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United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

Boating on the Nile

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FRONT COVER: Traditional boat built in Omdurman. Photo:UNMIS/Paul Banks

BACK COVER: *Tuktuk* in Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Paul Banks

Diary

8 August: Meeting with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Mutrif Siddiq, Joint Special Representative for Darfur Ibrahim Gambari expressed regrets on behalf of the African Union-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) over recent events in Kalma and Hamadiya internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in South Darfur and their possible negative impacts on the future of the peace process.

9 August: Blue Nile State members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and National Congress Party (NCP) formed a six-member parliamentary committee charged with raising awareness about popular consultations on Comprehensive Peace Agreement implementation in the state.

10 August: The SPLM and NCP began pre-referendum talks on wealth and power-sharing, demarcating the border, defining citizenship and sharing the Nile waters in preparation for the southern self-determination vote, scheduled for 9 January 2011.

14 August: Two Jordanian police advisors with UNAMID were abducted in Nyala, Southern Darfur, as they were walking to a UNAMID transport dispatch point 100 meters from their residence. Three days later the two police advisors were released unharmed in Kass, Southern Darfur.

16 August: Members of the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission elected a nine-member steering committee to oversee its activities as the region approaches the self-determination referendum three days later the two police advisor were released unharmed in Kass, Southern Darfur.

17-18 August: The UNMIS Indian contingent held free veterinary camps at Denthoma and Paloich *payams* (townships) in Melut County, Upper Nile State, treating 1,235 animals for various ailments.

19 August: Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management James Kok Ruea said at a UN and aid group meeting in Juba that the international community must prepare to provide massive humanitarian assistance to the region after the 2011 referendum, in the event of violence or an influx of refugees into the region.

23 August: In his last briefing to the Security Council, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes urged all parties to the conflict in Darfur to ensure that humanitarian workers were free of harassment and intimidation in the steadily deteriorating situation in the region.

23 August: Members of the 10 state referendum high committees were sworn in at a ceremony in the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba. Consisting of five members each, the committees will be responsible for appointing subsidiary bodies at the state and county levels as well as overall administration of the referendum.

23 August: During the annual Ramadan breakfast of the Coptic community in Khartoum, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir announced the launch in Southern Sudan of the government's campaign to promote the country's unity.

26 August: Meeting in Khartoum, representatives of the African Union (AU), UNAMID and the United States voiced their support for Sudan's new strategy to resettle displaced persons and develop Darfur. Attending the gathering were Chairman of the AU Panel on Sudan Thabo Mbeki, Joint Special Representative of UNAMID Ibrahim Gambari, US Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gratton and Sudanese Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salahuddin Attabani.

26 August: A three-day forum for Western Bahr El-Ghazal State commissioners ended at Wau's Peace Hall with recommendations on how to better ensure security, deliver basic services and support the southern referendum.

30 August: At a ceremony held at its headquarters outside Juba, the SPLA unveiled a new unit seeking to complete demobilization of all remaining child soldiers. Under an action plan signed with UNICEF in November 2009, the SPLA pledged to demobilize within a year's time all estimated 1,200 teenage troops then in its ranks and arrange for their transition into civilian life.

1 September: The first referenda support base (RSB) constructed by UNMIS was inaugurated in the Western Equatoria State county of Mundri West. UNMIS intends to establish a presence in all of Southern Sudan's 79 counties to help monitor the referendum and provide logistical support as well as technical advice.

On every corner

One are the days just a few years ago when UN and relief agency 4x4s seemed to dominate the mainly dirt streets of Khartoum.

Now, the city's newly paved roads are teeming with transport, including a wide variety of taxis.

Paying customers can hop on white metre and "negotiable" yellow cabs, six-passenger *amjad* (mini-vans) or glorified four-seater motorbikes called *tuktuks* (rickshaws).

Amjads and *tuktuks* are the cheapest way of getting around the city and also easy to find. In abundance on the main streets, prospective passengers can wave their right hand up and down to hail them, if drivers haven't already stopped to ask if they need a lift.

"It's easy to use an *amjad* when going downtown, (to the) taxi park, the airport or on a city tour because most of us are familiar with the roads and have fair prices," said *amjad* driver Fatti Elias. "And we can easily maneuver our way to take you there, compared to others."

Business is good, according to Mr. Elias, who earns an average of 150 SDG (\$63) per day and has also managed to acquire a 14-passenger van. "But it (the van) is making less money compared to what I'm getting per day with the *amjad*."

It helped if the driver spoke another language, like English, in attracting customers, said Mr. Elias. "Most of the Sudanese drivers (only speak) Arabic ... as it's widely spoken in the city, compared to any other languages."

Cheaper than the *amjad*, but slower and less stable on rutted roads, the Korean-made *tuktuk* began appearing on Khartoum roads in 1999. Since then, its numbers have multiplied and the vehicle has spread to other areas of Sudan.

Both vehicles have become popular

among locals and foreigners. "I like it (the *tuktuk*) very much because you can sit inside it comfortably, not like a motorcycle (taxi) in Kampala," said Isaac Kisingani, a Ugandan working for UNMIS.

Tuktuk can be found in the southern capital of Juba, but few are in use due to poor roads. Most people use motorcycle taxis commonly known as *boda-boda*, which also easily avoid traffic and congestion.

So called for its rattling engine sound, the *tuktuk*'s popularity has unfortunately sent the price soaring. "It used to cost 4,000 to 5,000 SDG (\$1,700-\$2,100), but these days it's gone up to 9,000 to 10,000 SDG (\$3,800-\$4,200), as it gained a market," said Mujait Zakani, a *tuktuk* driver in Khartoum's Haj Yousef area.

Tuktuk drivers also face a steep license fee of 1,200 SDG (\$508) per year and road taxes of 30 SDG (\$14) per month, levied on them by local authorities. *Amjad* drivers pay the same license fee, and pay 1 SDG at taxi stations around the city as road tax.

According to Mohammed Ali, a traffic police officer in Haj Yousef, *tuktuks* were also restricted to locations with less congestion and accidents, as some ignored road regulations.

Moreover, both vehicles are only legally authorized for short distances due to their insurance policies. "The *amjad* insurance policy covers only compensation of the taxi and driver in case of accident," noted Mr. Elias. "This is very risky for the passengers ... (who) will not be compensated."

Somewhat less convenient but more comfortable than the *tuktuk* and *amjad* are dispatch, meter taxis, introduced to the Khartoum market earlier this year. Rather than haggling with the driver about the fare, meters calculate the fee based on time and distance.

"We don't overcharge our customers based on their appearance," said Hussan Ali, dispatch director for Khartoum meter taxi services, referring to the tendency of some drivers to overcharge foreigners.

"Our (fare) is automatically calculated by the machine."

The meter company now had 15 taxis spread throughout Khartoum, with 10 more on the way, said the dispatch director.

The taxis sport the slogan "Under your disposal around the clock", said Mr. Ali. "You just call them and they will be available for you at any time."

Of course, meter taxis can become expensive when delayed in heavy traffic with the device ticking away and the pounds adding up.

But Mr. Ali said the company had put measures in place to ensure customers were not unduly charged in times of congestion. "Our drivers normally avoid such situations by taking less congested routes or short cuts to ensure no delay in a passenger's time." ■

Ojja Bosco

Photos: Ojja Bosco and Paul Banks

Fatti Elias in his *amjad*



New dispatch metre taxi.



Tuktuk in Khartoum.



Boating on the Nile

With the help of a few oil drums and pieces of iron, a Malakal man has transformed travel in Upper Nile State during the rainy season.

Boats made by Mohamed Hamza Abaker have opened up trade and reunited communities previously cut off by flooded roads eight months of the year.

Before Mohamed began building boats in 1991, river transport depended on local canoes carved out of tree trunks.

Traveling no farther than neighbouring villages, the slow-moving vessels had little space for people or cargo.

Covering the 90 kilometres by canoe from Malakal to Tonga, for instance, took a day and a half. Mohamed's boats make the journey in about six hours.

Known locally as Mohamed Tokor, the craftsman learned his trade in 1976 at the age of 12, when he was apprenticed for six months to a Lutheran World Relief boat-building project in Juba.

"This was not easy because of my age, as the work involved lifting bags of cement (used to build the boats)", said Mohamed, shaking his head.

He worked for the Lutheran organization for the next nine years, building boats, constructing schools and even cultivating fields. But he eventually returned to Malakal to pursue his first passion.

"I came back in December 1989 with the idea of ... boat building," said Mohamed.

He began his boatyard in 1991, when Malakal was a Sudan Armed Forces garrison town and the country's civil war was at its peak.

"I bought some empty drums from NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and Sudan Armed Forces," the builder said. "Out of these, I made my first boat,

which was 12 metres long and could carry 15 passengers."

The vessel's mainframe consisted of 16 iron angles, with 14 oil drums flattened out and welded together to make up its watertight body.

Each boat cost roughly 571 SDG (\$241) to build. The finished A-frame craft was fitted with a 15 horse power engine, for another 5,000 SDG (\$2,118).

National Security agents at the time warned Mohamed to make no more boats, as they could fall into the hands of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, which would use them to transport men and equipment.

"But I never gave up the idea," said Mohamed, although he asked boat customers to obtain approval from the security forces first. "Instead I went to Canal Town (Jonglei State) to collect old ship container sheeting for the boats. They were stronger than the ... drums previously used to build the first boat."

Canal Town had become a depository of ship containers that had transported materials in the mid-to-late 1970s to build the ill-fated Jonglei Canal, which was never completed.

Beginning in 1995, Mohamed and his students also ran their boats along the rivers, transporting goods and people up the Nile to Melut, down the Sobat River and up to Nasser. They also made trips to Fangak and Tonga along the Bahr El-Jebel River.

As the war was still raging, they often faced the risk of attack. "It was not easy -- we were often shot at, some boats were sunk and some of my pupils were killed, including my own brother," said Mohamed.

Bigger boats

More recently, Mohamed has ventured into barge-like 25 metre boats that carry 25



Mohamed Hamza Abaker at his Malakal boatyard.

metric tons of goods and 45 passengers, and 37 metre craft that transport 96 tons and 90 persons.

To date, he has built 18 of the smaller and 24 of the larger vessels. A timely process, it takes 21 days to complete a small boat and 45 for a big one, when all the materials are available.

"The prices for materials are higher than before. This is main reason why there are boats still lying here unfinished," said Mohamed, adding that he currently only built two or three boats per year.

High prices for materials like zinc, iron, plywood and rabbit wire were making it difficult to survive, he added. Iron angles, for example, ranged from 67 SDG (\$28) to 135 SDG (\$57) now, as compared to 30 SDG (\$12) to 96 SDG (\$40) in 1991.

The high price of fuel and taxes had also reduced interest among potential boat investors, Mohamed said.

A trip from Malakal to Renk and back with a 90-seater vessel cost 3,500 SDG (\$1,500) in fuel, noted boat owner Onyuti Gordon Shooqi. As passengers paid 70 SDG (\$30) in fare, a full boat yielded 6,300

Unfinished boat in Malakal.



Unfinished boat at Abarouf boatyard, Omdurman.



Metal boat built in Malakal.



A family tale

Relaxing against a few sacks under a reed-roofed shelter on the banks of the Nile, Hussien Nasur Hamed said he built his first boat out of wood that was hand-carved from logs.

His family, the first boat-builders in the Abarouf area of Omdurman, Khartoum, had been constructing vessels this way for 150 years, said the 74-year-old boat-builder.

They began the trade in 1861, after arriving in the area with a group of people accompanying Sudanese religious leader Mohamed Ahmed El Mahdi from Labab Island near Dongola, Northern State.

One boat took about 10 logs, which Hussien bought from area sellers. "These logs mainly come from a type of acacia tree in the Blue Nile or in Upper Nile areas," he said, adding that the price ranged from 70 to 100 SDG (\$30 to \$42), depending on size.

Assisted by his two sons and two carpenters, he carved the logs into smoothly curved wood. Handsaws were then used to transform them into a boat shape, which Hussien said automatic ones could not achieve.

"I have two carpenters who diligently cut the log into pieces easy to join together using locally made nails," Hussien said.

The price of a boat depends on its length, which is measured using the builders' arms. A five-arm boat costs 1,500 SDG (\$635.59), while a 12-arm runs about 15,000 SDG.

"Now the boats are used for fishing," said Hussien. "In the past they were the only means of transport besides donkeys, horses and camels."

Some fishermen prefer metal boats, which cost about the same but are more tightly sealed. "It takes a lot of energy to put pieces of cloth between minor spaces (in the wooden boat) to prevent water leakages," said Ganim Mohamed Ibrahim, a fisherman from Geithiana town, south of Jebel Aulia.

"There is a boat builder in Tuti Island who makes boats out of iron sheets and iron angles for the same price" said another area fisherman, Ali Ibrahim Shamali. "These ones are lighter and easy to paddle with less effort, as compared with the wooden ones."

SDG (\$2,600), of which 350 SDG (\$148) went to the driver.

When Mohamed does get orders for boats, his return on the 6,000 SDG (\$2,542) for a small boat and 8,000 SDG (\$3,389) for a large one is diminished by expenses.

Money to pay his 12 trainees, buy fuel for generators, maintain his workshop and supply its monthly rent of 400 SDG (\$169) eats up two-thirds of it. "I earn just about 7,000 SDG (\$2,966) per year."

While boatbuilding may not make Mohamed rich, it has gained him a solid reputation in the community. Many customers believe his boats are the strongest and most durable on the Malakal market.

"I had a boat built in 2004 by Mohamed. This boat did last a long time as compared to others," said Malakal resident Andrew Kong Kur.

This means the craftsman has remained a step ahead of his pupils, as the other two boat builders in the area were trained by Mohamed himself.■

Francis Shuei Diu
Photos: Paul Banks

Boatyard at Abarouf, Omdurman.



Completed boat in Abarouf boatyard, Omdurman.



Hussien Nasur Hamed at his boatyard in Abarouf, Omdurman.



Fisherman Ganim Mohamed, Omdurman.

Handsaw at Abarouf boatyard, Omdurman.



Once a lifeline

Down through the centuries, water has been the main mode of transport connecting North Sudan to the largely undeveloped south.

It became the only viable and affordable means of transport for moving goods within Southern Sudan during the country's second civil war, as roads across the region became littered with land mines.

Water transport remains the most affordable option for moving large quantities of cargo. Seventeen barges operated by seven private companies continue to ply the White Nile on a monthly basis from the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba to the river port of Kosti.

Vessels going downriver from Juba commonly carry timber, bamboo products, papyrus mats and beer – though the last commodity can go no farther than the Upper Nile State town of Renk due to the long-standing ban on alcoholic beverages in North Sudan.

Barges coming from the north are often laden with soft drinks, wheat flour and onions.

The Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) River Transport Department in Juba assesses docking fees to the companies that own the barges.

A new dock and maintenance yard for barges in Juba is currently under construction by the GoSS Ministry of Transport and Roads. Its capacity for servicing barges will surpass that of the city's old quay.

The 1,463-kilometre voyage from Juba to Kosti typically features stops at the towns of Terekeka, Bor, Adok, Malakal and Renk.

Measuring 10 metres in width and 40 metres in length, a barge can handle up to 400 tons of wheat flour or sugar.

Fully loaded barges often travel in convoys of two to four vessels that are driven by a 'pusher', similar to a tugboat. River currents have a major bearing on the duration of the trip.

"Coming from Kosti to Juba with thousands of tons of goods can take us close to 15 or 20 days," said Mohamed Suleiman, skipper of the barge El Radii.



WFP moving food through Sobat River Corridor, Upper Nile State.

"Coming from Kosti to Juba with thousands of tons of goods can take us close to 15 or 20 days."

"But returning to the north takes us about 10 days."

River transport has played a vital role in operations of UN agencies in Sudan. The World Food Programme has used barges to transport food aid and UNMIS relies on vessels to move vehicles and building materials from the north to its facilities in Southern Sudan.

The White Nile became a crucial lifeline for the city of Juba during the 22-year civil war that ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

Food was brought by motor boats and canoes from Gondokoro Island and the downstream towns of Terekeka and Mongalla.

A motor boat called Sirnum belonged to four residents of Terekeka County and delivered food to Juba, returning home with salt, soap, oil and clothing.

But such boats have declined sharply in number as roads were cleared of land mines and ground transport once again became a feasible alternative to the river.

"This is now a past glory for us and the local boat builders," said Richard Abujalang, one of the Sirnum's co-owners. "As peace now prevails, the land routes are opened."

With the end of fighting, the International Organization for Migration hired a barge to repatriate thousands of internally displaced Southern Sudanese who fled north during the civil war.

But all barges currently operating on the White Nile are cargo vessels, which are unsuitable for use by passengers.

The Southern Sudan Trans Nile Company plans to launch a passenger barge service from Juba to Kosti, which will charge a fraction of what it costs to fly from a southern state capital to Khartoum, according to the company's administrative officer Emmanuel Taban.

"When this is done," said Mr. Taban, "the people along this route will have their transport problems resolved." ■

Felix Waya Leju

Photos: Tim Mckulka



Keeping roads open

UNMIS Roaming Roads Maintenance Program on Yei-Kaya road, Central Equatoria State.

Like so many other overland routes in Southern Sudan, the road from the Central Equatoria State town of Yei to the border town of Kaya is out of service for several months of the year during the region's rainy season.

The segment between Kaya and the town of Morobo that snakes through the Pokii Hills has been especially prone to potholing with the onset of the rains.

That has posed serious problems in the past for area residents who are so dependent on imported food and building materials from neighbouring Uganda.

But a major road works programme led by UNMIS is upgrading ground transport conditions significantly in that corner of Southern Sudan.

The drive from Kaya to Morobo used to take four hours, but can now be covered in as little as 45 minutes, which has bolstered the local economy.

"Our customers are benefiting since the road is now maintained," said Morobo County Engineer Mawa John. "Business is now booming, especially at the entrance to

Southern Sudan (from Uganda)."

The rehabilitation of the Yei-Kaya road is one in a series of ground transport infrastructure improvements involving UNMIS personnel in Southern Sudan.

A team of UN Volunteers and Sudanese independent contractors upgraded a 12-kilometer-long road linking Yei to an airstrip that services the town during the first half of 2008.

In partnership with the World Food Programme and the UN Office for Projects, UNMIS has also provided bridges and building materials to six locations in Southern Sudan, along with assistance from engineers in the Bangladesh Battalion.

Another seven bridges are scheduled to be installed in the region.

The team of 10 UN Volunteers and 70 Sudanese labourers have been adding gravel and widening segments of the 72-kilometer-long road from Yei to Kaya since last year.

"This keeps open the lines of commerce to the south of Sudan with its

traditional trading partners," said James Boynton, chief of UNMIS Integrated Support Services.

The road works have also lowered the frequency of traffic accidents along the stretch between Morobo and Kaya.

UNMIS project engineer Arip Kituyan Olekambainei has been in charge of the work on the Yei-Kaya road, and UNV Stephen Aguta of Nigeria has led the team, who will return to Juba to support the rehabilitation of the regional capital's airport.

"We call the UNVs working on this project ambassadors of the UN," said Anil Kapoor, outgoing deputy chief of Integrated Support Services. "It will be of great help to the nation when this road starts to function normally."

Morobo County Engineer Mawa John said maintenance of the upgraded road would be funded by a tax to be levied on truck drivers and other motorists. ■

Taban Keny

Photos: Isaac Gideon

Man pushing sack of fresh maize on unfinished Yei-Kaya road.



Controlling vehicle movement during work on Yei-Kaya road.





Filling southern skies

Before Sudan's peace accord was signed five years ago, the only aircraft allowed to land at Juba International Airport belonged to the Sudanese Armed Forces and international aid agencies.

Five years later, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines and Egypt Air are among the better-known regional airlines flying into the now bustling airport.

"On average about 80 aircraft, including (those owned by) UNMIS and the UN Humanitarian Air Service, land and depart daily," said Juba Airport manager Riang Ruei Duop.

The Kenyan airline Jetlink became the first commercial international carrier to start operating the Juba-Nairobi route in 2006.

Air Uganda and Ethiopian Airlines quickly followed with the introduction of direct flights to Entebbe and Addis Ababa, respectively. Kenya Airways launched its service to Nairobi in June of this year, and two months later Egypt Air became the latest foreign airline to enter the market.

Jetlink operates two daily flights while Ethiopian Airlines, Air Uganda and Kenya

Airways fly once a day. Egypt Air is flying to Cairo twice a week.

"I went to Nairobi a week ago and I am now back, which is very good," said Juba resident Elizabeth Aliet. "This is really a big change for us."

Still more airlines may be on the way. "Recently we received requests from Bahrain Air to fly to Juba directly from Dubai and from South African Airways," said Anthony Makana, Minister of Transport and Roads of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS).

But with only four months left before the January 2011 self-determination referendum in Southern Sudan, concerns are rising about the inadequate facilities of the airport, which its manager acknowledges.

"The airport has one 2.4-kilometre runway which needs upgrading," said Mr. Duop. The airport also lacks a hangar, a refuelling station and designated parking.

The current terminal is quite small and lacks air conditioning, which can cause discomfort to passengers during the dry

season when temperatures can climb as high as 40 degrees centigrade.

The absence of modern security screening equipment forces security personnel to inspect carry-on bags by hand.

"It is disappointing that they open your bag and scatter your things while searching," said Ms. Aliet. "It is also very hot in there and you wait sweating."

The steep cost of flying in and out of Juba is another source of complaint.

"I paid 320 US dollars for a one way Juba-Kampala flight," said Anke Kluppels, a program officer with the non-governmental organization Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, who visits Southern Sudan regularly from her base in Uganda. "That is about twice the cost of flying from Kampala to Nairobi."

The GoSS transport and roads ministry's director general of air transport, Patrick Aiteng Lotwa, said lack of funds had hampered plans to renovate and expand the

Wau Airport Manager Joseph Akot.



Feeder Airlines General Manager Capt. David Martin.



Airplane at Juba airport.





Juba International Airport, Central Equatoria State.

terminal building.

A new terminal is currently under construction and the length of the existing runway will be extended to 3.1 kilometres, according to Mr. Duop.

"We have introduced electronic screening at the terminal entrance and completed fencing of the airport premises to ensure more security," he said.

Within borders

To the northwest of the region, Wau Airport has emerged as a regional hub connecting residents of the greater Bahr El-Ghazal region to the national capital in Khartoum.

"We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of passengers, especially in the last three years," said Acting Airport Manager Joseph Akot. During the first half of 2010, 5,200 passengers flew out of Wau and another 4,500 passengers landed at the airport.

One of the beneficiaries has been Oliver Marko Wondi, who used to spend a week travelling by land from Khartoum to Wau when he was enrolled as a student at the Khartoum branch of the University of Juba.

"Now, everybody can travel and reach Wau by air within hours from Khartoum," he said. "(It) is a good sign of change for all of us."

But another passenger hastened to point out the high cost of travelling by air, which limits the number of people who can

access that mode of transport.

"Although travelling by planes is smooth and safe, it is very difficult to pay for the ticket easily," said Wau resident Rina James. "It is very expensive."

The price of one round-trip ticket from Wau to Khartoum is 460 Sudanese pounds (\$175). The cost of a return ticket for that route originating in Khartoum is only slightly cheaper at 425 Sudanese pounds (\$160).

Feeder Airlines General Manager Captain David Martin attributed the steep cost of air travel in Southern Sudan to differences in the price of aviation fuel between the north and south.

"The cost of fuel in Southern Sudan is three times higher than the cost of fuel in Khartoum and in the whole north," he said.

According to Mr. Martin, the same gallon of fuel that costs \$2.20 in Khartoum goes for \$7.37 in Juba.

While most planes flying into Wau come from other cities in Sudan, the airport occasionally receives charter flights from Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Like its counterpart in Juba, the airport in Wau was mainly a military facility during the country's second civil war. Its 2.8-kilometre-long runway is now used by small commercial airplanes and helicopters.

Feeder Airlines, Badre Airlines and Tarco Airlines currently fly to the city three times a week, while Sudan Airways and 748 Air Services fly there twice a week.

As in Juba, the sharp rise

in the airport's passenger volumes has not been matched by a renovation of its buildings and facilities.

"This (departure) hall was built 30 years ago, and till today there is no change," said Mr. Martin, a Wau native who is also a licensed pilot. "The passengers do not have a proper (security) screening."

The lack of a secure fence around the perimeter of the airport can pose a serious safety hazard for airplane crews. Mr. Martin said he had to abort landings on three separate occasions last July after spotting people and dogs on the runway.

"As you can see now, people can enter the airfield from anywhere because it is not properly fenced," he added.

Airport Manager Joseph Akot recognizes a pressing need to bring the runway and adjacent facilities up to international standards. "We lack a lot of services," he conceded. "But we are still trying to serve our people better with what we have at our disposal."

Mr. Martin foresees an increase in the number of passengers flying into Southern Sudan as the 2011 self-determination referendum approaches.

"We have a plan to increase the number of flights to the south," he added, "based on the availability of funds."■

Negus Hadera and
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos
Photos: Tim Mckulka

Juba International Airport, Central Equatoria State.





Sheikh Abdallah (in black).





The Sufi way



The small village of Umm Aidan in rural Sennar State, North Sudan, is home to a devout group of Sufis, an Islamic sect.

As the muezzin calls the faithful to prayers on Friday, the Muslim holiday, young boys in the *khalwa* or religious school rock back and forth memorizing *surras* (chapters) from the Quran.

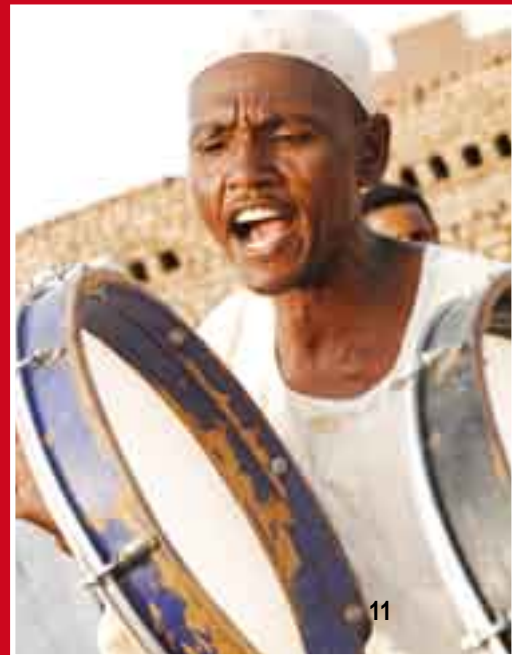
The men from the village begin chanting and dancing as the temperature cools in late afternoon. A new *sheikh* has been anointed and the community is dancing to celebrate the event.

The crowd is working itself into a fever pitch as gunfire punctuates the air, signifying the arrival of Sheikh Abdallah and his followers.

Entering the walled compound with a group of followers, Sheikh Abdallah releases two ostriches into the square and joins the celebrations. Music, chants of Allah and the ostriches blend into a chaotic scene as the sun sets on Umm Aidan. ■



Photos: Tim Mckulka





Knowledge as food

Daniel Khamis Mudo

The university lecture halls where Daniel Khamis Mudo has taught are a far remove from the rural community he was born into 63 years ago.

Most of the villagers in his Western Bahr El-Ghazal *payam* (township) of Bazia did not know how to read and write, but he was inspired to pursue his studies by the example of a few members of the community who had received some formal education.

As a youth, he set his sights on becoming an educator one day. Mr. Khamis enrolled at a teacher training institute in the Western Equatoria State town of Maridi in 1962 and later obtained bachelor's and master's degrees in education at two French universities.

A lecturer at the University of Juba's College of Education, Mr. Khamis said he has taught an estimated 5,000 students drawn from nearly all of the states of Sudan during his 21-year academic career.

"It was rare to see someone from my own village become a lecturer," said Mr. Khamis.

Besides the University of Juba, the father of three has taught English,

It was rare to see someone from my own village become a lecturer.

psychology and philosophy of education at both the University of Bahr El-Ghazal and the St. Paul's National Major Seminary in Khartoum.

Mr. Khamis first joined the University of Juba faculty in 1985. He moved to Khartoum in 1989 when the escalating civil war forced university officials to move the institution of higher learning to the national capital.

He is reluctant to compare the living conditions he encountered in the capital with those he experienced in Southern Sudan a quarter-century ago.

"Juba was very poor in terms of infrastructure, health facilities, electricity and water systems in 1985," he said. "It is better off now."

Successful students

Some of his more successful former students include Monsignor Roko Taban, 42, who was appointed the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Church Diocese of Malakal in Upper Nile State in 2009. Mr. Khamis taught Angelo James at the St. Paul's National Major Seminary, and that ex-student was recently elected to the National Assembly from Central Equatoria State.

His current and former pupils speak of him in glowing terms. University of Juba student Oliver Marko credits Mr. Khamis for teaching him to "salivate" for knowledge rather than just food.

"My colleagues and I will never forget Daniel Khamis in our lives," said Alfonso Cornelio Terga, an accountant with the Danish Red Cross in the Western Bahr El-Ghazal state capital of Wau. "He is a living example of hard work and dedication to students."

He is a living example of hard work and dedication to students.

He currently divides his time between the University of Juba's facilities in Khartoum and its original campus in Juba. Regardless of the outcome of the referendum in January 2011, Mr. Khamis says he will move back to Southern Sudan with his family in the near future.

Literacy rates remain shockingly low across the region, and only 12 per cent of Southern Sudanese women can read and write, according to the UN Population Fund.

But the son of humble village farmers confidently predicts a rise in literacy rates in coming years.

"Through hard work, personal initiative and commitment in education, illiteracy will reduce gradually," said Mr. Khamis. ■

Michael Wondi
Photo: Isaac Gideon

Reclaiming the trees

Abu Alaga forest near Wad Sharifey, East Sudan.

Drive a few hours north-east of Khartoum towards Kassala, near the Sudanese border with Eritrea, and you will come across acre after acre of trees.

The once barren terrain has regained its lush environment, hosting species of acacia, neem and eucalyptus on almost 28,400 hectares of land.

The area was denuded of greenery after refugees began pouring in almost 50 years ago, reaching a million by the 1980s. Struggling to survive, they used wood for cooking and shelter or cleared it for grazing and farming.

“Before the influx of Ethiopians and Eritrean refugees into eastern Sudan from the 1960s onward, the vegetation cover and landscape were intact,” said Mustafa Hassan, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Agriculture Field Assistant in Kassala.

To replenish the environment and assist remaining refugees in the area, UNHCR launched a programme in 1985 that has so far planted 19 million trees.

The first reforestation programme was implemented between 1985 and 1996 for UNHCR by ENSO, a Finnish non-governmental organization specializing in forestry, said Del Aneyth Atem, Environment Project Manager for Sudan’s National Forests Corporation (FNC).

With UNHCR support, the FNC has continued ENSO’s work since 1997, providing refugees and local people with materials, seeds and tools as well as training and technical advice on agro-forestry projects.

Some 66,000 refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea still live in 12 camps spread through four eastern and central states, and an estimated 40,000 others reside in local communities. About 2,000 new asylum-seekers arrive at the border every month.

Shagarab camp now has a community wood lot of 406 hectares (975 *feddans*) as well as three seedling nurseries, two more than last year, said Ikhlas Omer, team leader for FNC projects at Kilo 26 and Shagarab camps.

This year Shagarab’s nurseries will produce more than 54,000 seedlings of different species. They will be distributed to both refugees and locals for compound tree planting as well as communal plots, including guava and citrus species, which bear fruit in three years.

Women carry out most of the project’s activities as men are usually working outside the village.

By preserving trees and bushes, rather than cutting them down, refugees gain a source of fruit, medicine, shade and fodder. They also prevent erosion, a major concern in an area where the Sahara sands encroach further every year.

UNHCR funds reforestation and agro-forestry projects in and around the camps where its staff operate. At Kilo 26 camp, new trees and irrigated farmland cover 37 hectares.

The crops, including okra, tomato, cucumber, watermelon, beans, onion, sorghum, ground nuts and fodder for livestock, are planted between lines of trees, which create a microclimate that helps increase production and provide vegetables in the off-season.

“The project has assisted us, through agro-forestry, in the cultivation of vegetables for household consumption and for sale in local markets,” said one refugee.

Locals and refugees ensure the project’s success. Their nurseries produce 7,000-8,000 seedlings a year for fields or home gardens. The programme benefits 6,000 locals and 9,000 refugees.

“Agro-forestry provides us with daily vegetables and is a source of income,” said another refugee. “And we also obtain firewood, fencing materials and fodder from branches.”

During the dry season, communities use shade trees as shelter for themselves and their animals. The plantations have allowed refugees and locals to meet their basic needs through dry wood collection, collaborative forest management and tapping as well as collection of gum arabic.

The FNC has a training centre for refugees at the Shagarab camp, where it teaches environmental awareness,

tree planting, seedling production and alternative energy use. Locally made mud stoves have reduced fuel consumption by 40 per cent.

“Engaging refugees through this project in natural resource management has increased the refugees’ sense of ownership and responsibility, while benefiting the environment and host communities,” said UNHCR Kassala Head of Office Mohamed Dualeh. ■

Karen Ringuette
Photos: UNHCR

Refugee woman at agroforestry project, Kilo 26 Camp, East Sudan.



Tree nursery in Kilo 26 camp, East Sudan.



The voice of Miraya

A proudly smiling Sheila Keji Modi recalled that she and a fellow reporter were the first voices to be heard on *Radio Miraya*.

It was 30 June 2006, when the UN station went on air for the first time in the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba.

The historic broadcast featured a live programme with President of the Government of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit.

Ms. Modi felt honoured to be selected with Ayuen De-Gabriel, out of a team of what she described as very good reporters and presenters, to go on air with President Kiir.

"It was such a privilege and a humbling experience sitting close to President Salva Kiir," she said.

Now, four years after its first broadcast, *Miraya* airs 24 hours, seven days a week.

The station has expanded from its initial coverage of Central Equatoria State to six of the 10 states in Southern Sudan.

Radio Miraya Senior Radio Producer Neeraj Bali noted that the station had transmitters in 14 locations -- Juba, Wau, Malakal, Rumbek, Maridi, Yambio, Torit, Yei, Bor Aweil, Melut, Bentiu, Nasser, and Kapoeta.

"We are installing two new transmitters -- one in Kajokeji and one in Nimule -- in August and all going well, we should be transmitting there before the end of the month."

The management are also in discussions with *Internews* to broadcast for a few hours every day on its community

radio stations in Leer, Turalei, Kurmuk and Kauda.

New directions

To reflect changing times, *Miraya* launched new programming in March, following a survey of different stakeholders.

"We commissioned a qualitative survey in 2009 to analyse what the audiences like, what they do not like, what they would like to see and so on. This study was done in the north and south," *Miraya* Editor-in-Chief Jean-Claude Labrecque said.

The new programming includes current affairs in the national and regional level, women's issues, youth programming and a roundtable discussion on national events every night.

The news broadcasts have also changed to accommodate audiences who go to work early in the morning. Now, there is an additional morning news hour from 6.00 a.m. to 7.10 a.m.

Staff numbers have also increased from an initial 20 to 139 in Sudan. At 100, Sudanese nationals make up the bulk of employees.

"The national employees are the backbone and the sinew of *Miraya*," said senior producer Bali.

Covering the referendum

Being the only regional broadcaster in Southern Sudan, *Miraya* played a

successful role in civic education and election coverage in April, said the radio's officer-in-charge Helene Papper.

"We received a lot of feedback from our audiences before, during and after the elections through the mobile phone short message, short code service," she said.

Hundreds of Juba residents also attended the fourth anniversary celebrations this past June. "The community is very much attached to the radio station," Ms. Papper said.

Miraya is expected to duplicate its election function in the forthcoming 2011 self-determination referendum in the south.

"The Southern Sudan referendum is one of the most important events in African history this century," said *Miraya*'s first chief, Leon Willems, who now works with *Radio Dabanga* in Darfur.

"If *Miraya* is going to continue to be an important factor in informing the people about the referendum, you have to make sure you have correspondence in all corners of Southern Sudan," he added.

Miraya has an ambitious expansion plan to 16 new sites. "We want to expand our reach to cover as many county capitals, especially in areas with no radio coverage at all," Ms. Papper said.

The radio station will introduce new programmes targeting referendum news and civic education. It also plans to invite members of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) to the studio to discuss with audiences their roles as well as the Southern Sudan Referendum Act 2009.

"We will have some drama, skits, and public service announcements in different local languages, in partnership with the SSRC," Mr. Labrecque said. The radio's website, *Mirayafm.org*, which targets Sudanese in the diaspora, will have a special referendum section.

Training of staff will be another major

Former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jan Pronk being interviewed on Radio Miraya in Juba.





Miraya's fourth anniversary celebration, Juba, Central Equatoria State.

element. Journalists and editors will receive training on the meaning of unity and secession and how to cover referenda polls in a balanced and objective manner.

"Miraya should do the best it can to make sure there is freedom of speech, that people can express their views, that there can be real debate and real discussion about issues of relevance and that normal people can take part in this process. That is where their key function lies," said Mr. Willems.

Spreading peace

Resolution 1590 of the UN Security Council mandate for UNMIS called for the formation of a radio station, primarily to inform Sudanese people about the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

"Miraya is a UN radio station, run in partnership with the Swiss non-governmental organization Fondation Hirondelle," said Mr. Bali. "We work under the UNMIS mandate and our primary objective is to disseminate information about the mandate to the people of Sudan, and support peace."

The establishment of *Miraya* in 2006 was made possible through the determination and persistence of many people. It has played a significant form in informing the population in Southern Sudan about the peace process.

"I am very proud to have been part of that team," said Mr. Willems. "President Kiir opened *Miraya* and he gave a big boost to freedom of the press in Southern Sudan.

Officials at the Ministry of Information also played a very positive role."

The first challenge during *Miraya's* inception was to find qualified Sudanese staff in the war-torn south. It quickly dawned on the recruitment team that they had to look outside the country's borders.

"I travelled to Kenya and Uganda for the recruitment. The Southern Sudanese staff we got were fresh from college with no experience in radio," said former Deputy Chief of *Miraya* Valerie Msoka.

After a three-month training session in Khartoum, they deployed to Juba, where the staff of 20 held editorial meetings under trees as they waited for construction of office buildings.

Ms. Modi was among those recruited in Nairobi, where she had been living as a refugee for 18 years. "I had just finished a journalism course and I knew I wanted to return and give (something) back to Sudan."

She was among the first group of five journalists on the CPA sensitization programming team. "We studied and did a lot of programmes on CPA facts and produced a lot of census awareness programmes. Even today, when I go out and introduce myself, people ask 'you are Sheila Keji Modi of CPA facts

and Census?' They still remember our programmes."

Looking back, the radio journalist believes *Miraya* has really been serving its purpose. "In the south, radio is the only means of communication that can reach even the remotest corner. Though it has not had as wide a coverage as was expected, it has made a huge impact."

Ms. Msoka noted that all voices on air had been Sudanese from the onset, which was still the case four years on.

Lately, international staff have been training national employees to take on more leadership roles, said Ms. Papper. "We are training the staff to take up more responsibilities. Our head of news is a national staff, Nelson Nwak, and the *Miraya* national staff was also responsible for the planning of the fourth anniversary celebration."

The Miraya frequency is available on medium and short wave in the south, on NileSat (digital radio and television) in the north and streams online from the radio's website.

Murugi Murekio
Photos: Tim Mckulka

Miraya's fourth anniversary celebration, Juba, Central Equatoria State.



Listening to Mirary FM in Malakal market, Upper Nile State.



A university reborn

A year and a half after it was looted and closed down due to violent clashes between rival military forces, Upper Nile University is up and running again.

Damages to the university during the February 2009 conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) came to about 25 million SDG (\$10 million), according to its acting principal, Prof. Lino Libo Ador.

Public and environmental health student Jacob Ishag was a first year student at the time, living at the university residence. "I had to return to my hometown in West-Darfur for six months after the crisis. I was very sad to be unable to continue my education for one semester."

The institution languished until April 2009, when Prof. Bol Deng was appointed its new vice-chancellor. One of his first tasks was to request the assistance of the Government of National Unity and Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) to reopen it.

"The national government contributed around one million SDG (\$400,000) that was channelled through the Unity Fund," said Prof. Ador. "The Government of Southern Sudan contributed around 500,000 SDG(\$200,000)."

[The Unity Fund consists of monies allocated by the national government to develop Southern Sudan in making continued union with the north attractive.]

With the help of this financing, the university rebuilt itself up and opened again in September 2009. It currently hosts 3,744 students on three campuses in Malakal, Renk and Khartoum (in the north), said Prof. Ador.

"The programmes that we have so far are only undergraduate level, but maybe next year we will start the graduate degree programme," he added.

The only public university in the state, Upper Nile is one of the oldest and most

developed centres of higher learning in Sudan. Founded by the national government almost two decades ago, the university's initial three faculties -- education, natural resources and environmental science and medicine -- have now grown to eight.

Public and environmental health and human development were added as new faculties, while natural resources and environmental science were broken down into agriculture, forestry, animal production and veterinary medicine. The university also has an outreach centre to distribute information on women and children.

Partnerships abroad

To boost its standards, the institution has entered into partnership with Norway's Oslo University and Akershus University College.

In co-operation with Akershus, Upper Nile is developing a bachelor's programme in vocational teacher education. It will also be offering a master's programme in multicultural and international education with Oslo University College.

Upper Nile is also part of the Norwegian north-south Fredskorpset staff exchange programme.

"Oslo University has sent several lecturers to Malakal and our university has sent lecturers to Oslo University and Akershus University College," said Prof. Ador. So far, two Sudanese lecturers have participated in the exchange programme, which began in 2006 and runs until 2011 with the possibility of extension.

"I was sent to Akershus University College from September 2008 to 2009 to learn about its curriculum so I can apply it accordingly to Upper Nile University," said Sabet Akwa Kwan, an English lecturer in the Faculty of Education.

Despite challenges the university has faced, some graduates from Upper Nile



Professor Lino Libo Ador, acting principal of Upper Nile University, Malakal.

have gone on to lead successful careers, the acting principal said.

"One of our graduates now is a member of Upper Nile State parliament, Thon Bany," said Prof. Ador. "Some of them are even employed at the GoSS level or as principals of secondary schools all over South Sudan."

Imelda Tjahja

Still recovering

The February 2009 clash that closed down Upper Nile University was the second time it had fallen prey to violence.

In 2006, the institution suffered a similar fate after being rampaged during another confrontation between the Sudan Armed Forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army, which left two staff members injured, according to Acting Principal Prof. Lino Libo Ador.

Despite the government refurbishments, the university is still looking for additional funds to cover the February 2009 losses, the acting principal said.

In 2009, UNMIS donate 29,000 SDG (\$11,600) to refurbish the university library. Plans are underway by UNMIS to donate computers and multimedia equipment and also to begin a capacity-building project in the university, said Prof. Ador.

Jacob Ishag (second from left), witness of February 2009 violence, Malakal.

Upper Nile University classroom, Malakal.





State Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Director General Eliaba Habakkuk, Yambio, Western Equatoria State.



Yambio Farmer's Association's only tractor.

A land in waiting

Possessing highly fertile land capable of yielding a wide array of tropical fruits and vegetables, farmers in Western Equatoria State face numerous challenges in harvesting a crop.

"The land here is good for anything you put down," said Yambio teacher and farmer William Friday. "The rains are constant and enough in any season."

But he added that area people had been repeatedly forced to flee their fields due to attacks by the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

During an August visit of humanitarian officials to the area, Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission State Director Lexson Wari Amozai noted that the attacks often occurred during harvest season, forcing thousands to flee to safety.

In addition to the LRA threat, area farmers also grapple with scanty capital, poor roads and primitive machinery in producing a decent yield.

Trying to encourage the land into use, the non-governmental organization (NGO) World Vision began a maize-farming project during the north-south civil war. "It helped some parts of Southern Sudan where there was famine," said State Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Director General Eliaba Habakkuk.

But the area has never produced enough to feed its people. The southern capital of Juba in the lower part of the state has relied heavily on food imports from Khartoum in the north and neighbouring countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Kenya since the signing of the 2005 peace agreement.

According to Mr. Friday, Western Equatoria could play a huge role in food

production for the entire of Southern Sudan if the mango, pineapple, banana and palm trees growing wild were farmed commercially.

Yambio market seller Alex Bakumba observed that maize and sorghum also grew well in Western Equatoria. "We only need government support for massive production so that we minimize or stop getting everything from Uganda or Democratic Republic of the Congo."

Local people often grow cassava, sorghum, groundnut, sesame and yam for domestic use. Palm trees dot every home and residents tap them to produce *zet mbiro* (palm oil), which could also be commercially developed.

Mango trees grow wild in the area, but frequent bush fires often undermine their yield, said Ezo County resident Elias Inie. "If care is given to these fruit trees, a canning factory could be established here and we could stop importing mango and pineapple juice from our neighbours."

Broken promises

Yambio County Commissioner David Billy noted that various promises had been made and broken. "There have been ... investors who visited Western Equatoria State and expressed willingness to make use of our many fruits here, and the rich land for massive food production, but none ever came back to put what they said into action."

On their own, 35 farmers in the area combined their efforts in 2000 to form the Yambio Farmers Association (YAFA). With 32 branches in Yambio County, the organization now has a membership of

over 4,000 farmers, who are the major suppliers of produce to area markets.

Supported by the state's ministry of agriculture and NGOs like World Vision, YAFA farmers grow everything from pineapples and mangoes to maize and groundnuts.

But although they manage to farm sizeable tracts of land, the association lacks machinery to sustain large-scale farming.

"With only one tractor, one cannot do much, as there are 38 acres under maize and 20 with groundnuts for 418 farmers," YAFA Secretary General Anthony Ezekiel said.

They also have no means of processing their produce once the harvest is in.

"If we could be supported with a machine that crushes the mangoes and pineapples ... we could supply Southern Sudan with juice," the YAFA secretary general said.

Director General Habakkuk remains optimistic, however. "The ministry has plans to change from subsistence farming to commercial farming, using the already organized farmers in the state, so that Western Equatoria can return back to its position of being the 'bread basket for Southern Sudan'."

As a step in that direction, the Government of Southern Sudan and the United States government launched an Agriculture Innovation Fund on 24 August in Nairobi to develop agriculture in the semi-autonomous region.

Story and photos by:
Felix Waya Leju

Book review

Anatomy of an implosion

Richard Cockett starts his new book on Sudan by comparing the work to “the various international peacekeeping forces that have tried to bring some sort of order to Sudan”.

The somewhat curious analogy occurred to the author because *Sudan: Darfur and the Failure of an African State* is, in Mr. Cockett’s own words, “something of a hybrid...part journalism and part history”.

And that is one of its problems. Neither a hard-hitting exposé of corruption or human rights abuses nor a definitive history of Sudan as an independent nation, the book provides an up-to-date introduction to the country for a newcomer to the topic but will break little fresh ground in the eyes of veteran Sudan watchers.

The Africa editor of *The Economist* magazine, Mr. Cockett sets himself a lofty goal at the outset -- “to explain how Sudan came to implode so catastrophically, and to suggest what the often well-intentioned foreigners who tried to help the country can learn from their collective failure to do much about it.

While other recent books have focused on specific regions or aspects of the country and ignored “the big picture”, Mr. Cockett promises to examine the tragedy of Sudan in its totality and demonstrate how all of its various armed conflicts are linked.

But that was comprehensively done by Douglas H. Johnson in his seminal 2003 book *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars*. Although Mr. Cockett’s prose is more readable than the dense text of the American historian, his contribution to the copious body of literature on Sudan contains few original insights or arguments.

One of the best sections of the book traces the road to the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and how U.S. President George W. Bush’s anxious search for a foreign-policy success story in time for his re-election bid helped push the negotiations along.

Mr. Cockett also explores at some length China’s special relationship with Sudan and how Beijing has repeatedly sided with Khartoum during UN Security Council debates on the Darfur crisis.

He portrays President Omar Al-Bashir’s

break with the Islamist politician Hassan Al-Turabi in December 1999 as a key turning point that ushered in “a modest withering of the Islamic revolution”, which had shaped government policies throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

But for a book that features a photo of the stick-waving Bashir on its cover, there is remarkably little biographical material about the country’s longest ruling chief of state apart from two cut-and-paste paragraphs that sketch out the president’s humble roots, military career and two marriages.

The book’s subtitle foreshadows a special focus on Darfur, and two of its seven chapters are devoted exclusively to the outbreak of fighting in 2003 and its emergence as a cause célèbre for a motley crew of mostly Western activists.

Southern Sudan gets relatively short shrift by comparison, perhaps reflecting the brief stints that Mr. Cockett has spent in that region during his six visits to the country.

The book delivers a mixed verdict on the United Nations and the role it has played in Sudan.

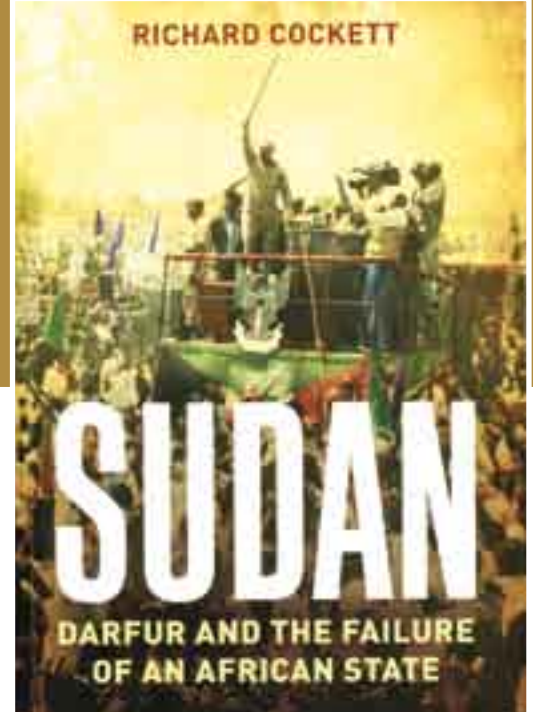
It lavishes praise on UN officials like Jan Egeland who, as head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in 2004, shone a spotlight on the killing fields of Darfur before Mia Farrow and other international celebrities began to highlight the plight of its refugees and internally displaced population.

But Mr. Cockett chides the UN for failing to “wholly pacify” Sudan, despite the large sums it spends yearly on UNMIS and the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur.

What overarching lesson does the author draw from the international community’s alleged failure to prevent the implosion of Sudan?

“Next time such a crisis occurs,” he concludes, “all the various actors and agencies involved will have to find mechanisms to work together, forums in which to pool ideas, ways of using each other’s strengths, knowledge and resources to optimal advantage.” ■

Joseph Contreras
Photo: Tim McKulka



Coming up

Khartoum

Sports

Khartoum American School. Sunday is volleyball, Monday basketball, Tuesday ultimate frisbee and Wednesday soccer and touch rugby. All games start at 6 p.m. Register by emailing Audrey Paar at apaar@krtams.org. Bring 5 SDG and a photo ID with you.

WaPI

25 September -- WaPI, Words and Pictures showcasing youth arts and music at the Greek Club on 25 September from 7:30 p.m., followed by another event at Juba’s Nyakuron Cultural Centre.

Juba

Ethiopian cultural night

Authentic Ethiopian cuisine and delightful Ethiopian dancers at Queen of Sheba in Hai Malakal every Friday and Saturday from 8 p.m. For reservations call +249 128 187 173.

Mexican and movie night

Mexican food every Thursday from 7 p.m. at Logali House, followed by big screen cinema until late. For reservations, call Laurie Meiring, General Manager, +256 477 103 800 or +249 957 103 800.

Philanthropic ventures

Juba Rotary Club every Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Juba Grand Hotel. Every other week, the Rotary Club has speakers on various topics. For more details call Evan on +249 955 800 600.

NEWS BRIEFS

UNMIS opens first referendum base in Mundri

The first referendum support base (RSB) constructed by UNMIS was inaugurated on 1 September in the Western Equatoria State county of Mundri West.

The event drew senior government officials at the regional, state and county levels as well as members of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission Bureau and the Western Equatoria State Referendum High Committee.

UNMIS intends to establish a presence in all of Southern Sudan's 79 counties to help monitor the referendum, and provide logistical support as well as technical advice.

In the aftermath of last April's general election, both parties to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement asked the United Nations to assume a more expansive role in the months leading up to the self-determination referenda that are scheduled to take place in Southern Sudan and the Abyei area on 9 January 2011.

Mundri West County Commissioner Samson Arap hailed the opening of the base as the beginning of the referendum process. "The real action has started," he said.

About a dozen UNMIS staff members will be deployed at the Mundri West base, which consists of six large tents that will house offices and accommodation.

Two UN police advisors will be assigned to the facility to provide election security training to local law enforcement personnel.

Three more referendum bases will soon open in Terekeka County in Central Equatoria State, Koch County in Unity State and Maban County in Upper Nile State.

Referendum committees sworn in

Members of the 10 state referendum high committees that will help organize the January 2011 referendum in Southern Sudan were sworn in on 23 August in Juba.

Consisting of five members each, the state-level high committees will be responsible for appointing subsidiary bodies at the state and county levels and overall administration of the referendum process.

Dignitaries attending the ceremony included Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) Chairperson Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan Haile Menkerios, members of the resident diplomatic corps, and representatives of UN agencies as well as various international organizations.

"We are facing a historic task which is very complicated and very difficult," said SSRC Chairperson Khalil. "We need to devote all our energies and approach it with open minds and in good spirit."

Mr. Menkerios assured the assembled referendum officials and invited guests that the SSRC and its state-level committees would enjoy the full support of the United Nations.

Preparations for the referendum, which will determine whether Southern Sudan remains united with the north or separates, are well behind schedule. Voter registration should have taken place in July of this year, but materials for that exercise have not yet been approved.

SPLA unveils child protection unit

At a ceremony held at its headquarters outside Juba on 30 August, the SPLA unveiled a new unit that seeks to complete demobilization of all remaining child soldiers.

Under an action plan signed with UNICEF in November 2009, the SPLA pledged to demobilize within a year's time all estimated 1,200 teenage troops then in its ranks and arrange for their transition into civilian life.

UNICEF will provide both financial and technical support to carry out sensitization campaigns and raise awareness with the SPLA on the legal framework of child rights – international and national laws that prohibit recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

Over 22,000 SPLA troops below the age of 18 have returned to civilian life in the past 10 years, but UNICEF estimates that there are 900 child soldiers still serving in the Southern Sudanese army.

Deminers host show and tell

The United Nations Mine Action Office conducts an open house demonstration day in Juba.



Deminers in Juba held a half-day open house in the UNMIS compound on 20 August to demonstrate their work to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies operating in Central Equatoria State.

"So far we have cleared about 70 to 80 per cent of the communities' working areas but ... new areas keep on emerging to be cleared," said Lance Malin, chief of operations in Southern Sudan for the UN Mine Action Office (UNMAO).

"This continues to demand more resources. As a result, the work is getting bigger all the time," the UNMAO operations chief said.

About 80,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance and 19,000 anti-personnel mines have been cleared in Southern Sudan since the end of the country's second civil war, releasing an estimated 33,000 kilometres of roads and 54 million square metres of land for use by civilians.

Bangladesh Battalion Commanding Officer Maj. Mohamed Terek Abdullah said that demining expertise among local residents was still low.

"There is a need to create awareness among the population and build the capacity of local people working in the minefields (to) give them the chance to demine if international NGOs leave the country," said Maj. Abdullah.

