

United Nations Mission



December 2010

In SUDAN

Special Focus: RETURNING
The first returnees

**Countdown to referendum
Roaming Khartoum streets**

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FRONT COVER: Southern Sudanese returnees and their luggage awaiting departure from Khartoum to Bentiu, Unity State. Photo: UNMIS/Paul Banks.

BACK COVER: Dome in Wau Cathedral, Western Bahr El-Ghazal State. Photo: UNMIS/Tim McKulka.

Diary

16 November: The Security Council urged parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to take urgent action in ensuring peaceful and credible self-determination referenda in Southern Sudan and Abyei. It also underlined the need for "rapid progress" on resolving post-referendum issues like security, border, citizenship, currency and natural resources.

17 November: Some 8,000 internally displaced Southern Sudanese heading home ahead of the January 2011 referendum had arrived in the Unity State capital of Bentiu. About 2,700 wishing to travel further were living in area schools with little food due to inaccessible road conditions.

19 November: Members of UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan visited the Abyei Area, where they met with the chief administrator, other local officials and community chiefs. Panel Chair Benjamin Mkapa stressed to Dinka chiefs that the problems in Abyei must be resolved peacefully.

19 November: A one-day forum in Juba on the state of human rights in Southern Sudan found little or no progress on some outstanding rights violations in the region. Organized by the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission with the UNMIS Human Rights section, the forum was opened by Southern Sudanese Vice-President Riek Machar, who noted that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Southern Sudan Police Service and other state security forces still committed arbitrary arrest and other human rights violations.

23 November: A memorial service was held at UNMIS Headquarters in Khartoum for Matthew Karley, a UN Volunteer (UNV) who passed away on 21 November in a city hospital. Arriving at the mission in April 2007, Mr. Karley was one of the first UNVs to join the Aviation Section. He was 47 and is survived by his wife, three daughters and two sons.

24 November: Speaking at a Khartoum press conference, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan Georg Charpentier said the UN and its partners, in collaboration with national and state authorities, had enhanced monitoring of departures in the country's north and key transit hubs and return areas to assist voluntary returns of internally displaced persons and refugees.

24 November: The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) delegation to the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Summit in Addis Ababa returned to Juba with a message to fully implement the country's peace accord. Other issues discussed at the meeting included the Southern Sudan and Abyei self-determination referenda as well as citizenship and border demarcation.

1 December: World AIDS Day was commemorated across Sudan with a call for "Universal access and human rights". Events in Khartoum included testimonials by persons living with HIV and a candle lighting ceremony. In Juba, UNMIS HIV/AIDS unit held a sensitization workshop and SPLA soldiers performed an anti-stigma drama.

2 December: SG Ban Ki-moon called for a probe into an incident in Zalingei, West Darfur, in which at least one person died and several were wounded. Protesters had clashed on 1 December with government security forces at the University of Zalingei during a visit by Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé and Qatari State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, who had been holding consultations in Darfur since 28 November to advance the peace process.

4 December: Civil society organizations launched a campaign in Khartoum to support dual nationality for southerners and northerners in the event that Southern Sudan secedes. The campaign also sought a guarantee for freedom of movement, residence, ownership and work, and aimed to support a peaceful referendum.

8 December: Referendum voter registration, which had been extended a week by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission, ended with a high turn-out in Southern Sudan, compared to a lower one in the north. The SSRC was still collating registration figures as *In Sudan* went to print.

The first returnees



IDPs waiting at Juba River Port. Photo: UNMIS/Isaac Gideon.

Southern Sudanese leaving the country's northern states ahead of next January's self-determination referendum are following a trail blazed by other southerners years ago.

For those who left five years ago, the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was enough of a green light to pack their belongings and start heading south.

More than two million people who fled the fighting in the south during the country's 21-year civil war and settled in North Sudan have returned to the 10 southern states since then, according to UNMIS' Return, Reintegration and Recovery section.

Bakhita Joseph fled her home town of Yambio in 1992 and spent the next 14 years eking out a living by brewing a home-made liquor known as *marisa* in a camp outside Khartoum for internally displaced persons.

The 52-year-old mother of three was detained on 11 different occasions for breaking Sharia law that bans the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

When news of the CPA signing reached her, the choice facing Ms. Joseph was a no-brainer. "I was tired of living in that way," she said, referring to the ever present possibility of another arrest in the national capital. "At that time, my thoughts were only on my return home."

For others, tracking down their loved ones lost amid the upheaval of civil war supplied the driving force behind their return to Southern Sudan.

Joyce Yona's son was living in Juba in 1991 when she abandoned the family home in the Western Equatoria State town of Ibba and trekked to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From there, she made her way to Khartoum and stayed until the advent of peace in 2005 made a trip to Juba feasible.

The disputed 2008 census found that upwards of 518,000 Southern Sudanese were still living in the country's 15 northern states in the second quarter of that year.

"I came because I was waiting for the opportunity to see my son," she said. "We had no communication when I was in Khartoum."

Mother and son reunited in the Southern Sudanese capital and lived together for four months. But the scarcity of work in Juba drove Ms. Yona to move back to Khartoum.

She stayed there until last July when financial assistance from a sister enabled her to re-settle in Juba.

A neighbour of Bakhita Joseph, who lives in the Gbudele district of Juba, Ms. Yona earns about 200 Sudanese pounds

a month crushing stones into usable construction materials.

Some who relocated to Southern Sudan early on during the CPA era left behind relatives in the north to face an uncertain future.

Assunta Theophilus was born and grew up in one of the camps for internally displaced persons on the outskirts of the national capital.

The daughter of Southern Sudanese parents had always wanted to visit her family's native region, but no opportunity presented itself until she landed a job at UNMIS headquarters in the peacekeeping mission's Human Resources section.

She was transferred to the section's regional office in Juba in 2007, but her parents chose to remain in Khartoum where they already had a house and a car.

The disputed 2008 census found that upwards of 518,000 Southern Sudanese were still living in the country's 15 northern states in the second quarter of that year.

The scarcity of job opportunities and the poor quality of educational facilities in the south convinced many southerners to remain in North Sudan after the CPA was signed. And in the case of Ms. Theophilus's parents, the astronomical cost of living in the Southern Sudanese capital also discouraged them from joining their daughter.

"We have a large family," she said. "If we want to find a house like what we have in Khartoum, it can cost around US\$ 3,000 a month."

Negus Hadera

Weighing the options

Foreign and North Sudanese residents of the country's 10 southern states are pondering the pros and cons of remaining in Southern Sudan during the final countdown to the region's January 2011 referendum.

The closing weeks of the campaign for last April's general election witnessed a significant exodus of foreign merchants from neighbouring countries like Kenya and Uganda, but some of them doubt the trend will be repeated.

"The referendum is not like elections, it can be conducted normally like in Kenya," said Andruqa Abdalla, a Ugandan food vendor in Juba's bustling Konyo-Konyo market, who has no plans to leave Southern Sudan anytime soon.

"During the elections, some people went due to the fear that they may not be peaceful, (but) they later came back and found us doing our business normally," said Mr. Abdalla.

Some expatriates were so favourably impressed by the security arrangements made by Southern Sudanese authorities during the general election period that they fully intend to stay put before and after the balloting that is scheduled to begin on 9 January.

"Security forces were everywhere in the streets of Juba, and we continued to do our business normally without any hindrances," said Ugandan trader Mansour Abdu. "I believe it's going to be the same in this upcoming referendum process."

But business has nevertheless been hit in the marketplace of the Southern Sudanese capital. The prices of tomatoes, cabbages, onions and other food items in Juba have soared in recent weeks as some jittery retailers draw down their stocks and reduce their orders for imported goods.

Grace Stieney falls into that category of merchant. However, instead of hiking prices at the two general stores she runs in the Eastern Equatoria State capital of Torit, the Kenyan businesswoman said she was slashing them on clothing, shoes and foodstuffs to clear out her inventories before heading home.

"I will definitely go and come back after the entire process is over," said Ms. Stieney, who moved to Torit in 2006. "High expectations have led to the loss of innocent lives in Kenya's elections (in 2007), for example, and this is what we expect to happen here."

Only 20 of Torit's estimated 1,000 expatriate residents stayed for the April



Fadilmullah Ismail.



Abdullah Karim Abdullah.

"If they want us to leave for the north when the result becomes separation, we'll go. When the situation normalizes, I will return to the south."

general election, said Hezron Smart Kiley, leader of the city's Kenyan community.

He warned that widespread anxiety among foreigners in Torit could drive the figure even lower by the beginning of next year.

Shops belonging to North Sudanese traders were set ablaze during the rioting that engulfed parts of Juba in the aftermath of Dr. John Garang's death in a helicopter crash in July 2005. And recent media stories have reported on plans of northern Sudanese merchants in the Upper Nile State capital of Malakal to close down their businesses and move north.

Cautiously optimistic

But a sample of opinions among northern merchants in Juba found their mood to be cautiously optimistic in the main -- and none of them was contemplating a departure from Southern Sudan.

Fadilmullah Ismail was born in White Nile State, but moved to Southern Sudan in 1989. The trader in Juba's Custom Market shrugged off any suggestion that life might become impossible if the southern states vote to secede from the rest of the country.

"I love the south more than the north," he said. "Since we are only traders and not politicians, there is no worry about staying

in the south after the referendum results."

Gismallah Mohammed, who moved from Blue Nile State to Southern Sudan 30 years ago, also considered it to be home. But he did acknowledge the possibility that he and other northern merchants might be forced to leave Southern Sudan if its residents opted for separation.

"We are concerned for our business only and not politics," said Mr. Mohammed, who trades in Juba's Gbudele Market. "If they want us to leave for the north when the result becomes separation, we'll go. When the situation normalizes, I will return to the south."

Abdullah Latif sounded a note of caution, arguing that the fates of northern residents in Southern Sudan will be inextricably linked to those of southerners living in the country's 15 northern states.

"My stay here will depend on the response of the people in the north to the results," said the itinerant vendor. "If the result is separation and they do not chase or harass the southerners in northern towns, we shall be safe. But if they do harass them, we are finished."

Story and photos:
Ojja Bosco and Felix Leju

The final leg

Aluel Wol could not hide her excitement. It had been a long wait, but soon she would be heading back to her hometown of Aweil in Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State.

Since moving to Juba from Khartoum three months ago, Ms. Wol had been a frequent visitor to the repatriation offices of the Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management to press her case for assistance.

And her perseverance eventually bore fruit. In early November, the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) gave Ms. Wol and her husband an undisclosed sum of money to help cover their travel expenses for the three-day journey to Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State.

"I cannot believe that the day has finally come," said the mother of four, who fled the war-ravaged south with her mother after her father joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army. "I am so happy that I will now be able to continue my journey."

Tens of thousands of Southern Sudanese are packing up and heading back to the country's 10 southern states after extended stays in North Sudan. Some 19,500 returnees had landed in the Unity State capital of Bentiu by early December and most of them have moved on to their villages of origin.

The "accelerated returns programme" launched by the SSRRC aims at transporting between 150,000 and 250,000 internally displaced persons

(IDPs) to Southern Sudan by March 2011.

Most southerners leaving the north are "spontaneous" returnees who have used their own resources to plan and finance the trip, according to Mary Abiong Louis Nyok of the GoSS Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management.

As of mid-November, however, the GoSS had yet to release funds earmarked for assisting state governments to cope with the influx of spontaneous returnees.

The lack of financial assistance for returning southerners has marred their homecoming in some instances.

Aluel Wol had hoped to set out for Aweil with her family within days of arriving by barge in Juba last September. But in the absence of government aid, Ms. Wol made what she termed the difficult decision to move in with relatives in the Southern Sudanese capital.

Her account of life in Khartoum is a story of hardship, poverty and fear that explains why she pulled up stakes so readily in anticipation of next year's referendum in Southern Sudan.

Ms. Wol met her future husband after moving to the national capital in 1991, and she supplemented his income as a part-time public transport driver with odd jobs.

Families hired Ms. Wol to wash their clothes for a meager two to three Sudanese pounds per bundle, but she derived her main source of income from distilling a strong spirit called *siko*.

She ran afoul of North Sudan's Sharia law on numerous occasions. Each arrest was a source of chagrin, but Ms. Wol's

maternal instincts always prevailed. "I would feel so embarrassed for bringing shame to my family," she recalled. "But my children had to eat, so I continued brewing."

She no longer lives in fear of imminent arrest, and hopes to start a business so that her children can enrol in school after she returns to Aweil.

Ms. Wol was particularly excited about voting in the self-determination referendum scheduled to begin on 9 January. She hoped some of her former neighbours in Khartoum who were also southerners could follow in her footsteps in time for the long-awaited balloting.

Unlike Ms. Wol, Ester James Taban made the trip from Khartoum to Juba without her husband and has been stranded in the regional capital's port since she arrived with her eight children in mid-October.

The 40-year-old native of Torit received some assistance from the UN World Food Programme, and she was anxious to reach the Eastern Equatoria State capital before voter registration for the referendum closed on 8 December.

"It is not easy," said Ms. Taban about the living conditions she and her children had endured at Juba's port. "But I am very happy to be back home among my people."

Her resolve to cast her ballot in the January referendum transcends geography.

"If the referendum finds me here in Juba, I will register and vote," said Ms. Taban. "But I hope I will be able to register and vote in Torit."

Antonette Miday



Esther James Taban and one of her children at Juba River Port.
Photo: UNMIS/Isaac Gideon.

Heading south



Truckloads of Southern Sudanese returnee luggage waiting to leave Khartoum for Bentiu, Unity State.

Oil-rich Unity State is one of four southern states expecting to absorb the bulk of internally displaced Southern Sudanese heading home ahead of the January 2011 referendum.

The Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission reported about 19,500 state-organized returns to Unity at the end of November, with buses continuing to arrive. Southerners have been packing up their belongings and returning to the south from camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) around Khartoum and other parts of North Sudan.

The UN has been monitoring the influx of returnees so that it can be prepared for any humanitarian needs that may arise. The number of returnees has increased dramatically over previous years, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Relief Coordinator Georg Charpentier noted at a recent Khartoum press briefing.

While the vast majority of returnees have travelled on buses and trucks, barges have also been departing from the Nile River port of Kosti, While Nile State, destined for points south, including the southern capital of Juba. Another 2,000 IDPs were expected to arrive in Juba by air

at the end of November.

Total spontaneous returns through Kosti by the end of November had climbed to 8,930, well over three times the average figure for the same month in previous years, according to the UNMIS Resident Coordinator Support Office/Early Recovery section.

Despite the increase, Mr. Charpentier

said the current pace of returns was manageable. The UN and its partners had adequately prepared for the welfare of returnees, he added, but cautioned against massive movements to communities unable to cope with the new arrivals.

Photos by Paul Banks



Southern Sudanese returnees waiting to leave Khartoum for Bentiu, Unity State.



Bentiu, Unity State

ABOVE: Returnees belongings piled up on school grounds.

RIGHT: Returnees residing in school premises.

BELOW: Returnees staying with family members.





Busload of Southern Sudanese returnees en route from Khartoum to the Equatoria states. Photo: UNMIS/Isaac Gideon.

Help along the way

Tens of thousands of internally displaced Sudanese have been heading back to their southern roots with little more than a few household items and the shirts on their backs.

Initially, they struggled to return from the north ahead of the country's upcoming self-determination referenda on their own, assisted only by their families or individual states.

But the returnees are now being assisted by the Government of Southern Sudan, which launched a massive return programme by air, land and river at the end of November. An estimated 2,000 returnees were scheduled to move to the three Equatoria states (Central, Western and Eastern) by air, 23,000 by barge and others by road as *In Sudan* went to print.

"We are receiving two flights every day, each carrying at least 100 IDPs," said Satimon Ladu, Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) Secretary for Juba County. "So far, 703 individuals have been transported by air ... while several others are moving by barge."

Upon arrival in Juba, IDPs are taken to a way station where they are given food, registered and medically examined before traveling to their final destinations.

In addition to the Equatorias, an estimated 42,000 returnees planned to return to Unity State and another 80,000 to Abyei, noted Mary Abiong Louis, director general for return, resettlement, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction (5Rs) in the ministry of humanitarian affairs and disaster management.

By 5 December, more than 19,500 individuals (2,320 families) had returned to Unity State, according to a joint assessment carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP), SSRRC and several other UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

As of 23 November, the WFP had provided 15-day rations for 5,797 transit returnees in the Unity capital of Bentiu, handing out about 61 metric tons of mixed food items.

The transit returnees were being hosted in schools, as they were unable to reach their home counties due to bad roads. The state government was working on the roads so that they could move on as quickly as possible.

Returnees will continue to be assisted by the GoSS, WFP and International Organization for Migration, according to the 5Rs director general.

"We have ... a budget of 30 million Sudanese pounds to transport the IDPs from the north," said Ms. Abiong.

SSRRC Deputy Director for Central Equatoria State Michael Lado said he was pleased that returnees unable to afford the trip were now returning home, but pointed to coming challenges.

"As our people are massively returning to the south, we are going to face problems accommodating them, not only in terms of housing but in other sectors like education, health, water and employment," the deputy director said.

Returnees themselves, who had to abandon employment in the north, are concerned about living and finding work in a now unfamiliar environment.

"It is not going to be easy to get another job quickly here," said Juba returnee Mazinga Yona Alebe, who had been working as a driver at the University of Juba in Khartoum for 11 years.

Focusing only on returning, others are prepared to tackle any obstacle. "No matter how difficult it is, I must go to my ancestral land in Aweil, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State, so that I can start a new life," said 41-year-old Aluel Kuol, also now in Juba, who had lived in Khartoum for 22 years.

The SSRRC has requested humanitarian actors at the Juba and field level to provide support for returnees as well as assist with verifying, registering and tracking them.

The Logistics Cluster (a group of NGOs and UN agencies led by WFP) has been working to map all organizations' logistics capacity across the region.

Ahead of the January referendum and in preparation for a potential influx of returnees, the WFP is positioning some 76,000 metric tons of food in strategic locations across Southern Sudan. This includes WFP planned assistance for some 500,000 returnees with up to three-month food rations.

Border states – Upper Nile, Unity, Warrap, and Northern and Western Bahr El-Ghazal – are being considered priorities for food deliveries and will have some 50,000 metric tons of food positioned by mid-December.

Emmanuel Kenyi

One per minute

Marked by long, animated queues, voter registration in Juba for next year's self-determination referendum reflected the enthusiasm of southerners ahead of the 9 January poll.

"We have been receiving one registrant per minute since the first day (15 November) up to this second week (28 November) of the registration," said Clement Jada, chairman of St. Bahkita Primary School Registration Centre.

Mouna Registration Centre also had lengthy lines, sparking complaints from registrants about inadequate numbers of registrars. "I have been waiting for three hours to register," said Karapino Lodu Kulang. "Our center has only one registrar. One registrar cannot work quickly enough."

Mr. Jada discounted claims of a low women's turnout in registration centers. Initially this had been the case, he said, but during the second and third weeks the reverse was true. "There are more women than men here today. To remedy the problem of women queuing for a long time, we register one man after every registration of four women."

With fears rife that ineligible voters would register, the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission put in place several checks to ensure only eligible Southern Sudanese registered.

"Before we register anyone, we demand from them a national identity card and a birth certificate," said the chairman of Hai Jebel Market Registration Centre, Hillary Loguo Thomas. "If a person does not possess any of these identity documents, then an area inspector will help us identify that person."

Lony Rout, chair of the region's largest domestic observer organization, Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections, said his office had received no reports of irregularity from the 550 observers it had sent to centres in the south or the 200 people monitoring in the north.

"The conduct of the registration in the country has been smooth so far," he said during the third week of registration.

Ballot papers

After registration finished on 8 December, focus shifted to referendum symbols that will be used during the seven-day poll. Local chief Bona Abur Lugun from Munuki Payam (township) said illiterate voters would need to be educated about the symbols to avoid making mistakes during the poll.

Samuel Yanga said he was unaware what symbols would be used. "Let the symbols be brought so that I see and understand that this symbol stands for this and this stands for that" said the 58-year-old Juba resident. "We want to see them with our own eyes so that we are not lost during the balloting."

But Lumang Mary Bilal, a worker at Hai Jebel Market, said she knew what symbols would be used in the ballot papers. "What I have seen is a single hand waving that means separation or secession and two hands held tightly together that stand for unity."

James Sokiri



Voter registrant showing ink marked on her finger (to avoid double registration) after signing up at centre in Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Isaac Gideon.

Voting on track

Commenting on recently concluded voter registration in Sudan, a top southern referendum official said the exercise had gone well and that balloting should begin on time.

"If the unforeseen happens, then we wait to see but right now, we are working towards the January 9 deadline," Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau Chairperson Justice Chan Reec Madut told *In Sudan*.

He noted that registration had been extended for a week due to high numbers of people still unregistered, internally displaced persons in North Sudan wanting to come south and register, and those still wishing to register in the north, where turnout had been low.

Also, some centres had run out of materials during the second week and had to stop registering until new forms had been brought from South Africa, the bureau chairperson said.

But he added that prolonging voter registration and revising the referendum schedule would not interfere with the original timeline for the vote.

Mr. Madut also observed that the commission had agreed on the importance of registering prisoners for the vote. "Since the prisoners do not have the freedom to walk and register where they like, it was decided that they be registered inside the prison."

Asked whether extending the bid for the ballot printer (also by a week) would affect the 9 January poll date, Mr. Madut said that once bids were open and a competent company chosen, it would be possible to place orders and produce the voting papers on time.

A United Kingdom-based company, TALL Security Group, won the ballot paper bid on 7 December, as In Sudan went to print. Tall Group offered to produce and deliver materials to Khartoum, Juba and the eight Diaspora voting countries (Australia, Britain, United States, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya) within 12 days of signing the contract.

Countdown to referendum

A towering clock strategically positioned at a major roundabout in Juba counts down in days, minutes and seconds the time remaining before registered voters flock to the polls to cast ballots in next year's self-determination referendum.

In anticipation of the ballot, the resident diplomatic community in Juba has been growing by leaps and bounds. A dozen consulates already operate in Southern Sudan, and more have voiced interest in establishing a similar presence in the city.

The world is literally descending on Juba, said UN Development Programme Advisor on Peace and

Development Dan Eiffe.

"They are considering this as an opportunity to move away from humanitarian aid to help with real state-building," said Mr. Eiffe, an ex-priest who has lived and worked in Southern Sudan for over 20 years.

"The population expects their natural resources to be better utilized and the perennial food shortages ended (after the referendum)."

UNMIS is building a sprawling office and accommodation complex 12 kilometres from downtown Juba on a 126-hectare piece of land near Jebel Kujur.

The new UN House Project Manager Georges Bou Saba said the complex would accommodate 1,000 office staff from UN agencies as well as the peacekeeping mission. Senior UNMIS officials have described the project as a tangible sign of the UN's long-term commitment to

Southern Sudan.

Mr. Saba said Jebel Kujur is expected to become a hub for many government ministries and diplomatic missions in coming years. The Ministry of Transport of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has already established its headquarters in that area of the city.

Foreign delegations, referendum observer missions and international news media are also streaming into Juba ahead of the long awaited balloting scheduled to begin on 9 January 2011.

To accommodate rising volumes of passenger air traffic, the international carriers Kenya Airways and Egypt Air started flying to Juba in the last half of 2010.

Eager investors

Investors wait anxiously on the fringes. The number of paved roads and new buildings sprouting in the regional capital attests to the soaring demand for housing, office space and a better road network.

The private sector is looking ahead to the referendum with great anticipation, said Mike Lucas, Managing Director of the Active Partners Group, which was awarded a government contract five years ago to build power generation projects in eight southern states.

Mr. Lucas foresees an influx of investors and contractors who will be looking to make quick money. A lot, he says, will depend on the technocrats and policymakers who will help shape the investment climate in Southern Sudan.

"The outcome of some of these issues will greatly affect our decisions as investors," he said. "But it looks very promising."

Most of the hotels in Juba are enjoying high occupancy rates and have had to turn away many prospective guests, according to Trevor Kandiah, general manager of the Juba Grand Hotel. His hotel is planning a major expansion of its facilities to establish itself as the industry leader in the city.

Officials of the Southern Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture forecast a flood of foreign investment pouring into the capital after next January's referendum.

Chamber consultant Charles Anyama said that preference would be given to companies willing to establish production facilities that would create new jobs and help lessen Southern Sudan's heavy reliance on imported goods.



Booming businesses in central Juba. Photo: UNMIS/Isaac Gideon.

Price hikes

While hype surrounding the referendum has provided a welcome boost to some sectors of the local economy, others have not fared so well. The scarcity and rising cost of the US dollar for foreign exchange traders dealing in Sudanese pounds has narrowed their profit margins.

Restrictions on the purchase of foreign currency in banks have also complicated matters for small businessmen. Hardware vendor Jojo Modi said he queued at a local bank for an entire day to obtain a mere \$200 in hard currency, which he needs to purchase imported merchandise.

Uncertainty surrounding the referendum has also fuelled rising prices in Juba's open-air markets as some merchants cut back on new orders to replenish dwindling stocks. "I used to sell a tray of eggs for 8.5 Sudanese pounds last May," said Customs Market wholesaler Joseph Kenyi. "But now I sell it for 12 pounds, yielding me an extra 3.5 pounds."

The real estate sector has not been spared. As more southerners move from North Sudan to the regional capital, the demand for relatively scarce rental housing has gone through the roof.

Celina Kiden was recently served an eviction notice by her Juba landlord, who needs the house she's been renting to accommodate some of his relatives who have arrived from Khartoum.

"I have been looking for a house for rent for two months now, but without any success," said Ms. Kiden, adding that a two-room, semi-permanent dwelling that could be leased for 200 Sudanese pounds a month as recently as last August is now fetching between 400 and 600 pounds.

Heightened expectations

As the countdown clock on the roundabout ticks away, the dreams and demands of many Southern Sudanese continue to soar.

"The population expects their natural resources to be better utilized and the perennial food shortages ended (after the referendum)," said Clement Kuot of the GoSS Ministry of Information.

Whatever the result, the boom town of Juba is poised to maintain its current breakneck pace of expansion as ever more investors, diplomats, returnees, humanitarian aid workers and others adopt the city as their newfound home.

Antonette Miday and James Sokiri

Water crisis looms large

As more and more residents return to Southern Sudan from the north and neighbouring countries to participate in next year's self-determination referendum, already limited supplies of potable water in Juba are fast becoming even scarcer.

The inhabitants of Juba's Hai Baraka shantytown on the northwestern side of the regional capital depend on one well to meet their water consumption needs.

"You have to be patient enough while waiting for your chance to pump," said area resident Jane Rose. "I have to queue for five to six hours to get my turn."

They blame the city's emerging water crisis on the influx of newcomers who are placing a greater strain on public services, infrastructure and the supply of housing.

"This referendum has brought back many people, resulting in water shortages," said Hai Baraka resident Joyce Aita. "Early this year, most houses in this area were vacant, but now all the houses are occupied."

Buying purified water is out of the question for the urban poor, who cannot afford to pay the seven Sudanese pounds charged by itinerant vendors for a 240-litre container.

The vendors themselves must also wait in line for lengthy periods to fill up their tanker trucks at the city centre's lone water treatment plant.

"I have to wake up at 4 a.m. each day in order to queue up to get my share of the day's water," said Ikawa Richardi Odokonyero as he sat in his truck on a recent weekday morning.

Ms. Aita and her neighbours in Hai Baraka should count themselves fortunate in at least one respect. The residents of some parts of Juba have no access whatsoever to a nearby well and must rely on the muddy waters of the White Nile for their source of water, risking exposure to river-borne diseases.

"We do not have a borehole here," said Josephine Bakhita as she collected water directly from the river at a point near the Konyo-Konyo market area where she lives. "Even pipe water does not reach us, so we drink this water."

"I have to wake up at 4 a.m. each day in order to queue up to get my share of the day's water,"



Water queues at Hai Baraka, Juba.

To alleviate Juba's worsening water shortage, the Southern Sudan Urban Water Corporation (SSUWC) unveiled a treatment plant in the city centre last June with assistance from the United States Agency for International Development, which funded its construction.

In September, the SSUWC handed over operation of the plant to a private company. The firm has since opened two more water treatment plants at Juba Teaching Hospital and in the Munuki district of the regional capital, according to one of its employees, Simon Peter Igga.

Story and photo: James Sokiri

Managing a prison's records

Describing the condition of record-keeping at Juba Prison as appalling would be a major understatement.

Records dating as far back as 1994 lie scattered over a table in the wooden shack that serves as the facility's admission and discharge office.

Additional documents litter the dirt floor, a good number destroyed by insects, moisture and the soil.

"Unfortunately, the prison records were stored in wooden cabinets and termites ate them up," said UNMIS Corrections Advisor Isaac Abuaku-Ameyaw.

During a recent visit to the prison, one clerical employee was observed to be sitting in a darkened corner of the shack while nine of his colleagues did their work outside under the cover of trees.

One of the oldest facilities of its type in Southern Sudan, Juba Prison is also the region's biggest.

But its 500-inmate capacity falls just short of accommodating half of the 1,010 prisoners currently in custody at the prison.

Managing the huge volume of paperwork generated by their incarceration has been an uphill struggle for the prison administration's poorly equipped clerical staff.

In November 2008, the UNMIS Corrections Advisory Unit, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and

International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Justice organized their first records management training for the prison's clerical staff.

The workshop discussed a number of record-keeping tasks and practices ranging from the filing and archiving of prisoners' files to confidentiality and access issues.

UNODC also furnished filing cabinets for more effective storage and printed necessary forms for accurately recording prison information.

"When we started training the officers, they knew the importance of accurate records and they knew what information should be collected," said UNMIS Corrections Coordinator Robert Leggat. "But they had no physical documents in which to do it."

The UN Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners mandate the recording of a prisoner's name, reason for imprisonment, incarceration authority and the time of his admission.

"Without legal documentation, you cannot have rule of law," said Mr. Leggat.

Colonial Structure

A second training was held last July with UNODC and the UNMIS Corrections Advisory Unit. UNODC went a step further in August and funded the renovation and

expansion of the records office.

Built in 1948 during the waning years of British colonial rule, the two-room structure has never previously undergone renovation, according to Juba Prison Director Maj. Gen. Alfred Manyang Abok.

The renovation project has been budgeted at 45,000 Sudanese pounds (\$19,000). When completed, the building will house two offices for record-keeping personnel and another three for senior prison authorities.

"All construction work has been done by prison artisans," said UNMIS Corrections Engineering Advisor Ruzvidzo Muchongwe, adding that the project should be finished by the end of October.

The Government of Southern Sudan has agreed to establish a reception area at a cost of 17,000 Sudanese pounds (\$7,100).

On account of its size, Juba Prison is the only facility of its kind in Southern Sudan that is receiving that additional funding, said Mr. Leggat.

The UNMIS Corrections Advisory Unit has assigned 25 correction advisors drawn from the ranks of the peacekeeping mission's contributing countries to mentor staff at the 10 state prisons in Southern Sudan.

Story and photo: Murugi Murekio



Project Engineer Ruzvidzo Muchongwe (left) inspecting expansion of Juba Central Prison records office with UNMIS Correction Advisor Isaac Abuaku-Ameyaw.

A perilous journey

When 16-year-old Hatim and two friends left Eritrea for neighbouring Sudan last spring, they carried only their mobile phones and some extra clothes. Fleeing mandatory and unlimited service in the Eritrean army, they thought Sudan was just a short hike away.

Six weeks passed before the trio stumbled into Shagarab Camp funded by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in East Sudan, half starved and in urgent need of medical assistance.

The camp, located about two hours from Kassala, has become a transit point for many minors (persons under the age of 18) slipping away at night in pursuit of a better life in Sudan, the Middle East or Europe. The refugee agency registered some 1,300 children who were unaccompanied or separated from their families there in 2009.

Four months after the ordeal Hatim [not his real name] said he felt almost recovered. Looking thin but healthy, he often looked down as he spoke guardedly about his harrowing journey out of Eritrea.

Hatim's flight began on a snap decision. He had quit school to contribute to his family's income, but school administrators notified the government that he had abandoned his studies.

Shortly afterwards, Hatim received a letter drafting him into the army – a service mandatory in Eritrea for men and women between the ages of 15 to 50 years that has no time limit.

When the letter arrived, Hatim decided to leave the country with two of his friends, who at that time were on furlough from the military.

"We knew Sudan was to the west and

it was close. ... We only brought our mobiles with us," he said.

Leaving the town of Tesenay that evening on foot, the boys kept walking, but the trip took longer than they had expected. They started to feel hungry and thirsty and spent the first night sleeping on the ground.

The next morning they resumed their trek and walked for days without food.

As the youths were approaching the Sudanese border about 10 men appeared, nomadic tribesmen who live along the border and are famous for smuggling everything under the sun.

Sticks and snakes

The men forced the youths to the ground, hit them with sticks and menaced them with their swords, demanding to know if they had family abroad to pay for their release.

After robbing Hatim and his companions of their few belongings and identity papers, the nomads drove them into the bush, where they chained their hands around trees and shackled their feet for an entire month.

As Hatim recalled, the area was full of snakes and small scorpions that bit and crawled over them. The painful scorpion bites would swell and a large area of skin become numb for hours.

After three weeks about 10 young Eritrean men and women and an infant were brought to the same location, but soon a ransom was paid and they were taken away.

"UNHCR has received several reports by asylum seekers referring to similar stories of extortion by traffickers upon their

arrival in Sudan," Rebeca Cenalmor-Rejas, UNHCR Protection Officer in Kassala, said. She added that the agency's Kassala office had reported this trend to its Sudanese counterpart, Sudan's Commission for Refugees, and requested intervention by police and immigration authorities.

The nomads eventually threatened to kill the boys and sell their organs if no money was sent for their release. When it became clear that no ransom would be paid, the youths were released and dropped off within sight of Shagarab Camp.

"The three of us were sick and one friend needed help to walk," Hatim said. "However, we could not assist him for long, and we went ahead for help. After that, the people at the camp were very helpful to us."

At the refugee camp, Hatim and his companions received medical treatment and were registered at the reception centre. Later they were transferred to the unaccompanied minors centre, where youths receive food, water and shelter and have access to some games and television.

Hatim's travel companions are long gone -- one is in Khartoum and the other has made it as far as Israel. But Hatim said he had no plans to travel farther due to lack of a sponsor. He wanted to continue school, however, and become a mechanic one day.

For many unaccompanied minors and refugees, Shagarab camp is a way station on the road to a better place. Some of them are trying to rejoin their families living in western countries.

Karen Ringuette, UNHCR

Minors at UNM Centre in Shagarab refugee camp, East Sudan.
Photo: UNHCR/Shobha Rao.





Homeless child attending reading and drawing activity at Omdurman open library.

Armed with clean sheets of paper and pencils, teenagers were drawing clouds, trees and solid houses in central Omdurman's Felah Centre before returning to the streets, where most of them lived.

"We come from the street," said 17-year-old Ibtisam Mohammed, a lanky girl dressed in colourful clothes, with a scarf holding up her abundant hair.

Ibtisam, originally from Babanusa in Southern Kordofan State, was attending the "mobile library", organized by the Sabah Association for Child Welfare and Development every Thursday and Saturday, along with 20 other young people.

Sabah is a Sudanese non-governmental organization (NGO) that has been providing services to street children in greater Khartoum since 1985. Executive Director Khalaf Alla Ismail said the project was launched by Sudanese volunteers wanting to support the hundreds of idle and hungry children roaming around markets after the western Sudan drought of 1984-85.

At that time, many children moved to the federal capital with their families and were forced to work, beg or steal on the streets, pushing the number of street children in Khartoum to more than 12,000, according to a Ministry of Social Welfare survey.

Since then, the number had increased, as political conflicts, poverty and broken families continued to force children onto the streets, said Mr. Ismail.

According to the 2001 study "*Children of the Sug: Full-time and working street children of Khartoum, Sudan*", an estimated 35,000 unaccompanied children were on the streets of Khartoum. A collaboration of international NGOs and UNICEF, the study showed that about 80 per cent had homes to return to at day's

Roaming Khar

end, while about 20 per cent were believed to spend both day and night on the streets.

Nineteen-year-old Mazeed Mahmoud, a native of Dilling in the Nuba Mountains, who has been living in Khartoum since he was nine, said he polished shoes and worked as a conductor on minibuses to support his family. But he went home to his mother and four siblings for the night.

"I am the oldest one," Mazeed said, as he finished up his drawing of

a kindergarten surrounded by trees at the Felah Centre, adding that he felt responsible for his siblings.

Broken families, empty pockets

Children mainly took to the streets due to problems at home, parents without formal schooling, poverty and broken families,



toum streets

according to Ministry of Social Welfare psychologist and social worker Hala Rashid.

Frequently, when a parent remarried after the other parent's death or divorce, the new partner failed to accept children from the first marriage, Ms. Rashid said.

"The new parents are often violent with the children, drive them away and sometimes mistreat them," the psychologist said, adding that the trauma

often led to glue-sniffing addictions.

Roaming the streets often implies children are in trouble, according to social workers. The Juvenile Welfare Act 1983 defined homelessness as a crime punishable by 20 lashes until the Child Act of 2004 and then 2010 decriminalized it. However, children still often end up at police stations for sniffing glue or vagrancy.

One way of discouraging children from



Homeless children at Omdurman open library.

substance abuse was to warn them about the possible health risks, Ms. Rashid said, and keep them occupied.

Following this philosophy, the Mohabem Children's Centre was founded in Omdurman in 1997 by the Presbyterian and Evangelical Church as a drop-in centre where children could take a shower and receive a meal.

Since then, the church has established a centre in Khartoum's Gireif area, Renk, Upper Nile State and Nyala, South Darfur State. The idea at the Gireif live-in centre, which currently houses 20 boys, was to "keep them (the youth) busy", so they would stop sniffing glue, said a volunteer there, who did not wish to be named.

The centre also offered schooling and meals as well as mechanic and carpentry workshops for young men aimed at "realigning their identities", the volunteer said. "We are trying to show them unconditional love," making the boys believe that "being a thief is not my identity".

The hardest part was "learning how to stay in one place", said 20-year-old Maurice Pagan Deng at the Gireif shelter. "The workshops are the best thing, and that we can go to school."

Although the Sudanese government ran several large centres around the capital accommodating hundreds of homeless children, many social workers felt it was best to avoid institutionalizing individuals.

According to the "*Children of the Sug*", the governmental centres focused on "reforming children psychologically and socially through military-like discipline". Hence, children often escaped them to return to the streets.

"Many kids feel detained in residential centres and prefer to live outside," said Sabah social worker Ahmed Ali, who was trying to make youngsters feel more secure in a thatched shelter in a quiet Omdurman neighbourhood, before they hit the bustling streets again.



Social worker Ahmed Ali (right) and children at Omdurman open library.

Story and photos: Eszter Farkas

Setting an example



Nyandeng Malek during her swearing in ceremony, Kuajok.

Nyandeng Malek was a schoolgirl of 13 when she met the woman who would change her life forever.

The year was 1977, a time of peace in Sudan, when her aunt Victoria Yar Arol came to Ms. Malek's village in the Lakes State county of Cuebit.

A true pioneer for her gender, Ms. Arol was the first Southern Sudanese woman to be admitted to the University of Khartoum. She later became the first woman to be elected to the regional legislature that had been established in Juba under the terms of the 1972 Addis Ababa peace treaty.

The lawmaker was immediately impressed by the bright granddaughter of the village's paramount chief and offered to bring Nyandeng back to Juba to pursue her studies in the regional capital.

"At that time, most of the girl students dropped out of school after they completed their primary school in our village," recalled Ms. Malek. "The moment she took me to Juba, she really saved me from all the things which forced women to drop out."

“Early marriages are very harmful, and we are working on the notion that our children, both male and female, should go to school.”

As an adult, Ms. Malek would go on to blaze some trails of her own, becoming the first democratically elected female governor in Southern Sudan when she won last April's gubernatorial race in Warrap State.

"A lot of women are already inspired by the fact that we have got a woman leader in one of the biggest states in the region," said Gai William Deng Nhial, chairperson of the Warrap State Referendum High Committee. "Nyandeng Malek is setting an example and making history."

But the 46-year-old educator and mother of four daughters realizes her life could have taken a very different course without the support of her late aunt, who saved Ms. Malek from the early marriage that awaits so many girls from her Dinka

ethnic group when they are still teenagers.

"Early marriages are very harmful, and we are working on the notion that our children, both male and female, should go to school," the soft-spoken governor told *In Sudan* in a recent interview at her home in the state capital of Kuajok.

The road to the governorship of Warrap State took Ms. Malek through four foreign countries where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees and met her future husband before returning to Southern Sudan in 2005.

But it all began in Cuebit County, where she enrolled in primary school at the age of seven with the backing of her grandfather who, as the paramount chief in the village, overrode the objections of some relatives who wanted the girl to stay at home.

Ms. Malek spent three years in Juba with her aunt until Ms. Arol passed away in 1980. She returned to Lakes State briefly before her impressive test scores gained her admission to a girls' secondary school in Gezira State, which represented her first ever foray outside Southern Sudan.

At the conclusion of her high school studies in 1984, Ms. Malek won a scholarship to attend university in Egypt. But those plans were put on hold when she returned to Lakes State to say her farewells to family and friends, only to find herself stranded in her village by the escalating fighting of the country's second civil war.

"I was determined not to get married," she recalled. "In 1985 I managed to walk on foot all the way to Wau and finally reached Khartoum by military helicopter, which was the only means of transport during that time."

Ms. Malek made it to Egypt in 1987 and enrolled at Zagazig University, where she developed the keen interest in politics that led her to join the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

"As students, all of us really wanted to know about the war and its causes," said Ms. Malek. "We organized different rallies and discussed issues facing the country."

During her student years she acquired another enduring commitment – her future partner in marriage. He was a university professor named Andrew Malek Madut,

who was teaching in Ethiopia and met Nyandeng through a younger brother also attending Zagazig.

She graduated from the university in 1991 with a degree in education and moved to Addis Ababa to join her husband.

Her academic career took Ms. Malek to Kenya's Moi University in 1997, where she taught Arabic for three years, and then to Britain's Wolverhampton University in 2002 to earn a master's degree in development and education studies.

She was present at the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nairobi as a member of the SPLM delegation and later returned to Southern Sudan for the first time in 18 years.

Ms. Malek initially worked as a community development officer for the non-governmental organization Pact Sudan for two years.

Her political career took off in 2007 with her appointment as deputy governor of Warrap State. Over the ensuing three years Ms. Malek played an influential role

in state government affairs as minister of education and a political advisor to Governor Tor Deng Mawien.

Unlike some SPLM candidates for governor who encountered stiff opposition from dissident SPLM members mounting

“ I don't see any change I made so far, apart maybe from women being inspired (by my example). ”

challenges as independent candidates, Ms. Malek faced three opposition party rivals and cruised to an easy victory in the April general election.

Her colleagues speak highly of the governor's managerial style and the role model she represents to young Southern Sudanese women.

“She consults all the ministers for every decision and policy she executes and always works on the basis of consensus,” said Warrap State Minister for Physical Infrastructure Aniek Tong Atak. “She is a

very effective, trustworthy team worker.”

Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) official Abuk Nikanora Manyok highlighted the new ground she has broken within her own Dinka people's culture and traditions.

“In Dinka society, it is difficult for women to get a position as high as she got,” said the SSRB director for public outreach. “She is a symbol of commitment (and) determination.”

Barely six months into her term as governor, Ms. Malek was modest about her achievements to date. But she vowed to pursue her long-term goal of improving the living conditions of her fellow Southern Sudanese.

“I don't see any change I made so far, apart maybe from women being inspired (by my example),” she said candidly. “But what I want really is to see a people (climb) out of poverty. That is my dream.”

Story and photos:
Hailemichael Gebrekrstos



The biggest cathedral

The flagship of the Roman Catholic Church in the greater Bahr El-Ghazal region of Southern Sudan is the cathedral of Wau. Opened in 1956, it is an imposing brick structure replete with cupola and rose window and ranks as the largest of Sudan's five Catholic cathedrals.

The roots of Roman Catholicism in the area date back to 1904 when 10 Comboni missionaries left Khartoum for the remote settlement of Wau, where British colonial authorities had established an outpost at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In 1913 an apostolic prefecture was established in the Bahr El-Ghazal region under the leadership of Father Antonio Stoppani. Wau's current Bishop Rudolf Deng Majak described the city as a "cradle of Christianity" at the time, and Father Stoppani became Wau's first bishop four years later when the apostolic prefecture was upgraded to a vicariate.

The church played a vital role in the field of education over the ensuing four decades. Catholic schools were synonymous with the best education on offer in the Bahr El-Ghazal region to the children of the local elites.

The St. Joseph's Workshop churned out carpenters, plumbers, electricians and other skilled artisans.

That all began to change in 1958 when Catholic and other faith-based schools

were nationalized by the regime of Gen. Ibrahim Abboud as part of an effort to promote Islam in Sudan.

The church's fortunes enjoyed a modest uptick during Sudan's second civil war. It organized the distribution of food to the poor on a monthly basis, said Wau school teacher Peter Elis Bandas. As most state-run schools were forced to close their doors, that left Catholic institutions like the John Paul II Secondary School, which continued to function during the long years of conflict.

But the real comeback of the Catholic Church in Wau occurred after the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

It currently operates 16 schools in and around the Western Bahr El-Ghazal State capital, and a new faculty of agriculture was recently completed for the city's Catholic University.

The Wau diocese provides health care services through the Comboni Hospital, St. Joseph's Clinic and the Jebel Kheir health clinic.

"Its office of peace and justice has a great role to play for the success of the referendum of southern Sudan," said Bishop Deng, adding that the church has scheduled prayers for the referendum on a regular basis and is organizing workshops focusing on peace building and reconciliation.

A shortage of funding has hampered efforts to rehabilitate some of the Catholic schools and vocational training facilities that deteriorated during the civil war.

The problem is also present in the city itself, where the venerable St. Joseph's Workshop awaits the necessary infusion of money to upgrade its physical premises.

There is no doubting the imprint that the Catholic church has made on many prominent residents of Wau.

"The church in Wau has played a great role in my life," said Ms. Rose Alfred Maffigi, who attended Catholic schools from kindergarten right through to the secondary level.

"Most of my colleagues who are now working with the government, non-governmental organizations and even UNMIS here in Wau got their education from John Paul II Church Secondary School."

The next big project for the church is the opening of an FM radio station that will join other stations affiliated with the Sudan Catholic Radio Network.

Father Justin Wanawilla of the diocese's development office said that the church plans to use the radio station to provide religious and civic education to the population at large in Wau.

Michael Wondi
Photos: Tim McKulka



NEWS BRIEFS

SG Panel: Referendum registration encouraging

Voter registration for the upcoming referendum on the status of Southern Sudan was encouraging, but low turnout in the north must be addressed, the UN Secretary-General's monitoring panel said on 22 November as it wrapped up a 10-day visit to Sudan.

Speaking at a Khartoum press conference, Panel Chair Benjamin Mkapa commended the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission for its efforts to ensure that voter registration was able to begin on time on 15 November at almost all of the nearly 3,000 registration centres in Sudan, as well as at many in countries outside Sudan where diaspora voting will take place. Registration was due to conclude on 8 December.

But Mr. Mkapa voiced concern about low turnout at registration centres in the north, with many Southern Sudanese apparently unwilling to register. He called on the governments in Khartoum and Juba, the media, civil society and referendum authorities to step up their efforts to promote and explain the referenda so that the public was better informed about their rights and options in the vote.

He also urged all sides to tone down their rhetoric so that southerners living in the north and northerners living in the south feel assured that their



safety and property would be protected.

The three-member panel, which operates completely independent of the UN Mission in Sudan, visited voter registration centres in four states and travelled to the disputed area of Abyei. It held talks with senior government officials, referendum authorities, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, the diplomatic community and citizens across the country.

The other two members of the panel are former Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs António Monteiro and Bhojraj Pokharel, former Chairman of the Election Commission of Nepal.

Joint Mediator, Qatari delegation visit Darfur

Members of the Darfur mediation team, including the United Nations, the African Union and Qatar, visited the region from 28 to 1 December to hold consultations aimed at advancing the ongoing peace process.



AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator Djibrill Bassolé and Qatari Foreign Minister Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud kicked off the talks in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.

There, they met with UN-African Union Mission in Darfur Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari and representatives from the local community at the University of El Fasher.

"The mediation team delivered a briefing on progress made in the peace process and listened to participants in order to compile opinions on the way forward for the conflict in Darfur," the mission said in a news release.

During the four-day visit, the team also held extensive talks with local authorities and representatives of civil society, including internally displaced persons and nomadic communities in Nyala, South Darfur, and in El Geneina and Zalingei, West Darfur.

While the delegation was meeting with civil society representatives at the University of Zalingei, a demonstration began and later turned violent, resulting in at least one person's death and several injuries. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for a probe into the incident.

Sudan marks World AIDS Day



That access to treatment, care and support were fundamental human rights was the message of this year's World AIDS Day, globally celebrated on 1 December and commemorated across Sudan.

At UNMIS Headquarters in Khartoum on 1 December, a representative of Club for People Living with HIV, who has been living with the virus for five years, spoke about discrimination he had experienced and called for equal treatment.

During the same event, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haile Menkerios emphasized that prevention and care were fundamental human rights.

Mr. Menkerios added that the mission's HIV/AIDS unit had conducted training for various vulnerable groups in Sudan, including police, internally displaced persons, prisoners and participants of the integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

On 30 November in Juba, the UNMIS HIV/AIDS unit held a two-hour sensitization programme for staff members to mark the day. The following day, peacekeepers joined the Southern Sudan AIDS Commission's celebrations at the Dr. John Garang Mausoleum.

Thousands of residents converged in Wau, Western Bahr El-Ghazal State, for a procession to Freedom Square on 1 December. State Governor Rizik Zackaria Hassan said the government had opened three HIV testing centres in Mapel, Wau and Raja Counties.

The UNMIS Welfare Committee in Wau donated clothes and medicine to people living with HIV/AIDS in the town.

