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BBC presenter

United Nations Mission

In SUDAN

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Knowing no fear



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FRONT COVER: BBC presenter Zeinab Badawi.
Photo: Legend BBC.

BACK COVER: Sudanese casting his ballots.
Photo: Mohamed Siddig.

Diary

17 April: The European Union Observer's mission and Carter Centre issued separate preliminary statements on Sudanese elections, saying they paved the way for democratic progress and constituted a Comprehensive Peace Agreement benchmark, although they fell short of international standards on the whole. The African Union Observer Mission said the elections, though imperfect, were historically significant and an important milestone in the country's peace and democratization process. Congratulating the Sudanese people, the League of Arab States Observer Mission hoped the elections would be a catalyst for further democratic transformation and development.

18 April: UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan Georg Charpentier warned that continued instability in parts of the eastern Jebel Marra area in Darfur had prevented agencies from accessing areas where they had been providing aid, including food, water, and medicines, over the past five years.

26 April: Announcing preliminary results for Sudan's elections, the National Elections Commission (NEC) declared that National Congress Party candidate Omar Al Bashir had topped the poll for President of Sudan with 68.2 per cent of the vote. He was followed by Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) candidate Yasir Arman, who, despite declaring his withdrawal from the race, had placed second of the 12 candidates with 21.7 per cent of the vote. SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir led preliminary results announced for President of the Government of Southern Sudan with 92.99 per cent. Challenger Lam Akol of the SPLM-Democratic Change party came second with 7.01 per cent of the vote.

27 April: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the people of Sudan for participating in the country's largely peaceful elections, despite numerous challenges. He took note of preliminary reports from observer groups detailing both successes and shortcomings of the poll, as well as several security incidents. The Secretary-General also called on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) partners to rapidly progress with preparations for the 2011 referenda.

29 April: The UN Security Council extended UNMIS' mandate for one year, until 30 April 2011, with the intention to renew it for further periods if required. The Council requested that UNMIS be prepared to play a lead role in international efforts to support preparations for the referenda, including an advisory role related to security arrangements.

30 April: The Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee mandated to demarcate the 11/56 border line conducted an aerial reconnaissance of borders for Sennar, Blue Nile and Upper Nile states to help begin demarcation. The team was joined by local committees and the UN, which is logistically and technically assisting the process.

5 May: The joint African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is nearing full capacity, according to a report issued by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Mr. Ban warns, however, that the mission continues to lack crucial equipment required to enhance the capability of both its military and police units.

7 May: The United Nations condemned the killing by unidentified gunmen of two UNAMID Egyptian peacekeepers while on patrol in South Darfur. The culprits opened fire without warning, killing two and injuring three others. Head of UNAMID Ibrahim Gambari expressed outrage at the "cowardly attack" against the peacekeepers. The total number of UNAMID personnel killed in hostile actions since the mission was established at the beginning of 2008 now stands at 24.

7 May: A High Level Strategic Review Meeting of the African Union and the United Nations on Sudan was convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. All international and regional actors invited agreed on the need for greater international support and close coordination among global actors in support of the CPA. The meeting specifically mentioned the need to create required conditions for the successful holding of referenda in Southern Sudan and Abyei.

Mummies, medicine and Coca Cola

A primary export with uses ranging from mummification to fizzy drink production, gum arabic in Sudan has experienced a turbulent ride on world markets amid controversial pricing at home.

Producing the two varieties of *hashab* (acacia senegal) and *talha* (acacia seyal), Sudan accounts for about 70 per cent of the world's gum arabic production, which makes the commodity the country's fourth most important agricultural export after sesame, livestock and cotton.

A plant that endures harsh environments, gum arabic grows in the Sub-Saharan "gum belt", ranging from Mauritania and Senegal in west Africa through Sudan to Ethiopia and Somalia in the east.

Given the name when Arab traders introduced it to medieval Europe, gum arabic had been used by ancient Egyptians, as a glue in body mummification as well as water colours and dye.

"Looking at the range of products which contain gum arabic (GA), even if in trace amounts, it is not unreasonable to contemplate that most people worldwide use GA every day ... without being aware of it," Hassan Abdel Nour, forestry professor at the Sudan University for Science and Technology writes in an analysis.



Gum arabic on tree twig photo Ezzedin Bashir.



Women hand selecting gum arabic at Afritec warehouse. El Obeid.

Oil and water do not mix under normal circumstances, but they do with the addition of gum arabic, said Ezzedin Bashir, quality control manager at the Khartoum cleaning factory of Afritec, one of the product's largest manufacturing and trading companies.

Due to its high fibre content, emulsifying and bulking properties, gum arabic -- which resembles hard candy once dried and cleaned -- is used in medicines, carbonless paper and a wide range of food stuffs and beverages, including Coca Cola, Mr. Bashir explained.

From 1982 to 2002, Sudan's gum arabic export earnings averaged \$40 million annually, according to a recent World Bank project proposal aimed at improving gum arabic production and marketing.

Up until the early 1990s, the country covered about 60-70 per cent of the commodity's world export. At that time, however, international economic sanctions against Sudan resulted in export losses.

While the United States had excluded GA from sanctions, the commodity continued to suffer on global markets until African and European countries began buying it from Sudan around 1996, when the government opened up the export market for processed GA.

After 12 processing companies appeared in 2003 and began manipulating prices, Sudan's share in global gum arabic export remained at about 35 per cent, while foreign demand also sharply decreased due to the introduction of starchy substitutes, said World Bank Rural Development Specialist Mohamed Osman.

People worst affected by price battles are producers at the bottom of the trading chain, especially in October, when tapping season begins.

Tapping is the process of slitting the tree's bark, allowing it to seep. When the sap solidifies after some 20 days,

gum arabic can be collected then cleaned.

"One of the problems is that all through the gum arabic belt, people need water when they do tapping," said Musa Suleiman, Blue Nile State National Forestry Corporation (NFC) Director from his Ed Damazin office.

As forests are located in remote areas, tapping requires workers to stay in the field for several weeks, meaning water and food must be transported there, Mr. Suleiman explained, increasing farmers' costs.

To finance their supplies, producers are then forced to sell their yield at a rather low price to agents offering advance payment.

According to Mr. Suleiman, producers receive 42 to 50 Sudanese pounds for one *quantar* (about 45.5 kilograms), while agents sell the same load on to big companies for twice as much, about 110 pounds.

Low income may also result in producers cutting down their forests and converting to sesame or *durra* (millet) farming, the director added.

"We try to convince them not to cut the forests and help them to register their land with the NFC," Mr. Suleiman said. The forestry body also urged producers to unite in cooperatives -- which 70 per cent of Blue Nile producers have done -- to ease communication, technical support and capacity building.

As part of its project to enhance GA production and marketing, which kicked off in five Sudanese states in early May, the World Bank was also offering micro-credit to producers through a local bank.

As a logical consequence of low market price, production might decrease, World Bank Monitoring and Evaluation Officer Ibrahim Abdallah said. The goal would be to provide incentive for producers to sell gum arabic to end users, rather than compromise for a fraction of the price through selling to middlemen. ■

Eszter Farkas

Photos: Mohamed Siddig

"Most people worldwide use gum arabic every day ... without being aware of it."

Everywhere a bank

The number of banking institutions in Southern Sudan has multiplied from almost none just five years ago to a current tally of over 25 houses of transaction.

Before Sudan's peace accord was signed in 2005, only a handful of banks in the north had branches in key southern towns, including Wau, Malakal and Juba.

Bank accounts, money transfer and loan facilities, all key drivers for economic growth, were unavailable.

Asha Ahmed from Kenya, then a UN Development Programme employee, remembers how she had to stuff and carry thousands of dollars of salaries and programme funds in her socks and luggage.

"What was most scary was that there were no (direct) flights to Juba. We had to spend a night in Lokichoggio," she said. "Fortunately, no one was robbed or lost any of the money."

Those days turned a corner when the wealth-sharing section of the country's Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2004, clearly defining a dual banking system for Sudan.

Under the accord, the north retained its Islamic banking system, while the South adopted a conventional banking system.

Established in 2005, the Bank of Southern Sudan (BoSS)

became the central bank for all Southern Sudanese banks, be they commercial, investment or agricultural. Its function is to license and regulate financial institutions in the south.

"The BoSS regulates the

Bank of Southern Sudan, Juba.

financial institutions in terms of monetary policy, pricing of hard currency and import arrangements," said BoSS President Elijah Malok Aleng, also deputy governor of the Central Bank of Sudan.

Six BoSS-licensed commercial banks – three local and three foreign – now operate in the southern region.

Ivory Bank (established in 1993), Nile Commercial Bank (2005) and Buffalo Commercial Bank (2007) are local, while foreign institutions include Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (2009) as well as KCB Bank Group (2005) and Equity Bank (2009), both Kenyan.

While banks have made life easier for Juba residents wishing to secure and easily access their cash, some complain that their charges are too high.

Twenty-five-year old Mose Mono, who opened a savings account with a foreign bank last year, was pleased that he could withdraw cash whenever he wished.

But he complained about the high 4 SDG (\$1.80) commission it deducted for each withdrawal as well as the lack of interest given for saving accounts.

"I very strongly feel that the bank should reduce its subtractions per each and every withdrawal," said Mr. Mono. "This will encourage more customers to keep their earnings in the bank."

"The financial institutions are the auxiliary structures that help the economy move."

Loans for growth

When Nile Commercial Bank (NCB) began operating in Juba in 2005, the town had deteriorated facilities and low economic interaction, according to the bank's acting managing director, Michael Marino Wusang.

"To support the poor economy, NCB gave housing loans, imported buses as there was no public transport facility, gave loans to companies like the Feeder Airline, construction companies and many others," he said.

A prime beneficiary of new loan facilities in the region was South Sudan Beverage Limited (SSBL).

"About a year ago, we got around \$5 million from the KCB Bank Group, which allowed the SSBL to have operating capital to start its operations," said Managing Director Ian Alsworth-Elvey.

SSBL now employs 283 Southern Sudanese and supports an estimated 5,000 people in the community, the managing director said, adding that the region's growing banking sector meant a future source of funding for SSBL expansion.

BoSS President Aleng noted, however, that people in Southern Sudan had lost their assets during the civil war, leaving them with no collateral and limited access to loan facilities.

But he appreciated the importance of banks to people's overall socio-economic well-being. "The financial institutions are the auxiliary structures that help the economy move."

In addition to banks, about 20 forex bureaus currently operating in the south have made the problem of sending and receiving money history, said Mr. Aleng. "If you send money now, the person can receive it even in minutes in Nairobi or elsewhere."

The forex revolution has made life much simpler for families with members living outside the country.

Awaiting her turn at Juba's Dahabshil Money Transfer office to send funds to her daughter studying in Kenya, Zainab Osman said, "I am sending money for her school fee ... I asked her to go and get it after two hours."

Yore Marial, a resident of Rumbek in Lakes State, was pleased to have received money at the same transfer office from his brother in America. "It is really good service. My brother called last week and told me to collect the money in Juba and it is already there." ■

Text and photo: Negus Hadera

In Sudan.UNMIS.May 2010



Reeling in shared profit

For Ali Abu Ali and most men in his Sudanese village on the Red Sea, fishing is more than just a job.

Having fished most of their lives, casting a net is a way of life, an activity that makes its way into most conversations and feeds them and their families.

But for years in this poor, rural region of Arbaat, men like Ali had no proper equipment to fish. They spent their days walking to the seashore and renting small, wooden boats to fish in the shallow coastal waters.

"We would carry the fish we caught slung over our shoulders, and walk from the sea back to the road, a distance of about three kilometres," says 50-year-old Ali.

The men would then wait by the side of the road for a ride. Sometimes the fish would spoil and they would return home empty-handed.

But today their hands are full. In the bustling fish market of Port Sudan, Ali and his cohorts sit behind plentiful baskets of fresh, varied fish caught deep in the Red Sea.

"We catch more fish, we make more money."

They have just returned from a week-long fishing trip in one of three motorized fiberglass boats provided by the Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme (RRP). Ali points to dozens of different types of large, colorful fish on display for local hotel and restaurant owners to buy.

"These are fish that can only be found in the deep sea," says Ali. "Before the small wooden boats we rented weren't strong enough to travel in the waves, but with the RRP boats we are able to go out to sea for days at a time."

And with three ice boxes also provided by the RRP, fishermen are now able to keep fish fresh for up to a week. This means they can store the fish until they are ready to sell at the market, which is a great advantage, says Ohaj Ahmed Eimali of SOS Sahel -- one of the RRP partners in Red Sea State.

The Arbaat fishing project is truly community-owned, with 105 families benefiting from just three boats. Each boat is shared by 35 fishermen, who are split into five groups, with a rotating schedule for going out to sea. Every time a group comes back from sea, the fish are sold at the local market and the profits split

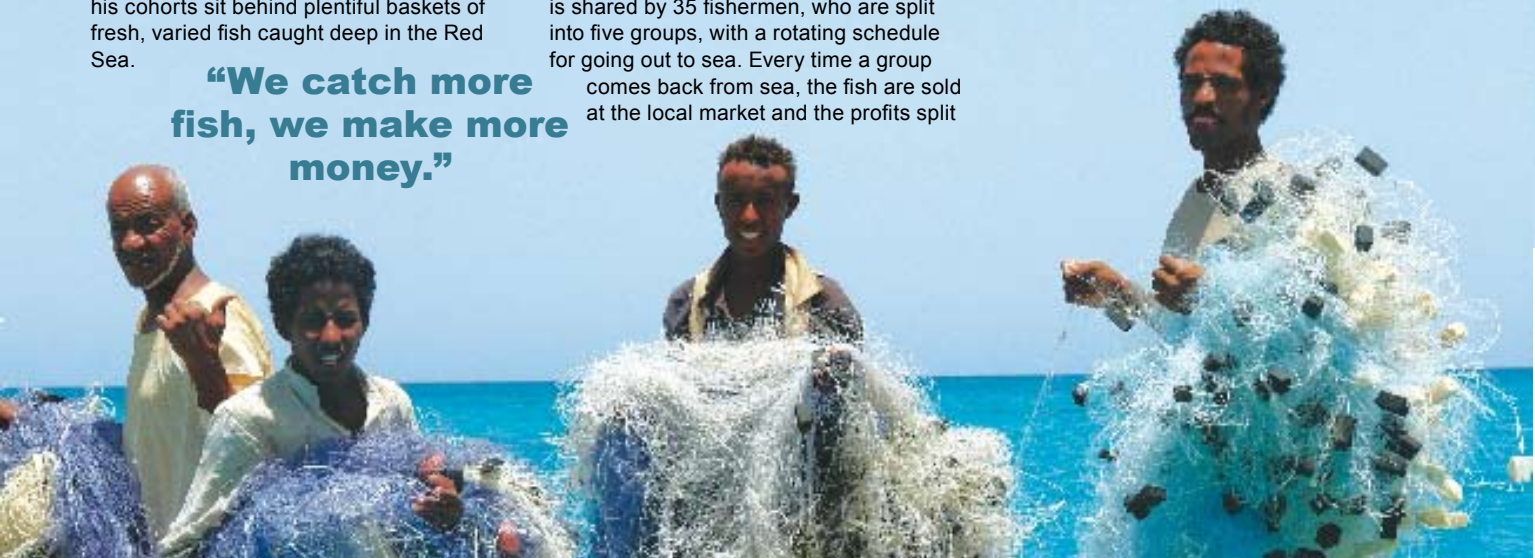
between all 35 members.

"The boats and boxes from the RRP changed so much. Now we can travel three to four hours out into the deep sea to fish," says 30-year-old Serie Abu Ali. "We can catch all kinds of fish that we didn't have access to in the coastal waters. On a seven-day trip we can catch 800 kilograms of fish and then sell them for 8 SDG (\$3.50) a kilogram," he explains while skinning fish on the rocky seashore.

Ali and the other fishermen will cook it over an open fire and sleep on the beach before getting up at the break of dawn to take the boats out again.

It is a simple life, which requires a simple formula for success. "We catch more fish, we make more money," says Mr. Ali. ■

Text and photo: Jaime Jacques, UNDP



What is the RRP?

The Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme (RRP) is a five-year initiative (2005-2010) managed by the UN Development Programme on behalf of the Governments of National Unity and Southern Sudan. The programme's total funding comes to about \$73.03 million, 65.11 million from the European Commission and \$1.96 million from the Government of Norway.

A total of 44 national and international non-governmental organizations are working together in 10 states across the country (Blue Nile, Abyei, River Nile, Red Sea, South Kordofan, Northern Upper Nile, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria,

Warrap and Northern Bahr Al-Ghazal) focusing on boosting institutions, improving livelihoods and basic services.

Before the RRP began in Red Sea, communities had already formed the Arbaat Development Association, a local to address the region's development needs, but meetings and activities were sporadic and poorly organized. With RRP support, the group became more active and now meets once a month in Port Sudan to discuss issues and make decisions affecting development in the state.

Doing business in Abou Shouk

A struggling businesswoman in Abu Shouk internally displaced persons camp, North Darfur, Thoria Awad arrived there in February 2003 from Tawila, in the northern part of the state. A determined survivor, she spoke about trading ventures she has entered into to support her 11 children.

In Sudan: How is life in the camp compared to Tawila?

Thoria: We used to live freely in our village, but living in the camp is not good. Our children used to have an education and we lived comfortably. Now we have difficulties. In the village, we were involved in trade and made a lot of money.

What did you trade in?

We used to grow snuff (chewing tobacco) in great quantities. But now life has become difficult because we are preoccupied with bringing up children. Trade has declined and I can't go to the village, so we no longer grow much snuff.

Do you have a manager there?

We have a manager but he does not produce the same quantities I used to. We used to supervise the business ourselves and employed 10-15 workers. Now the person who supervises shares the profits with us. With many children and the need to educate them, we only make enough money for food and clothing.

What type of business are you involved in now?

I sell things like dry okra, tomato paste, onions and other things. I used to sell in great quantities when I had a lot of money. But now I don't so I buy things and sell them in smaller amounts. During festivals I sell clothes. The profit from these is very little.

At home, we used to grow okra, tomato and sorghum. We were self-sufficient. We used to buy only sugar and meat. But now we buy everything and things have become expensive.

How did you start trading?

At the beginning, I had an agricultural project on two pieces of land. We produced a lot of snuff which we sold in El Fasher. With the money we received, we bought things and took them to Tawila. I used to get a lot of profit by selling in great quantities.

Are you still taking care of the project?

Yes, I am taking care of the project, despite the lack of rain. Agriculture is not profitable like in the past. Last month, I built a reservoir which cost me 2,500 Sudanese pounds (\$1,126). When water comes during the rainy season, it will be filled. If we receive support, this will help us and development will increase.

Why did you become a trader?

I did not receive enough education to be, for example, a teacher, although I had some. I still have the desire to continue my education, even though I am now a grandmother.

I have 11 children -- six sons and five daughters. I wanted to be a trader to help their father, who is a teacher. In the house there should be two pillars helping one another so that the children can grow and be educated. The children are going to support us in the future. This is what motivated me to struggle and become a trader.

Do you have other activities besides trade?

Yes, I have other activities. At home I have a sewing machine. I make beautiful things like hats, mats and praying carpets. If I have time, I don't sit idle. I do anything to make income for my children.

Market prices in El Fasher

Okra	= 17 SDG per kilogram
Onion	= 120 SDG per 100 kilograms (1 sack)
Sorghum (Dukhum local variety)	= 300 SDG per 100 kilograms
Sorghum (Marik variety)	= 75 SDG per 50 kilograms
Fresh tomatoes	= 5 SDG per kilogram
Dried tomatoes	= 15 SDG per kilogram

What are your future plans?

If I succeed in agriculture, I will take the harvest to Khartoum and sell it to big traders. Then I will travel abroad to import new things for people who cannot go to Khartoum. Also, I will help women and train them in trading. I will give money to some of them and they can repay me later.

Are you going to leave the camp?

I do not want to stay in the camp. If I have a chance to leave, I will travel.

Do you have a final message?

My message is directed at all people who are here and abroad. They must seek peace. We want peace to return to our homeland. We need stability and development. The camp is not good for children. There are a lot of negative things in it. We want our country to be safe and stable. We thank you all. ■

Interview and photo: Kalthoum Yahia, UNAMID Radio

Thoria Awad at home with her children in Abou Shouk camp.



One block at a time

Disarmed civilians in Akobo County, Jonglei State, have turned to cement block-making to support their families, rather than rustling their neighbours' cattle.

Thirty-six disarmed youth aged 20-27 recently took a one-week block-making course conducted by the non-governmental organization ASCOM International, and established the Akobo Youth Block Making Association.

"I find it (this programme) very useful in the sense that one day with some funds one can make one's own blocks for sale," said association field monitor Chiony Garwich Yak, adding that the blocks currently went into a common store.

The youths were disarmed after heavy tribal fighting among the Lou Nuer, Dinka and Murle tribes left an array of small arms and light weapons in the hands of Jonglei civilians.

Originally linked to cattle rustling, fighting among communities has progressed to raiding, abduction, deliberate killing of civilians and retaliatory attacks, according to the Joint UN Justice Programme.

While the country's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) emphasizes the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of military forces, it barely touches on disarming of civilians.

Following the signing of the CPA, the Akobo youth association members making blocks at their compound.



Nyachuot Chuol Kuon cleaning gravel on Akobo river bank.

"I decided to disarm because there was no longer a reason to carry a weapon, since the government will provide protection to our properties and our people."

Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) put in place voluntary civilian disarmament efforts in various parts of the country.

"Carrying arms has been made illegal for civilians ... the Sudan penal code will be used to punish any one who fails to give up arms," said Akobo County Commissioner Goi Jok Yol.

In 2006, people in Akobo began a voluntary community driven disarmament exercise, supported by the GoSS and the UN DDR Unit, surrendering an estimated 1,500 arms.

"I decided to disarm because there was no longer a reason to carry a weapon, since the government will provide protection to our properties and

our people," said block-maker Peter Pal Chuol, 26, who gave up an AK-47.

Another 1,000 arms were confiscated from cattle camps and homesteads by county authorities in February 2010, with the help of local chiefs, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and Southern Sudan Police Service.

The block-making project was initiated to give civilians an alternative source of income other than cattle rustling and raids.

In addition to the training, ASCOM donated four block-making machines, loaned the group cement and promised to buy their finished products. The four machines can produce 3,500 blocks each in 16 days.

"ASCOM has promised to buy them at the price of 5 SDG (\$2) per block," said Mr. Yak. "Each cement bag produces 75 pieces of block and one group can use five to seven bags of cement per day."

Women in the town, especially those displaced by area conflict, have also benefited from the project. They collect sand and gravel from Akobo River and sell it to the block makers for 7 SDG (\$3) per bucket.

"I use the money (from the gravel) to buy food for my four kids," said 25-year-old Nyadeng Nyang Top, whose husband left for North Sudan to seek work, but has not contacted her for over nine months.

Nyachuot Chuol Kuon, 43, also collects gravel to buy food for her two children. "I am trying to survive because there was no rain and (there was) last year's insecurity as well."

According to Commissioner Goi Jok, USAID has plans to provide boats. These will allow the youth to support their families by engaging in trade. ■

Text and photos: Francis Shuei Diu

From guns to goods



Wau residents witnessing arrival of train.

A train that formerly carried soldiers and weapons of destruction during Sudan's civil war could spark a new era of growth for the Western Bahr El-Ghazal State capital of Wau.

Shut down for the past 25 years, the newly reopened railway from Wau to Babanusa in neighbouring Southern Kordofan State brings a host of benefits for area residents.

High on the list will be a drop in prices of goods coming from Khartoum.

Local market businessman Neim Mubarak noted that prices had already fallen. One hundred kilograms of sorghum, for instance, had dropped from 160 SDG (\$72) and 100 kilograms of sugar from 160 SDG to at 130 SDG (\$59).

"Whenever the train arrives here, prices of commodities go down, which in turn attracts ... customers," Mr. Mubarak said.

The first goods train arrived in Wau on 11 March carrying about 900 tons of sugar, cement, sorghum, and oil.

Residents are also optimistic that the town's construction sector will grow. Trains can carry more materials than trucks and are less subject to roadblocks or robberies. Planes are costly and subject to weight limitations.

"The prices of cement and other building materials are very high here and ... one of the main constraints for development in the construction sector," said Karlos Vitale Kuku, Acting Director General of the State Ministry of Physical Infrastructure.

The director general noted that the reopened rail line had both economic and political implications for the state. "In the political aspect, it may strengthen links between southern Sudan and northern Sudan ... Economically, it will help to stabilize local prices."

At a cost of \$46 million, repairs to the 446-kilometre railway were mainly funded by the Unity Support Fund. Established by presidential decree in June 2008, the fund was intended to "make unity attractive" ahead of the 2011 referendum on the south's continued unity with the north or secession.

The train was officially inaugurated in a March ceremony attended by Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir and First Vice-President of Sudan and President of Southern Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit, along with thousands of excited and overjoyed Wau residents.

"This is our special gift to the people

of Wau in particular and to the people of Southern Sudan in general," President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir told the gathering.

Acknowledging its wartime use, First Vice-President Kirr said, "But now the line is rehabilitated for a new purpose, which is development."

Daniel Madut, a 20-year-old student attending the event, said he was "delighted" about the new railway. "I used to see trains on TV and films, but today is the first time for me to see one physically."

The train currently travels between Wau and Babanusa every three weeks. The station would like to operate it weekly, but lack servicing stations, said Sudan Railways Corporation Director for Wau Station Abdulhadi Mahjoub.

Out of 28 stations on the route, only three – Babanusa, Meiram and Wau -- are presently operational.

Wau station, which is using Chinese trains, hopes to gradually expand its services. "We will do whatever we can to provide quality and reliable services to our ... customers," Mr. Mahjoub said.

Preparations are underway to start a passenger train service in May. ■

Text and photo:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos

Levelling Juba roads

Roads in Juba are slowly overcoming their bad reputation of just a couple of years ago, when words commonly used to describe them included dusty, horrible, bumpy and nightmarish.

"My taxi used to break down once a month due to the poor nature of the roads," said taxi driver Tom Ishah Abdurrahman, who operates from Customs Market in the Southern Sudanese capital.

Minimal tarmac has been laid on southern roads since Sudanese independence in 1956, according to Gabriel Makur Amuor, director of roads and bridges in the Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) Ministry of Transport and Roads.

"Visitors who came to Southern Sudan in 2005-2007 shrugged their shoulders in total disbelief at the dilapidated nature of trunk and feeder roads being used at that time," said Mr. Amuor.

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, road recovery and construction were earmarked as key in ensuring development for all sectors.

To date, the GoSS has invested \$65 million for ongoing road projects in Juba. "We have planned to ensure that there is tarmac along the main streets of Juba town, Topping residential area, Buluk, Munuki, Gudele, Kator, and Konyo-Konyo areas," the roads director said.

At least 30 kilometres of a planned 65 have now been tarmacked in Juba by two local companies -- Aggregate Building Materials Construction (ABMC) and Oilfield Services Company Limited (EYAT).

ABMC is expected to cover 35 kilometres of roads in Konyo Konyo, Kator and Nyakuron, while EYAT will tarmack the remaining 30 kilometres stretching from Juba Airport through Topping to Kela Kuit, Munuki, and finally to Gudele.

Plans were afoot to build another 85 kilometres of roads within Juba after current projects had been completed, the roads director added.

Tarmacking of Juba-Nimule and Juba-Torit-Nadapal roads is expected to be complete by 2012. But construction of the Juba-Rumbek road has been put on hold due to lack of funds.

Seven two-lane, 11 metre-wide bridges on the Juba-Nimule road had also been built, he said. "The bridges are wide enough to allow for passage of two vehicles at a go. Their quality is also excellent, and their durability is guaranteed

for more than 50 years."

Tarmacked roads would boost businesses in the capital, as merchandise could then more easily flow into Southern Sudan, said Mr. Amuor.

They have certainly helped taxi driver Abdurrahman, who now makes an average of 250 SDG (\$114) daily, compared to 150 SDG (\$68) he was making previously.

"Presently, its (the taxi's) tyres can last for more than 10 months without wearing out and are free from punctures," the driver said.

The tarmacking has not only improved the transport sector but security and business.

"Laying tarmac would help reduce insecurity," the transport director said.

"Night patrols can easily be manoeuvred ... any cases of felony can be reported, and culprits are apprehended immediately."

Charity Doru, a 40-year-old pharmacist operating at Customs Market, praised the GoSS and all those responsible for the construction in what she described as a "positive step" towards developing Southern Sudan.

Ms. Doru noted that her area was dusty, malodorous and uncomfortable from 2005 until late 2009. "I used to sweep and mop the pharmacy three to four times a day to keep it clean, but today I sweep and mop only once ... thanks to the tarmac." ■

James Sokiri



Juba roads. Photos: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.





Zeinab Badawi

Knowing no fear

“I don’t think Sudanese themselves understand Sudan.”

Photo: Legend BBC.

Addressing a rapt audience in Ahfad University library, BBC HARDtalk presenter Zeinab Badawi chatted about ties to her homeland, her passion for the ancient Kush kingdom and Sudan's near future.

Enthralling listeners with her charm and self-irony, she received myriad compliments from listeners gathered on an early April evening at the Omdurman women's institution.

Yet one could sense the fierce intellect and persistence veiled by her smile, which she wields to pin down heads of state and leading politicians in television talk shows or documentaries.

Hailing originally from the Rufa'a area of northern Sudan, the BBC star came on a two-week trip to cover the country's national elections and film a documentary in Khartoum on conflict resolution through theatre.

The TV presenter had been to Sudan a dozen times, but said her time there was never enough.

“I always leave Sudan wanting more,” she said, adding with an exaggerated sigh, “But the heat sometimes gets to me.”

Ms. Badawi was two years old when her family left Sudan for the United Kingdom. After General Ibrahim Abboud came to power through a military coup in 1958, her journalist father found he could no longer freely practice his profession.

Kitchen Arabic

Growing up in London, Ms. Badawi spoke English with her siblings and Arabic with her parents and elderly folk.

“I speak very good kitchen Arabic,” she said jokingly, adding that her Arabic

reflected a bygone era rather than her own generation.

Her attachment to Sudan focused on people, including her family. “My great-grandfather Babiker Bedri was a visionary,” she said, who established a secular all-girls school in a Rufa'a village mud hut in 1907. His son Yusuf Bedri founded Ahfad University for Women in 1966.

Chatting in colloquial English to her predominantly middle-aged Sudanese audience and tossing in a few Arabic words, Ms. Badawi seemed to be in her element and at home.

“I feel fairly comfortable (in Sudan) but I also feel at home in England, and I am more familiar with England,” she said.

Her identity, rather than being static and defined by one country or the other, was dynamic, she added. She was Sudanese and British, but at the same time African and Arab, as well as a journalist.

Commenting on her chosen profession, the BBC presenter said, “A good journalist knows no fear”, but should be independent and play the devil's advocate, always taking a critical stance.

Recognizing her tough stance in interviewing renowned figures, including Sudan's Vice-President Salva Kiir and the Dalai Lama, the Association for International Broadcasting named her International TV Personality of 2009.

Besides covering elections and interviewing northern and southern Sudanese leaders, she also did a documentary about the southern capital of Juba during the same trip. “There is a lot of interest in the south now because of the referendum coming in January,” she said.

Adding that she also wanted to visit Darfur, but must return to her four children,

Ms. Badawi spoke with *In Sudan* about the country's western perception.

“Sudan has had a very, very bad press internationally because of the indictment of President Omar Al-Bashir, the terrible conflict in Darfur, and before that the long-running civil war between the north and the south.”

People probably realized, however, that the country was not “black and white”, Ms. Badawi said, confessing that she did not fully understand the country, like most people.

“I don't think Sudanese themselves understand Sudan,” she said.

Asked where she saw the country in a couple of years, Ms. Badawi expressed hope that the April elections would give voice to government critics and opposition parties. “It's going to be hard still to hear those voices, but in two years' time we'll see that they are even louder, especially on the grass-roots level.”

The BBC presenter felt that the Sudanese people's needs were overcome during elections by party wrangles. “I hope that in two years' time we will see more clearly what politicians are ready to deliver for this country,” in terms of policies, including for health and education.

During that time, Ms. Badawi herself might finish a book she was writing on a subject she was passionate about – the empire of the Kush.

The ancient Kush civilization was the first one in the River Nile valley, going back at least 3,000 years. Its numerous pyramids located north of Khartoum should be better respected and maintained, Ms. Badawi felt. “Sudan could derive pride from the past.” ■

Eszter Farkas

Ban calls for referenda preparations

Sudan still faces significant challenges in preparing for the January 2011 referenda on southern secession and resolving the status of oil-rich Abyei, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in his latest report on the country.

"Although the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have shown increasing political will to address referendum-related issues, they have made little concrete progress in establishing arrangements ... no matter the outcome of the referenda," Mr. Ban writes in the report, issued on 5 April.

He notes that the Government of National Unity (GoNU) Presidency urged the CPA parties in a February resolution to assure the Sudanese people they would agree on post-referendum arrangements and define the international community's role.

"The parties to the Agreement have not, however, agreed upon a structure, mechanism or timetable," the Secretary-General states.

Moreover, political disagreements within the GoNU have helped delay appointment of posts in the Southern Sudan and Abyei referenda commissions, hampering progress on technical preparations for the referenda.

"With less than 10 months remaining before the referenda, delays in addressing any of the major outstanding issues are likely to have serious repercussions for the entire peace process," Mr. Ban says.

The report also raises concerns about infrastructure needed for the referenda, especially in Abyei. Although the polls in Southern Sudan and Abyei will involve a smaller number of eligible voters than the April elections, they will require a new round of registration.

In addition, the Secretary-General notes that insecurity has hindered progress on physically demarcating the Abyei boundary in accordance with the Permanent Court of Arbitration award of 22 July 2009.

On the April elections, the report highlights a March resolution by the National Elections Commission (NEC) to postpone state-level elections in Southern Kordofan for 60 days to allow for a new census there and reallocation of constituencies.

The NEC also decided to postpone elections for the State Legislative Assembly in Gezira State, following the 27 December 2009 Supreme Court decision on constituency delimitation.



Internally displaced person affected by tribal conflict in Jonglei State receiving food from WFP in Pibor. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

The Secretary-General observes that the parties have advanced in discussions on popular consultations to be held in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, but that concrete steps have been lacking.

"As the popular consultations are already seriously behind the schedule set out in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and with the delay in elections in Southern Kordofan, there is a pressing need to find ways of moving this work forward in the coming weeks and months," Mr. Ban says.

On a positive note, the report notes that the CPA parties have granted border demarcation special attention. The Presidency instructed the Border Committee in February to begin demarcation from the Ethiopian border to the meeting point of Blue Nile and Sennar states.

Mr. Ban also observes that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have redeployed 100 per cent of their forces from Southern Sudan. As of January, the SPLA had redeployed about 35 per cent of its stated strength from northern Sudan, up from some 33 per cent during the previous quarter.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has moved ahead, with more than 21,000 former combatants demobilized since the programme began in February 2009. But the gap between demobilization and reintegration has widened, partly due to inadequate funds.

Raising concerns about security, the report states that at least 450 civilians have been killed and 40,000 displaced in Southern Sudan since the beginning of 2010 due to inter-communal violence, bringing the total number of newly displaced persons since January 2009 to 440,000.

The Secretary-General notes that UNMIS worked closely with authorities and communal leaders in Jonglei State to prevent armed Dinka Bor youth from mobilizing. An UNMIS cattle-tracking initiative resulted in the return of 1,400 cattle to the Bari tribe in Central Equatoria State, easing Bari-Mundari relations.

But Mr. Ban warns that food security in Southern Sudan will worsen sharply after scanty rainfall last year, poor or failed harvests and high food prices. The World Food Programme (WFP) announced in January 2010 that people needing food assistance this year will quadruple to 4.3 million, close to half the entire southern population.

The WFP has scaled up efforts to reach vulnerable populations, providing food assistance to 1.2 million people in February from 230,000 in the previous month.

Rounding up his report, Mr. Ban recommends a one-year extension of UNMIS' mandate until 30 April 2011, noting that the mission will face challenges regarding referendum preparations, security in the south and capacity-building in its areas of operation. ■

A second chance

UNMAO Quality Assurance Officer and landmine survivor Steve Fantham tells his story



Quality Assurance Officer Steve Fantham.
Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

For Quality Assurance Officer Steve Fantham of the UN Mine Action Office, April 21 2009 began like any other day.

At 6:30 a.m., he and Operations/Quality Assurance Assistant Edward Morli headed out to conduct a routine task in a minefield in Jebelin, south of the Southern Sudanese capital of Juba.

Once at the site, they met with a team of deminers to evaluate the minefield.

Halfway through the task, Mr. Fantham stepped on an anti-personnel landmine, injuring his right leg.

Team members quickly stabilized his injury and took him to the UNMIS Bangladeshi Hospital in Juba.

Due to the extent of his injury, Mr. Fantham's leg had to be amputated below the knee.

Following his surgery, the UNMAO Officer was transported to Nairobi for a week of treatment and then returned home to Australia to recuperate. Friends, family and colleagues, as well as the thought of returning to his job, helped Mr. Fantham recover.

"This was not going to beat me. You have to make a decision. Either cry in your pillow every day or get up and continue with life. It is as simple as that," he said.

Five months after his accident, Mr. Fantham decided to return to Southern Sudan, go back into the minefields and perform the same work he had been doing before.

"There is still a lot of work to be done in the Sudan. I wanted to be a part of it," he said.

Mr. Fantham approached his work with even more determination than before, as he knew first-hand how a landmine-related injury could truly impact someone's life. He also recognized the power and importance of mine risk education (MRE) in teaching people how to stay safe in environments where landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) were present.

Twenty-two years of internal conflict in Sudan between the north and south left 19 of its 25 states impacted by landmines and ERW.

Landmines and ERW not only cause injury and death of innocent civilians, but also significantly restrict and even block the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as access to land for agricultural and resettlement purposes. Freedom of movement is also hindered.

Southern Sudan, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan as well as the eastern states along the Ethiopian and Eritrean borders are the most affected regions throughout the country.

The Sudan Mine Action Programme was established in 2002 to eradicate this threat. To date, more than 800,000 unexploded ordnances and 25,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been destroyed throughout the Sudan, opening an estimated 43,000 kilometres of roads and 59 million square metres of land.

Although an estimated 3,000,000 people have received MRE, incidents continue to occur.

Five children died in a tragic accident on 1 March while playing with a hand grenade in Fashoda County payam (township) of Kodok in Upper Nile State. As of April 2010, it was estimated over 1,000 kilometres of routes and millions of square metres of land were yet to be opened.

Reflecting on the past year, Mr. Fantham said he is extremely lucky to be alive. "I feel great. I am nearly as physically fit as I once was." In six months, he will receive his fifth and final prosthetic leg.

When the New Zealander leaves the Sudan Mine Action Programme in May, he will be greatly missed. His sacrifice, passion, commitment and drive to succeed have inspired many.

"His (Steve's) general character is well suited to mine action; he is unflappable, mature and a consummate professional," said UNMAO Director/Programme Manager Nigel Forrestal.

Edward Morli, a Sudanese national from Southern Sudan, commented on Mr. Fantham's seemingly endless patience. "Steve is always willing to help people understand. He explains the answer to a question until you understand it. He deals with people in a very good way." ■

In need of water

Rapid growth in Western Bahr-EI Ghazal and Warrap states over the past few years has put a huge strain on its meagre water and sanitation facilities.

Less than 40 per cent of Western Bahr El-Ghazal residents use improved water sources and only 9 per cent use sanitary means of waste disposal, according to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey.

The demand for clean water in the state capital Wau, one of the largest towns in Southern Sudan, is far beyond the capacity of the Urban Water Supply Office, noted town Area Manager Joseph Akol Aniel.

"We are producing only 2,400 cubic metres of water per day. Based on the recently conducted census, we need to be producing over 20,000 cubic metres. We simply do not have the capacity to supply enough water," Mr. Aniel said.

While the local water treatment plant was established in 1940 to serve a population of approximately 2,000, the number of residents has now burgeoned to 150,000.

The shortfall is similar in neighbouring Warrap State, where only 2 per cent of its 970,000 residents have access to sanitary facilities and more than 60 per cent use improved water resources.

Joakin Ajou, acting director of Rural

Woman drinking water extracted by hand pump in Kuajok town, Warrap State.

Water Supply and Sanitation, Government of Southern Sudan Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, said some areas in the state were without access to clean water or sanitation due to their remoteness.

"People are exposed to different diseases because they do not have access to basic hygiene and sanitation facilities like latrines," the director said.

To mitigate the health threat posed by inadequate water and sanitation, various development agencies are working on these services in Western Bahr El-Ghazal and Warrap states.

Last year, UNICEF signed a three-year water sanitation and hygiene cooperation programme with the Government of Southern Sudan. So far, the UN agency has set up 190 water points, providing improved drinking sources for 165,000 people in the region, and sought to educate people about hygiene.

"An estimated 700,000 people have been reached with hygiene messages through radio, billboards and jingles," said UNICEF Water and Environmental Sanitation Officer Simon Bol Gatwech.

"People are exposed to different diseases because they do not have access to basic hygiene and sanitation facilities like latrines."

"An estimated 700,000 people have been reached with hygiene messages through radio, billboards and jingles."

Selam Tezera, of the non-governmental organization International Relief and Development (IRD) in Warrap, noted that the organization spent over \$200,000 on state water and sanitation programmes in 2009.

"IRD drilled four boreholes, six pit latrines and rehabilitated 16 non-functional water points. We also trained 150 participants from Twic and Gogrial West counties of Warrap State," Ms. Tzera said.

Wau Area Manager Aniel said the town would soon have a new water plant funded and implemented by USAID.

"The new water treatment plant is expected to produce an additional 6,000 cubic metres per day, bringing the total amount of water supplied daily to 8,000 cubic metres," Mr. Aniel said.

Work on the new water plant, which will cost an estimated \$4.5 million, began in early April, with an expected completion date of June 2011. ■

Population figures are from the 2008 Sudan Population and Housing Census.

Text and photo:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos





Sudan votes

Sudan held its first national, multi-party elections in 24 years from the 11-15 April, conquering massive logistical challenges in some parts of the vast country.

While the National Elections Commission (NEC) was the sole body responsible for elections, UNMIS provided various support in ensuring a successful poll. In the south, this included air transport in delivering election materials to remote polling locations scattered through its

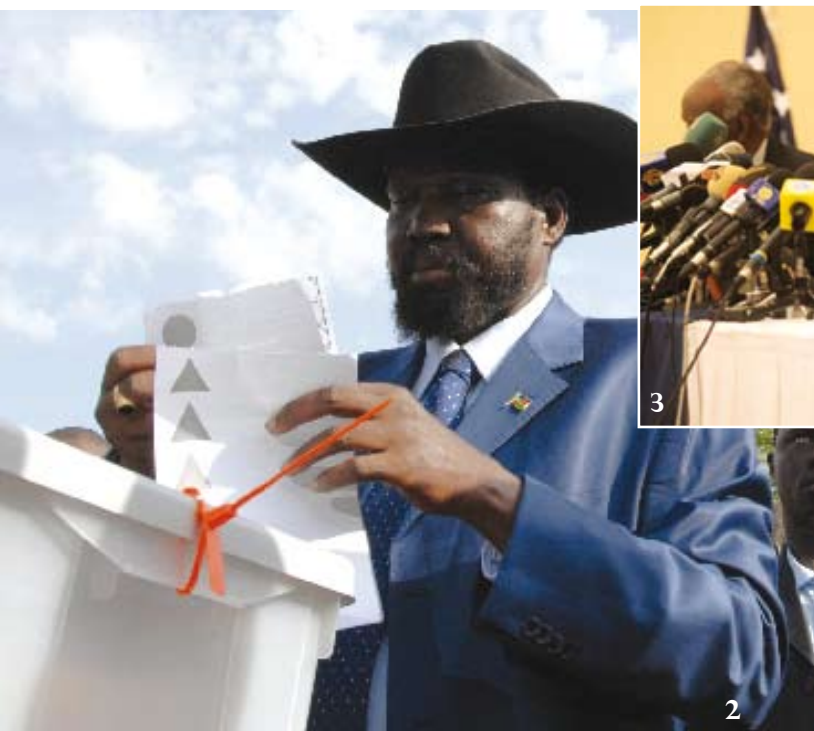
difficult terrain.

During polling in the complex elections, voters cast eight ballots in the north and 12 in the south to elect national and regional presidents, governors, members of national, regional and state legislative assemblies and women's and party lists.

Voting got off to a shaky start in some areas with polling stations opening later and some having trouble finding their polling stations. The NEC extended the election period by two additional days

from its original three to address logistical problems and allow more time for voters to get to the polls.

After the five days of voting, NEC staff began counting ballots at polling centres under the watchful eye of domestic and international observers and political party agents, who also witnessed the vote. Preliminary results had been released, but the final count was still pending as *In Sudan* went to print. ■



CAPTIONS:

1. During presidential election campaign at Juba stadium. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
2. Salva Kiir casting his ballots. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
3. Former US President Jimmy Carter, head of Carter Center election observation mission, speaking at press conference, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Mohamed Siddig.
4. Omar Hassan Al-Bashir casting his ballots. Photo: UNMIS/Mohamed Siddig.



5



8



6



7



9



10



11

CAPTIONS:

- 5. Checking for names on polling centre voter list, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Mohamed Siddig.
- 6. Voters queuing their turn, Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
- 7. National election observers monitoring voting process. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
- 8. Prisoner voting at Kober Prison, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Mohamed Siddig.
- 9. Voter casting her ballots, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
- 10. Transporting ballot boxes for counting, Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.
- 11. Counting ballots, Khartoum. Photo: UNMIS/Mohamed Siddig.



Jeremy Balmer.



Alex Yasona



Marco Biong

Unsung heroes

Supporting Sudan's historic, first multi-party election in 24 years was a daunting task for national and international UNMIS staff who worked behind the scenes to help make the poll happen. Here are some of their stories.

At the heart of it

Jeremy Balmer knows elections logistics the way Wayne Rooney knows how to score goals.

The 35-year-old Briton brought to Sudan's electoral process a wealth of experience gleaned from work both at home and in five foreign countries, ranging from East Timor to Kosovo, when he landed in Juba in April 2008.

But nothing quite prepared Mr. Balmer for the task awaiting him as UNMIS Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) regional logistics adviser for Southern Sudan in preparing for the country's April poll.

"I've never been in such a complex process," he said at his UNMIS Juba office as the retrieval of the outstanding ballot boxes began to wind down on 23 April. "It was the sheer scale of the challenges – the infrastructure, the size of the country, the weather, the literacy rate, the communications, the fact they don't have a history of elections."

The first major hurdle was voter registration, which kicked off at the start of November 2009. In some ways, that was the hardest job of all, as it was a leap into the dark for Jeremy and his two colleagues in the EAD regional logistics unit.

"The six weeks before the start of registration were really, really difficult," he said. "All of the challenges appeared to be insurmountable. You're working hard and you don't know what will become of it all."

Over 200 flights using UNMIS aircraft operated between mid-March and early May to deliver election materials and personnel to more remote polling stations in the Southern Sudanese hinterland, and retrieve those materials after the voting ended. Road convoys handled the lion's share of the 700 tons of ballot papers, ballot boxes and other voting items that were distributed among 5,744 polling stations scattered across the region.

Jeremy was at the center of that Herculean endeavor from start to finish. But he is quick to give high marks to his UN Development Programme colleagues, who were primarily responsible for getting ballot materials from National Elections Commission headquarters in Khartoum to all state capitals in Southern Sudan except Juba.

He describes his main function in the overall effort as that of a coordinator, saluting the "professionalism" of UNMIS colleagues in Mission Support, the Joint Logistic Operations Center, Movement

Control, Air Operations, Transport, UN Police and various military contingents, whose support was absolutely essential in getting elections materials to the right places by the first election day on 11 April.

"Our team achieved something pretty special in the operations and logistics side, and we should be quite proud of what we've done," he concluded. "But without the people in the state high committees doing their job and the Sudanese people coming out to vote and getting engaged in the process, this election would not have meant much. The fact that it's been a success is due to a coordinated effort on all sides."

In a windowless warehouse

Alex Yasona and Marco Biong had never so much as clapped eyes on each other when they arrived at UNMIS' Movement Control passenger terminal in Juba on 22 March to board that morning's helicopter flight to the Western Equatoria State capital of Yambio.

But the two Sudanese UNMIS staff members would spend the ensuing two weeks inside a hot, windowless warehouse hired by the National Elections Commission (NEC) to prepare election materials for delivery to the state's 29 geographic constituencies, typifying the unsung heroes of the mission's election support team who truly made a difference in the final countdown to 11 April.

Both Alex and Marco are 45-year-old family men who remained in Sudan throughout the country's second civil war, but all similarities end there. Mr. Biong is a native of Abyei who joined the Abyei area Joint Logistic Operations Center (JLOC) last December. Mr. Yasona is a product of Central Equatoria State who was assigned to the cargo cell of Movement Control in Juba when he was hired by UNMIS in June 2005.

At the request of the NEC, UNMIS deployed dozens of national staff members like Alex and Marco across Southern Sudan to ensure the timely shipment of election materials to designated polling stations. The two men toiled for up to 14 hours a day for 16 consecutive days under trying physical and mental conditions. But they now look back on their demanding assignment in Western Equatoria with a quiet yet deep sense of satisfaction.

"We went together and worked as a team," said Mr. Yasona. "People in the community were very happy and they believed that



Sifakanye Sibanda



Shukri Noor



Winham Harmon

without the mission, this election would have not have taken place.”

Those thoughts are echoed by his JLOC colleague.

“I’ve been associated with a group of people whom I would have never met, and I had an experience of what is involved in holding an election,” said Mr. Biang, who shrugged off the fact he never got back to Abyei in time to cast his ballot. “UNMIS played a very positive role.”

Beefing up security

The principal task assigned to UN Police in the mission’s overall support of last month’s nationwide balloting was the specialized training of Southern Sudanese police officers in election security tactics and strategy.

By the time polls opened on 11 April, 10,377 members of the Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS) had undergone intensive election security training courses.

One UNPOL instructor was Sifakanye Sibanda, a 44-year-old assistant inspector in the Zimbabwe Republic Police, who was assigned to UNMIS in Torit when he arrived in Sudan in June 2009.

Mr. Sibanda kicked off his first course of instruction in November. When the training programme ended in early April, an estimated 1,000 SSPS officers, including 30 women, had passed through his classroom. It was an experience he says he will cherish for many years to come.

“The new (SSPS) recruits were so eager to learn,” said the father of four. “It was the first training they’d ever come across, and although there were some problems (during the balloting process), they did a good job and tried their level best to do what they were taught.”

He was also among the dozens of UNPOL volunteers who spent the entire four-day Easter weekend inside cramped warehouses containing election materials in all 10 southern state capitals to help out with last-minute logistical preparations for the voting.

Assisting day and night

Bringing to the table more than four years’ experience with various UN electoral divisions, Shukri Noor Adan was among the North Sudan-based electoral staff who invested momentous time and energy to assist with Sudan’s complex elections.

The 36-year-old Kenyan entered UNMIS in July 2009 as a logistics officer with the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD). His initial assignment was to help establish the EAD office in Ed Damazin, Blue Nile State, as sector coordinator.

There, he assisted the elections State High Committee in organizing registration and identifying a suitable warehouse for voter registration materials as well as with transport and distribution planning.

Once the Ed Damazin office was up and running, Mr. Adan was transferred to Khartoum to act as focal point for EAD in the National Elections Commission’s central warehouse. “I was

assisting them day and night in the warehouse, in Khartoum south,” he said.

His main tasks until polling began included ensuring that materials produced abroad were dispatched to northern, Darfuri and two southern state capitals. Mr. Adan also assured that locally procured materials, including election forms, polling guides and executive ballot papers, arrived at their destinations across the country.

He said his three-year experience as a UN Volunteer with the Joint Logistics Operations Center of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had helped him smoothly handle the massive logistics task, in addition to his previous assignments with the Liberia and Iraq missions.

“The whole electoral process in Sudan, as far as my noble understanding is concerned, has not been easy,” said Mr. Adan. “It was challenging and the electoral system was also complicated. We had several elections at one time.”

Despite those challenges, all materials arrived at polling stations a day before elections began. “I have the satisfaction that my sacrifice and hard work did not go to waste, elections took place peacefully and I contributed to the democratization process of Sudan,” Mr. Adan said.

Coordinating in Darfur

Taking on the vast region of Darfur, Winham Harmon supported the elections State High Committee there by planning, coordinating and managing logistics assistance across all three states.

Acting as Regional Logistics Team Leader, his monumental task has included asset management, warehousing, transportation, material handling and tracking since he joined UNMIS Electoral Assistance Division in July 2009.

After polling stations closed, Mr. Harmon helped coordinate air and ground support to move voting materials like ballot boxes, polling kits and voter registration materials from stations across Darfur to state capitals.

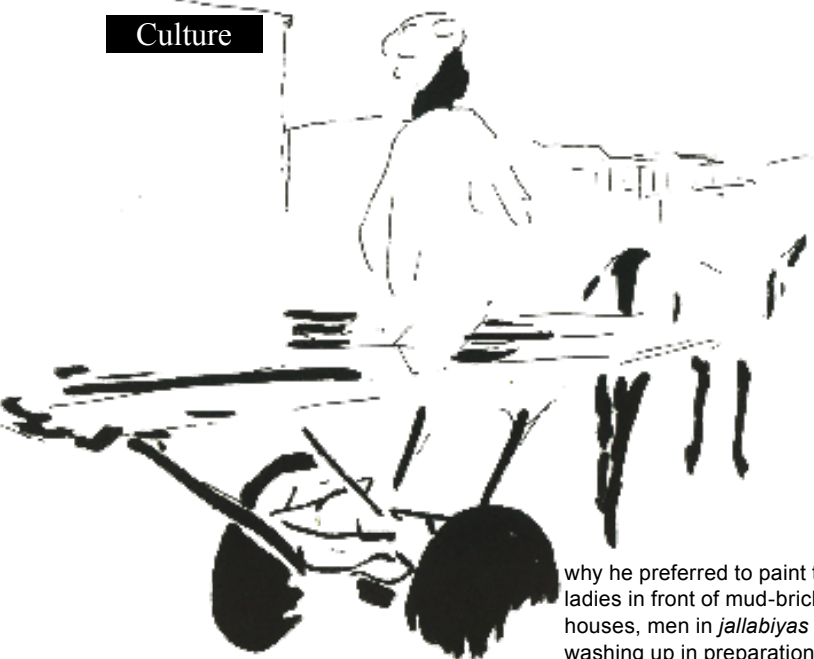
Voicing no complaint over his complex task, the Liberian said, “I’m glad to have provided support to Sudan’s electoral process, particularly in the Darfur region.”

Previously, Mr. Harmon worked as Joint Logistics Operation Officer with the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), where he supported 2008 municipal elections, which in the end failed to take place.

He also bolstered his logistics skills serving as UN Volunteer logistics assistant in his native Liberia, and worked in logistics administration for 10 years with the Liberian branch of Catholic Relief Services.

“My career aspiration is to become a professional ... logistician in the future, using my skills and knowledge in client orientation, accountability, team-work and development, planning and organizing logistics support to field operations, warehousing and commodities management,” Mr. Harmon said. ■

Sudan in ink



Chinese oil worker Su Ning had only a vague idea where Sudan was and knew almost nothing about it before his arrival in Khartoum in 2002.

Since then, he has published three books of drawings on Sudan while in the country and a fourth in his homeland.

"When I first viewed the country from the plane, the impression was 'hot! so hot!'" recalled Mr. Su, now back in China.

An economist by profession, Mr. Su came to work in Sudan with an oil company. His business travels, which took him to northern and eastern towns, including Heglig, Baleela, Babanusa, Jebel Ain, Kosti and Port Sudan, allowed him a glimpse of rural as well as city life.

He published his first book of drawings -- Sudan In My Eyes -- in 2005, followed by Habibi Sudan and Lonely Suakin in 2009. The pictures, painted mainly with Chinese brush, marking pen and plain as well as traditional Chinese ink, capture moments of everyday, rural northern Sudan and its people.

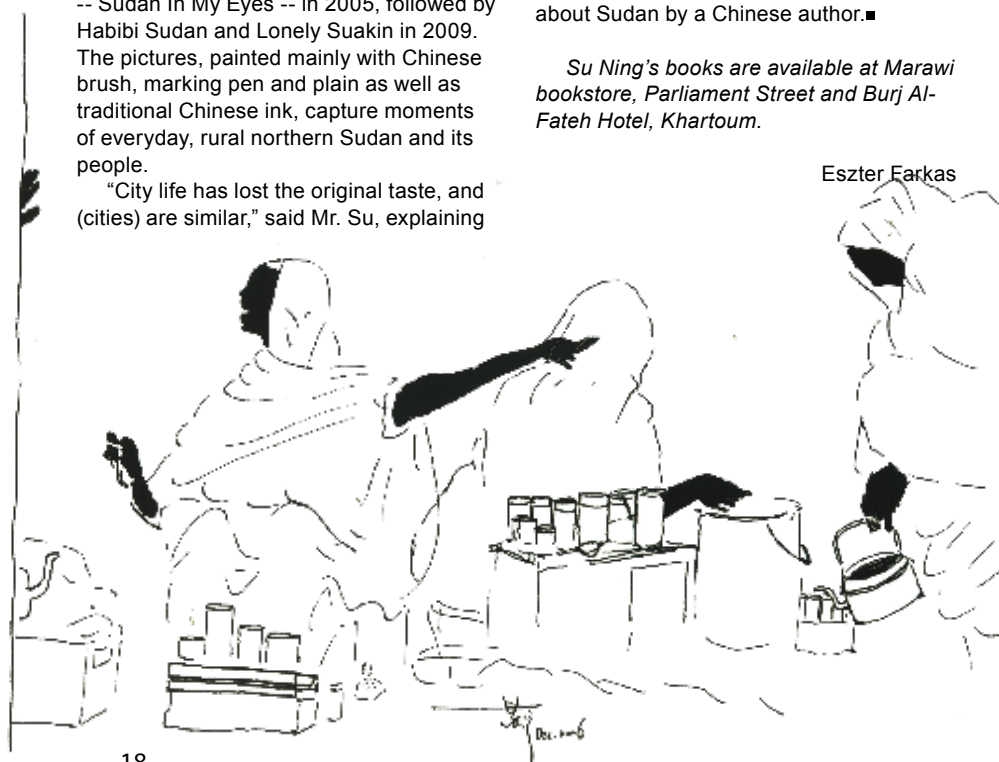
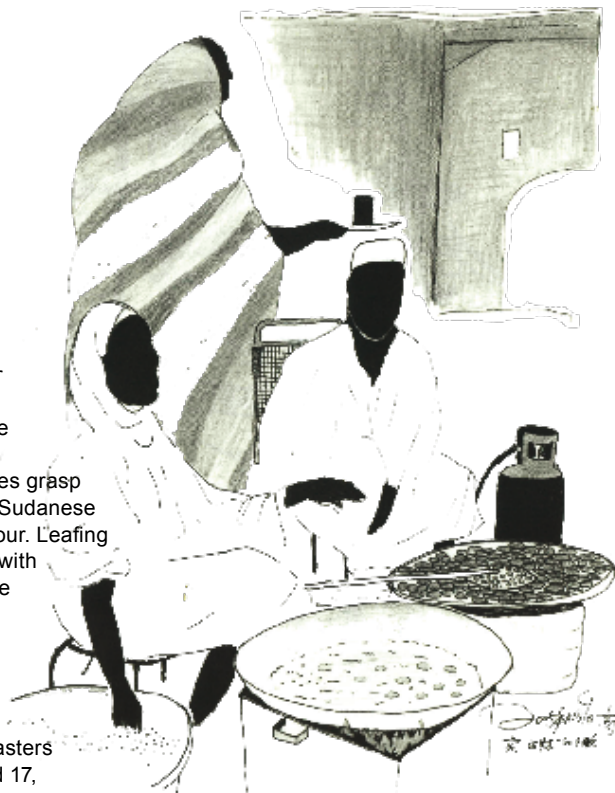
"City life has lost the original taste, and (cities) are similar," said Mr. Su, explaining

why he preferred to paint tea ladies in front of mud-brick houses, men in *jallabiyas* washing up in preparation for prayers and market scenes as well as donkey carts, while ignoring urban settings.

The compositions' fine lines grasp the essence of hot and slow Sudanese days, even without using colour. Leafing through the book, one is left with the impression that Sudanese life happens in the open, among the young and old of the family, with several goats an arm's reach away.

Mr. Su, who studied drawing with two Chinese masters between the ages of four and 17, recently published Nile Nile in his hometown Guilin. The book, which contains drawings, photos and poems in his native language, is the first travel book about Sudan by a Chinese author. ■

Su Ning's books are available at Marawi bookstore, Parliament Street and Burj Al-Fateh Hotel, Khartoum.



Coming Events

Khartoum

Movie screening
27 May, 7:30 pm – A 1970 fairytale with amazing colours, Peau d'âne (Donkey Skin), starring Catherine Deneuve, is showing at the French Cultural Centre. Entry free.

Juba

Concert
22 May – Ugandan reggae musician Moses Ssali, popularly known as Bebe Cool, is giving a show at Nyakuron Cultural Center.

Movie screening
Every Saturday from 7.30 p.m. – Enjoy a movie on large screen over the Jebel Lodge swimming pool. Entry free.

Mongolian evenings
Indulge in a tasty Mongolian dinner every Friday at the Rockshield Hotel. Bring your friends and culinary skills along and prepare your own tasty dishes listening to soothing melodies.

NEWS BRIEFS

Blind man casts vote



Blind retiree Francis Fongo arrived at a polling station in Wau, Western Bahr El-Ghazal State, to cast his vote in Sudan's historic election on 12 April, in the company of his grandson.

He was led to a board where the names of registered voters had been posted, and a polling station monitor later helped Mr. Fongo with the actual casting of his ballot.

"I have never seen an election process like this one today," said Mr. Fongo afterwards. "It is quite difficult, I have been asked a lot of questions, and I had to vote 12 times."

A former inspector of horticulture at the state government's agriculture ministry, Mr. Fongo voted in the 1971 national referendum organized by the government of President Jaafar Nimeiri to seek the electorate's endorsement of the Sudanese leader.

In that election, recalled Mr. Fongo, there were only two boxes marked "Yes" and "No," and soldiers forced voters to troop to the polls and vote for President Nimeiri.

In his judgment, the 2010 general election was a significant improvement over the plebiscite that he witnessed 39 years ago. "If this is how an election is done, I think this country is going to be a real country in Africa," said Mr. Fongo.

"Thanks be to God that we have the peace agreement that stipulated the time for elections," he concluded. "The people we are voting for are the people who are concerned about our problems and sufferings. Things will not be the same as we had in the past."

UNAMID still lacking equipment, says report

The joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force in the conflict-affected Sudanese region of Darfur is nearing full capacity, but continues to lack vital equipment to enhance its military and police units, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a recent report.

As of 15 April, personnel of the AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)

military component stood at 17,157, or 87 per cent of the authorized maximum of 19,555, while the total number of personnel in the formed police units (FPUs) came to 1,812, representing 68 per cent of the authorized strength of 2,660, Mr. Ban says in the report, issued 5 May.

"I am encouraged by the progress that UNAMID has made towards full deployment in Darfur. At the same time, continuing shortfalls in terms of the self-sustainment of military and formed police units remain a challenge to the operational capability of the mission," the Secretary-General writes.

He urges troop- and police-contributing countries to ensure that the necessary arrangements are made for the deployment of the equipment and other facilities. Helicopters and military vehicles such as armoured personnel carriers continue to be in short supply.

Increasing deployment and operational capabilities of UNAMID, especially in remote areas, have helped to improve security of Darfuri residents, including through expanded patrolling, community policing and improved collaboration with Sudanese authorities, the Secretary-General says.

But he notes that serious challenges remain in achieving lasting peace in the region, not least because of ongoing reports of violence in many areas, the absence of some key groups in the political process, and the failure of the electoral process to include large segments of Darfur's population.

He also expresses concern at inter-communal violence in Darfur, which has resulted in the "highest number of casualties during any reporting period since the inception of UNAMID".

Denied access to UNAMID by various parties, especially to areas where clashes have reportedly occurred, such as the mountainous Jebel Marra region, has significantly constrained the mission's ability to protect civilians, Mr. Ban says.

The Secretary-General also points to the proliferation of firearms among communities in Darfur, warning that this could continue to pose a threat to stability in the region.

WFP responds to southern food gap

With scanty rainfall in 2009 leaving severe hunger in many parts of Southern Sudan, a recent Southern Sudan Food Security Update estimated that 4.5 million people face food shortages.

Residents of Pochalla in Jonglei State are among those who have been adversely affected by the drought that has left them in desperate need of food aid.

"People there are really suffering, no food, no seeds, nothing," said World Food Programme Field Security Officer Brenda MacGregor, who had been on the ground to assess the situation.

Pochalla, which borders Ethiopia, is characterized by a poor road network and communications infrastructure as well as insecurity.

"Insecurity has also greatly contributed (to the food insecurity) and ... some unknown groups of gunmen are involved in looting food stuff," said Ms. MacGregor. The WFP estimates that around 600 metric tons of food are required on the ground.

To cope with the food shortages the people of Maban, Upper Nile State, are exchanging their livestock for sorghum, maize, or wheat. For three to four goats, residents obtain 90 kilograms of sorghum worth 150 SDG (\$60).

