

IT'S DOWN TO BUSINESS AS HONEYMOON ENDS

By Owen Bosco

The honeymoon is over for South Sudan, Africa's newest republic. After hosting a colourful and emotional independence party that officially separated it from the North on 9 July 2011, the hard work begins amid high expectations from its citizens. After dancing and singing patriotic songs for a whole week to welcome in the new country, Southern Sudanese people, including politicians and government officials, are pondering what the future holds for the nation. The biggest question on the lips of many people is whether the leaders of the new republic will follow in the footsteps of many African leaders who have driven their countries into chaos or whether they will make South Sudan a role model in the continent? Other questions include: will the new found independence heal the scars of the civil war that left millions dead and rich resources destroyed? Will South Sudan rise from the ashes to be on a par with African countries such as Botswana, which was once ranked as the 25th poorest nation in the world, with only 50 university graduates at the time of independence but, which later became one of the richest countries in Africa? Many villagers on the outskirts of Torit town, the state capital of Eastern Equatoria, told The People's Voice that for the new nation to succeed and improve the lives of its people, the government has to identify development priorities such as education, health, a disciplined army and police force, and to fight poverty. One of the villagers, Peter Majelikwa said South Sudan must fight tribalism, corruption and nepotism if it was to succeed. "The new government should encourage reconciliation amongst its citizens and try to address the needs of communities across the country to help curb tension and poverty," he pointed out. The UN estimates that about four million South Sudanese (half of the population) were in need of food assistance this year, despite the abundant and fertile land the country is gifted with, in addition to a richness in natural resources. Majelikwa asserts that growth in the agricultural sector is essential for improving incomes and ensuring poverty reduction in a country where the poverty rate currently runs at 46 per cent. Today, South Sudan starts off with more university graduates than countries like Botswana did. This gives the country an advantage and opportunity, particularly from the point of view of putting its house in order when it comes to operational and administrative systems. While there is no silver bullet for building a newly-

independent nation, Juba needs to give priority to key areas. A retired veteran soldier of the Anyanya One civil war, Charles Lokonol, said the new country's leaders and the political elite must involve the ordinary citizens in discussing its development strategy. "We have to develop a bottom-up approach. Development strategists must be inclusive and consultative. We must also carefully analyze our opportunities and weaknesses. We must define the role of the government, private sector, civil society and ordinary citizens," said Lokonol. He added: "leaders can and should provide a clear and shared sense



Charles Lokonol - Kapoeta north county

of joint investment if South Sudan is to set a solid foundation for a prosperous future." Abaya Claudio, a local trader in Torit town who runs a shop, stated that the government must foster private sector growth and the emergence of small business, which he said was the only way to create more jobs and wealth. The 52 year old father of three has lived here throughout his life and has seen the whole transformation of South Sudan. This he said included the hard times during the war and the peace accord period. "The economic strategy should be broad-based, prioritizing the needs of the population," he said. A human rights activist, Ms Madalena Hekisa, who was involved in the liberation struggle and peace negotiations for many years, wants the new Juba government to prioritize security. She wants the government to undertake radical reform of the police force ensuring personnel are disciplined and well trained. "We cannot continue with the type of policemen we have had since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005," she added. Hekisa also believes that university graduates should be given first opportunity in civil service employment because the government needed skilled manpower. A general feeling amongst villagers in Eastern Equatoria is that the new republic urgently needs a diversification strategy that moves it away from solely relying on oil, towards

one which seeks alternative sources of revenue, such as from agriculture. They say that with the country endowed with various valuable resources, the government should encourage and support the private sector to enable its development within the shortest period possible. Although Juba earns 98 per cent of its revenue from oil, it must start developing its agricultural sector not only for food security but for export as well. Many residents interviewed also want the stand of over the oil rich Abyei region resolved quickly so that its resources can

be exploited. The South and North Sudan are involved in a controversy over the ownership of Abyei, with both countries claiming its ownership. Villagers, many of them cattle keepers, expressed the view that the new government needs to put its house in order, shun corruption, and prioritize provision of basic infrastructural needs such as clean water, health care, education and roads. This, they say, can be equated to an old adage, "a house built on a strong foundation shall survive the tests of time".

Corruption: will we learn from the mistakes of our fellow Africans?

By Staff reporter

South Sudanese citizens are saying silent prayers that corruption, Africa's biggest development problem, does not swallow their country. A series of interviews conducted by the People's Voice in Western Equatoria State revealed that the majority of South Sudanese are worried that their fledgling nation may follow in the footsteps of other African countries, where corruption has adversely affected economic growth and led to massive poverty among low income groups. Those questioned asserted that corruption remains the biggest monster and threat to development in most African countries. In Western Equatoria State, citizens say corruption is already affecting government services and want the new government to take drastic action to deal with the menace, before it is too late and takes a strong hold in the culture, strangling the new nation. They claim corruption is deeply entrenched in both the government and Non-Governmental Organizations in the area. Residents here cite bribery in public offices, nepotism, tribalism, favoritism and stealing from public coffers as some of the major forms of corruption occurring in the state.

The People's Voice caught up with some villagers, most of them young people from the local counties of Mvolo, Ibba, Ezzo and Tombura. They had a common denominator in their views on corruption; it is real and threatening services in almost all sectors. 26 year old Isaac Okwera points out that there are numerous cases of corruption in the state, mostly in relation to tribalism and nepotism in most offices, especially when it comes to employment in public service. Okwera, who is a school leaver, says that employment in some offices is only guaranteed if one belongs to certain tribes or even particular politically correct families. "Corruption is the biggest challenge and set back to service delivery in our new nation," he said. Okwera pointed out that because of the corruption and tribalism in central government and in most states, government offices are often staffed by unqualified personnel. "As a consequence of rampant corruption and nepotism in this state, most civil servants here secured their jobs not because they were qualified but,

because of how much they paid in bribes or because they had well connected relatives serving in senior positions in the government", Okwera noted. He lamented that corruption had denied people their right to work and the possibility for community development. Okwera also maintains that even NGOs that are supposed to check on the government are deeply engrossed in corruption, especially with regards to employment. "When NGOs have vacancies, top officials secretly shortlist their relatives then put the advertisements on notice boards just as a formality. Applicants who have no relatives or friends are merely wasting their time," said Okwera. Sete Elisama, a 20 year old boda boda (bicycle taxi) rider in Yambio town stresses that corruption is even worse in the police force. "Sometimes the traffic officers ask for bribes when they stop you. They will always demand bribes even if you have not flouted any rule," said Elisama. He added that sometimes they asked for small amounts of money to be paid like 5 or 10 SDG and those who defy are punished. Elisama pleads with the government to discipline police officers involved in corruption. Stephen Dema is a bus driver plying the Yambio road and is among those who allege that there is massive corruption amongst traffic police. He says that he has been a victim of police extortion where some officers demand money, as much as 100 SDG, from public service vehicles operating in the region. "The corrupt police officers sometimes asked us to pay money for unspecified reasons and they never give us receipts," he complains. He explained that most drivers opted to bribe traffic police because they feared losing their jobs in the bloated public transport sector. "We expect the police officers to know that we have now won independence and we are struggling to show the world that we deserve it." The driver asked the law enforcement agencies to give more training to traffic tax collectors in a bid to end corruption. He said that as a result of the corruption, the government does not benefit from revenues and levies collected by some of its officers. "Corruption is a deadly disease that can easily destroy our new country. It must be stopped now," Dema stated.

Women & children caught in tribal crossfire

By John Actually

Despite the much hyped tribal peace talks in Jonglei state, deadly tribal conflicts continue to claim a high toll in lives. The government's efforts to restore peace amongst feuding communities, many of them cattle keepers, have hit a snag, as evidenced by the upward trend in the number of cattle raiding incidents.

Jonglei is the most populous administrative unit in South Sudan and has for a long time desperately sought to secure a lasting peace amongst its multi-ethnic population. The vast territory is occupied by the Nuer, Dinka and Murle communities, with Anuak, Jie and Khasipo tribesmen as minorities. Jonglei's tribal conflicts can be traced back to the 1950s when local communities; Murle, Dinka and Nuer resorted to cattle raiding from each other. Since then the communities have continued to sporadically attack each other using spears, bows and arrows and sticks. The situation worsened towards the end of the 1980s with the introduction of fire arms. The conflict took on a new dimension after both sides started abducting children.

The government has over the years failed to stop the fighting and casualties have continued to rise. This year, so far, over 900 people have been reported killed and many more injured in the clashes between Murle and Nuer tribesmen in Pibor County. Almost all the cattle in the 31 Bomas of Pibor County were stolen by Nuer raiders between 15th-30th June. In a recent incident, a resident of Nuer, Mr Gatwich

Dual, suffered severe injuries during a fight between the Murle and Nuer communities over cattle rustling. When asked why he took part in the raids, Mr Dual said he and a group from his clan decided to embark on a revenge mission following an alleged earlier attack on their village by suspected raiders from their Murle neighbours. He added that the attacks are normally carried out either to get quick riches or to revenge earlier attacks, leading to a vicious cycle of fighting. A youth who has participated in many raids, James Tut, pointed out that women, children and the elderly are usually targeted due to their vulnerability, and in order to weaken the community under attack. The fighting between Nuer and Murle communities over cattle has resulted in many women and children being either killed or kidnapped. Tut also elaborated

that they have recently resorted to taking some children and women alive to compensate the many children and women abducted from them by Murle in the past. He said any women who resisted were killed. He added that a man who kills many men and kidnaps many women and children is regarded as a hero. A Murle woman, Mrs Sahara Thamatho, describes the conflict between the two communities as extremely regrettable. She said women and children, due to their vulnerability, had borne the brunt of the skirmishes. "Some of the abducted children are sold to childless couples in far flung areas. It's a serious abuse of human rights and the new government must act to stop it," she asserted. In a separate interview with villagers at Malual-Agorbaar, Mr Magak Deng, a victim of raiding, said the government should hold a peace

conference with representatives of all the tribes and find a peaceful resolution to the problem. He added that state law should be amended to severely punish those involved in raiding, with the death penalty and long prison sentences being used as a deterrent. According to Magak, the Murle are not the only cattle thieves and rustlers, and there are also some communities from Lakes State involved. He said he was raided this year in Lakes State by Aliap tribesmen who robbed 19 cattle from him while he was trying to cross Nile River to Bor. Another resident of Malual-Agorbaar village, Man Kur Makol, said that his cousin was killed in July during a raid on Gam cattle camp by suspected Murle raiders. He blames the government of being reluctant to address the Murle issue, adding that the SPLA and some politicians armed

Cont. p2

Voices from the Villages

BY ALFRED TABAN

Barely one month after the birth of the new nation of South Sudan, The People's Voice travelled to Minyori village, which is located some seven miles outside of Yei town, to talk to villagers about their concerns and problems with a view to bringing them to the attention of the government. We found that, among the many issues raised by villagers, such as lack of farming equipment and a dearth of medical and educational facilities, that the sorry state of roads in Yei River County is a key factor affecting all aspects of life, from being able to access health facilities to being able to get produce to market. The residents interviewed said they were willing to invest heavily in food production to help boost their county's food security but, were lacking support

from the state. 40 year old Cosmas Lemi Eliyoba, a resident of Minyori village, explained that the agricultural

sector in the area was almost collapsing due to the many challenges that farmers faced; most crucially, lack of



Lona diko a resident of Minyori area minyori boma 9 miles from yei head office

of farms. Eliyoba, who lost his parents in 1994 during the civil war, said lack of access to loans, poor roads and damaged bridges also contributed to the misery of the farmers.

"We travel nine miles from the village to access services and the raw materials we need. The government

Cont. p2

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of *The People's Voice* produced in the new Republic of South Sudan, in which we bring you fresh feature stories that capture the mood of the new nation, ranging from reports on the hopes and expectations of the ordinary citizens to a sad story on the problem of domestic violence. It is important to mention here that the August issue of *The People's Voice* has been fully sponsored by our colleagues at the Norwegian Union of Journalists, who wish to support the cause of *The People's Voice* and help strengthen the Union of Journalists of South Sudan. We wholeheartedly thank our Norwegian colleagues for making this edition possible. It is on this note that this issue is dedicated to reflecting on the challenges faced by and the expectations of the people of South Sudan. Our writer Owen Bosco went behind the scenes in Torit and spoke to people in the streets, as well as experts, about their expectations, fears and dreams for their new country. From Jonglei state, our able reporter John Actually sent in a story on the sporadic ethnic clashes that have bedeviled the state and left hundreds dead and kidnapped, including many women and children.

From Yei we bring you a sad story about domestic violence that has been a source of worry to many residents. Our writer Agele Benson Amos speaks to the local villagers about the root causes of the violence, the impact it has on families, and how best it can be stopped.

In another interesting report, residents of Western Equatoria express their views on corruption, which they refer to as "the biggest threat" to South Sudan's future, and which is already affecting service delivery in both the private and public sectors in the region.

We also bring you *Voices from the Villages*, an article capturing the concerns and needs of ordinary villagers in the new republic.

And finally, our senior reporter Paul Jimbo sought responses from senior government officials on agricultural issues raised in previous editions of *The People's Voice*, and details their answers here.

We hope, as ever, that here you will read and hear the voice of the people ...

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August 2011

Women & children caught in tribal crossfire

the Murle back in the 1990s to fight against the Khartoum government but have never attempted to disarm them after the war. He said the guns are being used to kill the innocent people of Bor.

According to Kur, nobody from Bor has ever gone to raid Murle or other communities to avenge the attacks because they do not want their leaders in the central and state governments to be blamed, adding that he hopes peace

will one day be restored in Jonglei. Kur suggests that the government should prioritize road construction in the state so that all counties are linked up to Bor town for easy security patrols.

Apparently, the state government has already set insecurity as the first priority in the state to be dealt with and has vowed to eradicate cattle raiding and child abduction by building good roads as well as holding peace

conferences with all the tribes in Bor town.

The governor of Jonglei, Kuol Manyang, says that all the cattle keeping communities in the state will also be encouraged to diversify their sources of income in order to reduce the dependency on cattle; growing crops for example. Manyang also promised to deploy adequate security personnel to all conflict prone borders to track down aggressors.

FIGHTING POVERTY AT ALL COSTS

should at least provide loans to business oriented citizens and repair the roads so that we can transport our products to the market," said Eliyoba. He added: "we try to repair the bridges on our own but, because we are not professionals, no sooner have we worked on them, than raging floods sweep them away."

Besides agricultural issues, villagers are also pleading for better services. Lona Diko, 40, a widow whose husband died during the country's civil war, said many women have poor access to health facilities and have to walk long distances to

get medical services. "The ratio of the local population to medical facilities is very skewed, with many women walking long distances to get treatment," she said.

With a population of 15,500 people according to the 2008 census, Minyori Boma is in dire need of basic health care services for its residents. "We have to trek several miles to access basic services but, worse still is that even the facilities that exist lack qualified medical staff", said Mary Radoli, a mother of two. She added that she delivered her children at home with the help of traditional birth

attendants due to the long distance between her home and Yei civic hospital. "The roads are just in a deplorable state and nobody would waste time even hiring a vehicle to come and take a patient to the hospital. This is the same scenario facing local farmers whose farm produce rots in store houses due to the poor state of roads in this area", she lamented.

The area Chief, Mr Abel Sebit, summarized it well when he said: "We are no longer in the old Sudan, where young men only thought of war. Things have changed and we must build our new country."

Government plans to make South Sudan a major bread basket

By Paul Jimbo

The government of South Sudan plans to prioritize food production in order to ensure the new nation becomes Africa's next bread basket. The Ministry of Agriculture in the new republic is currently working on a strategy for food production that will convert South Sudan into a strategic food reserve aimed at reducing reliance on food imports. Having exposed concerns from citizens about high food prices,

poor infrastructure and lack of support for farmers in previous issues, The People's Voice sought the response of the concerned government officials and spoke to Mr Joseph Brok Maneya, Director of Agricultural Extension at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. He asserted that he wants to see South Sudan in a position to produce its own food for domestic consumption as well as being able to export surplus to

neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and even Tanzania. "Currently we are establishing the extension services which will give farmers technical help related to food production. This will also involve provision of modern farming incentives such as farm equipment, basic information and also practical training of the farmers", says Maneya. He disclosed that the Ministry had further begun

Cont. p3

August 2011

Government plans to make South Sudan a major bread basket

formulation of policies that will see massive sensitization of local farmers at all government administrative levels such as boma, county and state level. Maneya listed lack of qualified agricultural personnel, insecurity in some states, poor infrastructure that hinders access to market and low literacy levels as some of the most important challenges facing the agricultural sector in the region. "We have actually embarked on a comprehensive overhaul of the entire agricultural research and extension system to revive the once vibrant sector. We know we have the

potential and we can do it. We want to prove to everyone that South Sudan can rely on agricultural production rather than the widespread belief that we are purely dependent on oil", he said. He added, "we have even bought tractors which have been distributed to the states and we really want to ensure that the rural farmers have the necessary farm implements and are the ones who should benefit from these services". He attributed the high cost of food in local markets to the high costs of importation. "You see when we import food from

say, East Africa, it becomes quite expensive locally here because importers have to factor in their costs of production, transportation, taxes and even the risks involved, and at the end of the day, it is us who suffer", he explained. The government, Maneya said will be able to supply individual farmers with high quality seeds on time and further advise them on proper farming techniques. This will involve training more professional extension field service workers to work



Joseph Brok Mabeya, The Director in charge of Extension Services

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAUNTS YEI COUNTY

BY AGELE BENSON AMOS

Yei River County has lately been in the limelight for the wrong reason - domestic violence. Police have reported an increase in domestic violence cases, which contribute heavily to family break ups in the county. An in-depth look at police reports on gender related violence cases in Yei River County arouses serious doubts and fears as far as human rights issues are concerned. The damning reports point to high poverty levels amongst locals as a major factor in the rising number of domestic violence cases. The officer in-charge of the gender desk at the Yei police station, Mr Simon Towongo, says the increasing rate of gender violence has led to many separations and divorces, with the attendant impact on children. The gender desk was opened in 2007 by ARC and funded by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in cooperation with the Institute of Promotion of Civil Society (IPCS). Simon said most of the cases he handled were fights among couples many of whom did not know their rights and those of their spouses. "We solve such issues in a special room and investigate them in a professional way by giving both parties space to air their views fairly" he stated. Adding, "If they fail to come to a common understanding, we forward the case to boma, payam or county court depending on the type of the crime." A civilian working on the gender desk, Ms Silvia Charles, blamed the growing domestic violence on men who never give their wives enough money for shopping and general up keep. "Some women feel dissatisfied with their husbands simply because they come home late and drunk. This situation has brewed mistrust amongst married couples, some of whom have resorted to cheating on their marriage partners", said Silvia. Rose Tabu, a resident of Yei town, hails the government's efforts to deal with domestic violence cases but, stated that much more still needs to be done, particularly in terms of addressing the root

causes of the problem. "The gender desks have brought a lot of positive change to families including mine. After a series of problems with my husband and mother-in-law, my husband started beating me every day and my mother-in-law seemed to be supporting this", Rose narrated as she fought back tears running down her cheek, while passionately cuddling her two year old son in her arms. The situation compelled Rose to leave her husband and return to her family home where she currently lives with her parents and brothers. "My husband only give me five Sudanese pounds for food daily while he spent several hours drinking alcohol", stated Rose. She says that alcoholism remains one of the major causes of family problems, especially in cases where some husbands resort to drinking alcohol at the expense of family responsibilities. The director for Women, Orphans and People Living with HIV/AIDS (WOPHA), Ms Grace Kadayi, attributes the rise in domestic violence cases to misunderstanding between couples. "Most couples fail to know and perform their duties and responsibilities such as provision of basic needs to their families," she said. Ms Kadayi also blamed the sharp rise in domestic violence on the high bride prices demanded by the families of brides during marriages. "Once a man pays the high bride price, he starts mistreating the wife leading to loss of dignity, respect and rights to the paid dowry", she said.

closely with local people. The People's Voice also sought the views of Professor Joseph Mukiibi at the Ministry of Agriculture. He is actually a founder of the Uganda National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and has a wealth of experience in the field of agricultural research. He is currently the man tasked with the responsibility of developing an agricultural research strategy that will shape the future destiny of food production in the new republic of South Sudan. "We have done a field trip and as far as I am concerned, South Sudan has the capacity to produce enough food for its own consumption and even feed the entire region without a deficit. This is virgin land and I think we have to go this way", he asserted. Professor Mukiibi further expressed his optimism that once the country's agricultural potential is fully explored, South Sudan could easily shift its economic backbone from oil to agriculture. "Remember we are talking of vast arable land with a potential of producing species of crop available in East and Central Africa", Mukiibi added. True to its role as watchdog for the ordinary citizen, The People's Voice will be keenly monitoring the implementation of the government's plans.



Simon Towongo and Silvia at Yei police station gender office.