

Six years of peace



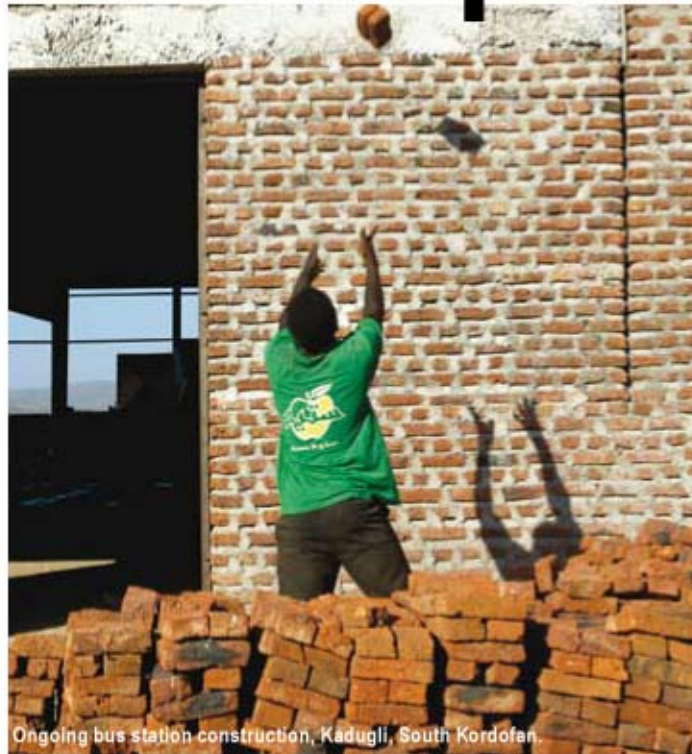
A guarded step forward

Devastated by heavy fighting during Sudan's civil war, Southern Kordofan is gradually transforming itself from an area of humanitarian emergency to one of cautious progress.

Gazing around the state capital Kadugli, one is struck by its mushrooming development. A long-distance bus station is scheduled to open its doors in March 2011, followed a couple of months later by the city's new, 1,000-bed hospital, and work on a stadium is ongoing.

Development is gradually coming to the state, which was formed when the former Western and South Kordofan states were merged after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005.

Six years ago, delivery of basic services – including provision of food, clean water, shelter, access to education and health services – was still rather problematic, recalled Takako Uguya, regional head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Support Office.



Ongoing bus station construction, Kadugli, South Kordofan.

The state was facing a humanitarian emergency when the peace accord was signed, Ms. Uguya noted. This had since eased and Southern Kordofan had recently entered a recovery phase.

Pillars of change

Development, which has recently picked up its pace, is largely due to the four-pillar policy drawn up in 2009.

Laid down by the government, these objectives included "peace and stability, unity of the three main parts of the state (southern, western and Sudan People's Liberation Movement -SPLM-controlled areas), sustainable development and preparation for elections", Southern Kordofan Secretary-General Abdalla Eltom said in his office at the recently built state secretariat building.

To maintain peace and stability, reconciliation conferences have been organized by the state's Reconciliation and Peaceful Coexistence Mechanism, with support from UNMIS' Civil Affairs Division and the UN

Development Programme. One of the most notable, held in Kadugli in November 2009, helped settle a long-standing debate on land and identity issues between the Abu Junuk and Misseriya tribes.



Ongoing stadium construction work in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan.



Ongoing construction work at new hospital site in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan.

Stability and development go hand in hand, as the scale of road constructions show. Close to 2,400 kilometres of roads have been built by December 2010, said Mr. Eltom, including inner-state gravel or asphalt roads and parts of the novel "ring road" linking Kadugli through El Obeid in Northern Kordofan State to Abu Gebiha in eastern Southern Kordofan.

The community benefited from newly built roads as they allowed people from different parts of the state to meet and get to understand each other, Mr. Eltom said. They also initiated trade, further contributing to development.

On the status of education, the official said, "If you don't have peace and stability, you can't provide services," adding that maintenance of schools and health centres had also recently started. But the state was struggling with a lack of qualified medical personnel, as many had fled during the war, and Kadugli still needed a college or university.

Issues of coexistence

Sitting at a local shop north of Kadugli, Pastoralist Union member Ali Brema also lamented the lack of educational facilities. "There is no improvement in the number of general or nomadic schools," he said, adding that schools were crowded and free education was still just a vision.

In Kululu, 25 kilometres south-east of Kadugli, Nuba high-school student Julius Julul noted similarly that villagers needed more schools and health facilities. The village was lacking hand-pumps, he said, forcing women to walk about an hour every morning to fetch water from the nearest

dam.

And even though peace has prevailed for the last six years, the state still has its Achilles heel. Sharing scarce water resources and grazing land have created tension between pastoralist and semi-nomadic Arab tribes, including the Misseriya and Hawazma, and the mainly farmer Nuba.

In Al Hamra, an hour's drive east of Kadugli on a major livestock route from El Obeid to Upper Nile State in Southern Sudan, pastoralists and farmers share one water yard, according to Sharif Hammad, the son of a Hawazma chief. Besides water scarcity, cattle rustling and damage to crops by cattle have been an issue for decades, mainly resolved by local mechanisms involving traditional courts and financial compensation.

As *In Sudan* went to print, several pastoralist groups had opted to stay in northern areas or migrate horizontally, having altered their migratory routes.

In addition, the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum meant "a lot of political variables (which could lead to insecurity) and people are confused",

noted teacher Mohamed Abubakar in Al Hamra. Members of his tribe added that they would wait until early 2011 before moving further south.

The state government had pledged to strengthen peaceful coexistence through infrastructure and human development, but Southern Kordofan was still awaiting state elections – postponed to April 2011 – and "popular consultations", allowing people to assess CPA implementation in their state.

Results of Southern Sudan's self-determination referendum might also have an unexpected effect on the state, as it bordered north and south, State Secretary-General Eltom said, adding that Southern Kordofan was looking for assurance from the Government of Sudan and international actors to maintain peace and security.

Story: Eszter Farkas
Photos: Paul Banks



Nomadic camp near Al Hamra village, Southern Kordofan.