homegrown liquor called *kwete* made from fermenting millet and cassava flour mixed with yeast.

She bore a dozen children, but only one daughter went on to have children of her own.

The centenarian remembered the 1980s as a particularly difficult time when Sudan's second civil war erupted and large numbers of southerners were displaced by the fighting.

Ms. Kadi can still recall

the words of a song from that era that captured the despondent mood prevailing throughout Southern Sudan. "It is a bad time in our time...it is roaring like a lion everywhere, and...everything is as hot as fire."

A living dictionary

She attributed her longevity to a combination of proper diet, good hygiene, respect for elders and a spirit of generosity.

"If you want to live longer," she said, "be kind, be respectful, and be helpful to people around you so that God will bless you."

**"If you want to live longer
be kind, be respectful, and
be helpful to people"**

By way of illustration, she mentioned an episode when she helped an elderly woman cross a river with a particularly strong current. The grateful woman assured Ms. Kadi that she would live to see her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"Nine of my friends who refused to

help the old woman are no longer with us today," she noted.

Ms. Kadi said she has never been seriously ill, and the habit of brushing her teeth every morning that was instilled by her mother has helped her to keep some of her teeth.

She survives on monthly donations from the office of the Government of Southern Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit and her grandchildren, five of whom live overseas.

The granddaughter who shares a dwelling in the Nimra Talata district of Juba with Ms. Kadi said that living with her is an educational experience that she treasures.

"Some people think that looking after the aged is a curse, but that is not true," said Sara Modi. "If you look after old people, they will bless you instead, and you will live longer like them."

"I cannot part from her because she is my living dictionary through whom I have learned many great things."

Story and photo:
James Sokiri

Rebecca Kadi (middle) at home in Nimra Talata, Juba, with her granddaughter (left) and her great-grandchild.





Child holding southern flag as Southern Sudan Referendum Commission announces preliminary results of referendum vote on 30 January.

The world's newest state

Preliminary official results of the week-long Southern Sudan referendum on self-determination showed that nearly 99 per cent of the 3,837,406 valid ballots cast endorsed separation of the region from the rest of Sudan.

International election observer missions joined foreign governments and the UN Secretary-General's three-member panel on the referendum in certifying the process as credible and fair.

On 31 January, Second Vice-President of Sudan Ali Osman Taha announced the national government's acceptance of preliminary official results that had been released on the previous day, all but guaranteeing the country's 10 southern states would become the world's newest sovereign state on 9 July 2011.

At the conclusion of the fourth day of polling, the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC)

announced that voter turnout had already surpassed the 60 per cent threshold of participation that was required to make the outcome legally binding.

Preliminary official results indicated an overall voter turnout of nearly 98 per cent. With unofficial estimates pointing to a lopsided victory for the secession option well before polling ended on 15 January, the formal announcement of the referendum's outcome became a foregone conclusion.

Over 99 per cent of voters in Southern Sudan and the eight foreign countries designated for overseas polling backed separation. Over 57 per cent of the 65,921 valid votes emitted in the country's 15 northern states backed secession. Southern Darfur was the only state in the entire country where a majority of voters expressed their preference for a united Sudan.



Hundreds of Southern Sudanese returnees arriving at Juba port on eve of referendum after 10-day barge journey up White Nile from northern Sudanese river port of Kosti, White Nile State.



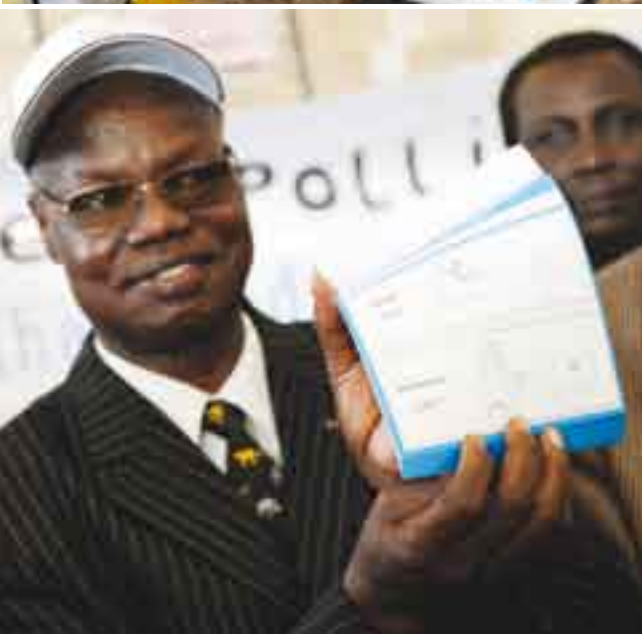
Top:
Southern Sudanese waiting to vote on first day of referendum, when they turned out in huge numbers to cast their ballots.



Left:
Voting on third day of referendum, when the majority of Southern Sudanese had already cast their ballots and lines had fallen off significantly.

Bottom left:
Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau Chairperson Justice Chan Reec Madut holding up referendum ballot paper during handover of polling materials by UNMIS and other partners in December 2010.

Bottom right:
Southern Sudan Referendum Commission Chairperson Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil (with microphone) and Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau Chairperson Justice Chan Reec Madut (right) announcing preliminary results of poll on 30 January.



Bells and beads

Illuminated by spotty lighting as the generator kicked in and out, members of the Kadugli tribe gathered on a large open field on the outskirts of town, celebrating another day with music and dance.

"It is just a family celebration," said Mohamed Rahal, the Mek or traditional leader of the tribe, sitting in the first row of onlookers enjoying a live band in Kadugli, the capital of Southern Kordofan State. "It is just another happy day."

While members of the Khartoum-based Nuba band Autar Jebel were playing a bowl-shaped drum called *sorek* or *kalem*, along with traditional guitars, others clad in colourful clothes and beads were dancing.

Women's necks and shoulders were adorned with *suksuk*, a sophisticated structure of mainly yellow and red beads, while men wore the same decoration as head dresses, hanging from the sides of their faces.

Dancers had donned dresses with African print. As they moved, *kushkush* or iron bells tied to their ankles chimed to the rhythm of the music.

The Kadugli belong to the Nuba family of tribes, who originally came from the far north of present-day Sudan to settle in Kordofan's mountainous area now called the Nuba Mountains, the Mek said.

"Our ancestors came here more than 400 years ago," said Mr. Rahal, adding that it was the Nuba who had had begun

farming the largely arid area and that agriculture was still their main source of livelihood.

Nuba farmers grow two of Sudan's main export commodities, sesame and cotton, as well as sorghum, *phool Sudani* or ground nuts. They organize large festivities at harvest end and perform various dances, including the *kambala* and *bukhsa*.

Equipped with large buffalo horns and wearing palm leaves tied around their waists, Nuba perform the *kambala* dance on diverse occasions, ranging from a boy becoming an adult to the onset of the rainy season. The horns symbolize strength and power, values greatly prized by the tribe.

Dancing the *bukhsa*, women and men shuffle around in a line taking small steps, while men wave sticks and hold shields fabricated from hardened cow's hide.

According to the tribal leader, men without shields would traditionally not be fought. "When two people have a quarrel, they use the shield to fend off hits from the wooden stick," Mr. Rahal said, adding that courting a woman was among the main causes of a fight.

"If you wanted to touch my girlfriend, she would tell me and I would then challenge you to a fight," the Mek explained. "But if you beat me three consecutive times, you will take the girl."

Just a few decades ago, women of the



largely Muslim Nuba were not allowed to leave the house during the day, said Mr. Rahal. When they did, they wore the *burqa* or full-body veil. Today, however, Kadugli women are encouraged to attend school and freely choose their husbands, although the Mek acknowledged that arranged marriages still happened.

The tribal leader proudly mentioned that one of their old customs, female genital mutilation (FGM), had been fading. Along with facial scarrings, FGM had been prohibited and the younger generation of girls were uncircumcised, he said.

Southern Kordofan, home of the Nuba, was the first Sudanese state to pass a law prohibiting the harmful practice of FGM in 2008.

Eszter Farkas
Photos: Paul Banks

Top: Kadugli tribe members dancing the *kambala* in Kadugli.

Bottom: Nuba dancer wearing *suksuk* (beads) and holding a leather shield at a celebration in Kadugli.



NEWS BRIEFS

Southern Sudan votes for secession

The national commission in charge of Southern Sudan's historic self-determination referendum announced on 7 February official results for the poll, which overwhelmingly supported secession.

More than 98 per cent of the eligible voters cast their ballots in favour of the south becoming a separate nation. No appeals were filed against the poll during a three-day window period, which began on 2 February.

Today will go down in history books, said Chairman of the Juba-based Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) Chan Reec Madut, addressing the event at Khartoum's Friendship Hall.

"It is crystal clear that the secession is decided ... but the real question is what next," Mr. Madut added. "We have to build on the goodwill that's present and encourage the parties to resolve outstanding issues", referring to Abyei, the north-south border and citizenship.

Southern Sudan Referendum Chairman Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil emphasized that the "correct, accurate and transparent" referendum was a result of combined efforts by the two Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) parties, supporting countries and the United Nations.

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Haile Menkerios commended President Bashir and Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit for their courage and wisdom in working together to achieve this CPA milestone.

President of the African Union High Level Panel Thabo Mbeki said the conduct of the referendum "promises to uplift the whole continent and serves as a testament for the continent to overcome conflicts and achieve its goals".

First UNMIS air contingent leaves Sudan



After over five years of invaluable service to UNMIS and local Sudanese communities, the Indian Air Force Contingent (IAC) completed its tour and returned home at the end of January.

UNMIS' first air contingent, the IAC arrived in Sudan in October 2005. In addition to transporting passengers and cargo, it also conducted air patrol, search and rescue, casualty evacuation, and insertion/extraction of quick reaction forces missions.

One of the IAC's most notable missions was the rescue of civilians and insertion of troops amid heavy crossfire in Abyei area in May 2008, when hostilities broke out between the Sudan

Armed Forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Among its more recent activities, the IAC visited Shyama Basic Girls School in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan in January, where Contingent Commander Capt. T. A. Dayasagar donated items like teaching aids, sporting equipment, and watches for each class room.

The contingent's medical team also organized two free health camps at El-Sher village, Southern Kordofan, on 14 August and 26 September 2010 in collaboration with the state's ministry of health, where a total of 444 people were treated.

High-level meeting agrees on Abyei security

Top government officials meeting on 17 January, in Kadugli Southern Kordofan State, agreed on several security-related actions in the Abyei area, including military deployment and protection of returnees passing through.

Hosted by the state governor, Ahmed Haroun, the five-hour, closed session was attended by Government of Sudan (GoS) Interior Minister Ibrahim Mohamoud Hamid, Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Minister of Internal Affairs Gier Chuang Aluong, UNMIS Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haile Menkerios, state governors and other government officials.

The meeting resolved to move 300 police out of Abyei and replace them with two battalions of Joint Integrated (military) Units, disarm the Dinka and Misseriya communities and allow returnees free movement.

To ensure their safety, returnees would be escorted to their destination by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)/National Intelligence Security Service and police. Once near Abyei, they would be escorted by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) as they moved south.

The officials also agreed on freedom of movement and grazing for nomads moving through the Abyei area and southwards. They agreed to form a technical committee comprising senior police officials from Juba and Khartoum to resolve the police issue in Abyei.

Bangladeshis complete crop project in Maridi

In an effort to boost agriculture in the state, the UNMIS Bangladeshi battalion handed over an agricultural project to the people of Western Equatoria on 26 January.

The Quick Impact Project, which the battalion began on 2 July 2010 in collaboration with the African Union (AU), focused on growing crops like sunflowers, bananas, pineapples, wheat and palm trees in the Maridi area.

At a cost of \$15,000, the project is expected to have a long-term effect on farming in the area.

"I am more than sure that this project will have an everlasting impact on the socio-economic aspect of Maridi in particular and Southern Sudan as a whole," UNMIS Sector Commander Col. Suman Kumar Barua said during the handover ceremony at Maridi's Don Bosco Manguo School.

Also attending the ceremony were several high-ranking state officials as well as representatives of the AU, UNMIS and the local community.

