



June 2009

United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Battling over cattle

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DIARY

- **18 May:** Darfur rebel leader Bahr Idriss Abu Garda appeared voluntarily before the International Criminal Court (ICC) to face charges of war crimes committed in September 2007 that killed 12 peacekeepers stationed at the Haskanita base of the African Union Mission in Sudan. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the ICC's efforts to ensure accountability for crimes perpetrated against peacekeepers.
- **18 May:** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern over ongoing violence in the border area between Chad and Sudan and called on all parties to cease hostilities. He warned against seeking a military solution to the situation in the region and urged the governments of Chad and Sudan to refrain from any actions that could further escalate tensions.
- **18 May:** According to the Displaced Population Report published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for Central and East Africa, Sudan's internally displaced population is over four million and the country is host to more than 250,000 refugees. Both figures are among the highest in the region.
- **19 May:** The Southern Sudan Kings, Chiefs and Traditional Leaders Conference got underway in the Unity State capital of Bentiu under the slogan of "together towards our destiny." The conference sought to mobilise all traditional leaders to support implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and was attended by the Luo Council of Elders from Kenya and top Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) leaders led by GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit.
- **29 May:** Worldwide ceremonies commemorating the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers highlighted the contribution of female peacekeepers. In Khartoum, UNMIS celebrated the day in a simple ceremony attended by government officials, leaders of various political parties and the civil society. In Juba, UNMIS marked the Day with the launch of a renovation project at Al Shabaah Children's Hospital and a free medical camp for women and children. Various events in honor of peacekeepers were held at UNMIS regional offices.
- **30 May:** Former Sudanese President Jaafar Numeiri died in Khartoum at the age of 79. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan (SRSG), Ashraf Qazi, expressed his condolences to the bereaved family and the people of Sudan.
- **31 May:** GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit announced a major reshuffle of his cabinet. Six of the ten ministers who were relieved of their responsibilities were immediately re-appointed to different cabinet portfolios and three new ministers were brought into the government.
- **3 June:** In a preparatory meeting ahead of the CPA conference scheduled to take place in Washington later in the month, SRSG Ashraf Qazi met with GoSS President and First Vice President of the Republic of Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit in Juba to discuss various CPA-related matters.
- **4 June:** Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Sudan Sima Samar concluded an 11-day-long visit to the country. While she noted some positive developments in the realm of legislative reform, Samar expressed deep concern about continuing human rights abuses throughout the country and urged state security forces in southern Sudan to play a more proactive role in curbing tribal violence that has killed and displaced thousands of civilians in recent months.
- **16 June:** An UNMIS Quick Impact Project was inaugurated in Mayo village on the outskirts of Khartoum in support of the Leprosy Mission in Sudan. UNMIS constructed ten toilets in a month's time at a cost of \$23,000 that will improve the living conditions of 115 people affected by leprosy.



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FRONT COVER: Dinka cattle camp in Abyei. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka
BACK COVER: Boys washing their bicycles at a water point in Abyei town. Photo: UNMIS/Johann Hattingh

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABYEI ROAD MAP AGREEMENT

One year has elapsed since violent clashes in the Southern Kordofan town of Abyei killed over 100 people and displaced more than 50,000 residents. And while signs of last year's fighting still abound in Abyei, the town is slowly regaining a semblance of normalcy.

A healthy interest in sport and recreation is one telling symptom of a return to business as usual, and that was on display on 21 May when an eight-team soccer tournament kicked off in Abyei's Freedom Square.

Jointly organized by the Zambian army contingent and the Abyei Department of Social Services, Youth and Sport Development, the tourney brought together teams from the local Joint Integrated Unit (JIU), the Joint Integrated Police Unit (JIPU), Zambian military personnel and five sides representing offices of the Abyei Area Administration (AAA).

Speaking at the official opening ceremony, the AAA head of Social Services, Youth and Sport Development, Ayom Matete Ayom, described soccer as a unifying influence for the people of Abyei that should belie the town's image as a strife-torn flashpoint of north-south tensions.

"It is one of the factors that can restore the confidence and morale of the people of Abyei," said the official.

Ayom urged the inhabitants of Abyei to work together for sustainable peace and development and invited his audience to have more interaction with members of the locally based JIU and JIPU.

Addressing himself to those onetime residents of Abyei who fled the fighting of last year and have yet to come home, the official called on them to return to the area and cited the tournament as firm evidence that peace is taking hold. "I urge them, especially the youths, to come back as there is now peace," he said.

But some locals say people are hesitant to return before the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague issues its long-awaited ruling on the 2005 findings of the Abyei Boundary Commission, which have been rejected by the National Congress Party. That verdict is expected in July.

The UNMIS Recovery, Return and Reintegration (RRR) office in Abyei understands such reservations. "For Sustainable Return, the first need is stability and a safe environment," said

RRR officer Viviana Olivetto. "In our efforts to support the civil administration in leading the return process, our first priority is to improve stability in the area."

Abyei has one of the highest percentages of displaced population. Prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Abyei area stood at around 200,000. According to Ms. Olivetto, an estimated 70,000 people returned over the ensuing three years, pushing the local population up to around 90,000 by the time of last year's clashes.

The outbreak of renewed violence sent 50,000 civilians scurrying across the Kiir River and into southern Sudan while another 5,000 IDPs migrated northward. The signing of the Abyei Road Map Agreement in June 2008 coaxed an estimated 10,000 people back to the town.

But most of them abandoned Abyei once again when fighting between the JIU and JIPU flared anew in December, killing one person and injuring ten more. Relatively few of the freshly displaced inhabitants have come back since then.

An unwelcome reminder of the area's continuing instability emerged on 6 June when unknown gunmen murdered Alor Deng Kuol, a Muslim cleric who also headed the Abyei department of education. The killing cast a shadow over the much touted local soccer tournament, as organizers had to postpone its final match in the wake of Deng's death. ■

Bwalya Nkandu

Photos: Johann Hattingh



Abyei town near the old market



Abyei resident building shelter after returning from Agok



A radio repair shop in the new market area



A pharmacy in the new market area

BATTLING OVER CATTLE

An upsurge in tribal and inter-state conflicts in southern Sudan over the past few months has left hundreds dead, thousands displaced and others living in constant fear of their neighbours.

The violent disputes are mainly cattle-related, flaring up over rustling or grazing land and water sources for the prized animals, which are a vital part of the region's culture and economy.

"Normally these conflicts happen due to some greedy and arrogant individuals who want to rustle others' cattle and property..... using illegal arms," said cattle dispute victim Emmanuel Deng.

Now living in Wau, Mr. Deng fled a bloody conflict over grazing land and cattle rustling between the Dinka Agar and Jur Bel tribes in Lakes State, which claimed his father and most of his property.

The displaced man stressed that most people were peace-loving and pleaded with the government and community leaders to identify individuals who are causing violence and bring them to justice.

The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) had reinforced Sudan People's Liberation Army forces in Upper Nile, Central Equatoria and Jonglei states, GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar recently told *Radio Miraya*.

Working with non-governmental organizations, the GoSS has also organized several peace conferences and initiatives in the region. Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal states have even tried to give authority back to traditional leaders, hoping cattle raiders would heed their advice to stop fighting.

UNMIS Civil Affairs Officer Fergus Boyle stressed that the only way to stop the bloodshed was to disarm warring

communities. But he acknowledged that most people were reluctant to give up weapons while their neighbours were still armed.

Civilian disarmament across southern Sudan actually began last year after a 22 May order by GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit, but many small and heavy weapons still exist in the region.

According to Wau resident Marik Chol, who fled a Lakes-Warrap state conflict with his wife and daughter in mid-May, politicians should work harder to disarm civilians. "Some people think ammunition in hand is a source of income ... and are encouraged to rustle someone's property illegally."

Others feel that the best solution is to expand education, development and employment, especially for youth. "Poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are among the main sources of tragic and destructive tribal conflict in the region," Ibrahim Alagab, a teacher at Wau's University of Bahr el Ghazal, told *In Sudan*.

The increasing number of tribal conflicts has even begun to discourage refugees in neighbouring countries, who fled during the civil war, from returning to southern Sudan.

Geoff Wordley, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Assistant Representative in southern Sudan, recently noted a dramatic fall

Conflicts in 2009

January: Fighting in Jonglei (Bor), Malakal, Western Equatoria (Mvolo), Warrap and Lakes states (Wulu).

February: Violence in Warrap State (Eastern Gogrial and Tonj North counties), Jonglei State (Nyan-gic, Pieri and Tiam villages), Lakes State (between Rumbek East and Wulu Counties), and Malakal.

March: Violence in Rumbek and Jonglei.

April: Violence between Warrap and Lakes states (Jalawau pastoralist youths of Warrap and Lakes pastoralist youths of Cuebiet county), Jonglei (Bor and Murle), Akobo County (Kueychar), Lakes State (Yirol West and Yirol East County) and in Central Equatoria (Bari and Mundari communities).

May: Clashes in Upper Nile (Lou Nuer and Jikany Nuer in Tor Kech village), Central Equatoria (Mundari) and Jonglei State (Uror County and Pibor).

in the number of refugees signing up to return to Upper Nile and Jonglei states.

"The net result of all these conflicts, particularly in Malakal and Jonglei, is that we believe negative messages have been sent out to the refugees," Mr. Wordley told *IRIN News*.

University teacher Alagab called on the GoSS to meet with people and find solutions for the deep-rooted problem of inter-tribal violence. He urged people themselves to stop "killing each other for nothing" and settle their differences peacefully.

"If we don't manage to halt this type of violence on time, it might affect the elections and referendum, so the sooner the better," the academic said. ■

Hailemichael
Gebrekrstos



Dinka cattle camp in Abyei.
Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka

WOMEN ON A JOURNEY

A group of Misseriya women sipped coffee in a camp of seven tents near the Southern Kordofan village of Kweik while they waited for the return of their cattle from nearby grazing lands. It was late afternoon, and their menfolk sat apart in the shade of a large tree.

Dressed in vibrant orange, Ghawali Hamuda said the nomadic community would set out for the northern Sudanese city of El Obeid in August. "When we go on *sayreen*," said Hamuda, using the word for travel in the local Arabic dialect, "we take rice, wheat and pasta, which we buy at the local market, as well as dried meat mixed with okra."

That movable feast is a way of life for women like Hamuda. She will pack the plastic sheeting of her family's hut for the overland trek to El Obeid, leaving behind the hovel's wooden framework for re-use when they get back to the cattle camp in October.

The women of the Awlad Nuba clan will also abandon their village near the Southern Kordofan capital of Kadugli when the seasonal rains start in a few weeks' time and migrate to El Obeid. "We like moving like our cattle," said Fatma Hassan, a 50-year-old woman who swayed slightly to imitate the movement of her community's prized livestock. "We like to join our families on the journey, finding streams along the way and staying there for a while."



Awlad Nuba girls preparing for migrating to El Obeid

It is not a lifestyle for the fastidious or the faint of heart. Besides cooking, tending to their children and fetching water from distant hand pumps, these nomadic women must feed their cows dried chunks of sesame seed and groundnuts and then milk the animals before sunset every evening.

The task of building the thatched huts from wood, palm leaves and canvas often falls to the female members of a nomadic community. And for those women who are told to stay behind during the rainy season so their children can attend school, their husbands invariably will expect them to raise crops or find work as seasonal labourers on farms in the men's absence.

It is a price that most nomadic women seem prepared to pay. "Now we want our children to go to school," explained Hanan Musa, a member of the Awlad Tena clan who lives in the village of Kulba north of Kadugli.

Their loss of mobility may not be such a bad thing. Life on the move has become more dangerous in many parts of Sudan in recent years. Cattle-rustling incidents are on the rise and with the introduction of more lethal firearms, chronic

conflicts between roaming pastoralists and established farming communities have become deadlier. "Due to recent tribal clashes, some no-go areas have been created," said Hawazma tribal elder Al Amir Sanad.

Yet for all the hazards and hardships that come with the lot of a nomad, many of these women wouldn't have it any other way. "We are used to this kind of life," said Hamuda. "This is how our grandparents and their parents used to live." ■

Story and photos by
Eszter Farkas



Woman making yoghurt from cow's milk



An Awlad Nuba woman outside her hut

HOME ON THE RANGE

The air is filled with acrid smoke from smoldering pyramids of dung scattered across the cattle camp as the clank of cowbells signals the return of the livestock from a day of grazing. The landscape of Sudan's pastoralist regions is dotted with such camps, which host herds ranging in size from dozens to hundreds of heads. Covered in ash from dung fires to ward off mosquitoes and other pests, the cattle keepers attend to every need of their massive beasts. Camp life begins at dawn when the girls milk the cows and the dung is gathered for drying in the sun. A paste made from ash, dirt and cattle urine is applied to the enormous horns as an organic coat of insect repellent, and ash is patted onto their



Dinka cattle camp in Abyei

hides. As the morning wears on and the mercury rises, young men take the cattle out to graze in the vicinity of the camp, to be followed later by younger boys leading the calves that have been assigned to them.

Pastoralists in southern Sudan have a special relationship with their cattle, and some even derive their names from the colours and markings of the animals. The cattle camp also represents an integral part of rural society where children grow into adults and take on new responsibilities. The camps are situated close to permanent settlements during the rainy season when water is abundant and pastures are lush. As the dry season

the camps are moved to remote areas with year-round sources of water where the cattle keepers will remain until the rains return. ■

*Story and photos by
Tim McKulka*



Bor cattle camp



Bor cattle camp



Misseriya cattle camp in Abyei



Cattle culture

Cattle are a never-ending source of inspiration for the people of southern Sudan. They are the stuff of legends, like the one about the Dinka hunters who killed the mother of the buffalo and the cow.

Both animals vowed to seek revenge against mankind, and the buffalo chose to hunker down in the forest and attack human beings whenever the opportunity arose.

The cow, by contrast, cleverly settled for its own domestication to play off man against man and cause human beings to fight and kill each other for ownership, possession or protection of her.

That abiding sense of devotion is also reflected in the praise songs that southern Sudanese compose about their venerated cattle. Joseph Maker Dut, 27, is the proud owner of over 30 cows in the Majak cattle camp on the outskirts of Wau, and he sang one of the cattle songs he learned from his father in the Bahr el Ghazal village where he was born and grew up.

Entitled "Kep," the song celebrates a huge, healthy bull: "I bargain with the owner of a huge bull in the village and reached agreement to exchange that huge bull for eighteen cows and seven spears to make up the total of twenty five cows."

Under a time-honored tradition, said Maker, the richest man in a village can flaunt his wealth by trading 25 or more of his cows for the biggest bull in a neighbouring cattle camp.

Maker continued singing: "I will do the best I can by taking this bull to the best grazing area, and assign a strong young man to look after it and will not give out my beautiful bull except for the most beautiful lady I want to marry."

Wau resident Chol Bourjouk sang a tune dedicated to the cow and the sustenance her milk represents for the cattle keepers all year round. The 43-year-old native of Jonglei State owns 15 cows.

"It is my own cow which produces enough milk for me, my family

and the neighbouring community, I will never ask anyone to provide me with milk. I have become healthier because of this cow, my sweat does not stop running around my neck because I have enough milk in my store, I have never experienced hunger in my family."

The image of perspiration running around the singer's neck is a symbol of good health. According to traditional beliefs, a skinny, hungry person does not perspire, whereas the fat, sweat-soaked individual is regarded as the very picture of good health in much of southern Sudanese society.

Michael Wondi



Dinka drinking milk in Abyei.
Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka

RESOLVING DISPUTES WITH CATTLE

It is mid-afternoon and the Kator B court on the outskirts of Juba is packed with people anxiously waiting for the start of the day's proceedings. A hush suddenly descends on the throng when Chief Denis Daramalo, better known as Chief Lele, strides into the tribunal to begin three hours of hearings.

The Kator B court is one of many traditional courts in southern Sudan that continue to play a significant role in the resolution of disputes between local communities. The parties to a conflict flock to these homegrown tribunals to seek justice and redress.

A chief and a council of ministers normally preside over the courts. The chiefs exercise significant influence among the local communities and act as intermediaries within established traditional systems of governance.

Many southern Sudanese rely on the enforcement of traditional laws for conflict and dispute resolution, says Joseph Abuk, a part-time producer specializing in culture and traditional programming at Southern Sudan Television.

The preferred methods of conflict management and resolution can vary from tribe to tribe, according to Abuk. But compensation is by far the most widely accepted modality for resolving disputes and deterring future abuses.

Justice James Berapai, a Juba-based commissioner of oaths for southern Sudan, agrees that most disputes are settled through the payment of *dia*, an Arabic word for compensation. And cattle, which are widely regarded as a yardstick of wealth and a status symbol throughout southern Sudanese society, remain one of the most commonly accepted forms of compensation in the region, particularly among cattle-keeping ethnic groups like the Dinka, Nuer, Toposa and Mundari.

Justice Berapai notes that compensation applies to criminal as well as civil wrongs committed against an individual. A fine can vary widely, depending on the nature of the crime, the social status of the victim, and the age and gender of the parties to the dispute.

In the case of the Nuer, murder can carry a penalty of between 50 and 70 head of cattle while manslaughter is punished with a penalty of between 30 to 40 cattle. If an adult man elopes with a girl, he may face a fine of up to 15 cattle.

The payment of cattle as compensation



Sunset over Dinka cattle camp in Abyei.
Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka

is recognised by various statutes, case law and traditional customs and practice, says UNMIS Judicial Affairs Officer Wilkins Onyango.

Once the verdict is handed down by a traditional court, the *dia* is paid to specific individuals. If a man elopes or commits adultery with an unmarried girl, he must pay compensation to her father. Fines for accidental death or physical injuries are paid to the parents of the victim.

Berapai says that payment of compensation is usually a communal

responsibility that must be borne by the family of the guilty party if he is unable to cover the fine. In some instances, the cattle of an offender's relative may be seized to ensure that the fine is fully paid up.

A verdict can be challenged in a conventional court of law if due process is not followed in the settlement of a dispute, says Berapai. Additional penalties like imprisonment that are derived from statutory law can be then meted out. ■

Antonette Miday

Cattle for dowry payment

In his 1972 book *The Dinka of the Sudan*, the Sudanese scholar, politician and diplomat Francis Mading Deng spotlighted the centrality of a dowry to the institution of marriage in his native society. "Counting the marriage," in which the amount of bridewealth is settled ... is the most celebrated and most festive ceremony of marriage," he wrote.

As the term "bridewealth" implies, it is the groom and his relatives who must come up with the dowry -- and in the context of southern Sudan, the preferred kind is emphatically a four-legged one. "Marriage implies loss of cattle as bridewealth," noted Deng. "But it is also a means of acquiring cattle."

The Dinka are not alone. The fathers of prospective brides in other cattle-keeping communities like the Mundari and Toposa also like to receive their dowries in bovine form, and in their circles a suitable package of bridewealth can range from 50 to 100 head of cattle.

Taller girls have traditionally fetched a bigger price than their more petite peers, and in more recent times education has emerged as another important factor that can boost the size of a dowry.

But the bridewealth custom can also have harmful effects on a marriage. The payment of a large dowry leads some men to view their wives as personal property who can be abused and beaten whenever they fail to fulfill their spouses' demands.

Cecilia Kiden left her husband after repeated assaults that she partly attributed to the high dowry that was paid to her family. "I was beaten every day and forced to have sex even when I wasn't in the mood," says Kiden, who recently moved in with an uncle who lives in the Hai Jalaba district of Juba. "My husband said he paid everything to use me any time he wants."

The tradition can hurt the marital prospects of a young man with limited resources. Ludu Alpose remains a bachelor at the age of 37 because he has been unable to accumulate enough livestock to meet the standards of a young woman's family.

"I don't have enough cattle, so I am still alone," says the Mundari man. But Alpose hasn't completely given up hope, at least not yet. "I will get a lady who is very expensive, and I will marry." In southern Sudan, it seems, cattle -- and not diamonds -- are a girl's best friend.

Taban Kenyi

CONFLICT IN PIBOR

Fighting erupted between troops belonging to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Murle tribesmen in Pibor County in mid-May, reportedly killing five people and wounding three others.

The 19 May incident occurred within days of a deployment of UNMIS forces in the area and was apparently triggered by a Murle youth, who shot an SPLA soldier in the hand while he and two others were fishing in a river. When SPLA forces rushed out to retrieve their wounded comrade, bullets started flying between the soldiers and Murle youths.

Hundreds of Pibor residents fled from their homes to surrounding villages. Over 120 people, mainly women, children and the elderly, sought refuge in the UNMIS base, spending the night there to avoid further attack.

Two of the wounded – a female wildlife officer and a male security guard employed by one of the area chiefs – were treated in the UNMIS camp by Indian doctors before being transferred to the county's main civil hospital operated by the non-governmental Médecins Sans Frontières.

With UNMIS on the ground, the warring parties were immediately brought together and tensions quickly defused. Calm returned to the area, paving the way for dialogue among the SPLA leadership, county authorities, elders and youths.

Pibor County Executive director Joseph Juong Maze told *In Sudan* that the town would have been reduced to ashes without the UNMIS presence. "Fortunately, together with UNMIS, we were able to put down the violence that would have escalated further."

UNMIS temporarily deployed 120 military, police and civilian personnel in mid-May to Akobo and Pibor, where clashes in March mainly between the Murle and Lou Nuer tribes left hundreds of civilians dead and thousands uprooted from their homes.

The team's mandate is to coordinate with local authorities in supporting peace and reconciliation conferences between communities, accelerating delivery of humanitarian aid, identifying causes of conflict and aiding efforts to find a lasting solution to the disputes.

UNMIS Pibor Civil Affairs Officer Benett Kenyi said the mission would monitor security to facilitate the return of displaced persons. "Within our capacity, we will also provide technical and logistical assistance to the local government through military, police and support personnel."

UN Police will train local law enforcement personnel in modern methods of riot control and crisis management, said Regional UN Police Advisor Francis Nartey Kodjo. They will also help build a better relationship between communities and the police.

He added that UN Police shall carry out patrols in the town to restore confidence and make civilians feel more secure. "Our patrols will also help to deter criminals and disrupt any plans to attack or raid civilians, (which is) important for the return of lasting peace in the region."

Pibor County Executive Director Joseph Juong Maze said he was happy that UNMIS was present to monitor events on the ground. "You have been hearing reports from afar, but now you are seeing with your own eyes ... the nature of the

conflict and ... how it is affecting the communities."

The communities had previously fought over cattle raids, but the violence this year has targeted women, children and the elderly, "They look more like revenge attacks between the Murle, Dinka and the Nuer than cattle raiding," said Maze.

In the executive director's opinion, UNMIS deployment will especially help to engage cattle camp youths in dialogue. "Our people are living in constant fear. People are dying every day and communities are stricken by hunger due to instability. No development can occur in the county." ■

Emmanuel Kenyi
Photos: Tim McKulka



Internally displaced Murle tribe members waiting to receive WFP aid



Murle women collecting food aid in Pibor town

BACK TO THE BARRACKS



Hazel De Wet

Hundreds of black school children were shot down in 1976 in the streets of Soweto, South Africa, as they protested the poor quality of their education. To honour these children, in 1991, the Organization of African Unity (which changed its name to African Union later) made 16 June the Day of the African Child. In celebrating this day, *In Sudan* spoke with UNMIS Senior Child Protection Adviser Hazel De Wet about the situation of children in Sudan.

In Sudan: What are the main child protection priorities at UNMIS?

Hazel De Wet: Currently, the main priorities are the recruitment and re-recruitment of children for armed movements. This is happening within the mission area of UNMIS – as noted in the third annual report of the Secretary-General issued in January 2009 – mainly due to delays in implementation of the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) and the slow process of child DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration).

We are seeing more and more cases of demobilized children going back to the barracks because there are no alternative livelihoods for them. They are welcomed back by their commanders, who believe they are doing these children a favour and giving them protection.

What is Child Protection doing to address this problem?

We identify the presence of children in armed forces and groups, report on the issue and alert the Northern and Southern Sudan DDR Commissions, UN agencies like UNICEF and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) with a mandate and resources to initiate

“We should not forget that child recruitment is a violation of the CPA and that the parties as well as the UN should monitor it”

reintegration activities for demobilized children.

We also bring the issue to the attention of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The UN Secretary-General issues two (regular) reports relevant to children in Sudan.

The first is an annual report with a list of parties who recruit children in different parts of the world. Many actors in Sudan appear on this list, so we appeal to those parties to refrain from recruiting children and release those associated with their forces. The second report is Sudan-specific and provides insight into the grave violations suffered by children in the country.

Has the unit encountered any obstacles to its work?

Yes. One would think children's issues would be easy to address, but they can be contentious. For example, when we talk about children associated with armed forces and groups, the recruiting parties avoid the topic or act like it is not taking place.

We should not forget that child recruitment is a violation of the CPA and that the parties as well as the UN should monitor it. The CPA stipulates that children should be released within six months of its signing. Some commanders give us access to their barracks while others still refuse. For the time being, we work with those who cooperate and keep channels of dialogue with commanders who refuse access, by giving them training and sharing information with them.

Even after we identify and verify the presence of children in barracks, very few agencies or implementing partners are able to conduct projects outside main urban centres of the south, due to the security situation and lack of funding, making reintegration even more challenging.

Despite these challenges, what progress has been made?

More than 1,500 children have left military barracks since the CPA was signed, but thousands have remained there. Progress depends on the political will of parties and agents on the ground to admit they have children in their ranks, and allow us access to verify numbers.

Progress also depends on resources available for UN agencies and NGOs to increase reintegration projects, because children's reintegration schemes are mainly community-based. It would not be fair to other war-affected children to only assist children associated with armed groups or forces.

UNMIS Child Protection and other actors have also worked hard to ensure that the Sudan Armed Forces Act (2007) and Southern Sudan Child Act (2008) prohibit the recruitment of persons under 18. It is important for UNMIS to capitalize on these achievements and support the identification and release of children from armed forces in its area of operation.

Finally, we have established two fora where we directly address northern and southern authorities on grave violations committed against children. This is the most important achievement, as it is ultimately their duty to ensure the protection of their children.

How can UNMIS as a mission help to give children better protection?

It would be a mistake to think that only our unit has a mandate to monitor children's issues. All sections are actually looking at child protection issues from different angles.

For instance, mediation between the tribes in Jonglei has tremendous consequences for child protection, given the number of children that have been abducted during the clashes. We have so far documented and verified more than 200 cases.

UNMIS political and military resources are vital in securing access to military barracks in the Three Areas and southern Sudan in verifying the presence of children, and facilitating their release. The idea is to use the good offices and assets of the mission to support child protection in this post-conflict setting.

How and why do children join armed groups?

Regrettably, we have witnessed a global trend over the past two decades under which methods used to wage war, including

abduction, have increasingly used children to fight adult interests. However, family separation, family disintegration, lack or absence of schooling, a search for security, revenge, and a lack of livelihood opportunities are all rational reasons why children are recruited by armed forces or groups or choose to join them.

How have children been affected by the past four years of peace in Sudan?

More than two generations of children have known nothing but conflict in this country and know little of peace. Children who were twelve in 2005 when the CPA was signed will be able to vote in the 2011 referendum. The six years between the signing of the CPA and referendum are crucial in making peace and unity attractive.

But regardless of the outcome, children in Sudan will feel the impact of peace when the Child Bill of southern Sudan is put fully into practice and they can enjoy their rights. At the same time, in the north we are looking forward to the speedy adoption of the 2008 Children's Bill so as to ensure comprehensive legislation protecting children's rights.

What do you think of the

rising number of street children in Sudanese towns?

The presence of street children is symptomatic of a post-conflict setting gone wrong, where child protection mechanisms are too weak or non-existent. UNMIS Child Protection remains concerned by some incidents of abuse against street children in the markets by law enforcement agencies or abuse by market vendors. This brings us back to reintegration.

In Abyei, for example, the current legal void has led to a situation where there is no clear legislation protecting street children, who are often arrested for petty crimes, mainly related to poverty.

Furthermore, some customary practices are not necessarily structured to look at the best interests of the child. Street children are vulnerable to further abuse, exploitation, re-recruitment and detention. Their problems require a state welfare policy with dedicated resources from the government and its partners to rehabilitate street children.

What about increasing reports of children being abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)?

From January to April 2009, we documented and verified 25 abductions, 30 escapes, two cases of injury and four killings committed by suspected LRA groups against children. As of the end of February 2009, organizations working on Family Tracing and Reunification had received 63 reports of missing children following LRA attacks.

Boys are often made to carry looted goods or guard LRA settlements and are taught spying techniques. They are also used as fighters and directed to commit atrocities against civilians. For example, one child who spent five years with the LRA informed us that he received military training and was forced to kill a lot of people. He also participated in oath-taking by drinking the human blood of persons he was made to kill.

Abducted children often witness the killing and torture of other children, especially those who try to escape. Reintegration of children associated with the LRA requires specific programming as well as coordination with the UN in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda because we are dealing with children from these countries as well. ■

Photos: Johann Hattingh



A boy doing homework outside a school in Abyei town

NO CHILD WITHOUT A SMILE

Placing a unicycle gingerly between his legs, Gavin Stockden asked his audience for volunteers willing to go for a spin on the contraption. When no one came forward, the man with the oversized red nose and the bulging pillow stuffed under his T-shirt failed in his first attempt to mount the unicycle.

Peals of laughter rang out from the assembled children. The clown fared better on a second try but he maneuvered the unicycle with an obvious lack of confidence and skill that drew yet more guffaws. As he gained speed and turned in the direction of the children, they playfully scampered out of his way to the delight of everyone in the room.

Stockden is one of three travelling clowns who arrived in southern Sudan on May 19 to entertain children who have known hardship, upheaval and insecurity as their constant companions. The native of the South African city of Durban came to Juba under the auspices of Clowns Without Borders, a volunteer organization of artists and performers founded in Barcelona in 1993 that, in the words of its website, "offers laughter to relieve the suffering of all persons, especially children, who live in areas of crisis including refugee camps, conflict zones and territories in situations of emergency."

Stockden was joined by Elisa Lane and Gwendolyn Rooker of Philadelphia for a two-week tour of southern Sudan under the slogan No Child Without A Smile. During their stay in Juba the clowns performed at the Ustratuna Centre for Disabled Children, a juvenile prison, the Juba Children's Hospital, a local orphanage and several other locations.

Wherever they went, the clowns spread mirth and merriment among their youthful audiences. Their first stop was the juvenile wing of the Juba central prison, where the eyes of the young inmates expectantly twinkled at the first sighting of the performers in their ludicrous garb and slapstick antics.

"The event created a unique atmosphere in the realm of stress and confinement at the prison," said Cathy Groenendijoc, the Sudanese director of a Juba-based non-governmental organization called Confident Children out of Conflict that helped organize the shows. "Our organization is working closely with the prison administration to improve the situation of juvenile prisoners; and the clowns' performance has worked well."

Prison inmate Peter Kemis added his plaudits. "It was really good," said the 17-year-old Kemis. "We laughed a lot. It would be nice if similar events are staged often."

A subsequent hour-long performance by the clowns at the Ustratuna Centre for Disabled Children elicited a similar response. About 30 handicapped children attended the show, and a seven-year-old boy named Richard Banu with a deformed limb hailed the event as "marvelous."

That should come as music to the ears of Gavin Stockden. "Our aim in coming here is to have fun, spread it to

people and see them smile," he said. The next stop on the Clowns Without Borders tour was the Northern Bahr el Ghazal State capital of Aweil.

But lest anyone should think that the No Child Without A Smile initiative is all about gags and pratfalls, the head of one of the schools visited by the clowns in Juba highlighted the salutary effects of wholesome entertainment on her young charges. "It is true that children study more when they get happy because entertainment recreates the spirit," said Sister Mary Juna, the principal of the Ustratuna Basic School of the Sacred Heart Sisters where 500 students turned out for the show and clamoured for an encore at the end. "It also helps in realizing the right of children to play, and the presentation can inspire talented children to cultivate it apart from their academic excellence." ■

Negus Hadera



Clowns Without Borders performing at Juba Central Prison. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka

Racheal Achol

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

“When I was a teacher in the refugee camp, I always advised the girls to concentrate on their studies ... I want them to participate equally in the development of our young nation”



Racheal Achol in her office

Forced by war to endure life as a refugee for 16 years in two foreign countries, Racheal Achol is happy to be back in southern Sudan.

She first fled with her family to Ethiopia in 1990 to escape the ravages of Sudan's then seven-year-old civil war. Then Racheal was among tens of thousands of Sudanese refugees forced back into their native country after the fall of Ethiopian dictator Haile Mariam Mengistu in May 1991.

Within months of her return to Sudan Racheal was on the move again, trekking with her mother and five siblings from their hometown of Bor towards the Kenyan border.

“We walked on foot for an entire year, and we were constantly being attacked by gunmen and wild animals,” she recalled from her government office in Juba. “Dozens were killed by assailants, while others died of hunger and disease. My mother exchanged her clothes for food to help us survive.”

Racheal and her family eventually reached Kakuma refugee camp near the Kenyan town of Lokichoggio, where living conditions slowly began to improve.

She began receiving formal instruction

at the camp under an educational programme funded by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Racheal later obtained a Kenyan School Certificate and graduated from a primary school teachers' training college in the East African country.

She then landed a teaching job in the Bahr el Nam primary school at Kakuma camp. The then 24-year-old woman returned to Sudan in 2007 under the auspices of a UNHCR repatriation programme. Today, she works at the Government of Southern Sudan's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology as a quality promotion and innovation inspector.

Since the repatriation programme began in December 2005, UNHCR has helped over 140,000 Sudanese come home. Tens of thousands of other refugees have returned to Sudan on their own.

Many like Racheal have come back with a variety of skills and experience that will be vital in rehabilitating southern Sudan's devastated economy and reconstructing its society.

Racheal hopes that Sudanese girls and young women will learn from her example and complete their formal education before getting married.

“When I was a teacher in the refugee camp, I always advised the girls to

concentrate on their studies rather than think about marriage,” said Racheal, who is single. “I want them to participate equally in the development of our young nation.”

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement has adopted a 25 per cent quota for female representation within the party and at the regional, state and local levels of government. Achieving that goal is a top priority for Racheal.

So too is the reduction of illiteracy among Southern Sudanese women, which has been estimated at 88 per cent by the UN Population Fund. “My ambition is for the post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement generation to get quality education,” she said. “This needs a lot of work from all the stakeholders so that together we shall eliminate illiteracy in southern Sudan.”

As a young person who spent most of her life outside her native land, Racheal is delighted to be living once again in Sudan. “There is no place like home, no matter how bad it may look to other people,” she said. “I was forced out only because of the conflict, and now that peace has come I am happy to be back home after 16 years in exile.” ■

*Story and photo by
Emmanuel Kenyi*

EVERYWHERE A MINE

Residents of Kurmuk, Blue Nile State, can now travel without fear to previously cut-off villages and seek precious water on once hazardous grounds.

The more ambitious have even built 200 new houses on the 150,000 square metres of minefields cleared by the Pakistani Demining Company since it arrived there in 2006.

But confronting the all-pervasive danger of unbidden explosions to clear the area – big enough for about 1,500 dwellings – has come at a price for the daring deminers.

For even compared to other military tasks, demining remains one of the most risky. And in their line of soldiering, a well-remembered professional maxim warns that “One’s First Mistake is the Last”.

The first mistake – which in this particular incident could have been due to a split-second of absent-mindedness – occurred on 21 November 2007. An explosion flashed into a blinding swirl of shrapnel, stinging cordite, smoke and clouds of dust.

When all was clear, a dazed Pte. Aftab Ahmed lay in agony, bleeding profusely. By the time an earnest, but very cautious procedure had moved him to safe ground for medical attention, it was clear that his left leg had been blown off.

The only other serious casualty was Pte. Dilawer Ali, who could have died on 26 January 2009, but for the first-class protective gear on his body at the time of the accident. Under the sweltering sun, he was enveloped in more than 10 kilograms of mandatory, cumbersome, personal protective equipment.

The bulky gear includes a face visor plus upper and lower protective vests. The heat seemed to approach sauna proportions, but bit by bit Pte. Dilawer inched on, warily gnawing off clods of earth, marking off cleared ground. When it happened ... he had no idea what hit him.

Regaining consciousness, Pte. Dilawer knew he would most likely have been dead without his vests and armour-glass visor. The head and chest injuries he had sustained were from the knock-on concussion and spillover debris.

Despite praise from senior area leaders and UNMIS officials, some local people think demining work in Kurmuk County is taking much too long to finish. But the deminers believe there are no quick-fixes to this extensive problem.

The very safety concerns demanded by their daring calling, coupled with the forbidding peculiarities of the Kurmuk

environment, are the biggest hindrance to speedy progress.

“One’s speed should be judged against the unique conditions, like weather and soil, of a given place,” according to demining Capt. Zulfiqar Ali.

Some of Kurmuk’s minefields are as old as 20 years, yet there are no records or maps of their layout, noted demining commander Col. Tariq Saeed. Moreover, one type of mine prevalent in the area is the PRBM 35, which is encased in plastic and almost impossible to trace with a mine detector.

“So you have to literally hunt for the mines. This renders every inch of ground potentially dangerous,” said Lt. Col. Saeed. “You must go every inch with great caution ... It’s trying and tiresome ... very painstaking and dangerous.”

Another hindrance is the state of Kurmuk soil, which is heavily contaminated with metallic litter, mainly spent ammunition cartridges.

Matters are also critically complicated by humanitarian, as opposed to military, ends of the company’s demining mission.

According to the commander, demining during military operations must adhere to tight timing for prompt troop maneuvering. “During battle ... you take the requisite degree of risk to facilitate prompt contact with the enemy; thus area clearance is not a priority. The intent is to make a quick breach into the minefield,” Lt. Col. Saeed said.

De-mining for humanitarian causes is different, as it must be a thorough and even more demanding affair. “In humanitarian demining, the time factor is not as important as the thoroughness of the job. It is the safety of the civilian population, who will later on use the cleared area, which is of paramount importance,” said Lt. Col. Saeed.

The deminers were also slowed down by Kurmuk weather and soil texture, which are largely heavy cotton blacks or clay. Sunshine quickly bakes

them rock-hard and dangerously hard to prod into. Often, water is poured on designated patches to soften the soil prior to demining.

With these obstacles, and given the mine threat remaining, there is still demining work to do. Luckily, although the volunteer Pakistani Company is scaling down its operations in Kurmuk, the UN-contracted commercial demining company RONCO will continue the clearance. ■

Maj. Okei Rukogota
Photos: UNMIS Military



Mine victim Teresa Laa Awang



Kurmuk deminers



Deminer probing soil in Kurmuk

NEWS BRIEFS

Priority landmine clearance starts

At the request of UNMIS, the United Nations Mine Action Office (UNMAO) launched mine-clearing operations in the strategically located Blue Nile state town of Ullu at the end of May only days after the Pakistani Demining Company handed over a mine-free area in the town of Kurmuk.

Ullu has been paying a steep price for the long civil war fought by the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudan Armed Forces. Both sides planted mines around Ullu, which has impeded the return of about 5,000 people to the area.

"People have to cross minefields to collect firewood, to access agricultural land or even just for sanitary purposes," said Steven Davies, UNMAO operations officer in the Blue Nile state capital of Ed Damazin. "As long as these mines are here, no development will be possible."

Working under a contract with UNMAO, the Washington-based RONCO Consulting Corporation has identified four minefields studded with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, booby traps and cluster munitions. UNMIS has designated Ullu as a high-priority area for humanitarian demining operations, and the first phase of the project is scheduled to be completed by next October.

Another densely mined area in Blue Nile is around Kurmuk, where the Pakistani Demining Company delivered a cleared stretch of land to the county commissioner on 19 May. A total of 170 mines and 35 pieces of unexploded ordnance have been found and destroyed in a 150,000 square metre area since 2006.

SRSG Qazi concerned over the increase in tribal conflict

The violent clashes in Upper Nile and Jonglei states that have killed hundreds of civilians and displaced thousands more are a major cause for concern, said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Sudan, Ashraf Qazi, at the end of a two-day visit to southern Sudan in late May.

He urged the international community to work with regional and local actors and address the situation as an utmost priority. "A secure environment is extremely important for the conduct of elections and the referendum," he added.

Mr. Qazi met with political and military leaders in the cities of Malakal, Bor and Pibor to discuss the recent fighting in the area and analyze issues pertaining to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Both governors of Jonglei and Upper Nile states have acknowledged the major role played by UNMIS in defusing tensions between rival tribes through the establishment of two temporary operating bases last month. The bases are located in Akobo and Pibor counties and are staffed by 120 military, police and civilian personnel. The SRSG also underscored the importance of enabling state authorities to draft and implement their own stabilisation plans.

UNMIS urges Juba government to halt demolitions

Concerned about the ongoing demolition of homes in Juba by the Government of Central Equatoria State (CES), UNMIS called on state authorities to halt the operation on 25 May.

Over 30,000 people have been left homeless in the regional capital since the demolitions began earlier this year, and many of the affected residents are internally displaced persons. Large numbers are living in poor sanitary conditions, and UNMIS urged CES and Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) officials to provide alternative land sites, adequate housing, access to basic services, and compensation to residents who were targeted by the bulldozers.

UNMIS criticized the demolitions as being inconsistent with southern Sudanese law and international human rights standards that recommend consultation with impacted communities, prior notification and publication of the eviction exercise within a reasonable period of time, and the legal option of appealing an eviction order. Observers fear there may be a further deterioration in the living conditions of the homeless with the onset of the rainy season.

First DDR programme in southern Sudan is launched

The demobilisation of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) combatants in southern Sudan was launched in the regional capital of Juba on 10 June under the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme. Some 35,000 SPLA combatants are expected to be demobilised during the first phase of this operation.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by GoSS Cabinet Affairs Minister Luka Monoja, the UN Deputy Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Southern Sudan Lise Grande, senior Sudanese government officials and representatives of the diplomatic community.

"The United Nations is happy and enthusiastic to support DDR, and as we celebrate the first phase we need to keep our eyes on future phases," said Grande. "We don't want to lose sight of the fact that DDR is one of the many components of the peace process. Its success depends also on the achievements of all of the other benchmarks of the CPA."

A dozen SPLA troops were demobilised at the inaugural ceremony including Captain Caroline Timon Lohure Lomiang, a mother of four who is also pursuing a degree in community development at Juba University. "It is time we use our experiences to show our people the right way to go in order to build our young nation and bring up better children to take over from us tomorrow," she told reporters at the event.



