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South Sudan: Six months after Independence

Six months ago the world celebrated the birth of a new nation on 9 July 2011. South Sudan's hard-won independence was met with much fanfare. Less than a week later, on 14 July 2011, South Sudan was formally admitted into the United Nations General Assembly as the 193rd member state. South Sudan also joined the African Union (AU) and the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The new nation took immediate steps to establish its new structures, including the formation of the South Sudan Legislative Assembly on 1 August 2011 and the formal announcement of the new Government on 26 August 2011.

The first six months of statehood saw much excitement and activity, as the new nation sought to rapidly deepen its

to discuss the key priorities for South Sudan during its transition phase.

With independence also came the responsibility of the new country and its Government to provide for its citizens. As a first step towards expanding service delivery and economic development, the Government launched the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) early after independence. With support from a number of development partners including UNDP, the SSDP outlines the Government's major development priorities for the first three years in the areas of governance, economic growth, social and human development as well as conflict prevention and security. This plan will serve as the country's roadmap for the future, directing Government expenditure and donor investment into much-needed development initiatives.

South Sudan continued along this trajectory of bolstering its service delivery by convening Government ministers, members of parliament and the ten state Governors in November for the first post-independence Governors' Forum. With support from UNDP, key stakeholders met to discuss equitable service delivery and how to implement the SSDP. The Government passed recommendations on improving infrastructure, building institutional capacity, fostering the rule of law, managing revenue and financial planning.

While South Sudan has taken important steps to promote development, a significant amount of work remains to be done. Just 13 percent of the population has access to basic healthcare while the maternal mortality rate continues to be one of the highest in the world. Infrastructure remains a key bottleneck, with only approximately 110km of paved roads and Government ministries lack both human capacity and resources to effectively fulfil their mandates. ■



ABOVE: South Sudanese celebrating independence
© UNDP/Marcin Scuder
CUTOUT: A child helping his family collect water
© UNDP/Brian Sokol

engagement with the international community. In September, President Salva Kiir Mayardit presented to the United Nations General Assembly, and spoke to the urgent priorities of the fledgling state. That same month, the UNDP Executive Board welcomed South Sudan as a UNDP Programme Country and a special session of the Joint Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP was convened



The General Assembly meeting on the admission of the Republic of South Sudan to the United Nations.
© UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

UN and UNDP development priorities for the new Republic of South Sudan

Building a new country following five decades of conflict, with the enormous challenges of poverty, insecurity, lack of basic infrastructure and weak institutions, can be a daunting task. However, as UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon said when the flag of the Republic of South Sudan was raised outside of the UN in New York, “We will work with you to realize all the hopes and dreams it [the flag] represents. We wish you justice, peace and prosperity. We will stay with you on the long road ahead.”

The principle framework of development priorities for the new country was laid out in the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP), which was launched shortly after independence. All of the UN agencies operating in South Sudan demonstrated their commitment to the SSDP, by working together to formulate the first UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for South Sudan, which aligns the UN agencies’ programmes with the objectives of the SSDP. Through the new UNDAF, the UN Country Team will assist the Government to take bold steps to reinforce core governance functions, build service delivery systems, improve food security, and reduce community conflict.

Within the framework of UN priorities articulated in the UNDAF, UNDP South Sudan worked with the Government to prepare its new Country Programme Document (CPD). The CPD was approved by UNDP’s Executive Board in February 2012 and details the new programme for UNDP in South Sudan.

Going forward, UNDP’s programme will focus on four key areas:

Governance: UNDP will concentrate on supporting oversight and accountability mechanisms, which include building the capacity of the Government’s anti-corruption and audit functions, strengthening democratic governance, increasing responsive governance through support to decentralisation, and supporting a pro-poor development agenda through evidence-based planning and public financial management. In addition, UNDP will support the Government in implementing the Medium Term Capacity Development Strategy (MTCDS), which aims to boost the capacity of the civil service at the state and county levels where the capacity gap is the greatest, including through south-south cooperation with regional organizations such as IGAD and the African Union.

Economic development: UNDP will centre its approach on fostering an enabling environment for inclusive growth and private sector development in key growth sectors such as agriculture, enhancing financial literacy and access to microfinance, supporting trade capacity and assisting the Government in instituting a framework for environmental governance.

Social and human development: UNDP will continue to support the Government in administering funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria & Tuberculosis and provide assistance in strengthening and expanding the health system. UNDP will also provide technical support to the design, establishment and implementation of the Government’s planned cash transfer programme, which is identified as one of the top priority programmes in the SSDP.

Conflict prevention and security: UNDP will support the Government in their efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants, stabilize insecure areas, maintain community security, promote effective peacebuilding, and improve access to justice at the county and local levels, including through assisting traditional customary law to align with human rights standards. ■

UNDP and South Sudan: Together on the long road ahead

The birth of a new nation following one of Africa's longest civil wars has come with both challenges and new opportunities. In the lead-up to independence, UNDP provided critical support to the historic January 2011 referendum through a USD 62 million fund that supported voter education, registration of almost four million voters, as well as the polling and supply of ballots and other materials. Between 9 and 15 January 2011, over 97% of South Sudanese voted for self-determination in a process that was recognised by both national and international observers as free, fair and credible.

UNDP supported the Government in its preparations to stand up as an independent state by working with the Government and development partners to prioritize and concentrate on building essential core governance functions in the areas of executive leadership, rule of law, fiduciary management, public administration and natural resource management. Building institutions and implementing mechanisms to ensure that the Government has essential functions in place was critical to ensure a viable take-off of the new state.

Cognisant of the capacity constraints that South Sudan faces, UNDP has led an intensive effort to enhance the

capacity of the Government, and support these essential core functions. By the end of 2011, UNDP had embedded over 120 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) in state governments across the country, through the Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI), including specialists in fiscal management, revenue, economics, statistics, public administration, rule of law, urban planning, civil engineering, and IT to support the statebuilding effort.

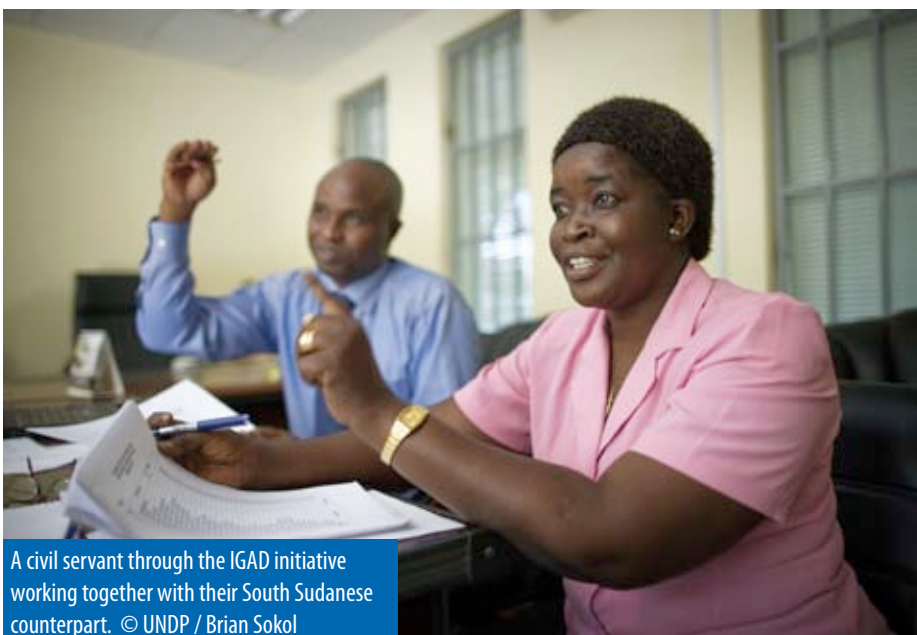
Along this vein, UNDP has fostered south-south cooperation on statebuilding through the IGAD Regional Capacity Initiative, which is seconding 200 Civil Servants from neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to provide on-the-job training and mentoring to their South Sudanese counterparts. By the end of 2011, 143 Civil Service Support Officers (CSSOs) have been deployed at central level ministries, commissions and the state governments to build the Government's capacity at all levels to deliver services to the people.

Given the continued concern regarding stability and conflict in the post-independence period, UNDP has provided support to help the Government extend its authority into insecure areas, through both the Community Security and Arms Control

(CSAC) programme and four State Stabilization Programmes funded by the South Sudan Recovery Fund (SSRF). These programmes have extended the rule of law to the most remote corners of the country. Within the first few months of statehood, UNDP handed over 54 new police posts and provided support to training the new police service. New security roads into insecure areas are being built as well as water haffirs and boreholes to prevent conflict over water access. These efforts will bolster the authority of the new state and therefore enhance the sustainability of peace.

While UNDP has been working to support the Government in developing the essential frameworks and capacity to govern, we have also been providing technical expertise in building platforms for service delivery and longer-term development. This includes strengthening core service delivery systems in sectors such as health, supporting the Government to put in place an enabling regulatory and policy environment for inclusive growth, and helping design a social cash transfer scheme to better distribute the wealth of the nation to its citizens. These initiatives are intended to demonstrate the dividends of peace to the people of South Sudan, and to build confidence of citizens in their new State.

Despite the challenges the new nation is facing, it is important to recognize how far South Sudan has come in a short period of time. As Helen Clarke, UNDP Administrator stated recently in December 2011 at the International Engagement Conference for South Sudan held in Washington, DC, which focused on strategic development and interaction with the private and public sectors, "It is important to acknowledge that progress is already being made....More people now have access to safe water and sanitation than at any point in South Sudan's history. Institutions are being established, roads are being opened, and communities and citizens everywhere are contributing, helping to construct social infrastructure and expand markets. But a great deal remains to be done." UNDP is committed to working together with the new nation on the long road ahead, towards build the nation's vision of a peaceful, democratic, just and prosperous South Sudan. ■



A civil servant through the IGAD initiative working together with their South Sudanese counterpart. © UNDP / Brian Sokol

A snapshot into the Presidential priorities for the first 100 days

In early August when the new Legislative Assembly was formed, the President announced 17 key deliverables that the new Government would provide in its first 100 days. UNDP has worked with the Government on a number of these deliverables, including strengthening accountability institutions and expanding the rule of law. One of the key deliverables in the area of rule of law was the opening of 50 new police stations and posts throughout the country. UNDP supported the Government in the delivery of this commitment by facilitating the construction of 54 police stations within the 100-day period.

One of these 54 police posts was built in a community called Hakuma Mafi in Eastern Equatoria, which in Arabic means “place of no government.” Situated in a valley between the Chalamini, Iliu and Ioming villages located on neighbouring hillsides, Hakuma Mafi was notorious for cattle raiding, conflict over grazing rights and violence stemming from access to water. Years of civil war had facilitated the uncontrolled acquisition of arms by the communities while the security situation was further exacerbated by poverty and having to strengthen law enforcement structures, train a police force and foster the rule of law. Building peace however went beyond simply negotiating a cease-fire between the three communities; it required long-term planning to ensure that peace is sustainable.

Creating sustainable and secure communities takes time as well as buy-in from local communities. In March 2010, UNDP’s Community Security and Arms Control (CSAC) project began consultations in every county of Eastern Equatoria to understand the needs of the individual communities. These consultations brought together village elders, local government, state ministers, representatives from the Peace Commission, religious leaders and community members to discuss and find local solutions to their security issues.



Villagers in Morulem, Eastern Equatoria celebrating the handover of a police post
© UNDP/Marguerite Nowak

Based on the outcomes of these consultations, a state-wide Peace and Reconciliation Committee was formed as well as county committees that decided what initiatives were needed to reduce conflict in their communities. It was the Torit County committee that decided a police post and a borehole were needed in Hakuma Mafi between the three villages to reduce the incidence of conflict and cattle-raiding. UNDP supported the Government in building the police post in Hakuma Mafi as well as the construction of 18 police posts and 15 boreholes throughout the state of Eastern Equatoria. These police posts were complete with solar energy, radio communications and trained police officers.

In a short period of time, the community is already showing signs of revitalization. At a recent ceremony of the police post where hundreds of members of the three neighbouring

villages attended, the Village Chief stated “Today we will call our land Hakuma Fi, a place of government, we are proud of this. Since the police post has been built no one has died on this ground.” The Village Chief and elders were even discussing setting up a local market near the new police post.

This process empowered the people and gave their local government the opportunity to deliver services that meet the needs of the villages. Moreover, the county committees that were formed during the consultative process are having a longer-term impact by continuing and serving as a platform for the communities to collectively decide how to address insecurity in their payams and bomas. By giving a community a channel to make their voices heard extends the state’s authority, improves accountability and fosters trust between the people and the Government. ■



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