71. An Imminent Return

It seems that the older one becomes the faster time passes. I know such a notion is illusory but many people express a similar feeling. Thus, I find myself in the last week of my home leave and will be returning to Southern Sudan, next week, to rejoin our Solidarity with Southern Sudan team. Having previously caught up with many Brothers, family and friends, these past couple of weeks I have been enjoying the company of my sister, brother and their partners, in a holiday house where one looks out the window at a sparkling ocean and golden sand.

My sister recently asked me if there is anything special I would like to eat this week before I return to Sudan. There is an abundance of everything here in bewildering variety and diversity. I found myself thinking that even a humble sausage, which it is possible to buy in the capital, Juba, but nowhere else that I have seen in Southern Sudan, can seem very special in some circumstances. For many people in Southern Sudan, simply not to be hungry is special. While here I have been re-examining some statistics published in 2010 by Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation.

All statistics in Southern Sudan are somewhat unreliable because the infrastructure for a reliable, comprehensive mechanism for collecting them simply does not exist; but the best estimates describe a disadvantaged people in a country of continuing need:

- The population is a very young one, with 32% under the age of 10, 51% under the age of 18 and 72% of the population under the age of 30.
- The population is largely rural with 83% residing in rural areas.
- The population density in Southern Sudan is 13/sq. km, which is less than one tenth of Uganda, where the density is 136/sq. km.
- 27% of the 15 years and above population is literate. The literacy rate for males is 40% compared to 16% for females.
- Only 37% of the population above the age of six has ever attended school.
- 55% of the population has access to improved sources of drinking water.
- 38% of the population has to walk for more than 30 minutes one way to collect drinking water.
- 80% of the population does not have access to any toilet facility.
- Infant Mortality Rate is 102 (per 1000 live births).
- Under 5 Mortality Rate is 135 (per 1000 live births).
- 83% of the population live in tukuls.
- 50% of the population use firewood or grass as the primary source of lighting. 27% have no lighting at all.
- 96% of the population uses firewood or charcoal as the primary fuel for cooking.
- Average per capita consumption in Southern Sudan is 100 Sudanese Pounds (SDG) per person per month – about $30.
- The average consumption of the poor is 39 SDG per person per month compared to 163 SDG per person per month for the non poor.
- 78% of households depend on crop farming or animal husbandry as their primary source of livelihood.
- 1% of households in Southern Sudan have a bank account.
- 52.7% of the population live in households which used cash in the previous 7 days.
Added to the above, there is a chronic shortage of trained teachers and nurses. Tribal rivalries, border and oil-revenue issues, and an uncertain peace notwithstanding, independence for Southern Sudan is scheduled for July 9th. There is no doubt it is important to give continuing support to the people of this emerging African nation. - Br Bill
Sudan delivery of goods

Sudan housing (tukuls)

We are many

Young people