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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Special Focus: ENVIRONMENT
Undoing the damage

Hitting the books
Sugar on the Nile

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Diary

2 September: More than 50 people were killed and many more injured in the remote Northern Darfur village of Tabarat, after an unidentified armed group attacked a marketplace.

2 September: Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) soldiers in Malakal completed a three-week basic first aid course organized by UNMIS' Indian Field Hospital to assist the unit in treating wounded or injured colleagues in the field.

3 September: UNMIS HIV/AIDS unit concluded a 10-day training session on awareness of the pandemic in Wau, drawing participants from UNMIS area military contingents, the locally based Joint Integrated Unit (JIU), Western Bahr El-Ghazal State AIDS Commission and civilian UNMIS staff.

9 September: UNMIS Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Gressly inaugurated the mission's new office in Kuajok, Warrap State, which will work closely with referenda support bases to be established in the state.

15 September: The UN Security Council called on all parties to take urgent action to ensure that next January's referenda were peaceful and held on time, acknowledging that Sudan was in a critical period preparing for the final stage of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Two days later, human rights expert Mohamed Chande Othman told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that it was the Sudanese government's duty to ensure that the referenda processes were free of fear and intimidation.

20 September: A committee involving the United Nations produced a preliminary draft peace document aimed at ending the Darfur conflict, based on peace agreements signed earlier by the government and the Justice and Equality Movement and the Liberation and Justice Movement, along with recommendations from civil society conferences and consultations.

21 September: UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon appointed the members of an independent UN panel to monitor Sudan's referenda on the self-determination of Southern Sudan and the Abyei Area. Former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa will head the panel, while former Portuguese Foreign Minister Antonio Monteiro and former Nepalese Election Commission Chairman Bhojraj Pokharel will serve as the other two members.

22 September: The United Nations would assist the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) with technical advice and logistical support, including delivery of about 120 tons of referenda materials to remote locations, said Denis Kadima, Director of the UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division, during his first press conference at UNMIS Headquarters in Khartoum.

22 September: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and First Vice-President of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir held discussions at UN Headquarters in New York on the upcoming referenda. Mr. Ban expressed concern that the Abyei Referendum Commission was yet to be established.

24 September: While renewing their commitments to peace in Sudan, delegations meeting on the margins of the UN General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on Sudan in New York -- also attended by Sudanese First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Second Vice-President Ali Osman Taha -- noted delays in referenda preparations. They called for the establishment of the Abyei Referendum Commission and acceleration of the SSRC's work.

25 September: During their meeting at UN Headquarters in New York, Sudan's second Vice-President Ali Osman Taha and UNSG Ban agreed on the need for a fair, timely and credible poll, free from intimidation and violence. Addressing the UN General Assembly two days later, Mr. Taha said the referendum would be free and transparent.

1 October: The UN Human Rights Council at its 15th regular session renewed the mandate of Mohamed Chande Othman, independent expert on human rights in Sudan, for one year.

7 October: A Hungarian civilian staff member serving with the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was abducted from his residence in El Fasher, North Darfur, by three gunmen. As *In Sudan* went to print, UNAMID and the Sudanese authorities were searching for the missing staff member.

9 October: The UN Security Council concluded its four-day visit to the country after meeting Sudanese political leaders, UN representatives and members of civil society groups and the humanitarian community in Juba, El Fasher and Khartoum. The delegation reiterated its support for Sudan's referenda, calling for a peaceful, stable and timely process.

FRONT COVER: Lush greenery around Luri town, Central Equatoria State. UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

BACK COVER: Anyieth Manyang D'Awol displaying Roots project jewelry. UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

Undoing the damage

An estimated 2,000 trees were felled in 2008 during the construction of a road from the Western Equatoria State capital of Yambio to the community of Faragsika.

Having funded that project, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) launched a campaign last August in conjunction with the state government's agriculture ministry to undo its environmental damage by planting trees near and along the route.

Dubbed the "cut one, plant five" scheme, the reforestation project has been budgeted at \$30,000 and will plant teak, mahogany, palm and fruit trees in Yambio, Ibba and Maridi counties.

state are designated as forest reserves, but illegal logging has flourished in recent years owing to a lack of active forest management practices and regulatory legislation.

The problem is not confined to Western Equatoria. A 2007 report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) found that Sudan lost almost 12 per cent of its forest cover between 1990 and 2005. The country's 10 southern states had lost about 40 per cent of their forests since the country gained its independence in 1956.

Local residents have welcomed the UNOPS-backed campaign.

"This reforestation project team will not have a hard time in mobilizing the

the planting of trees on privately owned land as well. "It would be appreciated if individual families can be involved in planting trees in their various plots," he said.

Complementary efforts

In a separate initiative sponsored by the Western Equatoria government, an additional 28,000 trees will be planted around schools, clinics and churches in six of the state's 10 counties, according to forestry director Johnson Ezibon Lagure of the state government's Ministry of Agriculture.

"The state ministry of agriculture has 7,500 seedlings that are awaiting the next planting season," he said.

The Government of Southern Sudan's newly formed Ministry of Environment is expected to soon submit an Environmental Policy and Protection Bill to the regional parliament.

Two privately owned timber companies are currently replenishing their own plantation reserves.

Under their concession contracts, the Equatoria Teak and Blue Lake companies must plant the same number of trees they harvest from their reserves. To date, Equatoria Teak has replanted teak trees in 110 hectares of land.

UNOPS expects to hand over the "cut one, plant five" scheme to the state Ministry

of Physical Infrastructure and the regional government's Ministry of Transport and Roads in April 2011.

"If this project is implemented according to the project details, we shall start to feel the beauty of this road in the next five to 10 years," said Yambio resident Apai Kent. "This will make the initiative meaningful." ■

Story and photo:
Paiyo Charles Angelo



Workers weeding seedlings in reforestation project near Yambio, Western Equatoria State.

"The need for reforestation was expressed by stakeholders who decried the destruction of heritage trees during the road construction," said UNOPS Environmental and Social Specialist Betty Ddungu.

Arguably the greenest corner of Southern Sudan with its proximity to the Congo River basin's rain forest, Western Equatoria State has been host to plantations of teak and mahogany trees since the 1940s.

About 660,000 hectares of land in the

community and involving them in this programme," said Anthony Surur, a student from the Western Equatoria town of Nzara.

In addition to boosting the state's forest cover, the "cut one, plant five" project will reduce dust levels and promote environmental awareness among many state residents, said Ms. Ddungu of UNOPS.

UNOPS will supervise the project and provide technical support during its initial nine months of operations.

Mr. Surur urged UNOPS to encourage

The meat business

On a sweltering day in Malakal, a loud, buzzing sound fills the air, reminiscent of a *vuvuzela* (horn) blowing at the 2010 South Africa World Cup.

But the sound has nothing to do with a football match. It emanates from numerous swarms of flies at the Upper Nile State abattoir in Malakal's Hai Saha neighbourhood.

Butcher Awath Abdallah described the slaughter yard as "sickening", adding that it failed to meet basic health requirements. "The yard itself is never cleaned and the waste remains spread all over the compound."

Established in 1930, the Malakal abattoir was built during colonial times and still operates using outdated and primitive facilities.

Originally, the Hai Saha yard was two kilometres away from Malakal town. But the city has grown over the years and residents now surround the abattoir.

The yard lacks mechanization, separate sections for different meats, a refrigeration area to keep meat fresh, covered vehicles to transport products and a proper waste management system.

Disposal of slaughtered animal innards is also a challenge. Waste is ferried by a small one-carriage tractor that has seen better days.

Located on the eastern side of the Upper Nile State capital, the dumping area is reached by a pothole-ridden road that becomes impassable during the rainy season. When the waste-hauling tractor breaks down, residents are left to battle with the rancid stink.

The chief of Hai Saha said residents had met last year with Malakal County former Commissioner Chan Aleki Amaikuei, who promised to move the yard to an area south of the town.

"The people in Hai Saha just want the slaughter yard moved out from their

residential area," said County Health Director William Apar Odhok Makal. "We are working hard to make sure it happens sooner (rather) than later."

As Southern Sudan has emerged from a two-decade civil war, upgrading its abattoirs has been low on its priority list. But government efforts are underway, according to Public Health Inspector Paulino Onyaw Mayik.

"We have presented a proposal to construct a new slaughterhouse," he said. "The budget is \$2 million. This amount includes a two-kilometre paved road to the new slaughterhouse."

In the meantime, health officials presented a \$400,000 budget for temporary improvements to the existing facility, the inspector added.

Illegal butchers

In the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba, abattoirs operating under deplorable conditions are also thriving, despite the existence of three government-run slaughter yards and concerted official efforts to end the practice.

"Most illegal butchers slaughter their cattle before the crack of dawn to avert supervision by veterinary doctors," said Juba *payam* (township) Public Health Inspector Kalisto Tombe.

The butchers slaughter their animals on open ground in residential areas and supply unhygienic meat to unsuspecting buyers, the inspector said.

Due to the absence of pit latrines, residents often use these areas as toilets. The butchers use hoes and rakes to push human waste aside and then slaughter the cattle there, said Acting Director General of Central Equatoria State Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries Francis Soma Wani.

UNMIS Human Rights Office Assistant Lucy Gordon lives close to an illegal slaughter area in Juba's Munuki payam.

"We are struggling with the bad smell," Ms. Gordon said. "When the thick, shocking stench enters your nostrils, you feel like vomiting. Nowadays, we only eat inside."

Some tenants have opted to leave the area to escape the stink, said Ms. Gordon. "It would be better to quit the area. Unfortunately, I have nowhere to go."

In Hai Seminary, resident Samuel Kulyoko suffers the same fate. "The slaughterers lay the meat on already decaying hides they removed from carcasses weeks before."

In addition to unhygienic meat, abandoned animal parts invite other health hazards.

"The hooves, horns, blood, and the cow dung, left to pile up and rot, produce a terrible stench that invites dogs, vultures and disease-causing vectors like flies," said Mr. Kulyoko.

In Juba *Payam*, 19 *boma* (area) councils were established to monitor and inform the local administration about any illegal animal-slaughter practices in the area, said Mr. Tombe.

"If a person illegally slaughters a cow, we call a veterinary doctor to examine the meat," he said. "If it is proven harmful, we burn it without any compensation. However, if it is okay, the owner can sell it."

The owner of damaged meat is also fined 2,000 Sudanese pounds (\$847).

According to Juba butcher Mortada Said, government health officials inspect meat in the market every morning. "The meat we sell is clean and fresh. If they check the meat and find no stamp on it, they collect the meat and burn it." ■

Francis Shuei Diu and James Sokiri

Blood flowing and mixing with animal remains at Malakal slaughter yard. Photo: UNMIS/Francis Shuei Diu.



Horns and hooves piled up behind Libya market in Juba. Photo: UNMIS/James Sokiri.



A culture of clean

While many struggling areas of Southern Sudan focus on vital needs like food, shelter and health, residents of Wau have made cleanliness one of their top priorities.

The second largest town in the south, the Western Bahr El-Ghazal State capital is renowned for being the cleanest city in the region.

"Cleaning is automatic for us and we do not need someone to tell us that we should clean," said Natalina Wadarif, an official in the state Ministry of Health. If there is rubbish around a house in Wau, the residents cannot be indigenous to the area, she said.

"When I arrived in this town for the first time, I discovered that the people are well-organized and concerned about cleanliness," said Ibrahim Ali, a trader from Nyala in Southern Darfur State.

"After visiting most of the towns in Southern Sudan, I became proud of Wau, my home town, for its structure and cleanliness," Ms. Wadarif said.

Efforts to stay clean also focus on personal hygiene, according to Nurse Regina Bawila. "Hygiene in Wau Town is almost 100 per cent."

Cleanliness in Wau starts with bathing twice a day, dressing neatly and cleaning around the home and business areas.

"It was our duty to clean the house every morning and evening when we were children," said Nurse Bawila, who still remembers how they used to sweep the path leading to their home without leaving

any footprints.

In August, Wau County Commissioner Luka Anthony Ubur issued a local order for the cleaning of Wau Town. The edict has been remarkably successful in the town, as residents have a positive attitude towards cleaning, Mr. Ubur said.

"It's our culture that people should be clean, including in their houses," he said.

Residents have not only taken to scouring their homesteads but cleaning

commissioner's order.

Public Health Officer Angelo Dunia William said the town was divided into north and south for cleaning purposes. County authorities had formed committees in all areas of the city to ease the cleaning campaign.

"We use local media like Wau Radio to create awareness among the citizens of Wau town," said Mr. Dunia.

Jointly, the county and state authorities have developed a programme to clean the city three times a month on Tuesdays.

Ongoing efforts

Commissioner Ubur said residents had begun to burn their rubbish after he issued an order banning the dumping of garbage all over town. Furthermore, county public health officers were now visiting government institutions, hotels and public places every Tuesday to follow up the ongoing cleaning.

In collaboration with a company hired to clean the three markets of Jau, El-Hajar and Wau, they had also identified areas outside town for garbage

disposal.

To reduce dust levels, Governor Hassan has declared that roads in town would be paved.

"We have already contracted Eyat Roads and Bridges Company to construct 20 kilometres of tarmac road inside Wau town," he said.

But no place is perfect. Acknowledging that the town was well planned, Darfuri trader Ali felt its drainage system could be upgraded and modernized. ■

Story and photos: Michael Wondi



Wau County Commission inspecting clearance along main street leading from Wau Airport.

"Hygiene in Wau Town is almost 100 per cent."

areas adjacent to their houses, he said, making the town more attractive.

"I am very much impressed by the Commissioner's order for the cleaning of Wau Town," said Stanslaus Bilal, of the city's Hai Salam neighbourhood.

State Governor Brig. Rizik Zakaria Hassan formed a supervisory committee to monitor implementation of the

Meticulously clean streets at Wau (right) and Jau markets (left).



The urban waste burden



Trucks dump 3,000 tons of waste daily at Khartoum landfills. Photo: UNMIS/Eszter Farkas.

Piles of abandoned household waste and countless plastic bags littering the streets of Sudan's bigger towns present a common eyesore.

"With rapid urbanization and changing consumption patterns, solid waste management has become a major challenge in most urban centres in Sudan," states a 2009 study by environmental expert Sumaia Elsayed.

Although the existing legal framework, including the 2001 Environmental Protection Act and the 2005 Interim Constitution, provides guidelines for garbage management, the "dirty work" is left up to state and municipal authorities, who often lack sufficient funds and an integrated approach, according to

environmental experts.

In Khartoum State, garbage collection, transportation and dumping is carried out by the Solid Waste Management Coordination Administration, a public corporation that evolved from the Khartoum Cleaning Up Project, which was launched in 2001.

The company now owns 600 vehicles, which collect solid waste from Khartoum's neighbourhoods three times per week and dump it in landfills, a service costing each household 7 Sudanese pounds (\$3) a month. Dwellers complain, however, that collection is irregular and insufficient.

Financial issues hinder more effective garbage collection in the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal. Instead of a needed five trucks, three vehicles struggle to serve the population of about 126,000.

Malakal's streets and canals were trash-strewn before the service was put in place about seven years ago. "At that time, the environment was unhealthy and people started to suffer various diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea," said Matthew Chol, director general of the state's Public Corporation for Sanitation and

Environmental Health.

But the service only collects about nine tons of waste per week (compared to 10,000 tons, for example, in Khartoum). The town looks cleaner now, but the trucks are presently able to serve only the main road of Malakal and its surroundings.

Garbage collection fails to reach the home of resident Angelina Jeremiah, although for 15 Sudanese pounds (\$6) per month it is picked up from her restaurant at the town's main market, which is cleaned every day.

Down in the dumps

Indiscriminate waste dumping was another concern in Khartoum, said Mamoun Abdelgadir, environmental affairs director at the federal Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Physical Development.

"We have seen medical waste in so many dumping areas," Mr. Abdelgadir said, adding that hazardous and medical waste was often disposed of with regular household garbage.

The Jebel Abu-alaulad dumping site, one of Khartoum's three landfill areas, receives about 3,000 tons of waste each day from Omdurman town alone, where it is located. Lacking household sorting, all trash is dumped together there, including organic waste, plastic, metal and paper.

"Reduce, reuse and recycle", the three pillars of green thinking, have so far been minimally followed in Sudan.

New garbage sorting facility under construction in Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Eszter Farkas.





Malakal street benefiting from garbage collection. Photo: UNMIS/Imelda Tjahja.

“Reduce, reuse and recycle”



Garbage truck performing its duty in Malakal. Photo: UNMIS/Imelda Tjahja.

Some small companies reuse waste by purchasing it from merchants, who commission young people to collect garbage from streets, said Khaled Shambool, director of the Department of Awareness and Planning at the Khartoum State Ministry of Environment and Water Utilities.

Plastic bottles are ground to powder by home-manufactured mills, then melted into plastic chairs and tables seen around town.

Realizing the potential in recycling, a private-public facility has been constructed at Jebel Abu-alaulad and is expected to start sorting reusable solid waste in November 2010. Energy production using methane gas captured from organic waste

is also being planned.

To lessen harmful practices, an ad hoc committee was set up in January 2010, which stresses the importance of a coordinated waste management strategy, proper procedures for handling hazardous materials and safe waste disposal.

“Working in the environment taught me that you cannot reproach anyone (for their practices) but you have to tell them about the environment,” concluded Mr. Shambool, emphasizing the need for awareness raising.

As a first step, the state ministry engaged students in about 200 schools through drama focusing on environmental

protection, and a statewide school play competition is planned for November 2010.

To strengthen hygiene, public health offices have been set up in Malakal County, where the government is cooperating with Southern Sudan Radio to create health awareness programmes. ■

Eszter Farkas
with input from Imelda Tjahja

UNMIS pioneer in environmental works

For pioneering work in minimizing the mission's environmental footprint, the UNMIS environmental engineering team was nominated as one of the three finalists for the UN21 awards in July 2010.

“(The nomination is a) clear recognition of the work and the importance of the ‘Greening Peacekeeping’ initiative,” said Joel Cohen, executive officer of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ Department of Field Support (DFS), in his congratulatory note.

The work, initiated by Environmental Engineer Fernando Gryzbowski, started with an Environmental Management System and action plan in 2008, tackling issues like waste management, natural resource and energy conservation, and water and soil contamination.

The goal was to integrate environmental considerations in planning and operations to minimize the impact of the mission and its staff.

A base-line study identified waste disposal as the main problem in all UNMIS sectors. Landfills had been inappropriately designed or secured, for instance, affecting the health of staff and the local population.

Another 2008 study showed that the entire mission generated 17,000 kilograms of solid waste per day, or about 6,000 tons per year. To lessen harmful effects, a mission-wide waste disposal system was established in 2009, comprising sanitary landfills, recycling and hazardous waste storage as well as treatment.

A waste water system was also put in place for all mission locations. Out of 50 planned treatment plants, 39 are now operational, allowing treated water to be used for the greening of compounds or car washing.

As part of the “Peacekeeping Goes Green” initiative, a collaboration



Garden that received treated water at UNMIS, El Obeid. Photo: UNMIS.

between Sweden and DFS, a pilot project was started in 2008 with two sustainable prefabricated units. These aim at energy conservation, waste and water reduction using devices like solar panels and rainwater tanks.

UN21 Awards is an internal UN award “to recognize outstanding initiatives by individual staff members or teams to improve the delivery of the Organization's programmes and services.”

Town under water

When the rains gathered force last September, Aluot Deng Ngor collected her five grandchildren and headed for higher ground to escape the floods.

"This is the heaviest rainy season I have ever witnessed in my life," said the 56-year-old resident of Aweil, capital of Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State.

Standing outside her hastily built, makeshift shelter on the main road from Aweil to Wau, the distraught grandmother said she had lost everything in her home. "Now I have nothing to feed the children."

Ms. Ngor's family is one of hundreds displaced after recent flooding in Aweil. Rising waters have caused massive devastation, destroying livelihoods and displacing thousands, according to state officials.

"Though we are still assessing the damage, destruction is estimated at 90 per cent of the Aweil (town) population," noted State Minister for Physical Infrastructure Peter Kuot Jel, who also serves as head of the Flood Risk and Disaster Management Committee.

At least three people were reportedly killed by the floods and many are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases.

"Many people have been admitted to health centres because of diarrhoea and (other) waterborne diseases associated with the floods," said State Ministry of Health Director General Dr. Edward Ayong Abiai.

Aweil Hospital Director General Dr. Garang Thomas Dhel also confirmed an increase in the number of outpatients visiting the hospital due to the floods.

"We have received many patients with diseases like malaria, typhoid and diarrhoea," said Dr. Dhel. "At this stage, we haven't seen cases of cholera, but we don't know what will happen next." (As In Sudan went to print, no cholera cases had been reported.)

He added that hospital medical supplies were stretched and might be inadequate to meet growing demand.

An estimated 48,000 houses have also been damaged, displacing an estimated 390,000 residents, according to Minister Jel. "We have identified three sites to relocate people whose houses have collapsed and are now living on the roadside."

Escaping the floods in Aweil.



The Flood Risk and Disaster Management Committee has relocated 283 households to higher ground within the town and distributed 500 sacks of cereals to flood survivors. Another 4,000 households will need food aid for 60 days.

Humanitarian agencies are also assisting the flood survivors.

In the flood path

Recurrent flooding in Aweil is aggravated by a poor drainage system and its three rivers -- Kuom, Wakabil and Aluel -- which often overflow their banks during the rainy season and pour into the city.

Some residents have proposed that the town be moved from its current swampy location, but others disagree. "It is unrealistic to move Aweil from its current location to a hilly area," said Dr. Abiai of the health ministry. "What we need is to construct a proper drainage system to

mitigate the problem."

Teacher Madute Akuol complained that no attempt had been made to construct a proper drainage system, despite annual flooding. In 2008, floods displaced about 40,000 people in the state.

Minister Jel, however, said efforts were underway to improve drainage and encourage a more effective flow of water. "Though the ministry lacks machinery, we have liaised with construction companies to help us with excavators and hire some from traders in town. With those machines, we dug a drainage channel of about seven kilometres long to the lowland."

The Flood Risk and Disaster Management Committee has also proposed the construction of a 6.8-kilometre canal to divert the waters of Aluel River to Kuom River and block all Kuom channels bringing water to Aweil town. It will also dredge Kuom and Wakabil rivers to ensure more water flow into the lowlands.

In the long term, the committee has suggested the construction of a 14-kilometre canal within Aweil town residential areas to divert overflow of water to lowlands and open up reservoirs to channel water to other places.

The canal project will cost some 15 million Sudanese pounds (\$6.4 million).

The flood committee is also encouraging residents to dig water drains in their home areas. ■



Flooded tukuls in Aweil.

Story and photos:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos

Hitting the books



Paul Pita Moga attending class during DDR training programme in Juba.

The topic of today's class on the blackboard reads "Subtraction", and students are diligently scribbling down numbers and symbols in their exercise books.

These are no ordinary pupils. They are ex-combatants who have turned in their weapons and want to make a fresh start in their lives. Most appear to be much older than the children you would expect to see in an arithmetic class.

These former soldiers have entered a programme led by the Southern Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, which has received funding from international donors and technical assistance from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to help ease their transition from military to civilian life.

Currently in the last phases of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme, these ex-combatants are receiving vocational training and educational instruction from the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) agency in Central Equatoria and Lakes states.

The training lasts three months, and students can choose from a variety of courses ranging from agriculture and computer literacy to English and child education.

For some ex-combatants, the GTZ programme represents their first-ever

exposure to a classroom.

"I come from a place where we keep cows," said Paul Pita Moga, who never learned to read or write as a child. "I didn't know anything except fighting."

enrolment test scores caught the eyes of GTZ staff members in charge of training courses, and they invited him to teach the adult numeracy and literacy classes on offer in Juba.

Choosing a new path

Almost 3,200 participants have entered the reintegration process in Blue Nile State since its launch in February 2009. After information sessions and counseling about reintegration opportunities, ex-combatants can choose from packages focused on small business start-up, agriculture or vocational training.

When Aziza Mohamed was 19 years old, she sold tahini (sesame paste). Seeking financial stability, she then joined the Popular Defense Forces, where she served for the next 20 years during Sudan's civil war.

In March 2009, Ms. Mohamed was demobilized and later entered the reintegration programme, choosing training in cattle rearing.

"I would like to make available in our local market the products from my cattle, which I think benefits my community," Ms. Mohamed said about her goals.

Amir Mohammed was 26 years old when he entered the war as a Sudan Armed Forces soldier. After the war ended, he tried to support his wife and six children ferrying goods on a donkey cart, which earned him around 7 SDG (\$3) per day.

When Mr. Mohammed was demobilized in February 2009, he chose to train in small business startup. Now he manages a small commodity shop in Ed Damazin.

"My life is better than before, stable, happy and I am able to cover the daily needs of my family," Mr. Mohammed said, claiming that he now earned an average of 40 SDG (\$17) per day.

He registered with GTZ last June and opted for the small business training. He runs a small fruit and vegetable stall in Juba that generates a monthly income of 300 Sudanese pounds (\$127).

Originally from the Central Equatoria State town of Mangalla, Mr. Moga had to move to the regional capital of Juba to enrol in the programme.

He is doing well in the mathematics course but acknowledges he may be too old to master a new language like English.

Other ex-combatants bring considerably more capacity to the reintegration phase of the DDR programme.

Morris Nyerji Ruben was a certified teacher and school headmaster when he joined the ranks of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in 1987. His

Those teaching duties are bringing in some additional income to Mr. Ruben, and he is also taking a computer skills training course on the side. He called upon all of his former comrades to sign up for the DDR programme.

"If they stay at home without knowing about the DDR programme, there is a chance that in the future they may be forgotten by the government," he said. "Then he or she may not feel at ease in his home community (when) they see their former colleagues earning money."

Besides Lakes and Central Equatoria states, reintegration of ex-combatants is underway in Western Equatoria, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Western Bahr El-Ghazal and Warrap states in Southern Sudan, and in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states in North Sudan.

Demobilization commenced this month in Eastern Equatoria State. ■

Story and photos:
Katerina Nezhelskaya

UNDP

From the ashes of war

When Fergus Boyle journeyed to the town of Kuajok in 2006, it seemed little changed from the war-ravaged outpost he first visited in the mid-1990s as a staff member of the non-governmental organization Save the Children.

Mr. Boyle was an UNMIS child protection advisor based in Wau when he returned to the Warrap state capital four years ago to prepare for a scheduled visit by the Government of Southern Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit.

Among the few permanent structures then standing, school buildings near the town's Roman Catholic church where Gen. Kiir had once attended classes as a teenager had been taken over by the recently installed state government.

"They had done up the buildings to give

the main road to Wau, Kuajok is studded with new buildings topped by freshly painted corrugated metal roofs housing government ministries, state police headquarters, Southern Sudan Radio and other public sector offices.

Conservative estimates of Kuajok's population start at 100,000. The cityscape is a distinctive blend of the urban and the rural, with grazing goats, neem trees and fields of *durra* (sorghum) interspersed among whitewashed store fronts and cellphone network relay towers.

An airstrip was recently completed on the town's outskirts, and the foundations have been laid for the largest community hospital in the greater Bahr El Ghazal region.

"We are keen to make Kuajok the best city in Southern Sudan," said State Governor Nyandeng Malek Dielic. "It has a

overnight.

"The town began to expand," said Warrap State Minister of Information Anai Mangong Awai. "It has changed drastically, and for the better."

The city still lacks some basic services. There is no sewage system or municipal water supply, and only those residents who can afford a generator can enjoy the benefits of electricity.

"The number one problem is food," said Warrap State Legislative Assembly member Gavino Kiir Madut. "Our markets lack vegetables, and some people eat only once a day."

But Kuajok has come a long way since the days when it was an isolated garrison town for the SAF on the road from Wau to the Warrap town of Gogrial.

Just ask Fergus Boyle, a native of Scotland whose family's roots in the area



Aerial view of Kuajok town. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

the governor an office," recalled Mr. Boyle, who moved to Kuajok in July to assume his new duties as UNMIS state coordinator in Warrap. "Kuajok was just a collection of haphazardly scattered *tukuls* (conically shaped mud and grass huts), and it hadn't really taken off at that point."

Kuajok has mushroomed as a city since then, now ranking alongside Juba as one of Southern Sudan's fastest growing capitals.

Laid out on an orderly grid west of

bright future because of its people."

Kuajok was one of the few towns in Warrap State under control of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) during the country's second civil war, and it remained a sleepy backwater in the years immediately following the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

But a decision by the state legislative assembly in 2007 to ratify Kuajok's status as the de facto state capital instead of the town of Warrap altered its fortunes

go back to the 1940s and early 1950s, when his father Randal served as an assistant district commissioner in Gogrial during the waning years of British rule.

"They've built a whole new town from the bush," noted Mr. Boyle. "People feel it's a symbol for some of the hopes people have for the south -- to build a new life from the ashes of war." ■

Joseph Contreras

The mud of Malakal



Malakal road during rainy season.

The onset of the rainy season is a welcome event for farmers in Upper Nile State. But for minibus taxi drivers and other motorists in the state capital of Malakal, it can be a curse.

The clay soil of the city and environs has poor drainage and turns slick, sticky and heavy when the skies open up. Not only is Malakal transformed into one big mud bowl, but the roads leading out of the city are soon rendered impassable.

That cuts into the monthly income of Malakal taxi driver Famed John, who must forego the more lucrative fares he charges for out-of-town trips during the rainy season and settle for the one-pound per passenger rides in and around the city.

"Our income decreases during the rainy season because we are unable to drive passengers outside Malakal," he said. "We limit ourselves within the town because of the road conditions."

His colleague Simon Red dreads the effects of precipitation on grounds of safety. "The roads are very slippery," said the veteran taxi driver. "It can cause an accident if we cannot control our (steering) wheel."

During this time of year, the only options available to Malakal residents wishing to get out of town are the Nile River or a sturdy pair of legs.

"If the (destination) is by the river,

such as Doleib Hill, I can go by boat," said journalist Andrew Bang of the Upper Nile State Ministry of Information and Communication. "Otherwise I have to walk, no matter how far the place is."

Kun Minylang Ding has heard it all before. As the Upper Nile State Minister of Physical Infrastructure, Mr. Ding is the point man in the cabinet of Governor Simon Kun Puoch for road conditions in the area.

But relief is on the way for the long-suffering denizens of Malakal. According to the minister, five of the city's 67 kilometres of dirt streets will be paved with funds donated by the national government in Khartoum.

A feasibility study by the China Sinohydro Corporation is underway and should be submitted to the minister during the course of September.

The actual paving is scheduled to start with the arrival of the dry season, which begins in the final weeks of the year.

"We plan to change Malakal to be a better town," said Mr. Ding. "I assure you that, after the rainy season, you will see (it) with your own eyes."

The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has promised the minister another \$600,000 for additional street pavement works in Malakal.

The state government also has plans

to improve driving conditions outside the capital.

At present, the road from Malakal to the towns of Nasir and Jikou can only be used during the dry season.

The same holds true for the road between Malakal and the northern Upper Nile State town of Renk as well as the artery connecting Maiwut and Longuchuk counties in the southeastern portion of the state.

The state government wants to transform the three roads into all-weather corridors that can be used throughout the year.

The China Sinohydro company has won a contract to upgrade the Malakal-Renk road. The cost will be covered by the Unity Support Fund, which was set up under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to promote economic development throughout the north-south border areas.

Funding for similar work on the road to Nasir and Jikou on the Ethiopian border is coming from the GoSS, which selected the Khartoum-based Eyat Company for the project.

No money has yet been found for improving the Maiwut-Longuchuk counties road, but work on the other two routes and the dirt streets of the capital is all set to go forward.

"We cannot tell you the exact date when we are going to start," said Minister Ding.

"(But) the contractors are ready now with their heavy equipment, and they are waiting for the rainy season to finish." ■

Heavy machinery for road construction in Malakal.



Story and photos:
Imelda Tjahja

Opening up Blue Nile

The scene of heavy fighting between rival forces during Sudan's civil war, Blue Nile State inherited numerous minefields planted by both sides during the conflict.

The mines have severely hindered local movement, blocking rain-fed agricultural lands, water sources, grazing grounds and commercial routes.

The UN Mine Action Office (UNMAO) began assessing the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERWs) on the state in 2005 in collaboration with the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action.

By March 2007, a Landmine Impact Survey was completed, which noted that 33 communities in Blue Nile State were affected by mines and ERWs. Further surveys and mine action activity in the state revealed by July 2010 that 54 communities were affected, with 11 considered high priorities due to blockage and levels of danger.

"As of July 2010, Blue Nile State was faced with a known problem of 61 dangerous areas, 20 defined minefields and 28 suspected hazardous areas throughout 54 communities," said Armen Harutyunyan, UNMAO Regional Operations Coordinator for North Sudan.

But the figures represented only known problem areas, and his office was constantly discovering new ones, the coordinator added. "In the 2010-2011 demining season, we aim to clear all high priority hazards first before addressing the remaining medium and low priority ones."

Considered an important strategic site during the war, the Blue Nile State town of Kurmuk was surrounded by minefields laid dangerously close to its residents.

The process called "land release" was begun in July 2006, with implementing partners collecting all existing documentation about the minefields as well as evidence of accidents at the location to better define the land to be cleared through demining procedures.

Land release focused on emergency humanitarian priorities like settlement areas and access to water. It continued with the survey and clearance of minefields surrounding the town.

Mechanical demining machines were used in six minefields defined through survey in early

2009. The machines shortened the work by at least two years, allowing over two and a half million square metres, or the equivalent of more than 300 football fields, to be released to local people.

"The inclusion of mechanical assets into Blue Nile State has had a great impact on the clearance rates," said Steve Davies, UNMAO Operations Officer in Blue Nile State. "We have been able to survey the fields more effectively and identify the high risk areas more quickly."

Now, recently built houses can be seen around Kurmuk on cleared land, and one area has actually become a football field.

The owner of one of these dwellings, Deng Malek, recently moved back to Kurmuk from the community of Keili, where his family had gone to live with relatives. "We were all crowded, did not have our own place. Then we found out that they cleared the mines in Kurmuk and we returned to our land."

"We are very grateful to UNMAO and its partners for the clearance activities in Kurmuk. Our people can now live in safety."

Mr. Malek has now finished building a second house on cleared land.

UNMAO and the National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) have cooperated in releasing this land. The Pakistani Demining Platoons and Ronco Consulting Ltd. have made it a reality, destroying over 7,000 anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines and explosive ordnance devices.

The release of Kurmuk area land has helped open up farming, animal grazing and borderline commerce. With a new road linking the state capital of Ed Damazin to Kurmuk, home-building on cleared land occurs almost overnight.

"We are very grateful to UNMAO and its partners for the clearance activities in Kurmuk. Our people can now live in safety," said Acting Commissioner of Kurmuk locality Zakaria Mariat.

As areas like Challi still remain heavily affected by mines and ERWs, NMAC and UNMAO will continue to cooperate with mine action stakeholders in removing these hazards.

With Sudan gradually entering a developmental stage, UNMAO plans to change from an implementation role to one of support at the end of June 2011, with NMAC taking over the coordination of demining activities. ■

Adina Dinca

Building houses on cleared land in Kurmuk. Photo: UNMAO/Steve Davies.



Patrolling Wonduruba *Payam*

At 9 o'clock on a weekday morning in August, a convoy of seven vehicles rumbled out of the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba to begin a three-day long-range patrol in the *payam* (township) of Wonduruba.

Aboard the vehicles was a Joint Military Team (JMT) consisting of four UN military observers, two national monitors from the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudan Armed Forces and one interpreter.

Their mission was to assess the security situation on the ground in Wonduruba and update the information that UNMIS has on file for the Central Equatoria State municipality 125 kilometres southwest of Juba.

Under the terms of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, JMTs are authorized to conduct regular patrols and visits "to prevent violations, preserve the ceasefire, and assist in building confidence".

Confidence has been in short supply at times among residents of Wonduruba due to an ongoing dispute over whether the *payam* should fall under the jurisdiction of Juba County or neighbouring Lainya County.

The simmering tensions briefly turned violent last November when the Government of Southern Sudan's then Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Samson Kwaje was wounded in a shoot-out that left three civilians dead. (The minister recovered from his wounds but later succumbed to kidney disease in a Nairobi hospital last August.)

During the rainy season, the drive from Juba to Wonduruba lasts about six hours. Upon arrival, the JMT went straight into a meeting with local authorities.

Discussing the security situation in Wonduruba.



This marked the first JMT visit to the area since last April and the status report was encouraging. "Since the shooting and wounding of Dr. Samson Kwaje by unknown gunmen, the situation in the area has remained generally calm and peaceful," said Noel Layla, deputy chief administrator of Wonduruba *payam*.

He reminded JMT members that no voter registration or voting in this year's historic general election occurred in Wonduruba on account of the unresolved row over which county the town should fall under.

Mr. Layla told his visitors that local residents were worried they could also be left out of the self-determination referendum scheduled to take place in Southern Sudan next January.

A growing town with a well-stocked market that stays open late, Wonduruba offers its residents some services that are often absent in *payams* of its size.

It hosts seven basic primary schools, and its main health care unit is equipped with an outpatient department, an HIV/AIDS testing and counselling unit and a maternity ward.

Residents draw their water from 17 boreholes in the *payam*. Cellphone customers of Zain, MTN and Vivacell can pick up signals in Wonduruba.

But there's always room for improvement. Community leaders told JMT members they needed more teachers, health workers as well as boreholes and asked for the deployment of a police unit to deter crime. ■

Story and photos:
Capt. Mohamed Hamed

School in Wonduruba *Payam*.



Wonduruba town centre.



“Four major challenges”



Denis Kadima. Photo: UNMIS/Paul Banks.

With Sudan's referendum coming up on 9 January 2011, a new integrated UN team has been established to assist national authorities with the immense process. To learn more about its tasks and challenges, In Sudan talked with the head of the UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED), Denis Kadima.

In Sudan: What lessons were learnt from the elections in preparing for the referenda?

Denis Kadima: The most important lesson we learnt was that (during the elections) UNMIS was working based on its own plans to support local authorities, while the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) also had a staff and mechanisms to support the same body. Thus we brought these two teams together into an integrated team, UNIRED, ahead of the referendum, so that the work would be better coordinated and coherent.

How is UNIRED structured?

UNIRED has three main sections – namely, operations, public outreach and programme management.

Operations will provide advice and assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission and its subsidiary bodies on operational planning, logistics, procedures and training, and field

coordination.

The Outreach Unit will mainly provide assistance to the Commission on voter information, accreditation of observers, public information, and media relations.

The programme management component relates to the UNDP Basket Fund for Support to Referenda 2011, and includes such areas as security, judiciary and media training, as well as support to domestic observer organizations and civil society.

What is the exact role of UNMIS in the referenda?

We have a logistical role to support the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, including voter registration and polling itself, how to dispatch and retrieve materials at the end of the process. This is a huge undertaking. Another very important role is the provision of technical advice on a daily basis, which the Commission asked for.

Besides technical assistance, the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) parties requested that the United Nations monitor the referenda process. These tasks, however, are incompatible – you can't provide technical assistance and at the same time observe the same process. You cannot be party and jury at the same time. To meet this request, the UN Secretary-General has put in place a (three-member) high level panel to monitor the process and make suggestions in terms of corrective measures. But this monitoring body is totally separate and independent. UNMIS is not part of it.

What seem to be the greatest challenges so far?

There are four major challenges, the first one being a legal challenge. The (referendum) law is not clear on a number of provisions, and if these are not clarified, it will have an impact on the process. For example, the eligibility criteria, defining who may vote and where they may vote (North Sudan, Southern Sudan, out of country), require additional clarification from the Commission.

The second challenge is the security situation in the country. We are hoping that pockets of tension and agitation don't escalate and make the situation more difficult than it is already.

Since the country's infrastructure is not the best, acquiring and distributing materials also poses a challenge.

Lastly, the timeline is very short. The Commission became operational only in early September. Managing all processes up to 9 January (the planned beginning of polling, which will last seven days) will be extremely difficult.

Has a timeline been issued by the Referendum Commission? What are the main outstanding questions?

Not yet. The only date is 9 January, which is rooted in the CPA. Every step of the process, including dispatching of materials, exhibition of voter register, objections by voters, campaign and the polling itself will require a couple of weeks, but the timeline is not cast in stone.

There are many questions which need answers. For instance, clarifying the eligibility criteria -- who can and cannot vote. The law is not straightforward, so it either has to be amended if there is a political will, or the Commission has to come up with an interpretation after consulting with lawyers. The law also says that between the publication of the final referendum register and the polling, three months must pass. But we don't have those three months.

Is UNMIS mandated to carry out voter education and if not, who is? What has been achieved in this respect so far?

Voter education is supposed to be done by the Commission, and we support them with advice. Voter education must be integrated within the timeline of the referendum procedures.

Will registration happen in North Sudan? What kind of documentation is needed for Southern Sudanese living outside the south to prove their origin?

Registration will take place in the north, the south and out of the country.

There are a number of documents to prove one is Southern Sudanese, including a UNHCR document for refugees, but ultimately the Commission will have to make a decision and the law itself needs clarification on the criteria.

The estimated number of eligible voters, based on UNHCR and other data, is about 6.5 million in total. That's what we work with in our preparations.

UNMIS has been setting up Referendum Support Bases (RSB) in remote locations of Sudan. What is the importance of an RSB?

That is one of the lessons learnt during the elections process, where we were present up to state levels. We felt that, to be able to support the Commission on the county level, which the law provides for, we should join it at that level. There are 79 counties (in the south), and we will have staff to assist the Referendum Commission at that level. The UN Joint Logistics Operation Centre is working on establishing these bases.

Are you treating the Abyei referendum, whether the area will belong to North or Southern Sudan, as part of the process, or do you attribute it special attention?

It is a separate process (but polling) is supposed to take place at the same time as the Southern Sudan Referendum. We have staff on the ground, waiting to support the process once the Abyei Area Referendum Commission is formed.■

State county of Aweil North 11 days later.

In addition to its existing 15 sector headquarters and team sites, UNMIS plans to open many more new support bases throughout Southern Sudan in the coming weeks. The bases will work closely with subcommittees appointed by the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau to oversee referendum operations.

"Both parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement asked UNMIS to play a more expansive role during the referendum process," said the mission's regional coordinator for Southern Sudan, David Gressly. "These bases represent part of our response to that request."

The Mundri West base is a "greenfield site", meaning that it was built from scratch, while other support bases will be established on the premises of existing UN agency offices or in leased accommodation space.

"It's our number one priority," said UNMIS Joint Logistics Operation Center chief Hilary Nicholson. "Sudan has exceedingly poor infrastructure, so the logistical challenge should not be underestimated, but we will do everything possible to achieve the task on time."

The inauguration of the first RSB in Mundri West was hailed by the regional, state and local government officials who

(UNIERED) is in place in the 10 state capitals of Southern Sudan and in counties where UNMIS already has offices.

UNIERED also has assembled teams of advisers to assist with the referendum process in northern Sudan.

Dozens of new UN Volunteers are expected to arrive in Sudan shortly to work with UNIERED personnel and provide expanded assistance to the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and its subsidiary bodies.

UN Police advisers have been conducting three-day referendum security training courses for Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) officers since last July.

Over 11,500 SSPS personnel had received such training by early October. UNMIS Deputy Police Commissioner Klaus-Dieter Tietz says at least 16,500 police officers will have completed referendum security courses organized by UN Police by the middle of December.

They will supplement the 10,600 SSPS officers who underwent similar training prior to last April's general election.

UN Police will use the same curriculum to train police responsible for securing polling and registration centres in the northern states.

A key role in the referendum process is envisioned for 3,000 officers who have

been assigned to so-called formed police units and have received specialized training in riot control techniques, VIP protection and special weapons and tactics.

"We want them available before the referendum so they can be used if there are any riots," said Mr. Tietz. "We expect a good, trained formed police unit member to minimize the use of force and reduce the use of firearms."

Voter registration that was supposed to have taken place in Southern Sudan last July is now tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-November.

Despite initial delays in planning, significant progress has been made in preparations for the referendum since the appointment of the SSRC's Secretary General in mid-September.

Within days of the appointment, the SSRC authorized the international procurement of registration kits, books and cards. Those materials were due to arrive by the end of October as *In Sudan* went to press.

SSRC offices are being set up at the state and county levels with support from the UNDP Basket Fund, which has procured office equipment, furniture and vehicles. ■

Joseph Contreras



SSPS undergoing security training in Rajaf West, south of Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

Gearing up for the referendum

Preparations for the self-determination referendum in Southern Sudan are picking up speed as the January 2011 vote fast approaches.

UNMIS opened its first referendum support base (RSB) in the Western Equatoria State county of Mundri West on 1 September. A second RSB was completed in the Northern Bahr El-Ghazal

attended the ceremony.

Mundri West County Commissioner Samson Arap said the event marked the effective beginning of the referendum process. "The real action has started," he said.

Staff from the UN Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division

Sugar on the Nile



Located on the banks of the White Nile southeast of the city of Kosti, the Kenana Sugar Company is the world's largest plantation producing white sugar.

Covering an area of 100,000 acres of irrigated land in White Nile State, the plantation employs 12,000 workers, with another 4,000 seasonal employees.

The company was incorporated in 1975 and construction of the factory began the next year. The operation was officially inaugurated by President Jaafar Nimeiri in 1981.

The plantation is irrigated by the White Nile through a series of canals running 40 kilometres to the growing area, with about 400 kilometres of smaller canals feeding the cane.

Kenana produces more than 400,000 metric tonnes of sugar cane annually and began exporting ethanol in late 2009. Yielding about 65 million liters of ethanol per year, the company signed deals with a Brazilian firm in late September to double the size of its ethanol plant and set up a biodiesel operation. ■



Photos: Kenana Sugar factory, White Nile State. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.





Back to the roots

"When they (Roots administrators) first saw me making beads, they asked me to produce more of them at home as a test," said the 30-year-old, who learnt the craft from her grandmother as a teenager.

She was overwhelmed when they bought all of her beads for 20 Sudanese pounds (\$8.50) per bunch.

"I didn't expect such a good return," Ms. Siama says. She realized she had wasted a lot of time and money producing beads for domestic use alone.

The project makes and sells traditional beaded jewellery, including necklaces, earrings, bracelets and anklets and decorative items like pottery as well as basketry.

"We also sell traditional items that are rare and take longer to make such as the Shilluk necklaces or Latuka head pieces," she added. "We have Dinka 'corsets'. They take several weeks to make."

"Many of our people see our products and say they are expensive and that their grandmothers can make them for free," said Ms. D'Awol.

"Women in Southern Sudan already do too many things for free. They cook at weddings, take care of other people's children, clean the streets, take care of the sick... all for free. Should they also make crafts for free?" she asked

In late September, the project opened its Arts and Craft Centre in the Nimra



Talata neighbourhood in Juba. It received a lot of support from individuals and donors like the French Embassy, Pact Sudan Fund and SDV Logistics.

"We plan to employ up to 100 people at the centre before the end of the year," said Ms. D'Awol. "Our target is poor women, who are unemployed but skilled in artwork."

The project has held exhibitions at Juba venues like the UNMIS compound and Nyakuron Cultural Centre, where its products were displayed for both domestic and international buyers.

Besides opening a retail shop at its site in Nimra Talata and Juba International Airport, Roots is planning to set up centres in the remaining nine southern states and expand abroad. ■

James Sokiri

Photos: Tim McKulka

When Anyieth Manyang D'Awol travelled around Southern Sudan over a year ago, ranking high on her to-do list was the purchase of traditional handicrafts from its various regions.

She was, therefore, hugely disappointed when she could not find any on sale, anywhere.

"I went to the market in Torit (Eastern Equatoria State) and no one was selling the traditional items. It was the same case in Bor market (Jonglei State)," she said.

Although she encountered women and men adorned in traditional jewellery, they said to her, "We produce these for ourselves ... not for sale."

Ms. D'Awol saw an opportunity and immediately sprung into action. In March 2009, she founded the Roots Project in Juba. The project preserves, manufactures and markets local art and crafts, providing employment for artisans.

"Southern Sudanese adornment is so unique because it decorates the front of a person, the back, the head, the ankles and any part of the body that moves," she said.

"The crafts were well thought out and meant something, whether to indicate that someone was a child, had been initiated, was ready for marriage, or had been elevated to a higher status in the community," Ms. D'Awol added.

Not only are some traditional items rare, it can be difficult to find people who know how to make them well.

"That is why one of our main objectives is to bring them out and preserve them in a comprehensive collection and eventually in a safe place where Southern Sudanese can see them and be proud of their heritage," said the Roots Project founder.

Currently, the project has 51 female and male members from 12 different Southern Sudanese communities. Based in Juba, they are survivors of the two-decade civil war and are either returnees or internally displaced persons.

Bead maker and quality control officer Jacqueline Siama is a project member.

Coming events

Khartoum

Exhibition



Watercolour paintings by artist Hussein Mirghani will be on display at the Shams Gallery in Khartoum 2 from 16 to 23 October. Recharge gazing at pictures showcasing "Sudanese Features", which are rich with life, and maybe buy one or two of them.

Open mic

Listen to young talents perform their own poetry, and take the microphone yourself on 22 October at Bait Al-Finoon in Bahri.

Drama

Well-meaning kid mobster Bugsy Malone, who turns bullets into whipped cream, is coming to town. Performed at the Khartoum International Community School on 11 November, with tickets on sale from 28 October.

Juba

WaPI

At the next Words and Pictures (WaPI) event on 22 October at the Nyakuron Cultural Center, yet undiscovered fashion designers, poets, dancers, graffiti writers, cartoonists, painters and singers will showcase their artwork, supported by the British Council.

Cultural dances

To promote cultural dances among students of various ethnic groups in Southern Sudan, University of Juba students will continue to perform at the university compound on weekends in October.

NEWS BRIEFS

UNSC: Referenda timeline tight but doable



Both parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) were committed to fully implement the accord in holding peaceful and credible referenda on time, although the timeline was extremely tight, UN Security Council (UNSC) representatives said in Khartoum on 9 October.

Registration for the Southern Sudan self-determination referendum scheduled to start on 9 January would begin on 14 November, as decided by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, UNSC delegation Co-chair and United Kingdom Permanent Envoy to Sudan Mark Lyall Grant said at a press conference, as the delegation ended a four-day visit to Sudan.

The parties must tackle outstanding issues, including border demarcation, citizenship, the question of the Abyei area and revenue sharing by this date, he said, acknowledging that the referenda timeline was tight but doable.

Reiterating the Council's support for the process, Ambassador Susan Rice of the United States added that the "core responsibility" for successful implementation of the CPA remained in the hands of the Government of Southern Sudan, the national government based in Khartoum and the Sudanese people.

During the visit to Juba, El Fasher and Khartoum, the delegation met with Sudanese political leaders, the UN Country Team, UNMIS and UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) force commanders as well as representatives of civil society and humanitarian organizations, focusing on issues related to the CPA and security in Darfur.

The delegation was "deeply concerned by the insecurity and continued suffering of internally displaced people in Darfur", Mr. Lyall Grant said, urging rebel groups who had refrained from attending the Doha peace talks to participate.

The visit was a follow-up to the UN high-level meeting on Sudan held in New York in September that had produced a communiqué calling on the international community to respect the outcome of the referenda.

Southern police trained in referendum security

Officers from the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) completed on 17 September a five-day course on security issues related to the 2011 Southern Sudan self-determination referendum.

Organized by the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS), UN Police and the Norwegian government, the course drew 120 SSPS officers from all 10 of the country's southern states. Participants were expected to share what they had learned with their colleagues upon return to their respective bases.

"We need the referendum to be peaceful," said SSPS Deputy Inspector General Gordon Micah Kur. "And for it to be peaceful, it requires proper efforts exerted by the police."

Mr. Kur reminded the gathering that the police would be responsible for overseeing the conduct of the referendum and safeguarding the security of ballot boxes during tabulation of votes.

UNMIS staff runs for homeless children

For the second consecutive year, UNMIS staff members participated in a running race between the towns of Agok and Abyei on 11 September to raise funds for homeless children in both communities.

Originally planned at 32 kilometers, the race was scaled back to 21 kilometres due to heavy rains preceding the start of the event. UN military observers, UN volunteers and UN Police staff members participated in the race, which began just before dawn and ended nearly four hours later.

The brainchild of Canadian UN Police Advisor Kirk DeSilva, this year's event had a fund-raising target of \$5,000. UN Police Officer Rob Haggarty

said he was confident of surpassing that goal when contributions were tallied.

Last year, the contest raised about \$7,000, which was donated to UNICEF's office in Abyei.

A four-member committee has been set up to disburse the funds, which have been earmarked for construction of *tukuls* (conical mud and straw huts) in Agok and Abyei. The buildings will provide shelter for homeless children and give financial support to foster parents who will be hosting three five-year-old children.

Sudan marks International Day of Peace

This year's UN International Day of Peace celebrations across Sudan spotlighted the self-determination referenda scheduled to take place in January 2011 in Southern Sudan and Abyei.

Festivities for the Day, slated for 21 September, featured the themes "Youth for Peace and Development" from the UN and "Making Peace Happen" from the African Union, which spearheaded the event for the first time.

In Juba, the Government of Southern Sudan hosted the event for the first time since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

Addressing the celebration, Ambassador Busho Ndinyenka, Ugandan consul general in Juba and dean of the African diplomatic corps stationed in Southern Sudan, urged both parties to the CPA to "make peace happen".

In the national capital of Khartoum, an estimated 250 university students raised concerns about their country's future in a symposium. During a heated debate, the youth posed questions about the lack of reconciliation, marginalization of political forces and definition of unity.

