



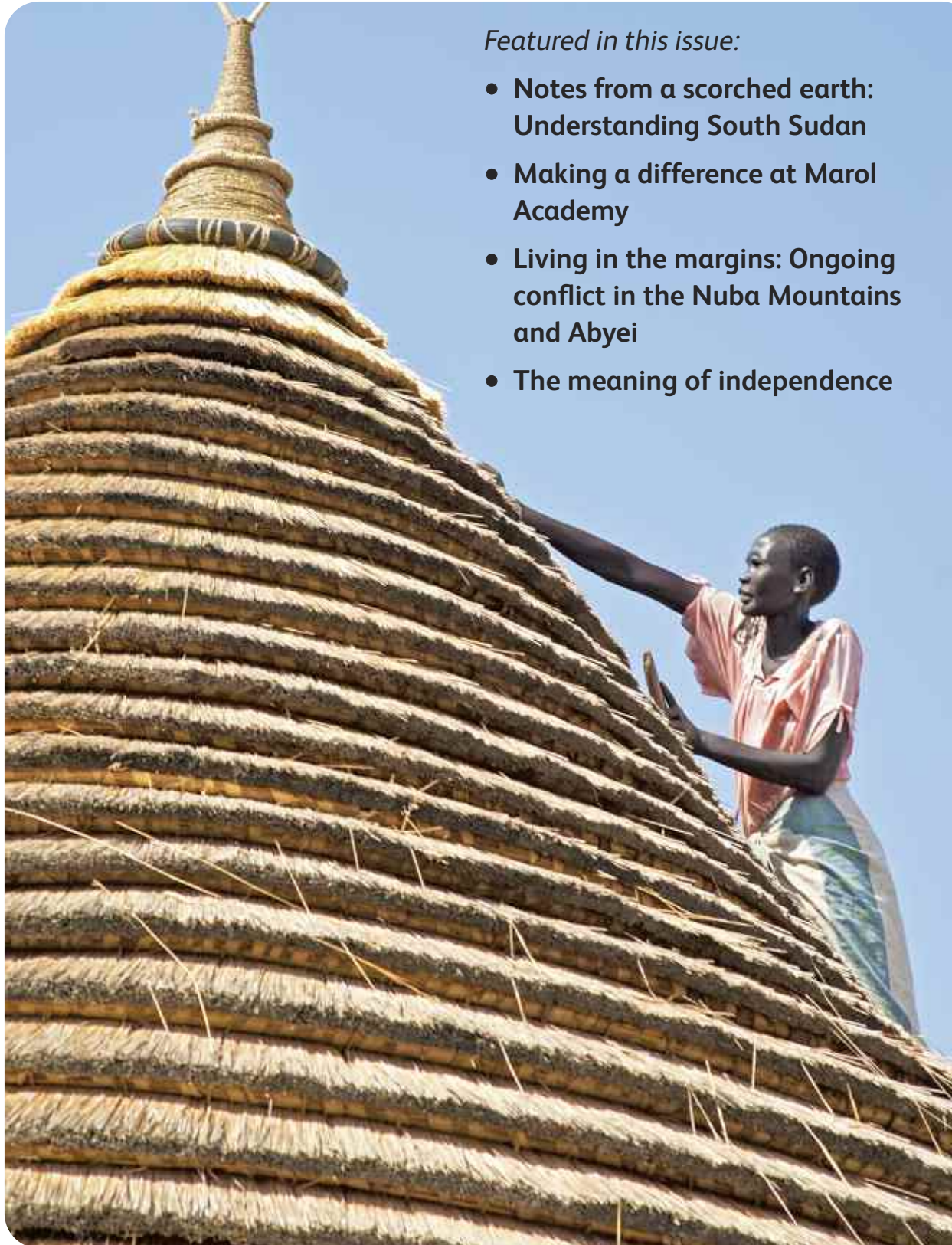
South Sudan at Independence

Registered Charity No 1107341

Building for the future

“Stories, hopes and dreams from a new nation on the eve of independence”

Right: A Sudanese lady builds the roof to her tukal in rural Bahr-El-Ghazel, South Sudan



Featured in this issue:

- **Notes from a scorched earth: Understanding South Sudan**
- **Making a difference at Marol Academy**
- **Living in the margins: Ongoing conflict in the Nuba Mountains and Abyei**
- **The meaning of independence**

A new nation

I will never forget landing at the forbidden airstrips, designated ‘No Go Zones’ by Khartoum so that no one could take aid to its victims or tell the world what was happening. As we landed, we could often see smoke rising from horizon to horizon – villages burning. We were always welcomed with courageous smiles, by men, women and children, so often emaciated with hunger and disease. And then we would go footing through the killing fields and the burnt homes and crops, torched in Khartoum’s scorched earth policy. At night, as we settled to sleep in our tents, the horizon red with flames, we would hear singing. The people still sang – even surrounded by the fires of destruction.

Now, South Sudan has risen from those fires of destruction to give birth to a new free and independent nation.

There are many challenges in the months ahead: the humanitarian crises; the renewed fighting and inter-communal conflicts; the unresolved problems of Abyei; the suffering of the peoples of the Nuba Mountains and the threat of violence in the Blue Nile – and many others. We will continue to support our friends in South Sudan as they build for the future.

Today, I write to congratulate South Sudan on the eve of this special day to celebrate the historic referendum and the establishment of a new nation, built on the firm foundations of the sacrifice of many who gave their lives for faith and for freedom.

(Baroness) Caroline Cox



“South Sudan has risen from those fires of destruction to give birth to a new free and independent nation”





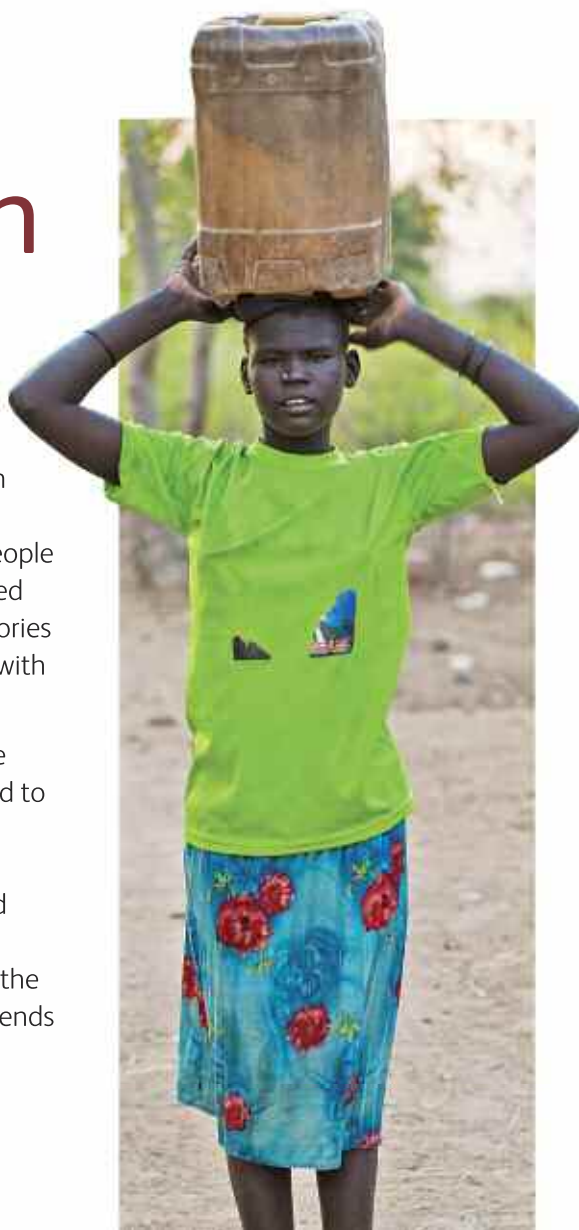
Students at Marol Academy in the village of Lunyakor

The dawn of a nation

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan will become the newest nation on earth. The struggle for independence began over fifty-five years ago – far longer than most lifetimes in South Sudan. A common history, a lack of justice and a desire to shape their own destiny has drawn the people of South Sudan together. Having witnessed Africa’s longest civil war, and countless stories of suffering, this final separation is laden with promise.

This edition seeks both to look back at the South Sudanese struggle for liberation and to glimpse forward at the future of this new nation. Drawing on our partners’ unique experiences and insights, we hope to shed light on South Sudan’s remarkable achievement and to give a snapshot into the stories of hope that HART is helping its friends weave in South Sudan.

Naomi Pendle and Lydia Tanner



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Understanding the North-South war

Notes from a scorched earth

They came without a noise – the whirr of the propellers sounded little more than the whisper of the wind. If you did not know that they might come, you would not have heard them at all. And then, high above the thin clouds, they would open their bellies, “dropping death from the skies”. The white hot, razor sharp metal that fell like rain killed thousands of people during the long years of civil war.

Yet as well as the bullets and the bombs, the tanks and the helicopter gunships, there were many slower deaths. Those that fled the attacks gathered into crowded camps vulnerable to disease. As they ran, there was no-one to plant their crops. Without a harvest there would be no food to eat for the year ahead. In the late 1990s in Bahr al-Ghazal, one hundred thousand people starved to death.

The civil war between North and South Sudan started in 1955, the year before the British left. Sudan was ruled by the British from the last years of the nineteenth century, and during their regime the British applied a ‘Southern Policy’ rule.

Since records began, Sudan has been defined by its plurality. Rich in indigenous tribal culture, its inhabitants have always been composed of hundreds of ethnicities, languages and religions. Disparate variations in the natural environment from desolate deserts in the north, to lush equatorial regions, have furthered this diversity. Before colonialism or urbanization, the deserts of the north were sparsely populated by camel raisers, sustained by the river Nile. In the south, men of all tribes broadly fell into two categories; agriculturalists and semi-nomadic cattle herders known as the Nilotics. Both were intensely proud of their civilizations.

Recognising the cultural and religious differences between North and South, the Southern Policy applied different taxes, visas and trade terms to the two regions. However, as independence approached and fast decisions were made, the North and South were joined back together. Power over the largest country in Africa was given to the ruling Islamic elite in Khartoum. Christian influence had already strengthened an emerging Southern identity, making enforced assimilation impossible. Violent resistance in the South began before the British had even left.

During the Ananya I – the first phase of the civil war – most of the rebels soldiers fought with sticks and spears. Grandfathers in South Sudan recall watching their brothers die with a nail hammered into their skull, and their wives being herded into a church and set on fire. Yet their motivation was strong and rebel control of the sprawling rural landscape of South Sudan became impossible to resist. As the rebel movements won favour with the people, control of the South moved beyond Khartoum’s reach.

Peace was only possible with the promise of limited autonomous government in the South and at last, the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 brought a halt

to conflict. The South was given powers to be a semi-autonomous region with its own government that would have control of revenues from newly discovered oil fields in the region. However, ten years of peace were shattered when the government, in Khartoum unilaterally nullified the agreement reasserting their sovereignty over the South. They disbanded the Southern Regional Assembly and took control of oil exploration and revenue rights. Direct rule from the North was imposed by the military: Sharia law was introduced throughout the country in the Muslim and non-Muslim territories alike, two presidents were overthrown, and deepening civil unrest suspended oil production and halted development aid. Opposition newspapers were closed. People began to disappear.

Sent to crush Kerbino Kwanyin’s Southern rebellion, Dr John Garang quickly defected from the Northern army and joined the liberation movement. In 1983, the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) was formed leading to a twenty-two year struggle for freedom. Survival became an uncertainty and terror a routine, especially in the urban centres of Wau, Gogrial and Juba, held by the North as garrison towns. In the battle for the town of Yei, it was said that dead bodies were piled so high on the roads that vehicles could no longer pass.

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s the ferocity of conflict increased. Thousands of villages were burnt to the ground. Tens of thousands of young

“During the first phase of the civil war most of the rebel soldiers fought with sticks and spears”





children who were looking after the animals away from the villages escaped the violence but lost their entire families. They made their way through hundreds of miles of desert seeking refuge in Kenya and Ethiopia. They became known as Sudan's lost boys.

The battle cry of the SPLA was always for liberation from the Khartoum regime, but the exact dreams varied over time and between players. The early 1990s saw a division in the SPLA bought on by ideological splits and a changing international scene. The fall of communism had shifted allegiances globally and the SPLA did not escape its effect. Often fuelled and funded by Khartoum, Southern militia groups that defected from the SPLA were used as proxy militia for the Northern cause. In the end, internal splits brought the deaths of more people in South-South violence than in North-South fighting.

On the 9th January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed by the North and South. For the first time in decades, bombs did not break the dawn and guns did not fire through the night. The war was finally over. It is estimated that this conflict claimed two million lives; more than the sum total of Rwanda, Somalia,

Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Kosovo, Liberia and the Persian Gulf combined. A further four million people were displaced.

The promise of the CPA was a referendum on Southern independence on 9 January 2011. A peaceful referendum produced a unified, southern vote for separation from the North.

Six months later, on the 9 July 2011, South Sudan will become the newest state on earth. South Sudan has always been defined by its diversity and here lies its real strength. Yet tribal ties still strongly influence who holds power in the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and while this is the case, the threat of ethnic oppression casts a long and wide shadow. The fear of subjugation remains very powerful.

A future that embraces and promotes South Sudan's diversity stands the best chance of letting it realise its potential as a thriving cultural crossroads of Africa. Yet, on the eve of independence, new tensions and violence from the North have already interrupted the peace.

The promise of South Sudan's independence is mixed with the fear of a return to war.

Above: Voting in the elections in South Sudan

Left: A soldier in South Sudan

Right: T-shirts promote the SPLM

Majok: The life of a South Sudanese child

Majok stands about chest high, covered in dust and constantly itching as the fleas bite him. His trousers hang off his waist, unwashed since he first started wearing them many months ago. Born with polio, he eats from the scraps on the streets of Wau and lives wherever the older gangs of South Sudan cannot find him. He is a child without a family, lost in this busy market city.

The streets of Wau are filled with nearly three hundred homeless boys like Majok. Held as a Northern garrison town during the war, many of the children are a product of the systematic wartime rape of the local women by the occupying soldiers. Women were branded like cattle once they had been used and the children were often abandoned as their mothers were unable to cope with the memories they induced. Other street boys have fled domestic violence and poverty at home, coming to Wau in

the hope that the streets of this small town are paved with gold. In this crowded city bursting with poverty, they can barely survive. There is no one to feed them, to help them when they are sick or to sit and talk with them. If they can steal the money, many buy and sniff glue to forget.

I first met little Majok in the summer of 2009. Even then he impressed me – having bought him the rare treat of a soda, he gave it away to an old widow begging on the street whose clothes were, somehow, more torn than his. Although he had nothing, he gave all he had. He is still the same today, when I see him for lunch in Wau. He will give me his last piece of meat even though he does not know when he will eat again.

Naomi Pendle, Marol Academy, South Sudan



Ajak Dit

Beyond the rubbish filled mess of the Luonyaker market and across the new gravel road on the way to the football pitch clearing, you find the home of Ajak Dit. Her home is a circle of three mud tukals (huts) and one larger luak (mud hut for animals). Each year she farms the small, surrounding land to feed her family. The widow of an educated man, Ajak Dit is the mother of three sons and grandmother to four young grandchildren. If you come to greet her, you will see these children clinging to her legs and running around her feet.

Ajak Dit was born during the first phase of the civil war in South Sudan. The granddaughter of the late paramount chief, Giir Thiik, she found herself at the heart of the Apuk Dinka tribe. Later, as a war-time widow left with three sons, she was often unable to feed or care for her children. Her oldest son was sent to school in Wau in the hope that he would learn and, eventually, provide for his family. From Wau he was forcibly recruited into the Northern army and, decades later, is yet to return home.

In the 1990s, a rebel group fighting against the SPLA, then based near Gogrial Town, attacked the village of Ajak Dit's home. When the militia attacked, they burnt houses, stole food and captured the young boys to become soldiers. That day, one of Ajak Dit's sons was at a small school held under a large tree. His little legs carried him deep into the bush, where he escaped from the militia but was almost unable to find his way back home again. When he returned the village was destroyed – all the food stolen and the land burnt. For the next few years, famine stalked the land. People died on the way to market, too hungry to make it a few more paces.

Yet, Ajak Dit shepherded her remaining family through the war they were born into. They survived and never left South Sudan. Now she is proud of her compound and of the swarming grandchildren and the two sons that survive. Aluet is the youngest grandchild who usually sleeps in her grandmother's arms. Ajak Dit dreams that Aluet's life will be different from her own.



Top: A home in South Sudan

Bottom: Children collecting water from the well

Interdependance: Fuel, Food and Guns



Above top: Fishing on the White Nile



Above: Carrying water

Just beyond the stadium, between the street stalls selling omelets, and the pile of Rickshaws waiting for repair, sits the single petrol station in Wau Town. Less than a year old, it usually has a slow trickle of cars that prefer this supplier to the tables in the market piled with jerry cans of diesel. In late May 2011, the lines of cars spilled out across the gutter and back along the road. Beeping their horns and nudging each other out of spaces, the vehicles were fighting for the last drops of diesel in Wau. Even the private fuel company responsible for imports for the UN and international NGOs had run out of fuel. With the North blockading the roads to the South, there was no route for the petrol tankers that transport their fuel to Wau. The city and the villages around it were slowly grinding to a halt. No motorbikes could deliver vaccinations; no trucks could move the critical supplies of grain; aid workers were unable to move between the sparsely populated villages.

In the disentangling of North and South Sudan, as the South prepares for independence, many have failed to appreciate the interdependence of these two neighbouring political entities. The abundance of oil in South Sudan makes the fuel crisis ironic, but for decades Sudan has been built as one state under the assumptions of shared resources and infrastructure. The only refinery in Sudan lies in the North and the only pipeline runs to Port Sudan many hundreds of miles from the North/South border. South Sudan may be rich in natural resources but it lacks the infrastructure that would enable it to benefit independently. Not only does it rely on the North for trade, it requires assistance to make use of its own resources for its own consumption.

After decades of war and a vacuum of development, South Sudan must import many of its supplies for daily

life. Warrap State, for example, does not currently produce enough grain to satisfactorily feed itself. Instead it relies on donations of food aid from the WFP (World Food Programme) and on trade from Khartoum via Wau. In recent weeks, with the roads from the North closed, the price of food has soared far beyond the buying potential of most citizens. Regions further south in South Sudan are more easily able to source their demands from their own fertile land and from across the borders with Uganda and Kenya. But, to get to Warrap State, trucks of food face many days of journeying over rough, swampy roads that are seasonally filled with deadly militias who regularly kill for a truck's cargo. Few businessmen are willing to make the journey, and even fewer see their produce arrive. With little infrastructure or security, the northern reaches of South Sudan still look to Khartoum for their supplies.

Yet, the dependence is not solely Southern. Following the CPA, the North has legitimately been able to access 50% of the oil revenue from the fields in the South and this wealth has nurtured a struggling and vulnerable economy. The promise of many more untapped oil fields in the South will be desperately missed in Khartoum.

Both North and South are capable of enflaming internal conflict in their neighbouring territory. Having agreed to the CPA and adhered to the key terms of the referendum, there has been significant pressure from many factions in Khartoum for the North to reassert its strong hold. President Bashir's decisions to occupy the border town of Abyei and to engage in aerial bombardment on civilian towns in the Nuba Mountains (Southern Kordofan) are being used to demonstrate that he still has a firm grip on the peripheries of his new, smaller state.

Furthermore, while the problems of the South have traditionally been attributed to interference from the North, there is now growing criticism of the Southern leadership, which is often expressed in ethnic terms. As independence approaches, internal violence within South Sudan has increased, bringing fears that South Sudan will fall apart before it has started. Many of the guns used in these conflicts were sourced in the 1980s during the civil war, but new ammunition and new weapons continue to enter the market. Southern conflicts rely on weapons from the North and the possibility of internal peace relies on Northern cooperation.

South Sudan is lavishly filled with natural resources but will be a land-locked nation with a severely underdeveloped economy and very limited infrastructure. As such, it has the potential to descend into violent, political conflict. By comparison, North Sudan has a well-developed infrastructure, a port and a fresh need for strong, political unity. If willing, both neighbours have the potential to help the other succeed.

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust: 'Footing' in South Sudan

Landing on a dusty airstrip in South Sudan is hard at the best of times – much worse during the rainy season, or when under threat of attack. As the plane landed in South Sudan, Caroline Cox saw the smoke of burning villages across the horizon – the latest victims of aerial bombardment and gunmen on horseback.

It was the start of the 'second war', reignited in 1985 after Khartoum unilaterally overthrew the semi-autonomous government in Juba. It would be another 20 years before a peace agreement would be reached, or before Darfur would hit the world's headlines, engaging the international conscience in a tragedy that had been unfolding for many years.

In the years that followed, Caroline Cox flew into the forbidden airstrips over thirty times. "The government in Khartoum would publish a list of airstrips open to NGOs" she says, "Then they would carry out their attacks in the areas surrounding the forbidden airstrips."

From where Caroline Cox stood, the sky glowed orange against the flat horizon as villages went up in flames. In village after village she was told story after story of death and destruction. No-one was untouched.

From deep inside South Sudan, Caroline Cox and her colleagues were able to collect evidence of abuses of human rights and of Khartoum's involvement in arming the militia groups that would ride south on horseback, setting villages alight, shooting civilians and taking others as prisoners. Returning to the British Parliament, Caroline Cox spoke passionately and strongly of what she had witnessed. Lord Tony Pandy has written: 'I regard Caroline Cox as one of the great women of our generation — a 20th-century prophet. She has awakened the conscience of the House of Lords to the terrible challenges that face Christians in other lands.'

In 2003, Caroline Cox established Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART) to build on her work in Sudan and in other places where oppressed and persecuted peoples were overlooked. In the years since, HART has continued to rely on first-hand evidence of human rights violations, using this as a basis for international advocacy and targeted aid focusing on sustainable community development and local partnership.

Through HART, Caroline Cox has continued to advocate for freedom and justice in Sudan. Finally, in January of this year that freedom was celebrated. Caroline Cox was invited to address the crowd that had gathered in London to hear the announcement of the referendum on South Sudanese independence.

Now, on the eve of independence, HART believes humanitarian work in South Sudan is as crucial as ever. South Sudan is a country that has long suffered from war and poverty. Roughly 9 million out of a population of 10 million live on less than \$1 a day; one in seven children dies before the age of 5; only 17% of the population receive immunization; and barely one-quarter of girls attend primary school.

While international political advocacy is crucial, HART also believes that grass-root activities are necessary to ensure the long term stability of South Sudan. In particular, there is an enormous need for education in South Sudan, where a girl of 15 is more likely to die in childbirth than to finish her primary education. Building schools allows teenagers to access the classroom, education and, eventually, an alternative source of income. It will deter teenagers from wielding an AK47 and conducting deadly cattle theft to earn a living and eventually allow these armed teenagers to experience the benefits of peace.



Nuba Relief Rehabilitation and Development Organization (NRRDO) Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains

In the Nuba Mountains region, the participation of women in decision making has long been limited through lack of education. The prolonged civil war, in which women are among the worst victims, has reduced their already poor prospects. Widows are particularly marginalized, both economically and socially.

HART's local partner, the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organization, has responded creatively to this need with their Widows' Empowerment Income Generation Programme. This provides leadership and management training for the women, training in the processing for food products, and the distribution of food processing items.

The results have been an improvement in the quality of life for the women of the region and the encouragement of their participation in the community. The Programme is a practical demonstration that the empowerment of women contributes positively to social development for everyone.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) Health Clinics, Yei County, South Sudan

Five primary health clinics, at Balamuke, Logo, Lura, Morobo and Morsak, have been established with HART funding. The clinics are now focusing on the diagnosis and treatment of malaria – including the provision of drugs through HART funds. HART also supports two children's homes, at Mobobo and Lora.

Malaria accounts for up to half of all cases at local hospitals and clinics. Through the work of the EPC clinics, this awful toll is reduced through the increased immunization coverage of children under five, direct treatment of patients in the clinics and, through outreach work, a change in people's misconceptions towards healthcare.

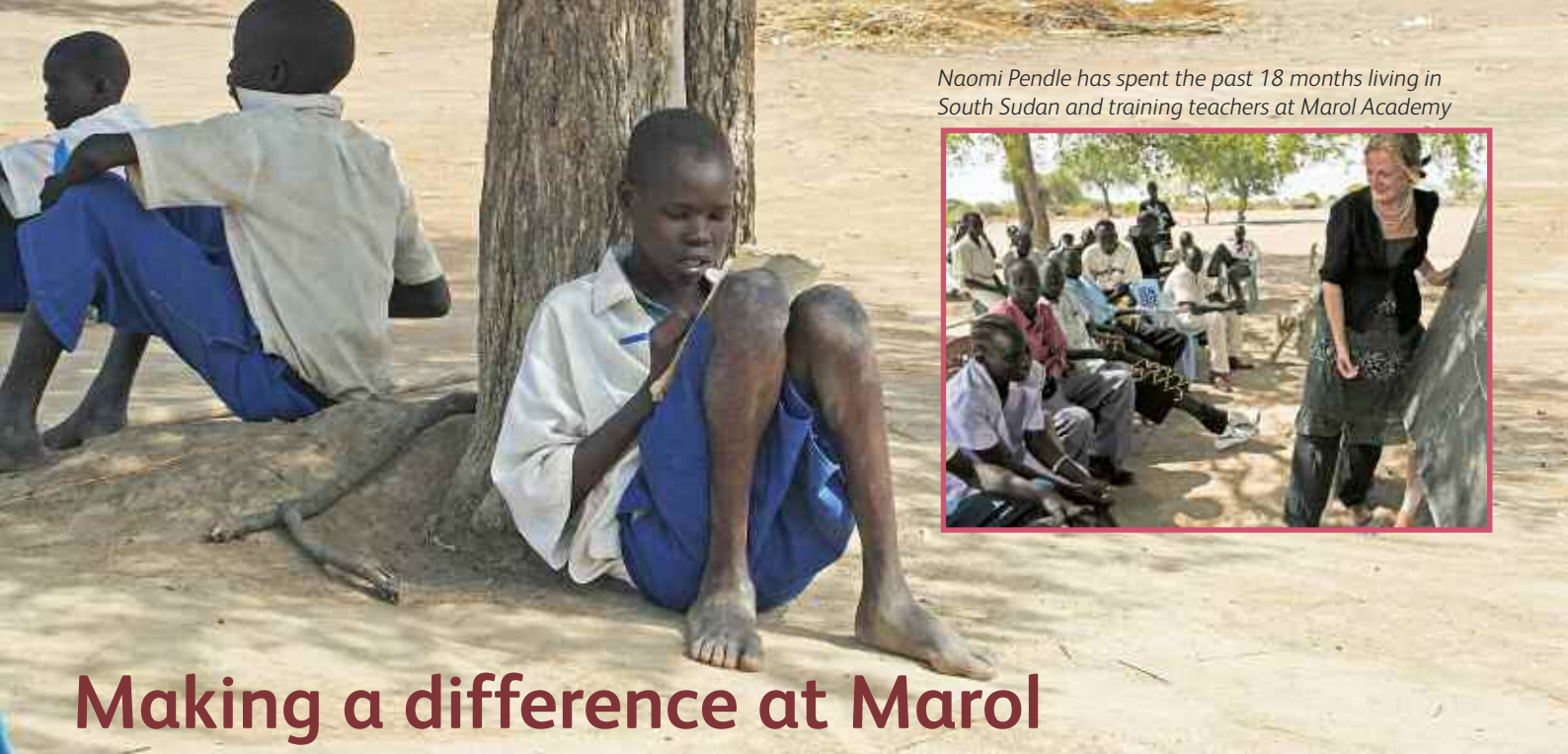
Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) Agriculture Programme, Yei County, South Sudan

This project is an income generation programme in support of orphanage and educational work, and to work towards sustaining the health clinics that HART supports.

At the project, tractors are used only for breaking new ground, and for transportation. All weeding and harvesting is carried out by human labour, thereby increasing employment.

In addition to the income raised and employment created, the programme also reduces local dependency on food providers from outside the region, and contributes to good husbandry and increased land fertility.





Naomi Pendle has spent the past 18 months living in South Sudan and training teachers at Marol Academy



Making a difference at Marol

No taller than a school desk, Nyandut is in her second year of primary school at Marol Academy. Having woken before dawn, beneath the stars, she walks to fetch water for her family, carefully balancing the 20 litres on her head. Once the water is delivered and her little uniform put on, she starts the four-mile walk to Marol, still barefoot. Some of the oldest pupils walk up to six hours each day to reach the Academy. The first school in the village and the leading school amongst the 90,000 Apuk Dinka, the children are prepared to make a sacrifice to reach the classroom.

For decades, there was no formal education available in Gogrial East County (South Sudan). The rare school was closed by the civil war; the gathering of people was too convenient a target for falling bombs or raiding militia. Instead the children learnt to wield spears and guns, to run from helicopter gunships and to recognise whether planes would drop food or bombs. In South Sudan today, a girl of 15 is more likely to die in childbirth than to finish her primary education. With less than 5% of the population having finished primary school, everyone is thirsty for education.

Since the signing of the peace agreement of 2005 there has been fresh hope in peace and education, but after decades without lessons there are few people qualified to teach. Returning refugees, who have often spent the last decade in camps in Kenya, are usually the most skilled people in the villages. Scattered around the rural villages of South Sudan, small schools have started opening under trees. Their teachers are untrained, returning refugees. They practice writing with sticks in the dust and sit on branches from the bush.

Marol Academy was initially opened under trees. On that day, over two hundred pupils poured through the bush to be taught their first lessons. Now, three years later, Marol Academy has nearly eight hundred pupils. It boasts the only functioning secondary school amongst the Apuk Dinka, opened in January this year. It has been active in supporting teacher training throughout the whole county to ensure that education grows for this large, sprawling community. Marol Adademy boasts four brand new classroom blocks and is saving to build rooms for the new secondary school.

Becoming a volunteer

Southern Sudanese who have completed secondary school, let alone university, are so rare that gold is easier to find here. While a secondary school at Marol seems essential for the community, there are no teachers available locally or within the wider region. Marol is eagerly looking for skilled volunteer teachers from abroad. Teachers are needed for a variety of subjects at both primary and secondary levels.

Please contact HART if you would be willing to make a 3 month commitment to volunteering at Marol Academy.

There are many other ways to get involved in HART's work within the UK. If you'd like to come along to one of our volunteer receptions to find out more, please contact Lydia: lydia.tanner@hart-uk.org. We'd love to hear from you!

Above: Students at Marol Academy sitting their exams under the trees

“Some of the oldest pupils walk up to six hours each day”



War in the Nuba Mountains

“The escalating violence is already creating a humanitarian disaster”

Devastated by heavy fighting during the civil war, the Nuba Mountains (Southern Kordofan) was already facing a humanitarian emergency when the peace accord was signed. The state of emergency has since eased and the region entered a recovery phase with cautious progress. But early in June, bombs started to fall from the sky.

The Nuba Mountains region was renamed Southern Kordofan in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) against the wishes of many of the local people. Although traditionally aligned with South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains lie within the Northern territories. As such, they were not included in the South’s referendum for independence from the North in January this year. Instead, they were promised a ‘Popular Consultation’, which has not happened.

The peoples of the Nuba Mountains have a rich cultural heritage, famous for dance, music and traditional wrestling. They are a mixed faith population of Muslims, Christians and traditional believers, who have lived peacefully together often attending each other’s wedding feasts. However, with large proportions of the population siding with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) and others with the government in Khartoum, the area has become rife with tension and faces pressing security, reconstruction and development needs.

On 7 June, heavy fighting broke out between Khartoum’s Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), with the SAF indiscriminately using air power, tanks and artillery against civilian targets. In the days since, 60,000 civilians have fled Kadugli, the capital of the Nuba Mountains, and as we write, 7,000 are camping outside the UNMIS (United Nations

Mission in Sudan) compound on the outskirts of the city. Hundreds of others from nearby villages have fled into the mountains.

The fighting continues and SAF tanks, heavy weapons and further troops have been sent to the area. MiG fighter bombers have been seen over the town of Kauda and there are reports of aerial bombardment resulting in civilian deaths in several parts of the region. HART’s partner in the Nuba Mountains says:

“The atrocities currently going on in Kadugli and Dilling are horrific. The SAF has been undertaking door-to-door forced entries: anyone even suspected of being pro SPLM is being executed on the spot – shot, or their throats cut. There have also been executions of those whose skin is considered ‘too black’. Such murders are conducted directly in front of the UNMIS compound; there are dead bodies lying in the streets everywhere”

Tensions began escalating during the elections in May 2011, when there was widespread evidence of vote rigging. The successful candidate, Ahmed Haroum has been charged for war crimes by the International Criminal Court for his actions in Darfur. This has contributed to a growing belief that the current Government in Khartoum is not intent on finding a peaceful solution through the political process.

The escalating violence is already creating a humanitarian disaster. In the areas of the Nuba Mountains being targeted by the SAF, trade routes have been blocked and there are critical shortages of food and water. With the rainy season coming, the critical humanitarian situation will escalate. So far, there has been very little humanitarian relief and the threat of mass starvation and disease is significant. The UN and many NGOs have withdrawn from the city and schools, government offices and shops are all closed.

Right: Bombs are dropped on the Nuba Mountains in sight of the UN who are yet to act



It is time to call for the UK government to raise the regions of Abyei and Southern Kordofan with the UN Security Council; to consider calling for the International Criminal Court to extend its enquiries and remit from Darfur to include these regions of Abyei and Southern Kordofan; and to establish whether UNMIS is merely acting as a passive observer, and, if so, to call for an extension of its remit to fulfil its duty to protect.

Abyei

The sun had already set but the women still clustered around the fire, cooking fresh, white fish. Tied to the handle-bars of the motorbike, Dut had just delivered the first dinner of the season from the river. Yet that evening Dut was anxious. He had heard there had been another attack from the North and he quickly disappeared into the *tukal* (mud hut) hoping to communicate with his home village near Abyei.

On his old, torn notebook Dut scribbled and underlined the heading: “Dead”. Below he listed the names of three of his wife’s relatives, all killed in the previous days fighting. Soon, many more would be added to that list.

On 20th May this year, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), controlled by Khartoum, attacked and occupied the small town of Abyei lying on the tense oil-rich border between North and South Sudan. Those dead could not be counted, but within hours 90,000 had fled, leaving behind homes and livelihoods. They ran into the bush, loaded down with all they could carry. Now, one month later, the growing number of displaced are scattered through Warrap State (South Sudan) without home or guarantee of security, food or water.

It is not the first time that aerial bombardment has threatened to destroy Abyei and its inhabitants. In 2008 the SAF carried out air attacks on the town, but this time it has been much worse. “The scale of this attack is something different”, an aid worker recently told us. Simultaneous ground and air offensives meant that the North’s rapid attempt to occupy the town could not be interrupted by Southern forces. The advancing soldiers from Khartoum pushed south with decisive force, even attempting to destroy the bridge that crosses the river Kiir, linking Abyei to the rest of South Sudan.

Sitting on the edge of North and South Sudan, the town of Abyei has long been claimed by both regions. The town itself and the surrounding villages largely consist of the *tukals* of the Ngok Dinka tribe. With ethnic, historic and political ties to the South, Abyei’s population believed

that it would lie within South Sudan when the border was finally drawn between the separating states. It was to the South that they ran when the town was attacked.

Rich in natural resources, most notably oil, this small in-between land has also long been familiar territory to Northern nomadic tribes. Each year, the Misseriya tribe’s annual migration in search of food and water brings them and their precious cattle to the green pasturelands that line southern Abyei.

In 2009, an arbitration in the Hague ruled that many of Abyei’s oil fields should be given to North Sudan – a ruling that the South accepted. Still, with the independence of South Sudan fast approaching, the Misseriya fear that their grazing rights could be restricted by the new international border. Securing the grass for their grazing cattle is their cause for concern. Pulling on political strings in Khartoum, the Misseriya were satisfied with the North’s occupation of their pastures.

Yet, the timing of the attack maximized its destructive impact on Southern civilians. In May the rains start to fall, the cows return home and the women must cultivate the fields. Displacing tens of thousands of the Dinka Ngok from their land just as their land is ready to be planted has destroyed any hope of cultivating the fields. Without land to plant their crops, the people of Abyei face a year without food and a certain struggle for survival. The battles bought many rapid fatalities. Now, the people of Abyei fear the prospect of a slower massacre.

The aggressive occupation of Abyei, a clear breach of international peace treaties, has been met by a passive response from the international community. The UN has a large peacekeeping presence in the region but, so far, they have sat and watched. Many see Khartoum’s actions as a provocation to force the South to infringe the peace agreement and to legitimize a return to the North-South war. The promise of independence on 9 July, and international pressure on the Southern Government to resist armed response, has persuaded the South to act passively or risk a loss of legitimacy in the face of the international community.

For the people of Abyei, and their friends, the failure of the North and South to settle on an agreement raises fears that Abyei is a battle simply waiting to be fought. The decisive, deadly action from the Northern regime has only fuelled a Southern sentiment to reinforce its claim to Abyei. If the international community is to honour its previous commitments, it should not necessarily shy from this dispute. It will not be long before a sovereign border lies between North and South Sudan – then, resolving Abyei may become a more intractable problem.

Conflict in South Sudan

Early one morning in May, South Sudan woke to the sound of gunfire as people fired AK47s into the air across the villages and towns. They were celebrating the founding of the SPLA – the Sudan People’s Liberation Army, formed in the 1980s to resist Khartoum’s armies and their proxy militia groups. Now, on 9 July 2011, after over fifty years of war, South Sudan is set to receive its independence.

Yet since the signing of the peace agreement, violence between Southerners has only increased.

The new country is awash with guns left over from the war and kept beneath the mattresses or in the rafters of every home. This a heavily militarized land: small domestic disputes quickly become deadly, and the traditional cattle-raids see dozens killed in a single attack. In 2010, the death toll reached the hundreds in the small county of Gogrial East alone. In the first weeks of May this year, one hundred and fifty people were killed in violent conflict in the pasturelands of the Dinka Apuk tribe in Warrap State.

However, this latest violence has been attributed to militia groups and their support of the cattle raiders. The promise of independence for South Sudan has seen the re-emergence of dissident groups set on undermining the semi-autonomous Government of South Sudan (GOSS).

As the South prepares for independence on 9 July 2011, many of the ethnically diverse areas of South Sudan remain tense. Despite the dislodging effect of the modern world, the principles and values of indigenous cultural backgrounds are cherished deeply in South Sudan. A common Southern identity was fostered by the emergence of rebel liberation movements over the last 50 years. The final movement, the SPLM (Southern Peoples Liberation Movement) recruited an estimated 100,000 young people, reinforcing the impression of a collective and cohesive identity across the entire southern regions. Its success was arguably maintained by drawing on the traditional tribal warrior culture in the formation of its command and distribution systems, thus building unity through diversity.

Notwithstanding, this Southern identity is as fragile as the new found peace. Fractures in a cohesive Southern identity come to the surface readily in response to the perception of injustice. Rumours of electoral malpractice and of unequal access to power often awakens tribal loyalty and tribal ties still strongly influence who holds power in the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS). While this is the case, the threat of ethnic oppression casts a long and wide shadow. The fear of subjugation remains very powerful and there are already widespread rumblings that the Dinka and Nuer peoples are

attempting to dominate the political and economic landscape.

Furthermore, there are fears that the North are funding and arming dissident movements in an attempt to undermine South Sudan before it has even gained independence. Last month, in Warrap State, most of those killed were young, teenage boys and girls, sent to these pastures to herd their cattle. Deadly violence is endangering the stability of this new nation. Over 1,000 people have been killed in such violence in the last year alone. Army boots and uniforms all hint that these attackers are not normal cattle herders. The raiders are armed with “Khartoum guns” – an uncommon type of gun assumed to be supplied from Khartoum. There is widespread suspicion that the Northern government is backing the rebel militia against the Southern army in a final attempt to thwart separation.



The meaning of independence

The village chief leans back on his stick beneath the shade of an old, arching tree in his home village north of Alek town (Greater Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan). His waist-high grandson lurks nearby hoping to gain the remaining sip of the old man's soda. Wrinkles etched in his dark skin, he remembers when as a young child the newly appointed Northern regime rode into his homeland. He watched them arrive, carrying guns to fight men who held only sticks and spears. He witnessed them use nails to execute people. He saw them herding people into a large, stone building only to set them on fire. Today, he still passes the ruined remains of the building on the dusty road to Kuajok. As chief of his community, he has spent a lifetime fighting for independence and calling his people to join the battle. When asked what independence means, he passes his grandson the remaining pink, fizzy liquid and replies: "It means that my grandson will not have to see what I've seen and that he will not have to do what I've done".


Independence means many things to the many people of South Sudan. For some, independence is the bittersweet memory of those who died in a fight for freedom. It is estimated that over two million people died and four million people were displaced during the long years of war in the South. The cost of freedom was high – now life is cheap and violence pandemic.

For others, independence is the promise of peace and the end to over fifty years of conflict. Peace does not yet pervade all corners of South Sudan. The town of Abyei is forcefully occupied; Unity State has been bombed; and internal conflict threatens to spread through the land. Yet there is hope: that independence can bring a final end to the North-South conflict; that the intractable, endless fighting will one day end.

Independence means that the people's leaders will be their own. The Animist and Christian villagers of the South will never again be forced to live under Sharia law or have their future dictated by a Northern, foreign regime. Budgets and elections, human rights and justice will lie in the hands of the South. The Northern militia will never so easily take their children into slavery, or bomb their civilians as they sleep at home. As a separate, sovereign state, the South Sudanese people believe they can defend themselves and call for help if their peoples' rights are infringed by an external enemy. Nevertheless, ethnic divisions threaten to leave some groups under represented in government, sparking a further sense of disenfranchisement, even a desire for conflict.

Independence brings with it high expectations and great hope in the future. The people imagine roads and tarmac; trustworthy water supplies and newly built schools. They imagine medicine to save their child from malaria and harvests to save their families from hunger. There has been a severe vacuum of development assistance in many Southern lands; freedom brings the hope of change, that if nothing else, there will be food security and relief from the long plagues of famine. Yet having been nurtured by the international community through the war and into independence, South Sudan knows that it cannot do it alone.

At independence many bulls will be slaughtered. On the 9 July 2011, in celebration, they will thank the heavens that it is time for South Sudan to stand alone. Here in South Sudan, bulls are also be slaughtered to ask for blessings to come. There are many blessings that are desperately needed in an independent South Sudan – to help prevent it from falling apart before it has even had a chance to get started.



... independence is the promise of peace and the end to over fifty years of conflict.

In South Sudan HART is working in Yei, Warrap State, and with refugees fleeing Abyei.

In Sudan HART is working in the Nuba Mountains.



HART works to provide lasting change through aid and advocacy for those suffering oppression and persecution, who are often neglected by other organisations, or are largely out of sight of the world's media. Founded in 2003 by Baroness Cox, a human rights activist, HART makes every endeavour to be a 'Voice for the Voiceless' for those who may be unreachable, unhelped and unheard.

HART relies on first-hand evidence of human rights violations as a basis for powerful twin-track programmes of international advocacy and aid. We believe that advocacy, combined with aid, is vital if we are to achieve sustainable community development, local ownership and empowerment for oppressed peoples.

We are committed to the prevention and alleviation of suffering and to the upholding of human dignity, the provision of support for local values, local ownership, and local capacity-building as the most appropriate and sustainable methods of promoting change and a belief in the value of advocacy with aid; providing a voice for the voiceless for victims of oppression and persecution.



YES!

I want to make a difference and be a Voice for the Voiceless!

At HART we see all the time how a little goes a long way – both in the way our partners abroad use the funds we provide and the difference our volunteers can make. There are many ways to support the work we do.

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