

Dear Sudan Sojourners,

This longer than usual update aims to bring us all up to date with news and Global Partner activities in South Sudan after months of escalation of violence in some parts. In each section there are snippets either from international news agencies or our global partners.

The range and extent of information forced me to remember the complexity of the situation in South Sudan and I trust it will be useful for you too as you think through the issues. Although it makes for less ordered or comfortable reading I hope it represents well the messiness and density of what our partners are facing.

I know that you can use some of the following to inform your prayers, and hope that it will also be useful for you in raising awareness of the issues in your parish magazine or Sunday service updates.

News updates on the crisis:

Little progress two years after South Sudan peace deal

<http://www.dw.com/en/little-progress-two-years-after-south-sudan-peace-deal/a-40241953>

"The agreement did not succeed in ending the violence, restoring stability, reforming public institutions and improving the living conditions of ordinary citizens across South Sudan," said Rajab Muhandis, director of South Sudan's Network for Democratic Elections.

The activist said the main objective has not been achieved since the deal was signed two years ago. "To the contrary, the violence has increased, ambushes have made roads impassable, at least one third of the population is displaced internally or in neighboring countries and six million people are severely food insecure," Muhandis said.

So far, only one of eight chapters of the peace deal has been implemented. Several key provisions are still unfulfilled.

"As JMEC we have remained profoundly shocked by the rampant hostilities across the country and the rapid deterioration of the political, security, humanitarian and economic situation in South Sudan," said Festus Mogae, former president of Botswana.

Mogae is chairman of the body monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC).

Headlines in August from: <https://blogs.prio.org/MonitoringSouthSudan/>

- South Sudanese refugees in Uganda reach the one million mark, as Ugandan authorities and humanitarian organisations struggle to provide basic services in the refugee camps.
- The IGAD South Sudan office convened a two-day High Level Independent Experts meeting on the revitalisation of the 2015 peace agreement. Riek Machar's forced confinement in South Africa was discussed, and the group also scheduled a consultative meeting in Addis Ababa in September between all the warring parties.
- Armed robberies have reportedly claimed at least 53 lives in Juba in August. Armed soldiers are allegedly the main perpetrators behind the recent crime wave in the capital.

- The Special Envoy for South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, warned that the conflict will worsen if serious issues are left unaddressed before the planned 2018 elections, saying GoSS has only “created an appearance of reconciliation efforts.”

CMSI response to the refugee crisis

CMSI have been supporting our partners in Maridi and Ibbra Diocese to enable them to care for the internally displaced people in their areas. In response to the refugee crisis we have been in partnership with Madi West Nile Diocese in Northern Uganda and Yei Diocese in their temporary offices in Arua, Northern Uganda.

Madi West Nile’s response has been wide reaching at different level of need within the camps.

For children in Bidi Bidi camp:

“The diocese with the support from CMS Ireland trained some Sunday school teachers in the churches within the camps to handle and teach children in their own church in a way that can help children access to word of God.

Secondly most of the children are traumatized that there is need to introduce simple games for them to help wipe the stress off them and to live a lively and hopeful life. Although there are some early child hood centers in the camps due to an enormous number of children the service are not enough hence making it relevant for some of the children to access these services locally.”



Distribution of play resources to Sunday School teachers in Bidi Bidi camp

MWN Diocese has also resourced women of the Mothers Union to facilitate family and community togetherness in the camps, and peace and reconciliation efforts. Child headed families and foster families too have received capacity building training and trauma healing efforts. Lastly the Diocese purchased hymnbooks and Christian literature for the South Sudanese who are creating their own church gatherings within the refugee camps.

Yei Diocese has been assisting Pastors who have remained in Yei to receive foodstuffs to enable them to survive, but in recent days some funds have been necessary to assist pastors to move out of Yei. These Pastors who have fought hard to stay with their people to support them in crisis are not redundant when they reach the camps. Their responsibilities continue as they

meet newly forming congregations of parishioners from Yei, therefore support for them is a top priority within the refugee response. Within the camps the emergency funds for Yei have been used to buy and distribute emergency food and shelter resources.

We are also thankful that the Bishop's Appeal has responded positively to two recent proposals for emergency funding to be distributed throughout each of our South Sudan Global Partners. Once these funds have been received they will support feeding programmes education and visitation in the camps.

Update on the Church in South Sudan:

"On the 30th July the Episcopal Church in Sudan became an independent province in the Anglican Communion inaugurated by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. He installed Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo as the first primate of the new province known as the Episcopal Church of Sudan - the ECS. Changes in the leadership of what is now the ECSS – the Episcopal Church of South Sudan – are expected by the end of the year when Archbishop Daniel Deng is expected to retire and a new Archbishop will be elected by the representatives of the ECSS." *(Salisbury Bulletin)*

Church offers age-old sanctuary to South Sudan's dispossessed (Reuters: Stefanie Glinski)

In predominantly Christian South Sudan, churches are seen as a safe haven - the custom has deep historical roots - and have become a place of refuge for civilians fleeing violence.

"People flock to churches in times of insecurity. Most of them have a strong faith. They believe that they are best protected here and in case of an attack, they'd rather die in the house of God," explained Father Moses Peter, who now works as the Wau Diocese's emergency coordinator.

From Bishop Hilary's statement following violent attacks against clergy in August:

"The church has been the only trusted and effective tool standing on behalf of the masses. It presented the suffering of the people like no other organisation would do. Its spiritual, moral and ethical role is to encourage the people with the word of God and to work to reduce the stressful experiences our people have been subjected to by masters of the war machinery. The church has been there among the people to defuse tension in their minds. It has been the church that engaged very high level delegations of different groups from Government of South Sudan to high level representatives of UN agencies, telling the truth to them.

It's a very serious sacrifice made by the church leaders to remain in Yei at a time when security per se had broken down and our members were being killed at ease. The church leadership together with the priests has taken the risk beyond the call of duty. For them (bishops, moderators) and our committed and courageous priests, it has been a matter of accepting the eventual worse to come their way. The mediating role of the church and the work for advocacy for peace is being undermined by such acts of atrocities."

Yei

Significant parts of Bishop Hilary's statement about the deterioration of the situation in Yei were shared with you in August. The sense of pain and outrage at the deaths and injuries of clergy was very clear. In spite of the obvious risks, shortly after his statement we received this from Bishop Hilary:

“We are unhappy that still there are thousands of people trapped in Yei and our heart goes out to be with them. Since I feel much better now, I long to be going back.”

For us it seemed like a difficult decision for Bishop Hilary, but in fact it was straight forward for him, and his mind and heart were set. Funds from the SS emergency appeal assisted him in making the journey back to Yei, and we await his return to Arua so that he can make contact again and update us on the situation. Mama Joyce remains in Arua, please pray for them both.

The folks at Yei Teacher Training College have been waiting to reopen the college, they had decided to reassess the situation in August. Sadly, they explain in their September update that reopening is no longer being considered as an option in the near future:

“In the last two months, we have been looking at alternatives of continuing our teacher training programs in the country. I am therefore happy to inform you that we have started in-service training (that leads to accreditation after 3 years) in two satellite locations, one in Juba and another in Awiel (Northern part of the Country). So far we have a class of 62 and 90 students respectively in the two locations.

For now, management has stayed the recall of the continuing students as this requires more time and thinking through, given they are scattered within the country and beyond. This has been pushed to the beginning of next year.

We continue to thank you for your faith in us and the support rendered during these past months.”

Meanwhile Bishop Allison Theological College has already relocated to a rented property in Arua. In a recent report Peter Taban tells us that the students planned to return on 2nd September:

“We thank God that He was able to recollect the students; out of twenty, sixteen managed to sit the exams and we have the hope that come the 2nd Sept 2017 all will report because we sent enough messages out there.”

He was also encouraged by some developments in the faculty:

“Very special news we have received three new Voluntary staff one was once a student who visited the college while in Yei from Duke Divinity school who as joined us fully for the semester and also Rev Shelvis and wife Rev Nancy Mather.”



Students at the reopened BATC in Arua

Maridi/Olo

While Bishop Justin has been completing his studies and now begins to prepare for his visit to Ireland the situation in Maridi, although tense, has allowed for the institutions to continue.

Chaima institute graduation was a joyful celebration in June. The importance of the training of young people is outlined in the report:

“Another fund was availed to train seven people at certificate level at Chaima training institute within the Diocese. Most of those students have completed their training and were ordained on Easter Sunday this year at All Saints Cathedral in Maridi. We very much appreciate and extend a word of thanks to CMSIRELAND and all those who contributed the funds for the ministerial training. We still hope and look forward to such support for the training of more young people for the ministry.”

Rev. Eli (Maridi) who studies alongside Rev. Cosmas and Rev. Lokosang (Yei) has returned with them to finish their final term at Africa Renewal University. Rev. Todoko who was also part of this group receiving assistance from Link Parishes to study in Uganda has completed his level and returned to ministry in Morobo Diocese.



Meeting of those most badly affected by the September 2015 tanker fire in Maridi

Bishop Justin and CMS Britain mission partner Lynne Treanary have continued to put to good use the tanker fire relief funds sent from CMSI. The most badly affected of those burned in the incident are still dealing with debilitating injuries two years later. Lynne has been identifying those who could benefit from surgery so that more can be done to enable them to return to work and independent living.

Meanwhile in Olo Bishop Tandema has successfully led the third phase of the leadership training programme. This aims to build the capacity of MU, Youth and Parish leaders to engage with the spiritual and social needs of folks in this very rural part of the province.



Leaders receiving training in Olo

Kajo Keji

Kajo Keji is almost deserted, Bishop Emmanuel tells us that 95% of his church members have fled across the border. The diocesan facebook page shows moving video of the people worshipping in their temporary homes. The Diocese is focusing on spiritual sustenance for refugees through a programme they have called "Rooted in Jesus".

"The refugees today are living in forested areas which are not supposed to be for settlement, and the people are filled with trauma but "Rooted in Jesus" is bringing people together."

One young refugee commented:

"To the glory of God, the "Rooted in Jesus" programme has changed my life from how I was before. The way I pray, the way I read my bible has enabled me to be successful and I call myself favoured because God has answered my prayers through this programme."

Ibba

Bishop Wilson was delighted to be able to provide implements and seeds for the Internally Displaced People who had moved into his area, and therefore come under his care.

He describes the situation in Ibba:

"As usual is calm and people are very busy with their businesses. We are pushing on well with the plastering of the new Cathedral. Our planning workshop tomorrow commences tomorrow for two days. The two days workshop has drawn participants from all our four archdeaconries. We want to come up with some priority activities for 2018."

The Cathedral opening will be celebrated on 18th December this year, and we look forward to hearing more about this exciting moment for the Diocese.



IPD's receiving aid in Ibba

Our response:

The range of situations across our Global partners is clear, but all of them live within a situation of tension and unknowns. We were encouraged by Archbishop Welby's comments on facebook

after his return from South Sudan in July, and I leave you with his words as you consider your ongoing response to your partners and friends in South Sudan.

"I am left wondering whether the cause of this crisis can be resolved. Is it possible for peace to be achieved in South Sudan? ...Truthfully I don't know the answer but we are disciples of Jesus Christ, the resurrected one, the Lord of hope and reconciliation. I have committed to do two things:

First, pray and advocate.

Second, do all I can to strengthen the church as a force for reconciliation in South Sudan."

Please pray for:

- The local, national and international stakeholders in the peace process of South Sudan
- Bishop Hilary, Bishop Emmanuel, Bishop Justin, Bishop Tandema, Bishop Wilson
- The churches formed and growing in refugee camps and the pastors and leaders who serve them
- Coordination of response to refugees in an already chaotic situation
- The ongoing work of Dioceses in less affected areas as they incorporate IDP's into their mission.

We thank you for your ongoing commitment and continue to pray along with you.

Linda