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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

UNIVERSITY OF KHARTOUM

NUMBERS VS STANDARDS

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One country, two curricula

The founding of a semi-autonomous regional government in Southern Sudan in 2005 opened the way for a different approach to educating its young people. And the development of new school curricula has taken a major step in that direction.

An English-language syllabus for southern primary schools was introduced in 2007, and secondary schools were given their own curriculum for some subjects last year.

Parts of the new syllabus have been borrowed from the neighbouring Anglophone countries of Kenya and Uganda. But students will also be exposed to topics like traditional southern culture and leaders of the Southern Sudanese struggle, which received little or no mention in national Arabic-language textbooks in past years.

"The new curriculum is good because it is based on the culture, the names and the stories of the south," said Isdoro Acok, director of basic education in the Central Equatoria State Ministry of Education. "We also teach the history of Southern Sudan and of the old Sudan, like the Nubian Kingdom before the coming of the Arabs."

Officials acknowledge that one of the difficulties posed by the adoption of the new curricula is the relative scarcity of trained, English-speaking teachers.

"All the schools here were taught in Arabic before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement," said Lul Ruei Dhol of the Upper Nile State Ministry of Education. "The new education curriculum, which is in English, is different from the national one and therefore has challenges in its implementation."

The existence of separate educational curricula in North and Southern Sudan harks back to the country's colonial past.

The Anglo-Egyptian administration that ruled Sudan from 1898 to 1956 developed an Arabic-language curriculum for the six northern provinces but used a different curriculum for the three southern provinces of Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr El Ghazal, which was taught in English by Christian missionaries.

That changed with the dawn of independence, as the people of the south became dependent on successive governments in Khartoum for the formal education of their children.

The signing of the Addis Ababa peace agreement in 1972 spawned a regional government in Southern Sudan with a limited degree of autonomy, and a dual educational system resurfaced during the early years of its existence.

Schools using English as a teaching medium were earmarked for Sudanese children returning from foreign countries. Children from families who stayed in the country during Sudan's first civil war continued to receive instruction in Arabic.

The elimination of Arabic from southern schools was heralded by former rebel Joseph Lagu who, after becoming president of the regional government's High Executive Council in 1978, told a rally in Juba's Freedom Square that English would become the sole language used in the classroom.

But the paucity of English-language textbooks prevented the regional government from carrying out Mr. Lagu's

"The new curriculum is good because it is based on the culture, the names and the stories of the south"

pledge, and pupils continued to study in both languages.

The revival of an Anglophone curriculum with a focus on subjects and themes rooted in Southern Sudan has been noted within and outside the region.

"Education is an important resource for any country," wrote Lina Bishai of the United States Institute of Peace, a Washington-based research group, in a special report on Sudanese universities issued in February 2008. "It is especially valuable in spreading the values that transform a wartime society into one with a culture of peace."

But the transition is bound to be smoother in some parts of Southern Sudan than in others. In Malakal, the Soura West

Girls' Basic Education School is now using English as a medium of instruction from grades one through five.

But with large number of Arabic-speaking families in the Upper Nile State capital, it may be more conducive to have a bilingual format of instruction.

"We are happy to be taught in English now," said Soura fourth-grader Nyabaic Adeng, "but Arabic should also be taught because we are used to it."

The outlook is considerably different in Central Equatoria, where English has been the preferred medium of teaching in 95 per cent of all local schools since 1972, according to that state government's ministry of education. ■

Story and photos by Felix Waya Leju



Lul Ruei Dhol



Soura West Girls School

DIARY

8 August: Sudan's First Vice-President and President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Salva Kiir convened a reconciliation meeting between Ngok Dinka and Misseriya traditional leaders in Juba following the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling on Abyei's boundaries. Vice-President Kiir reaffirmed the government's commitment to guarantee the grazing and water rights of Misseriya nomads.

9 August: The PCA ruling was endorsed by the Presidency. It was reportedly decided to establish a six-member interim technical committee to demarcate the Abyei boundary in line with the court's decision.

10 August: The Seventh Governor's Forum took place in Juba, bringing together governors from all 10 southern states and high-level GoSS officials. Among issues discussed were the security situation, the PCA ruling, forthcoming elections and the outstanding referendum bill.

12 August: An increase in attacks attributed to the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Ezo and Sakure of Western Equatoria State led all UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to suspend their operations in the area until the situation returned to normal.

13 August: UNMIS handed over a new, six-room building to Al Sabah Children's Hospital in Juba to house a new outpatient department. The \$25,000 project was initiated by the UNMIS Public Information Office and constructed by the Bangladeshi Construction Engineering Company.

15 August: National Congress Party (NCP) Secretary for Women's Affairs in Western Equatoria State Mariam Bringi was shot dead in her Yambio residence by unknown gunmen and her house was burnt down. Authorities are investigating the crime, which was condemned by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and NCP.

15 August: A donor's meeting was held in Juba to discuss mechanisms needed to address food security in Southern Sudan. Addressing the meeting, GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar said the south required about \$40 million to bridge the food gap for the next three months.

16 August: The fifth SPLM Political Bureau meeting began in Juba, where the SPLM renewed its rejection of the census results as a basis for constituencies' delimitation and called for a resolution on the matter.

19 August: The SPLM and the NCP signed an agreement in Juba on implementation of several disputed elements of the CPA brokered by the US Special Envoy to Sudan, Scott Graton. However, the census results and referendum bill remained outstanding.

19 August: World Humanitarian Day was observed for the first time globally. The joint UN/non-governmental organization communications group for Sudan launched a photo exhibition illustrating the wide spectrum of humanitarian work taking place in the country.

28 August: An armed group reportedly from the Lou-Nuer attacked the Dinka at Wernyol Boma in Twic East County. The county commissioner's and other reports indicated that the attack resulted in some 38 deaths and 64 injuries. At the request of the Governor, UNMIS provided air support for medical evacuation of wounded soldiers to Bor and deployment of SPLA forces to the area.

1 September: The Assessment and Evaluation Commission held its 47th plenary meeting in Khartoum and discussed among other issues the Referendum Bill and implementation of the PCA ruling on Abyei.

6 September: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced his deep concern over the string of attacks and counterattacks in Southern Sudan and the killing as well as displacement of civilians. He called on the GoSS to re-double its efforts to ensure protection of civilians, noting that intertribal reconciliation was vital to elections in 2010 and the 2011 referendum.



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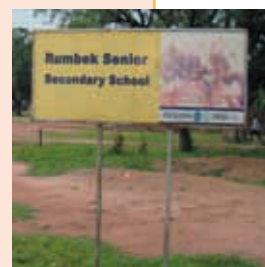
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FRONT COVER: University of Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Eszter Farkas

BACK COVER: Primary 2 students at Ikpiro Primary School, Yambio, Western Equatoria State. Photo: UNMIS/Negus Hadera

Numbers vs standards

While higher education expanded rapidly in North Sudan during the 1990s, standards suffered due to a lack of good teachers and equipment, academics say.

Khartoum's first university, Gordon College (now called University of Khartoum), was established in 1902, mainly to equip students for civil service at British offices in colonial Sudan.

Soon after independence in 1956, reforms for Arabizing education started.

This transformation changed focus from one decade to another but generally higher education became more Arabized with a larger dose of Islamic studies.

The first stage began in 1965 with secondary education, when Arabic replaced English as the language of education, despite Sudan's multiculturalism, said Khartoum political/educational linguist Ahmed Berair.

The emphasis on Islamic culture and religion grew in 1983 under Jaafar Nimeiri's presidency, when the Arabization of higher education started. The comprehensive "higher education revolution" was initiated after the National Islamic Front took over in a coup d'état in 1989.

"They (the government) wanted to improve the service, having more access to higher education," Mr. Berair said. "In the early 1990s, in one year they established a number of universities across the country," he added, which multiplied admissions. The Arabic and Islamic curricula were also strengthened.

According to Mr. Berair, the reform "was a complete failure", as the new institutions were lacking sufficient space, equipment and well-trained staff.

Private schools emerge

At the same time, private institutions began to mushroom, as entrepreneurs were granted permission to open colleges and universities. Currently, eight private universities and 51 colleges exist in the country, noted Minister of Higher Education

and Scientific Research Peter Adwok. Together with 31 public universities, this amounts to about 90 higher education institutions.

"The non-governmental universities are more like businesses, except for Ahfad and the International University of Africa" observed retired history professor Ahmed Diab from his Omdurman home. He added that private institutions are much more expensive and can pay lecturers more, resulting in a brain-drain of public universities.

"The non-governmental universities are more like businesses, except for Ahfad and the International University of Africa"

A professor at a public university earns between 10-15 Sudanese pounds (\$4-\$6) an hour, Mr. Berair estimated, whereas a colleague at a private institution makes between 50 and 70 pounds (\$20-\$28) an hour.

Investment in education has been strongly encouraged by the government, but has come at a price. Academics state that older universities were poorly maintained and the sudden shift from English to Arabic resulted in a lack of teaching material.

"No one in the field of education will oppose the expansion of education, especially in a country which is developing but, and it's a big but, you have to make sure that expansion goes hand-in-hand with quality," said Abdel Wahab el-Mubarak, former Minister of Higher Education and Academic Research.

While he was holding office in the federal ministry for seven months in 1996-1997, Mr. el-Mubarak commissioned a thorough study of universities, which found the quality of

education to be below standard.

"Some countries have refused to recognize the certificate of Sudanese institutions," Minister Adwok said, acknowledging the drop in standards and likening it to the secondary level standard.

Changing the law

As an initiative to remedy the situation, the ministry revised the Organization of Higher Education Act amended in 1995, and would present a draft to the Council of Ministers in September, Mr. Adwok added.

Under the revised law, universities should regain their freedom and autonomy, said the minister. In addition, vice chancellors, deans and department heads would not be appointed, but elected, regardless of party affiliation.

"A university will be free to decide on the content of its academic program," Mr. Adwok said, adding that the Islamic curriculum should cease to be mandatory across the board.

"There will be competition," the minister said, expressing hope that standards would rise due to the planned law revision. "We want to achieve excellence and social relevance of higher education."

Besides the lack of skilled and well-trained university teachers as well as budgets for libraries and research, Mr. Diab believed there was a vacuum in education, which should be filled by vocational institutions granting intermediate degrees.

"We are not in need of universities but of technical education," he said, adding that Sudan used to have several vocational schools that were converted to academic institutions. Today, only the Sudan University of Science and Technology caters to technical education.

"If you want to make a new Sudan, you need new technicians," Mr. Diab stressed, adding that companies largely depended on technicians from the Philippines, Bangladesh or Ethiopia.■

Eszter Farkas



Afhad University, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Johann Hattingh



University of Khartoum's School of Management. Photo: UNMIS/ Eszter Farkas

Open-air classes

Every weekday just after sunrise, Daniel Jame heads on a four-mile trek to arrive on time at Ikpiro Primary School on the outskirts of Yambio, Western Equatoria State.

The 10-year-old boy then joins 161 students of various ages sitting on rough stones peering at a blackboard hanging on a tree trunk, writing in exercise books balanced on their laps.

Sheltering from the hot southern sun under mango, palm and lemon trees in their open-air classroom, the students shift position throughout the day, following the shade as the sun climbs higher in the sky.

Echoing the feelings of many of his classmates, Daniel said, "It is tiresome to come to school and go back home ... (and) it is uncomfortable to sit on stone for many hours. But I am glad to do it every day as long as I learn."

While students willingly endure the harsh conditions to study, they are defeated by sudden downpours during the rainy season (from May to October), which force them to abandon their books and seek refuge in nearby houses.

"It is disappointing to go back home without learning ... last week we didn't attend any class on Wednesday and Thursday due to rain," said Daniel.

Long-lasting deluges, as are typical in Southern Sudan, may also prevent young children like Daniel who live in distant villages from travelling home until late in the evening.

A major hindrance

School director Benjamin Anibi and his 12 teachers, who instruct classes up to primary eight, are discouraged by the school's primitive conditions. They believe the number of students will drop as many seek better facilities elsewhere.

"We have no classrooms, no desks ... only a small storeroom where we stuff all our things," the director said.

State officials acknowledge that poor facilities pose a major hindrance in educating their young people.

"Out of the 321 state-run primary schools ... about 15 per cent are child-friendly with



Students at Ikpiro Primary School

at least the basic facilities such as class rooms, desks, toilets and some kind of playground," said Wayo Herekia, director of primary education in the state's ministry of education.

The remaining 85 per cent fail to meet minimum standards, with most lacking buildings and depending on trees for improvised shelter, Mr. Herekia added. "To accommodate the existing students, many schools use two shifts, while others rely partially or fully on tree ... classrooms."

Efforts are being made to improve schools by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and its partners, according to Director for Planning and Budgeting in the State Ministry of Education Gabriel Makana. "The GoSS allocates budgets for school buildings and other facilities ... local and international agencies also support the

effort."

In 2009, some 13 primary schools were built throughout the state -- one by the GoSS, six by the non-governmental organization Mundri Relief and Development Association and three each by UNICEF and Save the Children Alliance.

But the number of new schools is low compared to the existing gap in facilities, said Mr. Makana. "We appreciate the joint efforts to address the school infrastructure problem in our state. However, more emphasis should be given to ... the seriousness of the situation."

The plight of Western Equatoria students is shared by others attending primary Sudan's 155 secondary and 3,393 primary schools, according to GoSS Ministry of Education Deputy Director for Physical Planning and Construction. "About 60 per cent of the schools in Southern Sudan, mainly primary, are under trees."

No new secondary schools have been constructed in the region since 2005 and only five renovated, although plans are afoot to remedy that, said GoSS Education Ministry Director of Secondary Education Duku Azaria Enoka.

"The ministry has a plan to construct some 20 secondary schools in the 10 states from 2009 to 2011 with the help of government funding and assistance from the (World Bank) Multi-Donor Trust Fund. We believe this will solve the existing problem in access to secondary education," Mr. Enoka said. ■

Story and photos by Negus Hadera

In Sudan.UNMIS.September 2009



Knowledge and politics



Old blocks of Rumbek Secondary School

Throughout much of its history, Rumbek Senior Secondary School has been synonymous with academic excellence for the youth of Southern Sudan.

Founded in 1948 by British colonial officials, the school's alumni roster reads like a who's who of modern Southern Sudanese history. Its student rolls have included the late John Garang de Mabior, National Elections Commission Chairman Abel Alier, Vice-President Riek Machar of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), and the deceased rebel leader William Deng.

"Rumbek Secondary School was a place of knowledge, sport and politics," said Robert Benjamin, the 48-year-old chairman of the Southern Sudan Land Commission, who ignored his parents' wishes to send him to a Catholic school in Khartoum and began his studies at Rumbek in 1978. "When you came to Rumbek, you would become a complete man who was prepared to take on the challenges in either politics or the army or represent your community in whatever walk of life."

Part of the high school's appeal was rooted in its reputation as a hotbed of political activism and dissent. Its first student strike was called in 1960 when the central government in Khartoum decreed that Sunday would be a working day throughout Sudan in conformity with the predominantly Muslim northern Sudanese customs.

More demonstrations followed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Mr. Benjamin vividly recalled a protest on the streets of Rumbek in 1978, when the discovery of oil near the present-day Unity State capital of Bentiu aroused concern among the school's students that Southern Sudan's mineral wealth would be appropriated by their northern compatriots.

"Rumbek Secondary was a place which raised our awareness of politics and served as a political platform on which to stand up for our rights, freedom and dignity," said Rumbek East County Commissioner Mabior Mayen Wol.

"When you came to Rumbek, you would become a complete man who was prepared to take on the challenges in either politics or the army or represent your community in whatever walk of life."

Some of the leading cadres of Southern Sudan's first rebel movement Anya-Nya I were graduates of the school.

Commanders of the Sudan People's Liberation Army like Lakes State Governor Lt. Gen. Daniel Awet Akot also cut their academic teeth in its classrooms.

"It produced very clever people," the governor told *In Sudan*. "If you look at the majority of politicians in Southern Sudan today and teachers in different universities in both the north and the south, they are products of Rumbek Secondary School."

Admission was a highly competitive process based on academic merit. The school's faculty included teachers drawn from all over Sudan as well as foreign countries like Britain, India and the United States.

In its heyday, the school enjoyed an international prestige that attracted students from neighbouring countries like Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya, according to its acting director, Malou Makoi Ayuek.

The outbreak of Sudan's second civil war in 1983 closed down the school for 16 years. When it reopened in 1999 with the aid of a \$250,000 grant from the United States Agency for International Development, the formerly boys-only secondary school admitted girl students for the first time.

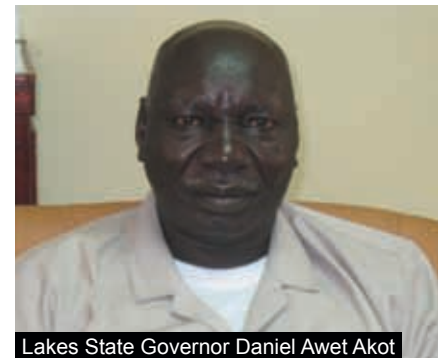
Sadly, the school has fallen on hard times in more recent years. The understaffed faculty of 38 teachers struggles to meet the learning needs of the school's 1,280 students. Some of its aging classrooms could use a fresh coat of paint.

Of equal or greater concern is the shortage of basic educational materials like books to stock the school's neglected library. Its acting director is urging some of

the school's more distinguished alumni to dig into their own pockets and help restore Rumbek Senior Secondary to its previous luster.

"I appeal to the former students of Rumbek Secondary School who are now holding office to do something for it," said Mr. Ayuek. "I ask them to let Rumbek be the Rumbek of their era." ■

Story and photos by Hailemichael Gebrekrstos



Lakes State Governor Daniel Awet Akot



Malou Makoi Ayuek, Acting Director of Rumbek Secondary School

A school for veterans

For two decades, many Southern Sudanese youth faced a tough choice -- join the armed struggle or flee their war-torn region to live in a foreign land and pursue formal education.

Those who took up arms and survived the fighting paid a heavy personal price by sacrificing opportunities for instruction at the primary or secondary levels.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) wants to give veterans from all armed forces, including the Sudan People's Liberation Army, prison service and police, a second chance to return to the classroom under the Alternative Education System (AES). The initiative was launched by GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit in 2006 for individuals who had no access to schools during their childhood.

Backed with financial and technical aid from the international community, AES condenses a primary education that normally lasts eight years into an intensive four-year time frame under the slogan "Education has no age limits".

"In AES, we target soldiers and their children along with pastoralists and their children who are constantly on the move," said Odur Nelson, the AES programme's deputy director in the GoSS education ministry. "We provide mobile schools and teachers who move together with their students."

The ministry and the SPLA directorate of education and sport recently unveiled the first school for wounded SPLA troops in the Central Equatoria State town of Yei. Over 800 veterans of Sudan's second civil war signed up for classes when the school opened its doors in July.

"We want to educate and prepare them for the new life when they will join their communities in the future," said Samuel Dem, a senior inspector for the GoSS Ministry of Education. "This is the first school opened for the wounded heroes and heroines, but we are going to extend these schools throughout Southern Sudan."

Similar schools will be established in the coming months for children of pastoralist communities with funding from the World Bank, according to Mr. Nelson.

Many of the freshly enrolled students at the Yei school are acutely conscious of the new challenges posed by civilian life.

"During the war, promotions to a higher rank could be based on how brave someone might be, but now it depends on how much one has read," said Peter Longai, an illiterate, 32-year-old father of four, who suffered a serious wound in his right leg during the war. "I want to study because the time for physical fighting with the gun is over. It is now time to use the brain to work."

Raphael Lupai had managed to reach the fifth grade of his primary school before joining the SPLA, but injuries sustained in combat have impaired his vision.

"During the war, promotions to a higher rank could be based on how brave someone might be, but now it depends on how much one has read"

"Although I am disabled, disability is not inability," said the 27-year-old father of two, who was placed in the Yei school's most advanced level of instruction. "I have to study hard because when you have the right skills, you can be helpful in the community."

The SPLA established some classrooms in its barracks to provide soldiers with a rudimentary degree of education. But the availability of qualified teachers, learning materials and other resources has usually been extremely limited.

"We conduct our lessons under trees, and when it is raining we stop classes and only resume when it is over," said Brig. Stephen Ban Mut, deputy director for education and sport at SPLA headquarters on the outskirts of Juba. "But we are determined to educate our people."

Education ranks high among the dividends that peace is supposed to deliver to Southern Sudan. And with the opening of the Yei school, that goal will no longer seem so out of reach for the men and women who put themselves in harm's way and still have the scars to prove it.■

Emmanuel Kenyi



Veterans during launch of school in Yei.
Photo: AES, GoSS Ministry of Education



Wounded Heroes Literacy Centre, Yei.
Photo: AES, GoSS Ministry of Education

Enrollment and literacy

Numbers of children enrolling in primary school in North Sudan have recently been increasing. According to Ministry of General Education data, some 4.4 million children attended primary school in 2007 and 300,000 more the next year.

In Southern Sudan, 1.2 million children were enrolled in 2007 and 400,000 more the next year, as shown by Government of Southern Sudan Ministry of Education, Science and Technology figures.

Regarding enrollment gender ratios, information varies but national data from 2006 indicate that about 51 per cent of primary school-aged girls were attending classes, noted UNICEF Chief of Media and External Relations Edward Carwardine. He added that in Southern Sudan, girls' enrolment was still only 34 per cent.

The literacy rate of Sudan's total adult population was 61 per cent between 2000 and 2007, according to UNICEF statistics. Male literacy was 71.8 per cent and female literacy was estimated at 50.5 per cent in 2003, as indicated by various sources.

A calm oasis

Entering a small, deep blue room with comfortable couches and a large painting of the same colour at the Rashid Diab Arts Centre in Khartoum, one cannot help but feel serenity and calm.

"Just sit down here for two to three minutes without talking," said general supervisor Shihab Abbas. "You will feel relaxed."

Not only the blue room flows with calmness, but distinct harmony can be felt across the centre, which was founded in 2005 in the northern capital's Gireif area.

Upon entering, visitors are greeted by plants in clay pots and trees guarding the walls, and the cream-coloured, balconied-buildings hint at Mediterranean architecture.

Sudanese painter and print-maker Rashid Diab spent 20 years in Spain, and the influence on his centre is clearly visible. "The building bears Nubian, Spanish,

Moroccan influences and North African elements, you can say," noted Mr. Abbas.

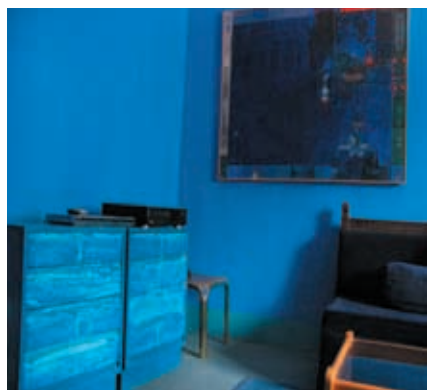
While touring the centre's five villas, which serve either as accommodation for guests attending international workshops from October through December or as galleries, one is amazed by rainbows that stained-glass windows in the ceiling create.

"Visitors come and copy some elements of the building," said the centre's supervisor with a smile. He added that some of the features were quite unusual in Sudan, including the bare wooden twigs serving as organic décor in the balconies overlooking the centre's courtyard.

Every corner catches the eye with another wondrous detail. After visiting the small souvenir store, one pauses under the green trees in the backyard to enjoy a bit of Mediterranean in Khartoum. ■

Eszter Farkas

Photos by Hoiam Abigasm and Eszter Farkas



Coming up

Besides annual workshops with Sudanese artists, the Rashid Diab Arts Centre runs forums in its large backyard with an open-air stage, houses arts exhibitions every two months and offers arts courses for children aged five to 15 every year during summer break, from May to July.

The centre will house the exhibition of Sudanese calligrapher and Sudan University School of Fine Arts dean Omar Dirma from 13 September to 4 October.

Those interested in art theory can attend a workshop by Zaki Al-Maboren, a Sudanese artist based in Germany, from 13 to 15 October. Under the theme "The subject of art", attendees will learn about techniques and colour. Mr. Al-Maboren's work will be on display, and there will be a collective show of pieces created during the workshop.

For more information, please visit www.rashiddiabartscentre.net.

A uni for Tonj

Many young people in the remote Southern Sudanese town of Tonj forgo higher education rather than bear the heavy expense of moving to a new locale.

Now, thanks to a legacy left by the late southern leader John Garang de Mabior, aspiring students in the Warrap State town will be able to study at home.

Before Mr. Garang's untimely demise in 2005, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak promised the former rebel he would set up a branch of Cairo's Alexandria University in Southern Sudan.

Making good on that pledge, an Egyptian delegation recently visited Tonj to announce the new university and inspect facilities set aside for it by Warrap State government.

"The president (Mubarak) is now in the process of fulfilling his promise to establish a branch of Alexandria University," Egyptian Consul in Juba Abdelghaffar Eldib told a welcoming rally in Tonj's Freedom Square.

Dr. Fekry Hussein, Dean of the University of Alexandria's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, said the branch would likely open by the end of September. Beginning with 20 students each in veterinary medicine and agriculture, it would later expand to offer nursing and education.

Originally slotted for Juba, the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) decided the university would be more optimally located in Tonj. "The area is known for its fertile lands and huge cattle resources, which I hope will benefit from the faculties of agriculture and veterinary medicine," said GoSS Minister of Education, Science and Technology Job Dhoruai.

The delegation, comprising representatives of the University of Alexandria, Egyptian Consulate in Juba and League of Arab States office in Southern Sudan, took over buildings for the new branch during its visit that had once housed a rope factory.

Inspecting the site, the Egyptians were impressed by the quality and structure of its buildings. "We didn't expect that we would find these kinds of buildings and facilities here in the area ... we have found the

buildings and land for the university ready," said Dr. Hussein.

Alexandria University would offer needed technical support to open the branch as soon as possible, the veterinary dean added. "Now we are looking for the decision of go ahead from the Egyptian side in Cairo and also from Southern Sudan."

Tonj community leader Agostino Agar Dut said the university would be a great opportunity for students and benefit the community as a whole. "We hope this university will boost agriculture and cattle production in our area."

Nineteen-year-old student Santino Majok said the facility would "benefit us a lot", encouraging youth to continue studying and opening up their futures. Another student, 24-year-old Simon Arop said, "It is like a dream for me to see a university here in our area."

Alexandria University was founded 70 years ago and now has some 30 institutions in the public health and scientific fields, according to Consul Eldib.

Egypt has long supported higher

education for Southern Sudanese students. Hundreds of southerners, including current Speaker of Southern Sudan's Legislative Assembly Wani Igga, were educated in the neighbouring country.

According to Professor Dhoruai, some 300 Southern Sudanese are currently enjoying scholarships for study in Egypt. Each year sees about 100 additional grants for Bachelor's degrees and 25 for Masters and PhDs.■

Story and photos by Hailemichael Gebrekrstos



(Right to left) Students Simon Arop and Santino Majok, Tonj.



Tonj residents welcoming Egyptian delegation.



Site for Alexandria University branch University, Tonj.

What prospects does the area have for development – in terms of feeding itself, for example?

Abyei has significant agricultural potential. In 2009, the AAA Department of Agriculture, with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization, provided vaccines for various diseases, including anthrax, to 60,000 nomad cattle, but 100,000 more are needed.

Tools and seeds have also been distributed to 10,000 households and a sizeable area is now being cultivated, although the lack of rain is currently a problem, as are pests like locusts and millipedes. AAA is conducting an irrigation programme for 12 community sites. This was proposed by the RCO, funded by the Canadian Embassy, and assisted by the Agok-based INGO GOAL.

What is being done to assist with Misseriya migration?

UNMIS Protection of Civilians and Civil Affairs sections are leading the migration strategy for the area. This began in 2009 and proved successful, as it was the first migration without major incident since the CPA.

The main components are dialogue at the political and local levels, UN monitoring and patrolling, and water access. It is also vital that the Joint Integrated Police Unit deploy to rural areas, which has not occurred yet.

This year we plan further support for the migration, including water, health and education. Last season, the RCO and AAA, with assistance from the WFP, initiated support for nomad education.

Has anything been organized for returns to the area?

The Dinka Ngok leadership are encouraging Abyei's displaced population to return to the area, a move the UN would like to ensure is dignified, voluntary and safe. The Abyei area chiefs are meeting in Khartoum with IDP (internally displaced person) leaders and the UN there is also becoming involved.

The UN would like the AAA to set up a local Abyei Area Return Commission. It would like returns to be organized and pre-registered with total numbers not exceeding 10,000 until the end of 2009, as the area cannot absorb more than that. For security reasons, returns until the end of 2009 should be to inhabited villages with social networks and basic services in place, which would reduce potential for conflict over resources.

What are the main priorities for the rest of this year?

The idea is to use the rest of 2009 to coordinate closely with the AAA to develop comprehensive plans for economic development, government capacity, education and other pressing needs for the longer term.

A peaceful migration and return process will contribute significantly to stability in the area. It will also strengthen area authorities and allow for more UN planning and joint development for 2010.

Spiraling conflict

With conflicts recurring in Southern Sudan and tension in areas like Abyei, In Sudan spoke with Mohamed Ahmed Abdelghaffar, professor of international law and international relations at the University of Khartoum, about resolution of disputes in present-day Sudan.

In Sudan: What makes a peace agreement work, especially in a country with a long history of conflict?

Mohamed Ahmed Abdelghaffar :

We have only three comprehensive peace agreements in the world -- in Cambodia, El Salvador and Sudan. The one in Sudan is really comprehensive, ranging from the modalities of peace making and peacekeeping to monitoring human rights. It covers a six-year period and has mechanisms to resolve conflicts that may arise during this transition period.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is not like the Addis Ababa agreement, where no one proposed what should be done if there was a problem. In 1983, there was a problem in Southern Sudan, which was resolved unilaterally by President (Jaafar) Nimeiri (who divided the south into three regions, instituted Sharia law and declared a state of emergency).

This solution was not agreed upon by the entire southern community or even everyone in the north.

The CPA tried to learn lessons from the Addis Ababa agreement, establishing six commissions to work as mechanisms under the Presidency, which is itself a mechanism to resolve conflict between the two parties.

What are other critical elements in the CPA?

There are some triggers or aggravators or conflict accelerators, as we call them. One of them is the demarcation of the north-south border. If you have not yet defined a region, how can you have a referendum on it? Referendum means first you have to define the region, then the population which is going to vote, and create the voting law.

Is it the majority of two-thirds to decide or the majority of fifty plus one, the normal majority?

How do you see the state of Abyei after the verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration?

One of the great challenges of the CPA is resolved now. Before the Abyei protocol was referred to The Hague (to the Permanent Court of Arbitration), we had a problem implementing the decision of the (Abyei Boundary Commission) expert team.

In the theory of conflict, we call most conflicts spirals because they recur. Now we have two challenges. One is how to give



Mohamed Ahmed Abdelghaffar. Photo: UNMIS/Eszter Farkas

Abyei a share of revenues and develop the area. The second is the Abyei referendum.

Does the Abyei referendum pose a risk of conflict?

Not unless we neglect conflict resolution mechanisms on the ground. For example, the late John Garang said that if Abyei goes to the south, he will guarantee the rights for the Misseriya to come and go. This is a problem-solving approach.

When the referendum decides if Abyei will go to Southern Kordofan or Bahr El-Ghazal, a problem arises. How will the pastoral community have access to land that it was permitted to use seasonally before? Land in itself is not the problem but the resources or grazing land, meaning water and pasture, are.

Do you foresee a fight for resources?

They will not fight if they have access. And this is guaranteed by the verdict of The Hague. It guaranteed that both communities would retain their historical rights.

Do you see a conflict spiral again, in light of recent tribal clashes in the south?

They are pastoral, agro-pastoral and ethnic clashes and have two causes -- grazing land and historic, inherited violence between the tribes. Because of the war, many tribes had obtained weapons. Disarming them is a challenge, which needs reconciliation.

The governments should disarm the tribes and wipe out sources of arms. You can get arms anywhere in the region -- the price of one AK-47 is one cow. There have been attempts at voluntary disarmament.

However, for instance, two years ago the Toposa said "we cannot disarm unless the Turkana of Kenya also disarm". The only way is to bring the chiefs and elders together and control the youth.

What next for Abyei?

The long-standing dispute over Abyei's boundaries was resolved with a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on 22 July. The decision was greeted peacefully, paving the way for recovery in the area, which was torn apart by violent conflict in May 2008. To learn more about post-PCA Abyei, *In Sudan* spoke with Meredoc McMinn, UNMIS Abyei Resident Coordinator and Return, Reintegration and Recovery (RRR) team leader in the area.

In Sudan: What has the reaction been to the PCA decision on Abyei's boundaries?

Meredoc McMinn: The PCA decision seems to have been accepted by the north and south, but the test will be how the parties interpret and implement the ruling over the coming months.

The United Nations in Abyei must now work to keep the area stable. This means assisting with peaceful coexistence conferences as well as military monitoring and patrolling. The mission will also support nomad Misseriya migration and Dinka Ngok returns, especially as concerns access to basic services like water, sanitation, health, education and food.

What has been done to keep the Abyei area stable so far?

The RCO (Resident Coordinator's Office) -RRR team has been working with the nascent Abyei Area Administration (AAA) to increase their capacity to support access to basic services.

This has primarily been done by strengthening working groups addressing these services, which are led by the appropriate UN agency and chaired by the AAA counterpart. For example, UNICEF and the AAA Department of Infrastructure are concerned with water needs.

In addition, RCO-RRR developed and maintains the Abyei Integrated Information System -- a database for the area. So far, it contains about 250 villages, with corresponding information like location, leadership and access to services.

What is Abyei's most urgent recovery need?

The primary need is water, both to reduce tensions and for humanitarian reasons. Since the beginning of 2009, there has been notable improvement in access, both on the migration route for the nomadic Misseriya, and in return villages for the Ngok Dinka.

Water coverage for the area currently stands at about 60% and AAA along with UNICEF have set up a Water Environmental Sanitation unit. Remaining funds come to \$300,000 – donated by the Japanese government through UNICEF. But a further \$490,000 is needed until the end of 2009 to improve water access on the migration route and for returns.

Health care was previously a serious concern. Has it improved at all?

According to my RCO-RRR team colleague



Meredoc McMinn (middle right) and Viviana Olivetto (front right) in Abyei. Photo: UNMIS/RRR

Viviana Olivetto, who focuses on health, education and protection issues, access to health services is still a significant concern, especially in the areas of maternal and obstetric services. Ante-natal care for pregnant mothers is completely absent, as are obstetric emergency facilities, contributing to relatively high mortality rates during delivery.

Child health also needs attention, especially in the area of nutrition, as the malnutrition rate is quite high. These health problems affect both the Misseriya and returnee Dinkas. Equal access to health care for these groups would help ease tensions between them.

But there has also been some improvement. The hospital now has a waste management system, provided through a project initiated by the RCO, funded by the Canadian Embassy and set up by the World Health Organization.

Plans have also put in place to strengthen the hospital's nutrition ward and generally rehabilitate the building, thanks to funding from UNICEF of \$210,000. In the rural areas, there are some PHCCs (Primary Health Care Clinics). But there is an urgent

need for an additional \$490,000 to improve rural health access with more mobile clinics, and to support existing PHCCs, for both the migration and return process, until the end of 2009.

What happened to the INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) that were in Abyei?

Due to continuing insecurity, the INGOs have left Abyei twice in the last two years. They were then expelled by the government in March 2009, and have not yet returned to the town. Nor have they received compensation for the financial losses they have suffered.

To carry out programmes in the area and make use of donor funds, INGOs are urgently required, but they will need a secure compound. The RCO and INGOs, with the agreement of the AAA, proposed a joint compound with offices and accommodation for 100-200 people. The site, at a total cost of \$475,000, would include a common external wall, perimeter lighting, interior road, water-system and generator.

Painkillers for malaria

It reads like a laundry list of the appalling conditions that plagued prison facilities in the middle ages -- dilapidated buildings, widespread disease, insufficient toilets and beds and a shortage of separate facilities for juvenile inmates.

But these circumstances capture the reality of life behind bars in Southern Sudan today. Some facilities bear scars left by Sudan's 22-year civil war, like the prison in the Western Equatoria State capital of Yambio, which lost most of its roofing to the ravages of live ammunition.

Others show the wear and tear from decades of neglect like Juba prison, where the cracked walls and worn-down floors date back to the day the British opened the building in 1948.

But the sorry state of some prison infrastructure pales beside the living conditions inside those crumbling buildings. A leaky roof often prevents Yambio prison inmate Joseph Kaunda from getting a good night's sleep during the rainy season, but his litany of complaints doesn't stop there.

"When you fall sick with malaria in this prison, they give you a painkiller," said Mr. Kaunda. "How can painkillers cure malaria?"

Over 80 per cent of the prison population depends on food rations donated by visiting friends and relatives, he added, and the one daily meal served by the prison is a monotonous diet of beans, cow peas, soya beans and peas.

Compounding the plight of Yambio prison inmates is a single manual water pump that represents their only means of obtaining water. "When it breaks down," warned prison director Brig. Luis Akuar, "we shall be forced to fetch water from the nearby streams and pools, risking our lives and those of the

prisoners."

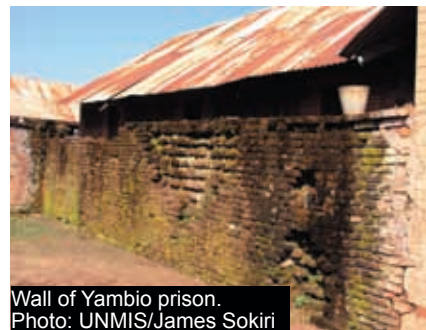
The picture is similarly grim at the prison in Malakal, according to UNMIS Human Rights Officer Alfred Zulu.

"Very essential facilities like toilets, shelter, bathrooms, water and electricity are lacking," he said. "Girls share bedrooms with women and boys share with adult men." The shortage of trained medical staff at the main prison in Wau prompted a visit by seven Kenyan doctors to the facility last June.

They treated 57 inmates at a prison clinic established by UNMIS, said mission Child Protection Officer David Kibiriti. The physicians identified several diseases among the prison population, including malaria, chicken pox, diarrhoea and scabies.

The prevalence of some illnesses at the facility in Western Bahr El Ghazal state was partly blamed on an acute shortage of basic items like mosquito nets, which could reduce the incidence of malaria, and beds, which are often shared by two inmates and can help spread a contagious disease such as scabies.

But help is on the way. The group of Kenyan physicians who made a house call at Wau prison brought with them drugs supplied by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Ministry of Health.



Wall of Yambio prison.
Photo: UNMIS/James Sokiri

UNICEF and the GoSS provide drugs on a monthly basis to Juba prison, and UNMIS plans to open an education centre for illiterate prisoners in Yambio soon.

Seven inmates at that prison have received carpentry training to improve their prospects for finding employment, said UNMIS Corrections Adviser Denis Phiri. Another 60 have taken farming courses and are already cultivating crops like cabbages and maize.

Construction of the Yambio prison's first latrine for females is scheduled to commence shortly.

Non-governmental organizations like Save the Children as well as the Catholic and Presbyterian churches donate clothes, food, blankets and other items to Malakal prison on a monthly basis, according to UNMIS Child Protection Officer James Gatgong.

The GoSS has hired outside contractors to supply food to the prisons in Juba and the Warrap state town of Kuajok. In the latter facility, juvenile inmates are segregated from the adult population, an example that other penitentiaries will hopefully copy in the near future. ■

Story and photos by James Sokiri

"We shall be forced to fetch water from the nearby streams and pools, risking our lives and those of the prisoners."



Chained prisoners at Yambio prison.
Photo: UNMIS/James Sokiri



Kenyan doctors treating women and children at Wau prison.
Photo: UNMIS/Haile Gebrekrstos

Disputed boundaries

International borders in Africa have been a recurring source of conflict and friction ever since the major European powers of the era sat down at the Berlin Conference in 1884 to divvy up the continent among themselves.

As the largest African country in terms of area with nine different nations sitting on its borders, Sudan has experienced its fair share of disputes over boundaries.

One concerns the so-called Illemi Triangle, a mostly barren chunk of territory along Sudan's border with Kenya, which was originally assigned to the Anglo-Egyptian administration that ruled Sudan from 1898 until 1956.

Responsibility for the 3,800-square-mile parcel of land was transferred to the British colonial administration in Nairobi in 1926, as the area was deemed too remote for Khartoum to effectively protect the region's nomadic inhabitants from attacks by tribesmen living in Southern Sudan.

Maps subsequently published in Britain in the 1930s showed the Ilemi Triangle to be clearly within the official borders of Sudan, but control over the region stayed in Kenyan hands after the neighbouring countries became independent from Britain.

The treaty ending Sudan's first civil war in 1972 granted a limited degree of autonomy to the country's southern states. The regional government set up under that peace agreement tried to reassert Sudanese claims of sovereignty over the Ilemi Triangle.

Those efforts had yielded no tangible results when Sudan was plunged back into civil war in 1983, and the regional Government of Southern Sudan has shown little inclination to revisit the topic with Kenyan officials since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

Some government officials, however, maintain the disputed area is still on the southern agenda. "Its (the Ilemi triangle's) return to Southern Sudan will be decided upon after the (2011) referendum (on whether Southern Sudan maintains unity with the north or secedes)," Central



Mustafa Okelo Kologbong



Equatoria state Governor Gen. Clement Wani told *In Sudan*.

Border issues have also occasionally sown discord between Sudan and Uganda. Last year, authorities in the Ugandan district of Moyo unilaterally moved an international border checkpoint located in the community of Afoji to a place that officials of the Southern Sudanese county of Kajo Keji consider to be under their jurisdiction.

“The Ugandan authorities have moved deeper into Sudan and want to set up their own administration in our *bomas* (areas) like Luteba, Moijo and Duwani,” said Kajo Keji County Commissioner Muki Batali. “This is not acceptable, and one day it may bring confrontation.”

As another case, modern maps show the town of Nimule to be clearly within Sudan and the nearby district of Arua lying in Ugandan territory.

But in the early years of the 19th century, Nimule actually belonged to Uganda and Arua was part of Sudan before a re-drawing of existing boundaries reassigned the two communities. The natives of the area suggest 1921 to be the year of the border changes.

Before Sudan's independence (in 1956), little distinction existed between Ugandans and Sudanese living in the towns of Nimule

and Moyo, recalled area native Mustafa Okelo Kologbong, a Second World War veteran currently living in Juba.

"Under the East African Protectorate, there was no passport required from the Sudanese at the border when entering Uganda. That is why I was easily recruited in Kampala in 1942 into the army. The south was more connected to East Africa than to Khartoum."

A road forms a segment of Sudan's frontier with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In the Border Township of Bazi, Morobo County in Central Equatoria State the two countries' national flags can be seen on opposite sides of that road. This can pose unique challenges to local police forces.

When Sharia was still the law of the land in Southern Sudan, thirsty residents would cross into the DRC to enjoy a tipple or two. That practice declined when Sharia was lifted in the 10 southern states under the terms of the CPA. But inhabitants of the area say that criminals can break the law with virtual impunity, as they can easily escape a policeman in hot pursuit by simply crossing the international border that separates the two countries.■

Story and photo by Felix Wava Leiu

NEWS BRIEFS

Special Representative bids farewell to Darfur

Rudolphe Adada, Joint Special Representative of the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), ended his two-year tour of duty on 31 August.

Mr. Adada travelled on 24 August to Nyala, South Darfur, where he visited Deputy Wali (governor) Farah Mustafa, who noted that forming UNAMID had been a challenge for African countries.

The Joint Special Representative commended South Darfur's government for its cooperation with UNAMID, calling it a model sector. Observing that UNAMID deployment had now reached 75%, he pointed to the decreased level of violence in Darfur.

"Long range patrols to assess the situation continue to increase in the countryside as well as in towns and cities," Mr. Adada said. The mission was planning long-range patrols in rural areas, 24-hour stays in internally displaced person camps and more night patrols to maintain security and protect civilians.

Mr. Adada visited West Darfur on 25 August, meeting in Zalingei with Commissioner Col. Yahya Hussein Ali. In El Geneina, he met with Deputy Wali Sanussi Bashir and other state officials.

Food insecurity threatening south, UN official says

Current conflicts as well as drought in Southern Sudan could push many people in the region into food insecurity, the World Food Programme's (WFP) representative in Sudan said on 23 August.

Speaking at a Khartoum press conference, Kenro Oshidari noted that 2009 had seen several conflicts in the south in states like Jonglei and Upper Nile as well as Lords' Resistance Army (LRA) attacks in Western Equatoria.

The region also had poor rains in May, negatively affecting the short-term sorghum crop usually harvested in August, Mr. Oshidari said. "What happens therefore is that the hunger period is prolonged until October or November, when the medium-term sorghum crop is harvested."

Compounding matters, the WFP representative noted that prices were high this year for both local and imported food, but low for livestock. "They only get half the amount of sorghum that they used to get by selling one cow, for instance."

According to WFP's October 2008 Annual Needs and Livelihoods Assessment (ANLA), the agency was planning to assist about one million people in Southern Sudan in 2009. But a recent mid-term review of the ANLA suggested that an additional 300,000 people will need urgent assistance between now and December.

Six states -- Jonglei, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Western Bahr El-Ghazal, Warrap and Eastern Equatoria -- were affected more than others, Mr. Oshidari said. Of the extra 22,000 metric tonnes of food needed, about half must be air dropped in, as many areas were cut off during the rainy season.

The total amount for food assistance, along with requests from UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization in the areas of health, nutrition and agriculture, came to \$44 million, which was officially appealed in August from Juba, the WFP representative said.

In addition to the south, Mr. Oshidari noted that about 70% of total WFP assistance for Sudan went to about 3.6 million people

in Darfur. Challenges there included deteriorating security and the expulsion last March of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the country.

The WFP was also assisting with food in the Three Areas -- Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. And it was providing development assistance like school meals in places like Red Sea, Kassala, and Northern Kordofan states.

Mr. Oshidari said some \$870 million would be needed to fulfill food needs in Sudan for 2010. "Our donors have been very generous and we have been tremendously grateful for that, but I hope this generosity will continue on."

Fire sparks fuel shortage in Yambio

A fire consumed a tanker truck and three containers on 22 August in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, cutting petrol supplies and pushing up area fuel prices.

The tanker at Kenyan-owned HASS petroleum station was transferring 30,000 litres of petrol into a container when the generator overheated and caught fire, according to company acting supervisor Laurence Enosa.

Leaping through the plastic transfer piping, the fire erupted on top of the container and spread to two others containing diesel and kerosene. No casualties were reported, but the truck and containers were destroyed.

As HASS is the largest fuel company in Yambio, the town is now facing shortages and a rise in the petrol price, which soared from 3.5 SDG (\$1.40) per litre to as much as 6 SDG (\$2.40) in some areas.

Motorcyclists carrying passengers in the town known as *boda-boda* drivers doubled their fares from 2 SDG (\$.80) to 4 SDG or simply packed up and left town due to lack of petrol.

HASS Petroleum's manager was unavailable for comment on how the company would manage the shortage. But Mr. Enosa said its Juba branch would arrange within a week to supply its customers, as efforts were made to complete a permanent station in Yambio in two to three months' time.

The fuel problem may hamper some agencies, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), from delivering vital humanitarian aid. "If the situation is not rescued immediately, it may put us in a difficult position of delivering food to thousands affected ... by the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) attacks," said UNHCR Yambio Head of Office Farhat Jabee.



Burnt-out truck and containers at HASS petroleum, Yambio.
Photo: UNMIS/Ojja Bosco

Erasing the war

With its rich soil, abundant grazing land, numerous water bodies and lion's share of the country's oil, Southern Sudan's Unity State could be looking at a sunny future.

"If we utilize our land properly, we can become number one suppliers of food and energy for the whole of Sudan," State Energy and Mining Committee Chairperson William Ruei Lok said from his office in the capital Bentiu.

The state still has a ways to go in reaching that goal, as it is only just emerging from a devastating civil war. But helping it along is a section of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which granted oil-producing states two per cent of crude revenue produced within their borders.

With its portion of the oil revenue trickling in for four years, Unity State has now opened a new chapter of development that is gradually erasing the ugly remnants of war.

Bentiu is slowly becoming a modern city, as roads are paved or graded, electricity is installed and main routes equipped with street lights. "The war denied us access to development, despite the presence of huge oil deposits on our land, but ... we have now seen some benefits," said town resident Samuel Kuol.

The state government has also begun to rebuild its offices and public buildings, including Faustino Puok Majok conference

hall, which housed the traditional chiefs meeting in May. "Because of the good facilities we have, said energy chairperson Lok.

As a new project, the state built the Southern Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation, initially used for census analysis and now devoted to capacity building workshops and other data collection activities.

Recently, it signed a five-year multi-million dollar contract with a Chinese company to rehabilitate collapsing government institutions. And it is constructing housing for state citizens, who will pay for the property in installments.

Oil companies are lending a hand through their community development programme. "We have built nine secondary schools, health centers-- one in each county -- under the community development programme. We propose the location and the design, then the company constructs it," said Mr. Lok.

Thanks also to oil, the state has hired over 200 foreign teachers from Kenya and Uganda since 2006 to supplement the yawning gap of educators in the state.

The state has even successfully invested in local sports talent, according to Unity State Coordinator in Juba, Samuel Loang Mayen. "We emerged the champions in the basketball tournament held in Juba this year, topping all 10 southern states."

Several shortcomings

Despite these advances, the state still suffers from several shortcomings, including medical care, noted Dr. Martin Kenyi, Bentiu head of the non-governmental organization CARE International. "We have beautiful hospitals constructed under the community development program, but ... there are no drugs and qualified health workers."

Educational facilities are also lacking, with a few schools housed in permanent buildings, but the majority in temporary structures or holding classes under trees. Qualified teachers and essential school items like books are needed, although UNICEF has been supplying materials to help fill the gap.

Good jobs are scarce, although oil exploration was initially viewed as a major source of employment for local people. "Our children are employed as casual laborers in the oil fields, while people from outside are the ones given the good jobs that earn better pay," Mr. Lok noted.

Higher salaries would help meet the area's steep prices for food, which comes from northern Sudan and neighbouring countries like Uganda and Kenya. "When you have just emerged from war, you can not provide all you need, although our land is potentially capable of producing enough food for domestic and foreign consumption," said State Coordinator Mayen.

Efforts are underway to reduce the state's reliance on imported goods through a large-scale mechanized farming project. Governor Taban Deng "has initiated a programme to support farmers with the provision of seeds and tractors to encourage them to produce more food," said Mr. Mayen. ■

Story and photo by Emmanuel Kenyi

"Bentiu has become a centre for major conferences and meetings in Southern Sudan"



Census Commission beside Faustino Puok Majok Conference Hall, Bentiu

