**Update from CMS Ireland on the situation of our partners in South Sudan – September 2016**

Following the increased tension and political in fighting sparked by the confrontation between different factions in Juba in early July, we have been keeping in touch with all our global partners in South Sudan. Life has become increasingly challenging with a breakdown in law and order, confusion politically, insecurity across the nation, transport and communication links badly affected and inflation spiralling out of all control. There are shortages of the most basic necessities and mobile and internet connections sporadic at best and in many places non existent.

It is impossible to keep up with the catalogue of atrocities and human misery. For many life has become a matter of survival on a day to day basis, with a desperate search for places of safety, for food and water. In towns there are acute shortages of food and clean water. Shops are empty, fuel has run out.

News from Kajo Keji

In June many people in Kansuk were displaced when there was an armed attack on the local market. Some people were killed and many fled and are fearful of returning. There have been several incidents of ambush and hijacking on the roads. The atmosphere of fear engendered by such random acts disrupt normal activities, trade and agriculture. Kajo Keji town remains safe, but life in rural areas is increasingly difficult.

The new health centre at Romogi is progressing well despite difficulties of obtaining building materials.

News from Yei

Yei town has been very badly affected by the instability. Rumours of armed groups roaming the countryside are causing great fear. Shooting incidents in the town are a common occurrence. Ambushes on the road have effectively stopped imports and public transport. Bishop Hilary with the other church leaders in Yei have appealed to the UN for emergency food relief. In the countryside around Yei there are many reports of attacks at night, homes burnt, people being killed, property looted. Refugees fleeing the countryside around Yei have chosen to use tracks through the bush to cross the border to Uganda or DR Congo. The commissioner of Morobo county, a man CMSI has had close contact with for many years, was ambushed when travelling in a government convoy with bodyguards. He was injured but escaped, others were killed.

*‘We were sentenced to death by Rebels Yei Morobo road thank God I am alive*

*(Psalm 35:7-8) I have nothing but almighty God who is my guard and shield’*

We have also been keeping in touch with Bishop Hilary, despite the challenges of no mobile network and intermittent internet. This week he sent an update:

*‘As I write, there are more then 200 families displaced from Dam residential area south of town to the church compound. We have no food to give them and our facilities cannot take them all. We are worried because of cholera out breaks that always follow congested humans living in a small area with no proper sanitary facilities.*

*We urgently need humanitarian intervention with food and non food materials like water, food, mosquito nets, ORS, etc. The Church leaders in Yei have sent out their appeal. But I doubt if any assistance will come from OCHA or the humanitarian organisations since all roads to Yei are blocked by insurgents.*

*The medical outlets in town cannot provide services. All staff have fled and there is no medicine around. Only Yei Civil Hospital operates at very reduced levels.’*

Bishop Hilary is concerned that the banks are hardly operational and that with the spiralling inflation South Sudanese pounds are almost worthless. Many of the diocesan staff have already left Yei to resettle their families in refugee camps across the borders. CMS Ireland are supporting the bishop and 2 of his key staff to travel to Arua, Uganda, to make plans from there for supporting folks in Yei.

News from Maridi and Olo

Maridi town is tensely quiet, supplies are very difficult. Bishop Justin has been in Maridi, but is due to return to Uganda to complete his studies. He writes:

*‘Greetings to you all from Maridi South Sudan. We are a bit okay here in Maridi after the terrible destruction of both lives and properties that happened last month in Eddi Archdeaconry when the rebel leader Rieck Machar and his forces were crossing to Congo. After this the situation here is a bit calm now. The main challenges are that all the roads are still impassable and this has resulted to scarcity of basic essential commodities . We have the scattered displaced people of Eddi also in a miserable situation.*

*Since the beginning of August it is estimated that 100,000 more refugees from South Sudan have arrived in Uganda, refilling the refugee camps of the 1990’s. The UN are scrambling to set up registration systems again and organise proper facilities.’*

Remember Lynn Treneary , CMSB mission partner who has just returned to Maridi after a short break in Kampala.

Olo, being nearer to Juba, is likely to be less secure than Maridi, but we have not had recent news.

News from Ibba

The situation in Ibba is similar to Maridi. These areas are just keeping their heads down and waiting for the storm to pass, bearing the hardships caused with grace. Bishop Wilson continues to encourage his pastors and people. He writes:

*‘Greetings to  you all in Jesus name. I glad to inform you that our week of witness went on well. It was house to house  with a word of God. Thank you so much for Your continued prayers.*   
*Generally, Ibba is calm. People are very busy with the second season planting ground nuts (monkey nets), corn and others. It has dry without rain for the last two months but it rained yesterday.   
The mothers Union have an agricultural  project in this second season. They have a plan to plant a feddan of beans, sorghum and  ground nuts. Mama Agnes Kippa and Rosi Bii are busy these days mobilizing mothers union from two archdeaconaries; Manikakara and Ibba  to come together. Please pray for Mama Agnes and Rose  as they work with the mothers union to ensure that the work is done.Our confirmation programs will begin on 9th October at Manikakara, 16th October at Madebe, 23rd October Nabanga, 30th October Ibba and 6th Cathedral. We invite your prayer for these programs to be ‘*

News from Ezo

People around Ezo are living in fear from threats due to the internal problems of South Sudan, but also from the remnants of the LRA activities. The LRA are still abducting people, looting and burning villages around the border regions of DR Congo and the Central African Republic.

In June and July Bishop John was involved in trying to negotiate peace with a group of insurgents who were ambushing vehicles on the road to Yambio. This group have now enabled the road to be reopened.

The previous displacement of people, subsequent bush fire and storm damage has not been repaired. The solar power supply and internet in the diocesan office has not yet been restored, so the closest internet connection is a days’ motorbike ride away. The diocesan store room is still in ruins and so are some of the village churches.

News of refugees

Madi West Nile diocese in Uganda which borders South Sudan. Kelly Yates, Partnership Coordinator for Uganda, asked Bishop Joel Obetia of Madi West Nile for an update on the refugees arriving in Uganda…

*‘A few days ago I had a visit from the camp Pastoral leaders from the refugee camps after I visited them in May. They brought me a list of 50 Lay Readers for licensing! These have been trained locally and needed our approval to begin to minister to the thousands of hurting souls. Now actually, the number of refugees has surpassed the number of residents in Adjumani district and is coming to half of that of Yumbe district. The situation in S. Sudan is so fluid that any and everything is happening. Pray for restraint for all factions, parts and neighborhoods that lives will be respected even in the chaos. The stories we receive from Ugandans and Sudanese alike is horrifying. Ask God to intervene for the sake of his people in the Sudans. Our services in Adjumani, Moyo and Yumbe are stretched to the limits.’*

We are now working with Bishop Joel to see how we can best support the efforts of the local churches in responding to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of such traumatised people.

We are in touch with the theological students from Yei and Maridi sponsored by churches through CMS Ireland currently studying in Uganda. They have been trying to keep in touch with their families all of whom have had to flee to safety in Uganda. Thank you to all who have responded to their needs, enabling us to send money to help the 3 Yei students to build tukul homes for their families in the refugee areas in Uganda and DR Congo.

**For your urgent prayers:**

For men of war to seek peace

For pride and greed to give way to humility and loving kindness

For the international community to respond with genuine assistance and not armaments

For the people you know, for their families, that they may live peaceably with those around them, whether in their homeland or as refugees

For CMS Ireland as we listen to our partners and seek to respond