

Local Needs and Agency Conflict: A Case Study of Kajo Keji County, Sudan

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Abstract: During Southern Sudan's second period of civil war, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided almost all of the region's public services and greatly influenced local administration. Refugee movements, inadequate infrastructures, food shortages, accountability issues, disputes and other difficulties overwhelmed both the agencies and newly developed civil authorities. Blurred distinctions between political and humanitarian activities resulted, as demonstrated in a controversy surrounding a 2004 distribution of relief food in Central Equatoria State. Based on analysis of documents, correspondence and interviews, this case study of Kajo Keji reveals many of the challenges posed by NGO activity in Southern Sudan and other countries emerging from long-term instability. Given recurrent criticisms of NGOs in war-torn areas of Africa, agency operations must be appropriately geared to affected populations and scrutinized by governments, donors, recipients and the media.

A Critique of NGO Operations

Once seen as unquestionably noble, humanitarian agencies have been subject to much criticism in the last 30 years.¹ This has been particularly evident in the Horn of Africa. Drawing on experience in Ethiopia, Hancock depicted agencies as bureaucracies more intent on keeping themselves going than helping the poor.² Noting that aid often allowed despots to maintain power, enrich themselves and escape responsibility, he criticized their tendency for big, wasteful projects using expensive experts who bypass local concerns and wisdom and do not speak local languages. He accused their personnel of being lazy, over-paid, under-educated and living in luxury amid their impoverished clients. Such criticisms have surfaced frequently. Based on research in Somalia, Maren described international aid agencies as under-scrutinized, self-perpetuating big businesses more concerned with winning government contracts than helping needy people.³ He was equally scathing of the naiveté of expatriate personnel, dependence by journalists on agency reports and willingness of native elites to exploit crises. Often aid has subsidized western businesses, such as grain-trading companies, eager to unload surpluses. Questioning whether non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are becoming Africa's new colonialists, one observer noted that the intended recipients of charity are the only persons who can assess whether or not altruistic goals have been met.⁴

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1a2.pdf>

Others have noted agency encroachment on state sovereignty.⁵ Particularly relevant in the case of Sudan, NGO activities may impede local political processes that could allow beneficiaries of assistance to become masters of their own destinies. Critics note that agencies hamper the development of local consensus to aggregate needs and form policy.⁶ Tvedt argues, ... NGOs contributed unintentionally to the erosion of the authority of a very weak state. ... The NGOs put up their own administration and authority systems thereby undermining the state institutions without establishing viable alternative structures.⁷ Referring to the agencies as "inadvertent accomplices," Martin notes that international aid organizations have flooded into the Sudan, mostly via Kenya and Uganda into the rebel regions of the South, in response to the devastating consequence of "years of combat, concurrent droughts, floods, and other calamities." The "hundreds of millions of dollars" that these organizations have poured into the region have provided the combatants with an excuse to avoid considering the tremendous human costs of the war. Although "the two largest Southern rebel groups have each created fledgling civil service bureaucracies," these bureaucracies have no resources. Virtually none of the national government's newly-found oil bonanza goes to fight war and poverty. Martin doubts that either the rebels or the government "would divert resources to humanitarian needs if the aid agencies were to withdraw." But this does not obviate the fact that the very actions of the humanitarian community allows "both North and South to evade the question entirely."⁸

Mamphilly and Branch noted two categories of critiques leveled at foreign-funded, NGO-implemented humanitarian aid. The first focuses on political and social problems stemming from unmediated relations that NGOs often have with local populations. NGOs distribute aid according to their own institutional imperatives. No matter how far they try to involve the local population in participatory forms of aid provision, there will always be a gap between their imperatives and the imperatives that would emerge through democratic decision-making processes within the beneficiary community. Often such situations result in "high levels of waste and inefficiency" due to competition among NGOs. Negative results flow even when there is inter-NGO cooperation and beneficiary participation, "the population can be habituated to making appeals to unaccountable international bodies for assistance." Instead of addressing their own political authorities or developing local "self-sustaining organizations that draw support from a popular constituency." The result is "the evisceration of ... local political authority and ... 'civil society organizations' that have no constituencies." Once the inevitable NGO withdrawal occurs, local administration is incapable of "continuing these basic tasks."⁹

"The second category of critiques addresses situations where armed groups insert themselves between foreign resources and the local population and mediate that relationship, usually to their own advantage." There are numerous examples of military forces on both sides of the southern Sudan conflict seizing aid for their own purposes. One such purpose is the frequent "politicized distribution of aid" that then can drive "the further militarization of the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army]," for "a politics of patronage" emerges that sustains the SPLA-local population relationship. This in turn "precludes the need for the SPLA to build an inclusive democratic constituency."¹⁰

The sheer size and political weight of NGOs, however, suggests they are unlikely to pay attention to those they serve. Relief is big business. World Bank figures showed that 12 percent of foreign aid to developing countries was channeled through NGOs in 1994. In 1996, the total

amount was \$7 billion worldwide. A Johns Hopkins University study found that the 2002 operating expenditures of NGOs in 37 nations totaled \$1.6 trillion, equaling the world's fifth largest economy.¹¹ In 2005, NGOs in Africa managed nearly \$3.5 billion in aid. Like governments or companies, they have vested political interests, as well as financial motives. Needing to attract funds to stay alive, they are not elected or subject to checks to assure their accountability or solvency. Yet they often have been in a position to mold governments and civil societies in southern Sudan and other places facing similar debilitating problems.

Civil Society in Southern Sudan

Sudan is Africa's largest country in area and one of its most diverse culturally. A quarter the size of the USA, it has known little but war and deprivation since independence from joint British and Egyptian rule on January 1, 1956. For half a century, regimes changed, but the Arab Muslim ruling elite's attitudes have remained the same. The country's non-Muslim southern half was subjected to an unbroken pattern of economic exploitation and cultural destruction under both elected governments and military regimes.¹² Peace followed the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords, but broke down by May 1983, as the Nimeiry regime neglected the South and increasingly sought support from Islamists. Southern rebels coalesced under the leadership of Lt. Col. John Garang de Mabior, founder of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political arm, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Nimeiry's ouster was followed by transitional military rule, a brief period of democratic government and finally the current Islamist-military regime of Omer El Beshir. Despite changes in Khartoum, fighting continued in the South.

Dominated by the Dinka, Southern Sudan's largest ethnic group, the highly centralized SPLM/A diverged from other Southern groups in not seeking independence. Instead it saw "the need to produce a new non-riverine solidarity based on the mobilization of groups in deprived areas throughout the entire country."¹³ Its official documents advocated a united "New Sudan," based on pluralistic, democratic and secular principles transcending the problems of polarized racial, religious, and ethnic identities.¹⁴ Painfully evident in this conflict of cultures is a deeper national struggle for identity, which Deng called a "war of visions."¹⁵ In fact, Sudan is subject to multiple conflicts beyond a simplistic North-South division; Darfur being a prominent case in point.¹⁶ Inspired though it may be, SPLM ideology proved divisive and was rejected by those wanting an independent South, particularly non-Dinka groups. Southern unity fractured along ethnic lines.

The SPLM/A's early administration proved problematic.¹⁷ Combining military executive, judicial and legislative powers, a five-man high command conducted the war and ran "liberated" areas with a pyramid of political commissars, officers, and military judges. Based on old provincial boundaries, zones were divided into districts, each with an administrator, military commander, and judicial officer. The war provided a rationale for delaying public-empowered governance, and military needs eclipsed all concerns for civilian welfare.¹⁸ Full of revolutionary zeal and seldom committed to consensus or tolerance, SPLA commanders, mostly young captains and often students who had interrupted their studies to take up arms, offered little encouragement for democracy and lacked administrative experience and local knowledge.

Their primary mandate was to mobilize resources for the war effort, including increasingly coercive conscriptions of young men, which provoked conflict with elders. Providing rations and portage, local populations resented their often bullying tactics.¹⁹ Obstructive local chiefs were removed and sometimes corruptly replaced by commanders' relatives. Suspicion of SPLM intentions ran especially high in the southernmost region of Equatoria. Supporters of Southern succession, Equatorians suffered incursions by both sides. Johnson writes that Yei's inhabitants saw the SPLA as a Dinka "army of occupation."²⁰ Herzog noted,

Soldiers on leave from the front lines [were] not restricted to their barracks ... and make use of their arms to obtain whatever they like and to evade any sanctions civil authorities might impose... even worse [were] deserters and the troops chasing them, causing havoc in the civilian population with robbing, looting, raping, and killing. ... The absence of Rule of Law [was] felt very heavily and the SPLA [was] feared more by the civilian population than the enemy in the North.²¹

In the early 1990s, the SPLM's cause seemed hopeless. Infighting blunted its challenge to Khartoum. Those loyal to Garang, however, remained most powerful and responded to demands for change. On September 12, 1991, SPLM leaders passed resolutions separating military authority from civil administration.²² Its First National Convention at Chukudum in April 1994 revised the movement's July 1983 manifesto to include democratic goals.²³ The New Sudan People's Liberation Act of 1994 clarified judicial and military roles. Civilians or retired officers were to run local administration. Subsequent conferences established standards, separated the SPLA and SPLM and reaffirmed the army's role as protector of both the population and administration. After October 1995, a rejuvenated SPLA launched major offensives, liberating ten towns, killing more than 10,000 government troops and seizing large quantities of military equipment. As a result of the 1994 formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) by the SPLM and seven mainly Northern opposition groups, new fronts opened in Upper Nile and Blue Nile provinces and in border areas with Eritrea.²⁴

Conferences on humanitarian issues brought SPLA commanders, relief agencies and human rights groups together in late 1995. Over six hundred delegates from civilian bodies and more than sixty foreign observers formulated new modes of authority at a conference on civil society from April 30 to May 5, 1996. Finalized in March 1998, the "Vision and Programme of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement" emphasized reform. Its underlying premise was that Sudan's basic problem was that all governments since independence had pursued policies conflicting with the country's diversity. It proposed to destroy the oppressive "Old Sudan" and replace it with a free, democratic, just and secular state that would include "the right to and exercise of self-determination by and for the people of the New Sudan."²⁵ Noting Sudan's manifold problems, realization of these objectives was seen as "a monumental undertaking."²⁶ Accompanied by much wishful thinking, the SPLM's fifteen-point program of action included the establishment of the Civil Authority for New Sudan (CANS); the development of democracy, good governance, unity, peace and security; and the provision of social services.

The CANS consisted of a National Executive Council and four tiers, each with assemblies, executives and judiciaries. Initially, New Sudan had five regions, but aimed to cover the entire country as it was liberated. Decentralization was mandated, but few details were defined. Headed by a governor, each state was composed of counties run by commissioners. Counties

were divided into payams (districts) and bomas (villages) administered jointly by SPLM-appointed officials and locally chosen chiefs advised by councils of elders. But administrators at all levels ruled without clear plans to facilitate local governance.²⁷ Trained personnel were scant. This skeletal system had very limited revenue-raising capacity, stalled all significant development initiatives and slowed the establishment of bonds between local communities and the movement.²⁸ Moreover, some reforms were reversed in 2000 when SPLM leaders realized that they could not afford their economic costs and political consequences.²⁹ In their rhetoric, they remained committed to democratic government. However, local autonomy remained wishful thinking rather than reality. The SPLA often intervened in decision-making and local officials were mostly ex-officers whose personal ties and military ethos permeated "civil" authority.³⁰ This feeble system came to rely on NGOs, whose provision of services, training and material aid remained beyond the purview of the SPLM Secretariat of Local Government, which existed on paper, but had no personnel.³¹

In July 1997, an important meeting in Kejiko in Yei County sought to resolve differences between the churches, which sought to curb human right abuses, and the SPLM, which sought their support. Religious leaders accused SPLA fighters of mistreating civilians and churches. In turn, the SPLM accused the churches of passivity and obstruction and charged that the many clergy in exile had abandoned their flocks. Despite heated exchanges, the meeting ended in agreement.³²

While expressing concern over many issues and attempting to make policy in many areas, the SPLM was unable to provide non-military services during the war. It even found settling disputes and policing areas under its control difficult. Most of southern Sudan's health, education, infrastructure, food and water operations were funded and run by foreign agencies. Describing the situation as "anarchic," one researcher asked, "Is New Sudan actually the first NGO-istan?"³³ Over an eight-year period, NGOs acquired new, often quasi-governmental roles, which profoundly influenced events. As the war dragged on, SPLM officials encouraged churches and other NGOs to get involved in health, education and other services normally under state control.³⁴ However, the major foreign NGOs went far beyond the provision of material aid and professional services. There are foreshadows of this in the early 1980s, even before the conflict in Southern Sudan restarted. During famines in the 1980s in Dinka country and Darfur, Keen and de Waal commented the failings of governments, western donors and international agencies and differences between the needs of victims on one hand and powerful elites, traders and agencies on the other.³⁵ Both also stressed the need to understand situations from the perspectives of local people who lacked political influence. Harrell-Bond also argued that agencies at that time were asserting quasi-governmental roles in Sudan.³⁶ Claiming even earlier involvement, Tvedt writes "the NGOs came to play a very important role already in the 1970s," calling southern Sudan "an early and natural place for NGO involvement."³⁷

To insure security for their operations, the largest agencies influenced the bodies that emerged as the SPLM evolved from rebel army to political movement to governing elite. In 1992 and again in 1995, foreign NGOs set "ground rules" to avert looting and protect their personnel. Capable of withdrawing assistance and influencing world opinion, they found local partners and shaped the development of new structures.³⁸ As local NGOs beyond SPLM control proliferated, well-connected foreign agencies gained power. Hence, Norwegian People's Aid, to

use a prominent example, may be "non-governmental" in Norway, but in southern Sudan is intimately entwined with politics. This is not to suggest that NGOs have sinister agendas, but clearly the role of agencies changed in ways that deserve closer attention and broader discussion.

International agencies and churches also filled a vacuum left by the lack of SPLM authority in local peacemaking.³⁹ The most outstanding and perhaps most noble example was the February 1999 Wunlit Conference. Sponsored by the New Sudan Council of Churches and observed by many NGOs, this gathering ended longstanding conflicts between the Nuer and Dinka through mediation by traditional leaders, a common feature of local peace processes. Recognizing the explosive potential of ethnic division, the SPLM tried to address conflicts between the Dinka and other southern groups in dialogues in 2001 and 2002.⁴⁰ After Wunlit, much emphasis was placed on peace-making by civil society organizations and traditional leaders. However, the roles of chiefs should not be over emphasized as the manipulation of traditional authorities by political movements has often weakened their local legitimacy.⁴¹

[T]he term "civil society" itself is consciously non-specific. In Sudan, as elsewhere, it is a catch-all term that needs to be examined in terms of the political ethnography of Sudanese societies, North and South, and the webs of kinship that define them. Today's civic leader may be tomorrow's warlord, and vice versa. And today's traditional leader may be tomorrow's national politician. The interests of the representative of civil society may not map onto those of the traditional leader. Thus individuals may have ambiguous relations both with government authority and armed groups.⁴²

A January 2004 civil administration workshop underlined the "need to implement the SPLM vision of democracy and good governance by expression in constitutional institutions that support rule of law, separation of powers, justice and equity" if credible local government was to be established.⁴³ Rethinking structures necessitated by war, it advocated increased numbers of elected posts, emphasis on counties, engagement of local communities, performance monitoring and rationalization of taxes at all levels. Many civil and traditional leaders expressed concerns with agency activities. In June and July 2004, SPLM authorities met with traditional leaders in Kapoeta County. Among the meeting's many recommendations was a mandate to "[c]reate robust mechanisms and laws that govern and regulate the activities of international non-governmental organisations with strong local authority and community monitoring component."⁴⁴

SPLM control over NGOs improved to the point that the movement could mediate between foreign agencies and local populations. The formal instrument of this control is a "memorandum of understanding" that every agency signs and must abide by at risk of expulsion. If properly pursued, such a process could also avert the duplication, over-provision and/or neglect of services commonly seen in areas of dense NGO activity. For instance, Reuters reported that SPLM officials broadly understand the pitfalls of foreign aid and thus are often reluctant to accept it. They recognize the SPLM local administration needs foreign aid to forestall "popular dissatisfaction with continued poverty and lack of services" from costing them support. Yet, becoming dependent on such assistance might well "undermine the social and political coherence of the South and put the SPLM political project at the mercy of the machinations, or apathy, of donor governments and foreign philanthropists." They thus have

sought to steer a middle course whereby “the SPLM has put into place NGO programs that can be transferred to the local administration.” It also has taken steps to distribute NGO assistance under its own auspices to ensure that the local population looks to it rather than the NGOs for resources. “Thus, the SPLM can build its own local authority through foreign funding instead of losing legitimacy and capacity.”⁴⁵

With the end of hostilities in 2005, relationships between local authorities and agencies continued to change. However, the numerous difficulties of a huge region utterly devastated by war and neglect had precluded what in most of the world would be the “normal” functioning of government.⁴⁶ In many countries, central governments have encroached on traditional sub-national roles in health, education, welfare, local security and transport. But decades of conflict led to a very different situation in southern Sudan where services were either absent or provided by agencies with stronger ties to the outside world than to local administrators, who have neither revenue-raising powers nor electoral mandates.

Issues of access to resources, mainly the form of foreign assistance and oil revenues, can only be resolved peacefully by processes of interest aggregation and consensus. The authorities must balance the need to distribute resources and opportunities equitably with encouragement for those already succeeding. Serious issues of sovereignty emerge if foreign agencies play major roles in such processes during peacetime. Local rivalries have emerged. If one community has a school or agricultural project, it builds resentment in others that don’t. This has been compounded by land disputes, which have grown to nightmare proportions.⁴⁷

Southern Sudan’s revenue framework is very weak. County commissioners claim their powers to collect property, social security, animal and sales taxes and permit fees are not enough and want to tax NGO donations, which the SPLM government also wants.⁴⁸ The idea of “taxing” NGO relief supplies is not new. During the war, local authorities were able to acquire resources by this questionable method, which, if widely known, would discourage donations to agencies without reducing dependence on them.

Driven by donor and agency demands, humanitarian policies in Sudan require rethinking. In particular, operations are often based on controlling the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and representing them as helpless and dependent.⁴⁹ Fears that those able to achieve economic stability would not return were unrealized, but repatriation has proved destabilizing.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, repatriation of all refugees remains a goal. Those able to acquire resources in exile are likely to return voluntarily when conditions are conducive.⁵¹ However, the return of people dependent on a relief-based economy requires enormous commitment if rehabilitation is to succeed. Whatever emerges, administration at all levels would be wise to continue to work with both foreign and indigenous NGOs, many of whom have decades of experience facing the manifold difficulties of working in a devastated land. Such relationships will undoubtedly be difficult in a united Sudan, particularly between Islamist officials in Khartoum and southern Christian groups. With this in mind, the agencies and SPLM collaborated in the drafting of the “NGO Framework” in May 2005.

Meanwhile, Sudan’s Government of National Unity attempted to rein in agencies in Khartoum’s typically heavy-handed manner. On August 4, 2005, Beshir issued the “Temporary Decree For Regulating Voluntary Humanitarian Work”, compelling local organizations to register their status and declare their assets. Donations, particularly from abroad, were

monitored and restricted. Protests came immediately from the New Sudanese Indigenous NGOs Network, an umbrella group of 66 local agencies, almost all partners of foreign NGOs.⁵² Eventually, the National Assembly rejected the decree and on February 21, 2006 passed the Organization of Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act, which included human rights in its definition of “voluntary and humanitarian work,” and removed criminal penalties for NGOs operating without being registered.⁵³ However, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, whose registrar and commissioner have broad discretionary powers, must approve all projects seeking foreign funding. In May 2006, hundreds of agencies challenged the act’s constitutionality, claiming that it violated their freedom of association. The Constitutional Court denied the action due to the “absence of direct interest from the plaintiffs.” Then, three Northern Sudanese NGOs filed a case claiming that they suffered direct prejudice from the act.⁵⁴ The Constitutional Court accepted the case on June 27 in its first constitutional challenge under Sudan’s new Bill of Rights.⁵⁵ However, the act remained in force in 2008.⁵⁶

The Beshir regime, the fledgling Southern government and many local authorities have pursued policies that both scrutinize NGO activities and profit from them. Given the power of agencies, such seemingly contradictory approaches are probably both necessary and wise for the foreseeable future. However, only democratic governance, coupled with the exploration of alternatives, will reduce dependence and encourage locally motivated development. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of any movement away from current norms. This state of affairs has been particularly evident in Kajo Keji, the southernmost county of Central Equatoria State, formerly known as Bahr el Jebel.

Kajo Keji

Home of the Bari-speaking Kuku, Kajo Keji, is bounded to the west, north and east respectively by Yei, Juba and Magwi counties, and Uganda to the south.⁵⁷ Its five payams, Kangepo I, Kangepo II, Lire, Livolo, and Nyepo, are all served by foreign agencies. This community has borne the consequences of numerous conflicts: civil war (1955-72, 1983-2005), local disputes, and northern Uganda’s troubles. Their effects are very visible and limit socio-economic and political activity. An indicator of instability, population figures for the county range from 135,000 to 260,000.⁵⁸ In January 1990, Kajo Keji fell to the SPLA and remained under its control until June 11, 1994 when government forces recaptured it. On March 24, 1997, SPLA forces overran the county again. The frontline solidified 48 kilometers north of Kajo Keji town. These cataclysmic events led many to flee to Uganda’s Moyo and Adjumani Districts, even though fighting ceased in 2000. In 1996, Kajo Keji hosted over 70,000 IDPs in camps at Bamurye, Mangalatore, Kerewa and Limi. Long-term IDPs include Dinka and Nuer who arrived in the early 1990s, and Acholi, Lotuko, Lokoro and Madi from the east.⁵⁹ In 2001, 2,436 IDPs were repatriated to Bor County.⁶⁰ More followed after truces and then the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM. By January 2006, 27,748 remained.⁶¹ However, repatriation faced the twin difficulties of lack of transport and landmines, which were scattered to hamper farming, fishing and transport.⁶² Furthermore, some IDPs remained in Kajo Keji for easier access to trade and education in Uganda. Tensions between the Kuku and Dinka soldiers and IDPs have been evident but

generally calm. Fearing landmines and renewed fighting, much of Kajo Keji's population chose to remain in exile rather than face limited opportunities at home. Suspicious of both Khartoum and the SPLA, returnees often preferred to settle in remote villages. As a result, Kajo Keji town remains sparsely populated.

Uganda's rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) brought new problems. Refugee camps around Adjumani suffered great losses of life and property in LRA raids in 2000. As attacks intensified, the Kuku began to flood home in April 2004.⁶³ Sudden mass migrations, coupled with LRA incursions into Sudan and weak local structures, caused food shortages and chaos. Disappointing conditions at home led some to return to Uganda, adding to the confusion. Fears of HIV/AIDS increased as refugees returned. Disputes over land, water and cattle escalated, as no land tenure (or even registration) system was in place. Hence, social, economic and environmental stress resulted from returnees on one hand and cautiously immobile IDPs on the other. Discord emerged when returning refugees were assisted by foreign donors and residents were declared ineligible for aid. Such factors will continue to affect stability for years to come.

Currently minimal, economic activity in Kajo Keji County is growing and has much potential. Out-migration and government bombing raids triggered the relocation of the central Mere Market to Wudu. There were no banks. One study concluded that the county could not even sustain a microfinance institution.⁶⁴ Proximity to Moyo in Uganda, where many Kuku operate businesses, encouraged circulation of the Ugandan shilling. More business could be conducted with surrounding Sudanese counties as connecting roads are made accessible.

Almost totally reliant on food aid in 1997, Kajo Keji can produce surpluses. Typically, spring and winter rains allow two cropping seasons. Though most areas are suitable for commercial agriculture, subsistence farming dominates. The World Food Program estimated that 25 percent of the population were agro-pastoralists and 75 percent were agriculturalists.⁶⁵ This composition has changed given increases in food production, improved access to markets and veterinary services, and refugee/IDP movements. Farmers raise maize, sorghum, groundnuts, millet, cassava, cowpeas, mangoes, and various vegetables, complemented by goats and cattle.⁶⁶ Approximately 25 kilograms of fish can be caught per day along the rivers Nile and Kaya, contributing up to 25 percent of total annual food intake.⁶⁷ Wild foods are available including game and shea butter nuts, often eaten during the "normal" hunger period between April and May. The contribution of wild foods is 30-90 kgs per household constituting 9-10 percent of annual food needs.⁶⁸ In bad years, other wild foods, including the bitter herb *melo ko dendu*, fill the hunger gap. With peace and outside assistance, the county's resident population became self sufficient in food during the 2000/01 harvests, warranting the elimination of food aid to residents.⁶⁹ Remembering troops from both sides confiscating produce, however, farmers seldom store much. These dated fears increase the likelihood of shortages. Bolstered by sales of modest surpluses and the introduction of ox-plows and other technologies, farmers had sufficient seed. The first 2002 season was characterized by erratic rains. Despite replantings, maize and peanut yields were low due to pests, diseases, and poor rainfall.⁷⁰ By July 2002, 20,734 metric tons of food needed to be distributed to hospitals and IDP camps. Second season harvests were better as rainfall stabilized. In 2004, disappointing rains coupled with the return of tens of thousands of refugees led to serious shortages and a return to aid dependence.

Water availability was also an issue. Kajo Keji gets more rain than most of Sudan. However, runoff and erosion are high and storage facilities are minimal. UNICEF data indicates that the County had a total of 155 water points - 98 bore holes and 57 hand dug wells.⁷¹ More are needed to assure safe supplies and reduce burdens on women, whose many tasks include fetching water often from great distances. The situation is even more serious where refugees have returned. Ugandan reports in April 2005 noted that over 15,000 returnees shared fewer than 25 boreholes.⁷²

Another problem facing Kajo Keji is its limited transport facilities. There are no railways. As most people live away from the Nile, river transport, which never extended farther south than Juba, is unimportant. Roads are poor. An all-weather, unpaved road linking Kajo Keji town to Moyo is rated as fair by NGOs. Recently a road between Kajo Keji and Juba was opened. Other roads are in a deteriorated state, some inaccessible due to landmines and many impassable during rainy seasons. Despite Canadian de-mining assistance, the probability of encounters with landmines has increased with refugee returns.⁷³ Significant numbers of passengers and goods bound for Kajo Keji fly to Moyo and then enter the county by road. Some NGOs flew into Kajo Keji, despite a government flight ban, imposed until late 2002. The county's productive capacity is limited due to the difficulties of getting materials in and products out. Negative effects on the marketing of cattle, shea butter, peanuts and other agricultural surpluses were already evident in the era between conflicts. In the early 1980s, southern members of the National Assembly complained about having to choose between attending sessions in Khartoum or maintaining contact with their constituents; few could do both. The poor state of transport has profound effects. Patients cannot be moved to hospitals. Health officials are hampered in dealing with ebola scares and meningitis outbreaks.⁷⁴ School attendance is low. Lack of communications forces both civil administrators and NGOs to use independent systems. Poor connections make accountability more difficult and encourage the misuse of resources. Inability to interact with the outside world promotes feelings of isolation. Though the UN and various NGOs have built some roads, it is government that must insure maintenance in the long run. However, if the county's productive capacity does not improve, better transport will only facilitate import penetration; a chicken and egg situation in which production is limited by lack of roads, but roads could create new problems. Existing only through Uganda, postal service is an essential that government needs to address. With cell phones and solar power, Kajo Keji may electrify and connect to the outside world without needing the poles and wires characterizing more developed countries. Internet and e-mail access, using cellular connections, are possible, but only for a tiny minority associated with the SPLA/M and agencies. Radio is important and could be put to greater use to inform the public.

Kajo Keji has one hospital, three primary health care centers and 25 primary health care units, run by trained health workers and traditional birth attendants. Efforts to improve maternal health and reduce child mortality, African sleeping sickness, malaria, and HIV/AIDS have seen some success. But tuberculosis, meningitis, diarrhea, respiratory tract infections, measles, visceral leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and syphilis remain pressing problems.⁷⁵ Psychological problems abound as a result of war trauma, migration, drug and alcohol addiction, and the stress of living amid landmines. Insecurity, dated studies, and poor transport and communications impair progress.

Agency Involvement

In theory, all humanitarian activities in Kajo Keji are coordinated by the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), an arm of the SPLM, established as the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association in 1985 and renamed in 1998. Plagued by limited resources and the daunting scale of its tasks, this agency is charged with promoting reconstruction and development in SPLM-controlled areas, including the return and rehabilitation of refugees, slaves, and child soldiers. Its work involves a bewildering collection of UN agencies, foreign and local NGOs, and bi-lateral governmental, group and individual donors. Nevertheless, it maintains the best collection of contacts and files on NGOs operating locally.

United Nations activities in Kajo Keji have included WFP food relief, WHO immunization campaigns, and UNICEF support.⁷⁶ WHO maintains a disease surveillance team for Kajo Keji in Uganda. UNICEF-sponsored programs provided medical kits and demobilized 47 child soldiers, who were supported and reunited with their families in the County in 2002.⁷⁷ In 2004, UN agencies in southern Sudan began an \$89 million project, including building roads and 174 girls' schools.⁷⁸

However, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is by far the most significant UN body in the area.⁷⁹ It has assisted tens of thousands of Kuku refugees and repatriates. Anticipating more returnees, its activities accelerated and included deployment of emergency response teams to implement reintegration projects in health, education, water, mine awareness, basic shelter/ infrastructure construction, protection, reconciliation and coexistence, community services, self-reliance and capacity-building; rehabilitation of 85 boreholes in Yei and Kajo Keji counties, rebuilding 26 schools in Luthaya, Yei and Kajo Keji; and support for primary health care and HIV awareness/ AIDS treatment programs.⁸⁰ Exact figures for Kajo Keji are not yet available but amount to millions of dollars. The UNHCR has had a presence in Kajo Keji since March 2005. Funded by American, Norwegian, Canadian, Danish, British, and other governmental sources, it opened an office with two local and three international staff members near the Wudu market in April 2005. Operating the projects it oversees, the UNHCR's partners include four foreign NGOs, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) for food security, Jesuit Refugee Services for education, the American Refugee Committee (ARC) for health and livelihood, and German Technical Cooperation for roads and livelihood; and two local NGOs, Sudan Health Association (SUHA) for medical facilities and Humanitarian Assistance for South Sudan (HASS) for primary education.

Coming from different countries with different approaches on how to operate and how much operational control they demand, these agencies frequently work from grant to grant, an undesirable state of affairs which is seldom seamless and can promote dangerous dependence without any guarantee of long-term commitment. As most of their expatriate employees do not speak Bari, they are limited and often need to choose between relying on local competencies and guaranteeing transparency.⁸¹

Since 1986, Norwegian People's Aid has been the foreign NGO operating most consistently in southern Sudan.⁸² Based in Bamurye to be near IDP camps rather than central to the county as a whole, NPA targets IDPs and vulnerable local residents, with food aid, health care and support for local institutions.⁸³ Partnering with the SPLM in 1997, NPA began an agricultural

rehabilitation program in Kajo Keji county, which included agricultural extension, training, cooperative support, renovation of storage facilities, a shea butter project, and distribution of seeds and tools. However, poor planning and logistics impeded its first planting season and necessitated continued food assistance. This experience underlined the importance of coordination and local participation.⁸⁴ Begun in 1999, NPA's Maresha ox plow program trained 58 farmers by 2002 and provided micro-loans for the purchase of 300 pairs of oxen by 2006. In 2002, 6,669 livestock were treated for various diseases through NPA programs, which also established the county's first veterinary pharmacy. NPA-supported loans of sorghum, peanuts and other seeds enabled communities create a revolving fund. Farm incomes were augmented by purchasing seeds locally for use elsewhere in Sudan.

Maintaining an operational compound in Kajo Keji and logistical bases in Uganda since 1994, the American Refugee Committee has provided integrated programs in health care, water, sanitation, agriculture and capacity building assistance with USAID funding.⁸⁵ The ARC supports thirteen health care facilities in collaboration with the SUHA, a local NGO providing medical services in Ngopo payam where foreign agencies had been unable operate for security reasons. Emphasizing the strengthening of basic services to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, it carried out road repair to make its operational areas more accessible. International Aid Services, a relief and development organization registered in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden, runs programs in agriculture, education, health, water, and sanitation.⁸⁶ Working in Kajo Keji since September 1997, Médecins Sans Frontières provides basic health care at Mundari Civil Hospital, clinics and health centers to treat numerous diseases; provide food, water and sanitary facilities; and treat the severely malnourished.⁸⁷ From 2000 to 2004, it ran a successful program to combat African sleeping sickness.

Below these international NGOs are faith-based groups, including many Anglican bodies, Catholic Relief Services, Jesuit Refugee Service, and other religious charities with whom the Kuku have developed ties. Only those involved in functions normally falling within the scope of governmental activity are included in this study. In the past, foreign church bodies in southern Sudan encountered hostility from Khartoum. Their activities were curtailed by the 1962 Missionary Societies Act. Following a February 1964 decree, all foreign personnel of Christian organizations were expelled from Sudan. Many returned with the renewal of the north-south conflict in 1983. By then, indigenous churches had grown and strengthened and their relations with foreign groups were on a much more equal footing than those that had clearly been colonial remnants in 1964.

Given that most Kukus are affiliated with the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), entities within the Anglican Communion have made a major impact on developments in Kajo Keji. Chief among these is the Diocese of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), which has a formal companion relationship with the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji.⁸⁸ Between November 1999 and January 2007, Bethlehem provided over \$360,000 in aid to Kajo Keji, including emergency food, agricultural inputs and support for schools, clergy, orphanages, and various self-help and training projects. In 2006 the two partners concentrated their efforts on seven primary schools, instead of continuing survival level aid to 36 schools.⁸⁹ Since then, Bethlehem has raised over US\$ 2 million for its work. Women groups from Bethlehem and the Diocese of Winchester (UK) supported programs run by Kajo Keji's Mothers' Union. The Diocese of Salisbury (UK) has a

long relationship with the ECS and funded five primary health care centers, a school and other projects.⁹⁰ The Church Missionary Society provided administrative support. Grants from Episcopal Relief and Development, an agency of the Episcopal Church of the USA, went to carpentry and tailoring projects and the purchase of sewing machines for women and bicycles for displaced persons. Trinity Church Wall Street in New York and St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Nashville also supported various programs.

Several Roman Catholic agencies have also contributed to Kajo Keji's welfare. Catholic Relief Services provided aid for income-generating projects, but closed down its Kajo Keji operations in March 2003.⁹¹ Dogged by transport and marketing difficulties, its limited success illustrated the need for a more integrated approach to providing assistance.⁹² Currently, the most influential Catholic institution is the Daniel Comboni School in Lomin, the County's best funded educational institution. Providing nursery, primary and secondary instruction, it is run by the Catholic Diocese of Yei and funded and staffed by the Comboni Brothers and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), which has provided supplies and teacher-training since 1980. With a staff of nineteen in Kajo Keji, the JRS emphasizes IDP camps and major concentrations of returnees and gives special assistance to women.⁹³ In early 2005, the UNHCR allocated sixteen primary and three secondary schools for reconstruction to JRS, as an implementing partner and added ten more primaries in 2006.⁹⁴

The London-based Crossroads Missions partnered with the Savannah Farmers Cooperative.⁹⁵ Concentrating on food production for local consumption to reverse aid dependency and develop model farms for replication throughout Sudan, Crossroads also funded school and hospital reconstruction and sent several containers of supplies to the county. The Bible Fellowship Missionary Society established model schools for approximately 3,700 children. The Sudan Pentecostal Church launched a nursery in Lire. Partnering with HASS, the African Children's Choir provided a clinic, maize mill, transport, uniforms, food and other supplies for some 2,000 pupils in seven schools.

A proliferation of indigenous NGOs accompanied the involvement of foreign agencies. Chief among these are the SUHA and HASS. Also important are church bodies, which engages in numerous activities in agriculture, development, education, health and food relief. But these established groups are only tips of an iceberg of a myriad of entities, whose foci and effectiveness vary enormously. As a SRRC assessment of local NGOs noted, "[a] number of dynamic individuals from southern Sudan, some who worked for international NGOs themselves, have taken initiatives to establish indigenous NGOs. These local NGOs appear to have dedication, local knowledge and basic skills to engage in program implementation, although a major concern remains regarding organizational capacity and long-term viability."⁹⁶

One effective local group is the International Widows Association of South Sudanese Refugees In Uganda, founded by refugee widows who built orphanages in Adjumani and later Kajo Keji.⁹⁷ Based on widows caring for orphans regardless of blood ties, it has been effective at raising money from various sources. Another gender-based organization, South Sudan Women's Concern, supported by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development since 1999, works to enable women's groups to earn incomes from the sale of surplus crops.⁹⁸

No discussion of Kajo Keji would be complete without noting the multifaceted contributions of Kuku exiles around the world, including BBC journalist Alfred Taban, SPLM

official Stephen Wondu, the Rev. Canon Oliver Duku, the late World Bank official Dunstan Wai, doctors, church leaders, professors and businessmen. Maintaining close ties to their homeland, these individuals regularly contribute money, time and expertise to local efforts. A key factor in maintaining linkages is the PARANET e-mail list.⁹⁹ But exiles are frequently overwhelmed by numbers of requests from their families and communities in Sudan. Furthermore, they are concerned about effectiveness and transparency. Democratic governance and solid accountability processes are necessary to convince exiles to become full partners in their homeland's development. Though exile efforts face many obstacles and are often disjointed, important initiatives have originated in Diaspora communities, whose potential is great. As with NGOs, exile organizations have shown varying degrees of effectiveness and coordination.

Founded by Sudanese refugees in 2003, the Canadian nonprofit Southern Sudan Humanitarian Action Development Agency supports health, educational, agricultural, business and gender-empowerment projects. Partnering with the Sudanese Children Care Committee, South Sudan Women Association, South Sudan Widows Committee and the ECS, a southern Sudanese community association in the Netherlands, the Bura-Kimak Lokita Voluntary Association seeks to improve education, health care and agriculture; and support orphans, child soldiers and widows. Others include the Action for Development Network, Kajo Keji Relief Fund, Kuku Association in the Netherlands, SCARD and Tree Leaf Organization.

Operationally, individual agencies have had comparatively few failures. They have met pressing local needs, though often in a haphazard manner. However, the accumulated problems generated by the proliferation of agencies are great. Larger NGOs have the advantage of broader and longer experience with Kajo Keji and similar situations, whereas smaller and newer donors have limited frames of reference, tend to be too trusting and/or lack the means to guarantee transparency. Riehl noted that despite their problems, foreign aid interventions have encouraged the formation of indigenous agencies.¹⁰⁰ This is evident in Kajo Keji and throughout Sudan. But many local NGOs have narrow foci, sometimes restricted to a single boma. Their operations are often sketchy. Lack of accountability and duplication of efforts have led to some inefficiency and inequities. Numerous agencies support schools, tailor training, shea butter processing, and ox plow projects, but it is unclear how many are appropriate. Some observers have expressed concern about the number of schools. In the case of income-generating projects, already questionable markets could become over-saturated, given that profitability assessments have often been conjectural.

A greater issue is lack of coordination and even recognition among agencies. In 1989, the UN and Beshir regime agreed to allow a UN umbrella organization, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to provide emergency relief, including development and education programs, via formal connections among its components (ARC, IAS, MSF, NPA and related partners). In the years that followed, the regime persistently claimed that this agreement was violated by OLS sponsorship of some 200 SPLM-controlled schools, which Khartoum claimed were used as military training centers.¹⁰¹ As a result, famine in the South was exacerbated by the regime blocking the flow of relief supplies.

Since the end of fighting, little has changed under the UNHCR. Recognition of agencies beyond the original OLS organizations is lacking and much needed.¹⁰² Already significant, many smaller NGOs operating in the county could carry out larger portions of relief and

rehabilitation work. But their contacts with others in the field are minimal, partially because of their size and limited or indirect local presence. However, this explains the situation only to a point. Large NGOs are often reluctant to consult with or share information with other groups. Clearly some view parts of Sudan as organizational fiefdoms. Official reports often overlook non-OLS efforts. For example, a chart produced by the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan in 2003 listed only eight agencies active in the county. Such attitudes and assumptions clearly promoted conflict between agencies.¹⁰³

Agencies in Conflict

Lack of recognition among uncoordinated agencies is illustrated by a controversy that erupted between NPA and the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji during food shortages in 2004.¹⁰⁴ Throughout that April, refugees fled northern Uganda, following an LRA attack on a bus near Adjumani.¹⁰⁵ Shortly thereafter, the LRA raided a half dozen refugee camps. Some twenty people were killed and more were abducted. Thousands of traumatized refugees, most with no possessions as a result of LRA looting, flooded into Kajo Keji. The county experienced severe food shortages, subsequently verified by UNHRC reports and by BBC correspondent Alfred Taban. Originally from Kajo Keji, Taban returned to visit his homeland after 23 years and was shocked by the destruction he witnessed. He was even more dismayed by the desperate condition of people he met. Some who knew him as a child were too ashamed of their clothes to approach him. Residents had shared their food with returnees, many of whom were relatives. Surpluses were quickly depleted. An American donation of 800,000 Ugandan shillings was used by the ECS to buy salt to make eating leaves more palatable.

At first, the Kuku and their compatriots in the Diaspora tried to deal with the situation by themselves. To mobilize exile communities, the Kajo Keji Emergency Response Committee (KKERC) organized coordinators throughout North America, Europe, Australia and Africa.¹⁰⁶ Its officers included Chairman Manas Könyi Aliphayo (Canada), Secretary General Monica Pitta Sabuni (USA), Information Secretary Sarah Duku (Ireland) and Finance Secretary Samuel Dilla (USA). By July, KKERC's approach changed. They began to build networks with NGOs and other partners globally to raise international awareness of the situation. As collaboration increased, Zamba Duku, Executive Director of Sudan Christian Action For Rural Development encouraged the involvement of his Canadian partner, Bruised Reeds Ministries. KKERC sponsored Taban's trip to Kajo Keji to expose the situation to the world. Taban contributed most of his expenses, plus brought \$1400 in donations from displaced Kuku in Khartoum. With varying degrees of success, KKERC contacted Anglican bodies, NPA, World Vision, Red Cross, Christian Reform World Relief Committee (CRWRC), UNICEF, USAID and ACT International. Kuku exiles in Ireland raised €10,000 on one Sunday alone. Anglican Churches in Canada; Stitching Aid and Training in the Netherlands and numerous individuals responded to KKERC appeals. Two other exile groups, the South Sudan Kuku Association of North America and East and Central Africa Environmental Institute, joined KKERC's efforts. Kajo Keji's relationship with the US Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem proved particularly significant.¹⁰⁷

Connie Fegley, chair of Bethlehem's World Mission Committee, learned of the crisis through e-mail messages on July 23, 2004. In a phone call, Bishop Manasseh of Kajo Keji,

claimed the number of returnees to be closer to 50,000 and noted that refugees who returned before the influx and resident IDPs put the figure of those in need at over 100,000. Bishop Paul Marshall of Bethlehem immediately mounted a fund-raising campaign. Within a month, over US\$47,600 was raised and transferred for relief operations in Bethlehem's companion diocese. By the year's end, donations exceeded US\$80,000. Meanwhile, Bruised Reeds Ministries shipped 50 metric tons of food.

KADRA (Kajojeji Development and Rehabilitation Agency), a wing of the ECS Diocese, was the implementing partner for KKERC, CRWRC, Bethlehem and exile communities. Its relief coordinator, the Rev. Charles Laku, and a staff, which included an accountant, food supervisor, storekeeper, food monitors, and distribution clerks, oversaw the operation. Villages were organized in clusters, each comprising a number of family heads. Clusters were headed by elected leaders, who passed distribution information from the food supervisor to the people and then worked with distribution clerks to give the prescribed rations to entitled families.

With KKERC's encouragement, both NPA and CRWRC took another look at the situation.¹⁰⁸ In a report issued after the crisis, Taban noted "NPA appeared from the beginning a little bit skeptical about the reported hunger... when [they] saw that Kukus in the Diaspora and the friends of Kajojeji, especially the Diocese of Bethlehem had started to send in relief food,... [they] said [they] too wanted to help."¹⁰⁹ CRWRC's response was positive and timely. As a member agency of the Canadian Food Grains Bank, they immediately assessed the situation and provided \$10,000 for food, seeds and sorghum, peanuts, cassava and sesame cuttings, purchased in Uganda and funneled through CRWRC's Kampala office. However, CRWRC expressed concern about KADRA's coordination with key agencies. Linda Beyer, who conducted CRWRC's assessment, noted, "My continued concern is that you have a group of leaders ready to take action and I have emphasized repeatedly that training is the immediate action and that the relief must be coordinated through the SRRC."¹¹⁰

Throughout August, tens of thousands of dollars were transferred to the Diocese of Kajo Keji, whose leaders purchased and transported food from Uganda. North American donations increased following news on August 12 of an incident in Liwolo where children unable to control their hunger ate poisonous wild cassava and, on discovering their bodies, their father committed suicide by eating the same.¹¹¹ ECS/KADRA assistance arrived in Kajo Keji before aid from other agencies.

On September 2, the first KADRA food distribution took place at Mondikolok. Thousands came to receive rations. Relief was available for newly arrived returnees, but not for the long-term residents who had shared their food reserves. Laku described the atmosphere as "bitter but not violent."¹¹² The next day at Kansuk, near the frontline, tension rose as SPLA soldiers threatened to disrupt distribution if they were excluded from receiving food. Intervention by the County Commissioner and army commander sent the soldiers back to their barracks. Complaints by residents who were refused food also arose. By the time of distributions at Kiri on 4 September, KADRA had received a message from the Commissioner, who after consultations with NPA, called the SRRC, KADRA and NPA to meet with him on September 13. Meanwhile, distribution continued at Jalimo (September 6) and Liwolo (September 7). By September 9, 14,224 people had received food from KADRA. These distributions gave one kilogram of maize, a half kilo of beans and fifteen kilos of salt and some vegetable oil per

person, quantities enough for only a day or two. A second distribution gave each person seven times these quantities.

The September 13 meeting, chaired by Kajo Keji's County Commissioner Michael Yokwe, sought to promote collaboration between NPA and ECS/KADRA.¹¹³ Local administrators were concerned about the distribution's security implications. This occasion exposed much about NPA's attitude towards non-OLS agencies. Out of 17,295 returnees from Uganda, NPA representatives targeted 13,709 as most vulnerable and in need of assistance. Based on its recent experience, KADRA argued that over 133,000 people were in urgent need, including returning victims of the LRA, voluntary returnees who arrived before April 2004, drought victims and host families whose reserves were depleted by returnees. The cost of basic monthly food supplies for that number of people was estimated to be over US\$2.5m. KKERC's international coordinator noted, "At the moment, there is no NGO attempting to address this problem apart from Diocese of Bethlehem and Kuku communities with their limited resources."¹¹⁴ NPA, which had been providing aid only to hospitals and IDPs, insisted that it be the only organization distributing food, and that Kuku groups handle only non-food items such as hoes. KADRA objected and a heated four-hour debate ensued with NPA threatening to withdraw from Kajo Keji if KADRA continued its distributions. SRRC regional coordinator Lexion William suggested two options: divide the county's payams between the two agencies or have KADRA distribute relief to those beyond the NPA targets. The second option was clearly flawed as separating targeted and non-targeted groups was impossible. In the end, the gathering resolved that KADRA serve Ngepo and Lire payams (4,432 in need of assistance by NPA's standards) and NPA serve the other three payams (13,907 out of a now revised figure of 17,493.)

Looking to the future, KKERC established a cassava propagation farm. Cassava cuttings funded by CRWRC were distributed to five church groups and an orphanage on 14 September. Seeds and tools followed.¹¹⁵ Between September 2004 and February 2005, CRWRC and the Canadian Food Grain Bank provided 212 metric tons of food and seeds, worth US\$110,810. Noting that children were among the most malnourished and that some 30 primary schools were ECS-assisted, Laku suggested that the Diocese of Bethlehem fund a program to provide school breakfasts and lunches. He further noted the need "to discuss with NPA to do the same in the areas of their operation."¹¹⁶

KADRA's problems continued. One of Laku's messages to ESC partners acknowledged that communications difficulties were severe and explored possible solutions. Distribution in Lire on October 7 was hampered when NPA sent food there and wanted it distributed first. NPA food was eventually removed. Laku reported, "... those who received the food rations were very happy... While those who were not entitled were very unhappy and cursing and insulting the Church as a dividing Church rather than uniting one."¹¹⁷ Compounded by transport difficulties and delays, the ECS was placed in the impossible position of trying to feed vast numbers of people who were not recognized as needy, but who had shared their food and now were increasingly critical of the church. On October 9, the SRRC called a meeting of community leaders in Lire and Mondikolok to evaluate distributions. As a bloc, the leaders noted that bitter divisions had developed and felt that everybody should be entitled to rations. The SRRC made it clear that distribution targeted only those forcefully displaced from Uganda. The areas served by NPA and KADRA should be served on equal basis. These sentiments were

echoed in Ngepo payam, whose leaders had registered all their people as needy, pushing figures for the targeted population even higher. But community members testified that some of the registered were in fact dead.¹¹⁸

Speaking with a range of people in Kampala, Moyo and Kajo Keji, Alfred Taban revisited his homeland in October 2004 at KKERC's request and issued an insightful report on the situation. Although he dismissed, with first-hand evidence, those who questioned the ECS's competence to run relief operations, he expressed doubts about its efficiency. Its members, mostly clergy, were educated, but few had handled this kind of work before. They lacked vehicles and other resources. Furthermore, their leaders tended to reside much of the time in Moyo, Adjumani or Kampala and not in Kajo Keji. The tasks at hand required a full time presence. Taban criticized Laku. Besides heading KADRA, he was also headmaster of Kajo Keji Senior Secondary School and involved in a cattle-breeding program among other things. Not surprisingly, those in the field complained of poor coordination. Despite its shortcomings, the ECS had built a network, domestically and internationally, which was mobilized quickly. Ultimately, Taban felt it should "be provided with the means to do its job." He noted that "transparency and accountability [was] essential for the continuation of the project," recommended detailed financial reports once a week and encouraged coordination between those in Kajo Keji, Uganda and the Diaspora. Feeling that desperation had led to a falsification of figures, he proposed a review of the system of collecting statistics. Indeed, Laku noted in a message dated September 19, "We have discovered a lot of irregularities in the registration of new arrivals from Adjumani refugee camps."¹¹⁹ Taban further stressed the need to maintain good ties with all NGOs, including NPA, though many disagreed with some of their policies. To avoid being confrontational, he felt that the NPA numbers should be accepted, even though they were "ridiculously low." He suggested "spend[ing] more money on seeds, especially improved cassava stems from Uganda and items such as hoes for the next season."¹²⁰

Better harvests in 2005 alleviated the situation. However, bitter feelings lingered on all sides. NPA had flexed its muscles while the ECS's reputation was tarnished, despite its commendable and timely efforts. In the end, the local agency, KADRA, was actually perceived by local authorities as interfering. Much questionable activity surrounded the food distribution. Demanding meetings, insisting that its data be seen as authoritative and determining policies and procedures, a foreign agency with vast resources clearly assumed the role of a political elite. Local needs and expertise were ignored in favor of agency priorities. The "needy" were defined without regard to local collective loyalties. Serious difficulties of efficiency, accountability and equity followed.

Facing Difficult Issues

Essential in providing food, health, education, water and sanitation, foreign NGOs have a wealth of useful experience and data. As sources of hope for places like Sudan, they bear tremendous responsibilities. Both scholarly literature and press coverage, however, have moved away from assuming that agencies always have the best motives and methods. This attention may, by itself, provoke changes. Sudan needs as much help as it can get, though not under any terms. Current emphases on funding tied to "good governance," controlling corruption, etc.,

needs to be applied to donors as well as recipients. Agencies need to clarify and, in many cases, purify their intentions. This necessitates partnering with the communities they serve, in the sense of recognizing as many local concerns and solutions as is practical. To do this, at minimum, their personnel must be able to live as the locals and speak their languages. Donors and the press need to be more critical. Agencies, governments, recipients and all other stakeholders must be recognized, brought together, coordinated, informed and held to account. In the case of Kajo Keji, NPA and the ECS could have shared a great deal with each other. Instead, jurisdictional disputes and bruised egos resulted.

To encourage governmental authorities to assume their full range of duties, outside assistance should provide a few important inputs in a limited range of well-monitored sectors, not everything for everyone as the scope of NGO activities in Kajo Keji and many other places suggests. Some problems, such as landmines and psychological trauma, require foreign expertise. Other equally thorny issues, such as conflict resolution and operational control over development projects, have grown out of an almost total lack of state presence in broad areas of public life. Allowing this situation to continue is unwise. While dependence is not an issue in education and health, it could be problematic if roads are built without an eye to future maintenance. Local people will not be encouraged to plow profits back into income-generating projects that continue to rely on external inputs. Whose income is to be generated and how equitable wealth is distributed need to be decided in Sudan, not in Oslo or Bethlehem. Aid recipients may be learning more about how to manipulate agencies than how to develop their country. In Kajo Keji's case, aid did not discourage food production, as in other situations, but none of the NGOs, local or foreign, encouraged a much needed return to storage. Beyond the much debated issues of who should feed how many is the question of whether foreign interests anywhere should dictate who is or is not suffering.

Nations throughout Africa, recently Chad, Ethiopia and Gabon, have sought to limit the "political" roles of agencies.¹²¹ However, sweeping actions by regimes can have profoundly negative effects. Critics of NGO activities, particularly among Sudan's emerging authorities, must recognize the important roles played by agencies, avoid disrupting essential services, and facilitate greater coordination as significant changes in power relationships and policies become unavoidable. Using a tiny portion of its revenue from petroleum royalties, southern Sudan's leaders are in a position to coordinate and control agency activity. However, the Government of South Sudan has accomplished little in terms of local development since 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has proved to be an uneasy settlement flawed by ignoring the war's root causes and delayed by distrust and political maneuvering. But there is little evidence that the SPLM could effectively govern an independent South and reduce reliance on foreign interests. Corruption, inefficiency, misplaced priorities, and discord are rampant. Since the events of 2004, Kajo Keji county has seen much change. Better schools, improved roads and increased economic activity are evident, but as a result of NGO or private, not governmental, initiatives. Some question why Kajo Keji, as opposed to Aweil or Genaina, should benefit to such a degree. Given its current peace, proximity to Uganda, and prominent past and present citizens, it is an obvious starting point for the reconstruction of southern Sudan. But such development must be as self-reliant, efficient and fair as possible, and needs to reverberate elsewhere quickly.

Despite their shortcomings and given the degree to which they have replaced government, agencies are enmeshed in Sudan's current survival and future welfare. Furthermore, no currently viable alternatives exist to replace the admittedly imperfect system of "sub-contracting" relief assistance and reconstruction to NGOs. Changing this state of affairs too quickly would invite further disaster in places already prostrated by past catastrophes. Change, however, cannot be delayed for long.

Notes

1. In addition to those cited, other critiques of NGO activities are Barnett and Weiss; Barrow and Jennings; Browne; Feher; Jordan and van Tuijl; Marriage; Minear; Moyo; and Rieff.
2. Hancock.
3. Maren.
4. Nienaber.
5. Mills.
6. Three articles in *New African* articulated ongoing criticisms of NGOs - R. Sankore, "What are the NGOs Doing?"; F. Manji and C. O'Coill, "NGOs: A Tainted History;" M. Onyanyo, "NGOs: Pseudo Governments or Surrogates of Western Powers?" *New African*, August/September 2005, No. 443.
7. T. Tvedt, "The Collapse of the State in Southern Sudan after the Addis Ababa Agreement: A Study of Internal Causes and the Role of the NGOs," in Harir and Tvedt, p. 91.
8. Martin. pp. 126-27.
9. Mampilly and Branch. p. 17-18.
10. Ibid.
11. Faroohar.
12. This includes not only the Southern Region, but also southern Blue Nile State, the Nuba Mountains, Abyei and most of Southern Darfur. Other good works include Alier; Beshir; Beswick; Collins; Machar Teny-Dhurgon; Spaulding and Beswick; and Wai.
13. SPLM, www.splmtoday.com
14. Lesch, also SPLM, www.splmtoday.com/
15. Deng.
16. Johnson.
17. Atem.
18. Lokuji. pp. 16-29.
19. Human Rights Watch.
20. Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," in Clapham. p. 70.
21. Herzog, quoted in Atem.
22. Atem.
23. Rolandsen. pp. 81-123, also SPLM, www.splmtoday.com
24. A pro-SPLM view of the movement's history in this period appears in Madut-Arop.

25. Awolich. p. 3
26. Ibid.
27. Lokuji.
28. Young.
29. International Peace Research Institute.
30. Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," p. 67.
31. Lokuji.
32. New Sudan Council of Churches.
33. Riehl, pp. 4, 8.
34. Diocesan Development Committee, p. 2.
35. Keen, also de Waal's numerous works.
36. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*.
37. Tvedt, p. 89.
38. Rolandsen, p. 129-33.
39. UN, *Sudan Peace Fund: A Summary of Grassroots Peace Work in South Sudan* (2004).
40. Mampilly and Branch, p. 6.
41. Bradbury, Ryle, Medley and Sansculotte-Greenidge.
42. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
43. "Local Government Workshop in Rumbek Outlines Critical Issues of Policy," *South Sudan Post*. January 2004.
44. SPLM, *Kamuto Declaration*.
45. Mampilly and Branch, p. 19.
46. Excellent works on these issues are Abdel Salam and de Waal; and de Waal and Ajawin.
47. "Land Disputes Fuel Tensions in War-Torn South Sudan". Reuters (19 August 2007) posted on Sudan.Net.
48. "Kiir and Machar Disagree on Subdividing Southern Sudan" www.southsudan.net/home1/home2/kiirandmachar.html.
49. Chambers, pp. 243-63; Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*; Karadawi, pp. 537-47; Leopold, pp. 205-225; and Voutira.
50. Harrell-Bond, "Pitch the Tents," pp. 19, 26.
51. Sepulveda.
52. Jambo.
53. UN Mission in Sudan, *CPA Monitor* (www.unmis.org).
54. Womens' Awareness Raising GroupRed Sea, Sudan Social Development Organisation, and Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture.
55. Constitutional Court (case no.35/2006)
56. "Foreign Organizations or Intelligence Networks" Sudanese Media Centre (www.smc.sd)
57. Kajo Keji's name is spelled numerous ways (Kajokeji, Kajo Kaji, Kajo-Keji, etc.) I have employed the most common usage.
58. These figures are 2000 and 2007 SRRC figures. Intermediate figures are 147,421 (Doerring 2003), 150,000 (WHO 2002) and 177,367 (WHO 2001).

59. NPA, *Food Security Project*. (2003) and conversation with NPA Field Monitor Ladislaus Ougaro in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
60. NPA, *Planning Document*. (2002).
61. Conversation with NPA Field Monitor Ladislaus Ougaro.
62. Ibid.
63. Goudstikker.
64. Doerring, et al.
65. World Food Program, *Kajokeji County ANA Report*.
66. Moulton provides an overview of agriculture in Kajo Keji.
67. World Food Program, *Kajokeji County ANA Report*.
68. Ibid.
69. Interview with Diress Mengistu-NPA in Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajokeji County*.
70. NPA, *Half-Year Report on Food Security Activities in the Project Locations*. (2002)
71. Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajokeji County*. p. 15.
72. Amazia.
73. See the *LM Report 2004* and the Canadian International Development Agency's proposal *Strengthening the Capacity of Southern Sudan in Land Mine Awareness and Victim Assistance*.
74. World Health Organisation, *Disease Surveillance and Ewarn Report*.
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78. McLaughlin, A., "Sudan's Refugees Wait and Hope".
79. UNHCR - www.unhcr.ch/.
80. UNHCR, *Operational Briefing on South Sudan*, April 2005; "Access to Water a Basic Right for Refugees, Says UNHCR", March 2005; *Refugees, Prizing Education, Defer Return to Sudan* and *UNHCR Briefing Notes*, May 2005.
81. The degree to which information (dates, amounts, project details, difficulties, accountability, etc.) was available varied greatly. Agencies responded in almost direct proportion to their size. Larger agencies were less likely to give details, beyond that available in their promotional materials and web sites. The UNHCR and USAID were exceptions, providing reams of material, in which determining what specifically had gone to Kajo Keji was sometimes problematic. Smaller NGOs gave much detail, often narrow or localized in focus.
82. NPA - www.npaid.org.
83. Ibid., and conversations with Michael Wani Geriga (Acting Field Coordinator), Ladislaus Ougaro (Field Monitor) and Dwoki Mary (Acting Compound Manager) in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
84. NPA, *NPA's Agricultural Program, Kajo Keji and Yei River Counties, New Sudan: Evaluation Report* and O'Toole Salinas, and D'Silva, p. 25-26.
85. ARC – www.arcrelief.org. See also Vincent, Masikini, and Nantale.
86. IAS - www.ias.nu.

87. MSF - www.msf.org.
88. The author's direct involvement with this relationship from 2000 to 2007 and visits to Kajo Keji in 2002, 2006, and 2007 facilitated access to numerous contacts and documents.
89. Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
90. Interview with Bishop Manasseh of the Diocese of Kajo Keji in October 2000. Also *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (14/3/2002) on the school appeal.
91. CRS - www.catholicrelief.org.
92. O'Toole Salinas and D'Silva, p. 29-30.
93. JRS - www.jesref.org/.
94. Conversation with JRS local administrator Charles Mogga in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
95. Crossroads Missions - www.crossroads.ca/missions/sudan.htm.
96. SRRRA Database and Monitoring Unit (June 2000).
97. IWASSRU - www.lahash.net and www.agorphanager.com.
98. CAFOD - www.cafod.org.uk.
99. Appearing to be an electronic media term, like Internet, PARANET is actually from the Kuku "parennet" (a meeting place of elders).
100. Riehl.
101. Foreign Organizations or Intelligence Networks" Sudanese Media Centre.
102. O'Toole Salinas, and D'Silva, p. 25-26.
103. Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajokeji County*. Table 6.
104. This account is based on an archive of extensive e-mail correspondence dated from 22 July to 20 October 2004 from KADRA Managing Director Charles Laku Losio, KKERC International Coordinator Manas Könyi Aliphayo, Connie Fegley of the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem; Bruce Campbell-Janz of the CRWRC and Chester Venhuizen of Bruised Reeds Ministries. It includes a BBC *Focus on Africa* interview with Alfred Taban (April 2004); a letter from Manasseh B. Dawidi, ECS Bishop of Kajo-Keji, to Mark Spina of Episcopal Relief and Development (9 August 2004) and "My Journey to Kajokeji on October 6 and October 7, 2004," an e-mail report by Alfred Taban (20 October 2004).
105. Goudstikker.
106. Könyi Aliphayo, *KKERC Emergency Relief Operation Annual Report: March 2004-July 2005*.
107. Ibid.
108. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message 28 July 2004.
109. Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
110. Campbell-Janz, e-mail message, 30 August 2004.
111. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message, 12 August 2004.
112. Laku, e-mail message, 4 September 2004.
113. Laku, e-mail message, 14 September 2004 and Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
114. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message, 17 September 2004.

115. Laku, e-mail message, 14 September 2004.
116. Laku, e-mail message, 19 September 2004.
117. Laku, e-mail message 13 October 2004.
118. Laku, e-mail message 13 October 2004.
119. Laku, e-mail message, 19 September 2004.
120. Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
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Interviews and Correspondence

Meetings, interviews, informal conversations and correspondence ranging from 1999 to the present include Michael Sworo Yokwe (SPLM Commissioner of Kajo Keji 2000-2006), Oliver Mule (SPLM Commissioner of Kajo Keji 2006-), Victor Ware (SPLM County Executive Director), Joseph Koka (SPLM Inspector of Public Security), Salween Yoasa (SPLM Education Officer), Lubajo Peter Maik (SRRC Relief Supervisor), the Rev. Clement Janda (Member of National Assembly, former Secretary-General of the All African Council of Churches), Michael Lado Kimbo (UNHCR Field Assistant), Charles Mogga (JRS Local Administrator), Michael Wani Geriga (NPA Acting Field Coordinator), Ladislaus Ougaro (NPA Field Monitor), Dwoki Mary (NPA Acting Compound Manager) and 105 officials from 27 schools.

Contacts within the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji included the Rt. Rev. Manasseh B. Dawidi (Bishop of Kajo Keji), Rev. Wilson Lomugun (Diocesan Secretary 2000-2005), Rev. Emmanuel Murye (Diocesan Secretary 2005-6), Rev. Simon Peter Kenyi (Diocesan Development Coordinator), Rev. Charles Laku (Education Coordinator 2000-2005), Rev. Canon Henry Leju (Principal of Canon Benaiah Poggo Memorial College), Rev. Tom Ezbon, Rev. Fred Taban, Rev. Simon Kenyi, Moses

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