

Rescuing the Peace in Southern Sudan



Survivors of an attack in Duk Padiet, Jonglei state

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The next 12 months will be critical for the future of Sudan. As the country marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended a devastating civil war, southern Sudan has seen a major upsurge in violence. In 2009, some 2,500 people were killed and 350,000 fled their homes. With landmark elections and a referendum on the horizon, the peace deal is fragile and the violence likely to escalate even further unless there is urgent international engagement.

Southern Sudan is one of the least-developed regions in the world. Its poverty, combined with limited government and aid agency capacity to respond to emergencies and deliver development, exacerbates the potential for renewed conflict.

The people of southern Sudan have shown extraordinary resilience to emerge from decades of war. If they are to have hope for the future, they urgently need development and protection from violence. Sudan faces many interlocking challenges, but if the international community acts now, they are surmountable.



Summary

Sudan is at a crossroads and the next 12 months could determine the future of Africa's largest nation.

In January 2005, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signalled a new era of hope. The agreement – between Sudan's central government and the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) – brought a formal end to a devastating civil war, which left around two million people dead and four million displaced from their homes. The CPA brought significant, if fragile, gains for southern Sudan, including the establishment of the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS); significant improvements in security in some areas; the return of many displaced people and refugees to their homes; and the expansion of local markets and trade.

Five years later, the peace agreement is extremely fragile and violence is again increasing. The humanitarian situation, already one of the worst in the world, is deteriorating; and in the eyes of most ordinary southerners, meaningful post-war development has been absent.

Civilians at risk

2009 was an extremely violent year for southerners: more than 2,500 people were killed and 350,000 fled their homes. This is a higher toll than currently reported in Darfur, the better-known conflict in western Sudan, where the humanitarian situation is also extremely concerning. Much of the violence is taking place in remote rural areas, where communities are often poorest and most difficult to reach. Many of the victims have been women and children. In one attack in a village in Jonglei state in August 2009, some 161 people were killed, most of them women and children.¹

The violence stems from multiple and sometimes overlapping sources. Tensions between northern and southern Sudan, including over CPA implementation, have resulted in clashes within joint north-south military units. Competition over natural resources combined with widespread ownership of small arms is fuelling violence between southern Sudan's many tribes. The region also continues to be badly affected by attacks from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a vicious rebel group with origins in northern Uganda.

Despite actions by the GoSS to disarm civilians and build a new police force, and despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIS) with, among other tasks, a mandate to protect civilians, ordinary people

¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, 21 October 2009, p.1. (last accessed November 2009).

in southern Sudan continue to face daily threats to their security. Government authorities and the UN peacekeeping mission need to act urgently to protect civilians from violence.

Addressing critical emergency needs

The insecurity, together with erratic rainfall in 2009, has led to a sharply deteriorating humanitarian situation. Cultivation has been disrupted; livelihoods have been destroyed; and critically needed development activities have stalled, which in turn perpetuates the risk of further violence.

Due to its vast size and lack of infrastructure, the ability of humanitarian agencies to reach people in need in southern Sudan has always been extremely challenging. There are less than 50 km of tarmac roads in the entire region, concentrated in the capital, Juba. During the long rainy seasons many rural locations are unreachable by road or air for weeks at a time. The rising violence is further narrowing this limited access.

The ability of international agencies, local government, and civil society to prepare for, and respond to, emergencies must be strengthened, including by improving access to remote areas and a better mapping of hazards. But this should not divert resources from the equally critical need to bring development to southern Sudan.

An urgent need for development

Popular confidence in the CPA has been badly undermined by the recent upsurge in insecurity, combined with the slow delivery of expected 'peace dividends' – essential services such as water and health care, livelihood opportunities, and infrastructure.

The scale of need in southern Sudan, a territory roughly the size of France, is almost inconceivable. Its human development indicators are bottom of the scale. Less than half the population has access to safe drinking water. A pregnant woman in southern Sudan has a greater chance of dying from pregnancy-related complications than a woman almost anywhere else in the world. One in seven children will die before their fifth birthday. Close to 90 per cent of southern Sudanese women cannot read or write.

After decades of war and neglect, it is not surprising that donors and the GoSS have struggled to deliver development. But mistakes were made that the people of southern Sudan could ill-afford: the design of the region's aid system was flawed, causing long delays in funding urgently needed projects. Focusing on CPA benchmarks and without core administrative functions in place, the GoSS was unable to devote sufficient attention to development.

A critical year ahead

The next 12 months are crucial. When the CPA was signed, a six-year interim period was agreed from 2005 to 2011, in which time a number of key benchmarks were to be achieved. However, implementation is massively behind schedule and the parties enter the final year with a number of potential flashpoints ahead. Two landmark events – April 2010 national elections and a January 2011 referendum where southerners will vote on whether to remain part of a united Sudan or secede – could well result in further instability if all actors are not well prepared. Key issues such as the demarcation of the oil-rich north-south border and the wealth-sharing of oil and other revenues, are still not agreed.

The people of southern Sudan have shown extraordinary resilience in emerging from one of Africa's longest and bloodiest wars. If they are to have hope for the future, and if the peace is to last, they urgently need security, development, and greater support from the rest of the world.

Southern Sudan's complex crisis requires a multi-track approach, which should incorporate the three key objectives set out below (more detailed recommendations are set out in the conclusion).

1 Mitigating conflict and protecting civilians

- The Government of Sudan and the GoSS must work together, with support from CPA guarantors, to resolve key issues in the lead-up to specific CPA events, above all the 2011 referendum and its aftermath.
- The GoSS, with support from international partners, must move beyond a focus on civilian disarmament to strengthening the ability of its military and police to provide effective internal security and protect civilians.
- The UN Security Council (UNSC) should emphasise that protecting civilians must be a priority for UNMIS and consider whether UNMIS needs more resources to meet its mandated obligations.
- UNMIS should provide clear guidelines and training for all its personnel on its mandated protection responsibilities and strengthen engagement with local communities.
- The UN Security Council must refocus on the LRA and push for a comprehensive solution to the problem.

2 Strengthening emergency preparedness and response

- Donors should expand emergency funding to southern Sudan and ensure that it is readily available to NGOs and not just to UN agencies. The United Nations, donors, and international NGOs must strengthen support to local NGO and church structures – often the only entities capable of reaching remote communities.
- The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) should be fully staffed, co-ordinate robust emergency

preparedness and advocate for improved access to under-served areas.

- Emergency interventions should contribute to development by seeking, where appropriate, alternatives to food distributions and other responses that undermine community self-sufficiency.

3 Accelerating service delivery and support to the GoSS

- The GoSS, with support from donors, should strengthen financial accountability and better manage its significant resources to deliver development for the people of southern Sudan.
- Donors should provide more predictable, longer-term funding, including for NGOs, for service delivery (in particular health care, education, and safe water). The goal should be handover of service delivery to government, but this must happen within a realistic timeframe.
- Donors should provide greater support to developing southern Sudan's infrastructure by prioritising the building of roads and rehabilitation of airstrips, including in remote areas. This will also enable the authorities and UNMIS to reach unstable locations quickly.
- Donors must increase and strengthen technical assistance to the government, with much more support to local structures.

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This paper was written by Maya Mailer and Lydia Poole on behalf of Oxfam International, Christian Aid, Cordaid, Handicap International, Save the Children, ICCO & Kerk in Actie, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Secours Catholique/ Caritas France, Tearfund and World Vision. Oxfam gratefully acknowledges the assistance from government, UN, donor, NGO and civil society colleagues and communities both in Juba and field locations who provided invaluable information and facilitated travel across southern Sudan. We would also like to thank Kirsten Hagon, Verity Johnson, Olivia Kalis, Alun McDonald and Noah Gottschalk for their hard work and support in the development of this paper.

It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues. The full paper is available to download from www.oxfam.org.

Authors' note: There is a profound lack of reliable data in southern Sudan. While the authors have sought to cross-check all statistics in the paper, some inaccuracies may remain. To the extent possible, the information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

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