

Road accidents in South Sudan: Who is to Blame?

By Yuggu Charles

Over the past few years, there has been a marked increase in the number of road accidents in South Sudan with many people losing their lives and others suffering terrible injuries. As the carnage continues across the new country, *The People's Voice* sought the views of citizens about the situation and who or what they think is to blame. Most people reacted angrily to the failure by authorities and motorists to reduce road deaths. Jale James, who works in the Customs Market in Juba, attributed the alarming increase in road accidents to careless driving. "There are too many cars on our roads and the drivers appear to love speeding. This is what is killing our people," he said. "Many drivers are careless and cannot even do simple and routine things like indicating when they are branching or exercising care when over-taking other vehicles. They don't even slow down when negotiating corners or roundabouts," he added. Furthermore, most drivers are not trained and use bribes to acquire driving licenses, James asserted. To improve the situation, James wants the government to introduce tougher traffic rules and stiffer punishments for reckless drivers. He also feels that the high number of motorcycle taxis on the roads contributed to many road accidents and wants the government to control the operation of these two-wheeled. "There are too many motorcycles being operated by youths, many of whom have not attended any driving school," said James. Isaac John, a businessman based in Rumbek, the capital of Lakes State, said the poor road network was among the factors that have contributed to road accidents in South Sudan. "A few months ago, two trucks carrying goods destined for Wau town, the capital city of Western Bhar El Ghazal, overturned along the Rumbek-Wau road, due to the poor state of the road," stated John. Garang Kong, a student at the University of Upper Nile, expressed his discomfort with the conduct of some drivers. "I'm not happy with the way some drivers speed.

Many of them are not aware of the risks and dangers on the roads. It is important to have these people re-trained on how to behave while driving and on general road safety and even first aid techniques," he said. "It would be good if the government adopts laws and legislation that will punish any individual who violates traffic rules because right now, the law is very lenient on these offenders," he added. Lupai James, a logistician at the organization for Nonviolence and Development, feels that traffic police officers may be contributing to the increase of road accidents in the country by harassing and intimidating drivers, and extorting money from them. "One time, I was driving along Ministry Juba road and one police officer ordered me to stop for the reason that I had blocked the way and I was asked to give them my license or pay 30 Sudanese Pounds. They also

ordered me to surrender my car log book," said Lupai. He added: "When I refused, they threatened to remove my number plate. They later forced me to pay the 30 Sudanese pounds but never gave me any receipt, an indication that this money would end up in their pockets. Such frustration makes drivers cause accidents". Although Lupai's logic may seem a bit far-fetched, there is certainly some truth to the fact that the traffic police are part of the problem, in that if they spent less time extorting money from innocent drivers, they would have more time to keep the roads safe. Colonel Kon John Akot, the Director of traffic police at the South Sudan Police Service, however, defended his officers and noted that it is the responsibility of citizens to avoid accidents. He said that traffic officers are entitled to put signs along the roads and bridges and at black spots to warn motorists of dangers. The police, he explained, were also allowed by the law to stop and interrogate and even arrest motorists breaking traffic rules. He said there was a need for cooperation between the ministry of roads and transport and the traffic police in order to safeguard the lives of people.

Kon urged road users to be careful while driving on highways such as the Nimule -Juba, Nadapal -Juba, Yei -Juba and Juba -Kajo Keji roads to help minimize road accidents. He added that traffic officers should be deployed along these highways to check and monitor speeding motorists. However, he observed that lack of equipment has hindered their work. "We lack radios, Motorola, motorbikes, tents, ambulances, generators and cameras to facilitate our work effectively; that is why we sometimes have problems," admitted the police officer. Kon stated that South Sudan traffic rules state that drivers are by law required to drive 50 km per hour while in town and on a highway the required speed is 90 km per hour, and those flouting these rules should not complain when arrested. "They know they should not overtake at junctions, yet some still ignore these rules," he said. On claims that traffic police officers were harassing motorists, Kon replied: "Police officers are mandated by law to stop and inspect any vehicle and charge the driver if he flouts any traffic rules." Ms Lydia Anyole, a traffic police and security consultant in Juba, says that road safety requires full involvement of both road users and traffic law enforcers. "If we are to reduce the number of accidents witnessed on our roads, all road users must be properly sensitized on traffic rules and traffic officers themselves must be made to understand that their job is futile without the cooperation of road users including pedestrians," she says. The government, she advises, should roll out a comprehensive civic education program that would help create awareness amongst members of the society drawn from all sectors to enlighten them on basic road safety rules.

Muslim community calls for religious tolerance

BY AGELE BENSON AMOS

The Muslim community in Yei River County has called for religious harmony and tolerance amongst various religious groups in the young nation of South Sudan in order to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all. The chairman of Muslims in the County, Kasim Yusuf, said it was only by respecting other religions that peace could prevail in the new nation which has just emerged from a prolonged civil war. He said disrespect of other religions has in the past led to unrest between Christians and Muslims living in South Sudan. Yusuf claims that religious tensions in the country had been brought about by discrimination against certain religions and advises that this should come to an end.

"We, at times, feel isolated simply because some people consider us Arabs and yet we are South Sudanese and not Arabs," said Kasim. He added that it was wrong to associate Islam with the Khartoum regime, saying that just like Christianity, the religion also has a massive following in the South. "Some people think mosques in South Sudan have been brought in by

by upholding harmony between the two religions. The Arch-Deacon for Yei Episcopal Church Rev. Cosmas Gwagwe Samuel blamed the suspicion between Christians and Muslims on idle talkers who criticize other religions. Religious conflicts, he said, can always be resolved through dialogue. "Freedom of worship should be exercised for all the religions without discrimination and political differences," he said. The Arch-Deacon warned the people of South Sudan against criticizing other religions and stereotyping members of rival denominations as this could bring serious tensions and problems. Halima Kalifa, a Muslim, expressed

happiness that the new South Sudan was already offering a free environment for religious tolerance and growth.



Chairman Muslim Community Yei River County Kasim Yusuf.

Khartoum, yet this is not the truth. True belief in Islam, for example, is very much in existence in Yei River County," he said. He also urged the government and non-government organization to involve Muslims in nation building activities, in order to enable them have a sense of belonging in the new country. Another Muslim faithful, Sheikh Saidi Jamba, 45, also called for unity with other denominations in South Sudan. "We Muslims have no negative attitude towards other denominations. All we need to do is to join hands together as brothers and sisters since we all ascribe to one God - whether as Christians or Muslims," Saidi said. He also asked the government and other donor agencies to help Muslims in South Sudan develop social amenities such as Muslim schools that can help in teaching the younger generation. Saidi challenged Christian and Muslim leaders to lead by example

happiness that the new South Sudan was already offering a free environment for religious tolerance and growth. "There is now a lot of religious freedom compared to what happened in the old Sudan," Halima asserted. She also urged all mothers to work hard and join hands in changing the behavior of contemporary young girls who are under the negative influence of modern culture. "Nobody will come from afar to help us, so we must learn how to mercilessly commit ourselves in advising the young ones who are the future of our new nation," said Halima. As opposed to the north where Sharia law is in practice, South Sudan remains a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country which accommodates freedom of worship and religion. It is imperative to note that Islam remains one of the actively professed and accepted religions despite the reality that South Sudan is pre-dominantly Christian.

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Civilians continue to suffer at hands of rebels in Jonglei

By John Actually

Today you see them, tomorrow they are gone. They are ruthless and no one knows why they are fighting. These are the rebel fighters of South Sudan's Jonglei State whose activities have contributed to serious insecurity among villagers. It all started in 2010 after some former Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA/M) generals failed to win posts during South Sudan's hotly contested general elections. They instead rebelled against the government by taking up arms and heading for the bush. Those who rebelled against the government included General George Athor Deng and David Yau Yau of Pigi and Pibor Counties respectively.

General Deng was selected as the leader of the rebels in 2010 in his bases in Pigi County in northern Jonglei. Since then his heavily armed group of fighters has fought several wars with government forces and has also been accused of attacking civilians in Fangak, Ayod and Nyirol, during which many women and children were killed. However, his troops were dislodged in heavy fighting that left many of his soldiers dead. He escaped to an unknown location. In March this year, unconfirmed reports indicated that he was hiding in Khartoum. Athor's reappearance this year in Urur, Nyirol and Ayod Counties, where he was arming the youth to fight



Paramount Chief Chuei Leek Kachuol speaking to senior reporter John Actually.

their traditional enemy the Murle, as well as the SLPA, surprised many people who thought he had been vanquished. Athor had refused to respond to a government amnesty, issued on Independence day on July 9, to

Chuol's opinion, the Jonglei rebellion is simply a matter of political greed by a few disgruntled politicians. He claims that people like Athor rebelled against the government as a retaliatory move, and aimed at killing civilians who did not

surrender and end the war. In an interview during an inter-peace forum in Ayod County recently, a youth leader, Mr James Chuol Youth Forum, said they held a meeting in Ayod in October to persuade the youth against joining the rebel group. "I told my people that we should not join Athor Deng's movement. We are from the independent state of South Sudan. There is a need for peaceful co-existence among the people themselves," said Chuol. Chuol asserted further that Ayod youth would not allow the rebel group to continue terrorizing the people. He said that although the youth were not

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Mixed reactions over proposal to move capital from Juba

By Agele Benson Amos

Should the government relocate the South Sudan capital city from Juba to Ramciel? This is the biggest debate doing the rounds in South Sudan as citizens of Africa's youngest nation look to the future. *The People's Voice* asked some citizens what they thought and found that were mixed reactions about the proposed relocation. Some think that the move is a good idea because the proposed new site offers ample land for proper planning and future expansion, as compared to the poorly planned and congested city of Juba. However, others are opposed to the move because they feel the world's newest and poorest country has many more urgent priorities to contend with. David Juma Mike, a student at Juba

University says: "We, the people of Central Equatoria State had the advantage of rapid development due to the presence of the capital city in our state but, now that it's moving far away we need to put more effort into developing the state." While welcoming the idea of the relocation of the capital city, David said the relocation should provide equal opportunity to all the ten states of the Republic of South Sudan. "We need equal opportunities in education, health and employment as the capital city will be moving far away from us," said David. Atayi Jesca who works with SUMI welcomes the idea of relocating the capital, explaining "Juba is too small to be a capital city since south Sudan is an independent country

which needs bigger buildings and many other things like industries and factories." She added that the relocation of the capital is a positive move towards the development of the new nation. "We should view it positively. The ministers and the members of parliament of all the constituencies should take the positive move of developing their areas and the big task is on the state government in ensuring the success of the plan," she said. However, Anthony Ladu, who works as a bar attendant, says that he sees no point in the planned relocation to Ramciel. "In fact, it would be a good idea if the government began addressing the immediate needs of the people such as lack of clean drinking water, poor health services, lack of

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EDITORIAL

Even as it prides itself of having achieved its independence, glaring challenges are fast replacing the ecstatic and celebratory mood that gripped the world's newest nation four months ago. Today South Sudan is contending with realities of a being a new country, some of which range from insecurity, child labour, religious indifference and even the debate on whether or not to move the capital city from Juba to a new location called Ramciel.

Welcome to this very special issue of the *People's Voice*. As usual, we bring you exciting and indepthly-researched stories that capture the high expectations, predicament, challenges and the Our very own investigative and undercover reporter, John Actually exposes the controversial issue of rebel groups in vast Jonglei state. He takes a closer insight on the reasons why some residents opt to join the rebel groups and seeks views and opinions of locals on possible solutions to puzzle. In one of our main stories we take a back seat and reflect with you the unending child labour menace, which has threatened the survival of Southern Sudanese child. Our reporter Benson Agele Amos spoke to several street children in Yei County who are engaged in various aspects of child labour including hawking and car wash businesses. He also sought the expertise views of the state government officials on how to end the problem. In this issue, we also reflect on the thorny issue of the indifference in religion especially in regards to doctrines in Christianity and Islamism. From Central Equatoria state, the current seat of the Government of South Sudan, our reporter Charles Yuggu speaks to several ordinary people on the raging debate on possible relocation of the capital city from Juba to Ramciel. a debate that has threatened to divide South Sudanese. This should not escape your eyes. As you flip over the insert, you will come across other exciting and well-researched stories on the general expectations of ordinary citizens of the new country. While some majority of them farmers, cite poor roads and lack of proper farm incentives as their major issues of concern, there are those who talk of insecurity while others would want the new Government to focus attention on provision of health and education services.

We wish you an enjoyable reading

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Civilians continue to suffer at hands of rebels in Jonglei

mandated to attack the rebels, they would stop them from attacking civilians. "We are ready to protect our people and the territory. We are capable of mounting a serious fight," said Chuol. Chuei Leek Kachuo, aged 68, a paramount chief of Duk County, said atrocities committed by 'criminals and law breakers' posing as fighters had disrupted life in the county, and many people are now living in fear and cannot venture into economic activities for fear of being attacked by the rebels. Chuei said he managed to reach two people from his area who are serving in the

rebel movement and prevailed upon them to quit their activities but they turned down his request. He claims that deaths caused by the rebel's activities were rising each day and cited a recent incident at Fangak in February this year, during which rebels launched a deadly attack on civilians, killing over 200 people, including women and children. Additionally, over 20,000 people were displaced and about 150 people wounded, during the attack. Chuei said the normal movement of people between Ayod, Uror, Nyiro and Duk has stopped due to

the insecurity, which has also led to severe food shortages and disruption of learning in local schools. The government has rolled out a plan to attempt to demobilize and disarm all rebel groups, including launching a massive sensitization campaign amongst various communities to ensure that no illegal arms remain in the hands of civilians. However, tribal loyalties, cattle raiding, and the unending cycle of high unemployment and poverty remain some of the much touted reasons for locals to join rebel movements like Athor's militia group.

Mixed reactions over proposal to move capital from Juba

By Agele Benson Amos

roads, lack of schools and providing help for farmers to produce food locally to avoid over reliance on expensive food imports" states Ladu. The 23 year old father of one says that the move to shift the capital city of the new state should be done at a later stage and not in a rush. "For now we have to agree that we have to face our challenges on our own and this means that every penny available must be put to the right use. Building a capital city is not an urgent need for the South Sudanese majority who continue languishing in adverse poverty" Ladu observed.

Alex Modi, a resident of Erap area in Yei town payam, said the idea of relocating the capital city is not bad but, it should be done gradually and in phases. "The government should first think of improving

the standard of public servants by increasing their salaries and also paying the salaries on time, so that quality services are provided to citizens instead of rapid relocation" said Alex. Alex told *The People's Voice* that the relocation will also improve access to the capital from all over South Sudan as some of the people were finding it hard to reach Juba because of the distances involved. "The relocation of the capital city should be seen as a uniting factor for the people of South Sudan. It should not be divisive. It should not bring about tribalism and unnecessary tension because we all belong to one nation," states Alex. The inspector of accounts at Yei River County, Kosmas Ayambo Enoc, described the decision to move the capital

from Juba as a brilliant idea. "We shall soon be in trouble if the capital city remains in Central Equatoria State because the capital must be far from the border with neighbouring countries. Juba is too close to Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya", Enoc explained. Enoc is appealing to people living around the new site in Ramciel to give up excess land to give way for the new capital which is being built from scratch. He urged the government of the Republic of South Sudan to cooperate with the international community and donor agencies to help put up a capital city befitting the new nation. South Sudan's government said it was moving the capital from Juba because of a shortage of land for expansion.

Mugwo community feels neglected by government

BY ALFRED TABAN

Residents of Mugwo Payam in Southern Sudan's Yei River County are a disgruntled lot. They feel neglected by the government following deteriorating standards of living occasioned by poor provision of social services. The villagers, most of whom are victims of Sudan's prolonged civil war said they lack good roads, health facilities, provision of clean water and schools. They are now crying out to the government to come to their rescue. Kiden Leya Asu, a 75 year old widow, and a mother of three children, is one of the many locals bearing the brunt of the lack of facilities. Asu who lives in Ombaci village stays with her brother after her husband died while in exile during the war. She has to walk several kilometers in search of water and health facilities. "The government is not doing enough to serve the people with all the services they need. The people here are neglected. There are no health centers. There are no good roads and bridges have been washed away by heavy rains," she said. She said local livestock farmers have given up after their animals were wiped out by diseases despite numerous appeals to the government to send veterinary experts to the area. "We cannot engage in meaningful farming because pests and other kinds of diseases and weeds kill our crops, lowering the harvests. We appeal to the government to help us learn modern agricultural methods," she added. Even the few farmers who record good harvests cannot market their produce because of poor roads. A break down in law and order in parts of the region has also contributed to a high school dropout rate.



Salome Kiden pensively sat outside her house as she talks to reporter Alfred Taban

"The influence of the night disco culture makes young children drop out of school and disobey their parents. The government should stop this social rot and force the closure of these discos," Asu stated. Another resident, Salome Kiden, 73, and also a mother of three, says many locals die of treatable diseases because government

hospitals lack drugs. "The government should equip the hospitals with drugs and necessary facilities. They must also make major roads passable so that the sick can be taken to the hospitals in good time," said Kiden. She added that scarcity of clean water had also contributed to the upsurge of many diseases. In most villages, women and children walk long distances to access water. The majority, she continued, depend on contaminated water found in nearby wells. She urged the government to form a committee to survey and document the challenges facing its people. She is particularly concerned that a few existing water wells that got spoilt have not even been repaired by the government. Locals also complain of poor sanitation in local markets and other social places sparking fears of outbreak of diseases. For Banja Steven, the high prices of food should be addressed by the government as a priority. The 53 year old father of three, says many villagers are starving because the government had failed to control the prices of essential commodities. "I earn a living by fetching water for the people in the trading centers but the money I earn is too little to enable me to feed my family because of the rising prices of food," he said. It is clear that the fledgling nation is grappling with serious challenges, most of which are crucial to the basic welfare and survival of its citizens, and therefore, it is not surprising that many are becoming impatient with the slow pace of improvements.

Child labour menace in western equatoria state

By Gift Friday

Like most African Countries, South Sudan has its share of problems afflicting children. Child labour is rampant in the country's Western Equatoria state following the displacement of thousands of people from their home villages due to the activities of the Ugandan rebels, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In Western Equatoria State there are hundreds of street children engaged in all kinds of child labour to earn a living. In Yambio town, the state capital, these street children are engaged in car washing, hawking, and restaurant attendance or washing plates, among other jobs. *The People's Voice* caught up with some of these street urchins to hear their stories. Jackson Tambua, from Nabiapai village, is an orphan whose parents were killed by the LRA in 2007 and since then has been staying with his uncles. He says he engaged in the car washing business in Napkangau stream in Yambio in 2008, after he was expelled from school for not being able to pay the school fees. "I was in primary 4 and could not afford the school fees, so I decided to look for work to earn a living by washing cars, motorcycles, etc" he said. Jackson stated that he sometimes earns between 40-45 South Sudanese pounds, an equivalent of 15 US dollars, per day. Anibie Kumbo is a girl aged 16 years. She works as a cleaner at a local restaurant. Although she lives with her aging parents, Kumbo has to frequent Yambio town's streets to undertake casual work to earn some money. She uses the little that she earns to purchase food for her family because her elderly parents are unable to cater for the family. "I left school just because of poverty. I took it upon myself to ensure the family gets something to eat every day," she said. Anibie wants to go back to school but her predicament prevents her. She dropped out at primary level 6. 19 year old Kubako John decided to move out of his parent's house to Yambio town's streets. He says that he made the decision after his parents failed to raise money for his school fees. He is now married to street girl. "I am actually now renting a house and

feeding my wife and my kid" he said. Kubako stated that he has no interest in rejoining school following the inability of his family to raise sufficient school fees. Kubako disclosed that he reached primary level 7, with only a year to go before finishing his O level, when he dropped out of school due to lack of money. The Director of Child Welfare in the State Ministry of Social Development, Justin Ebere, said that street children had become a major concern to the ministry. "We have assessed the five counties of the state and found out that the number of street children is increasing mostly because of displacement of families by the LRA while others are forced on to the streets due to family frustrations, poverty levels and even mistreatment," said Ebere. He disclosed that street children in Yambio town mostly engaged in washing vehicles or motorbikes, while a few resorted to hawking. He said his ministry had organized a psycho-social and counseling workshop for street children, in early May this year, in which over 70 street children were rounded up and sensitized on the importance of resuming classes. Ebere disclosed that, with the help of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners, a rehabilitation resource centre has been constructed to help street kids, some of whom ended up on the streets as a result of LRA activities in the area. He added that the directorate has reunited most of the street children with their families. The ministry is also trying to raise awareness among parents who mistreat their children about penalties they may face under the 2006 Children's Act. "Some of the children are sent by their parents into the streets purposely to help them raise money," he said. He stressed that the ministry will continue to advocate for street kids and more specifically, keep trying to reunite them with their parents. "Handling street children is a difficult issue, especially if some parents have no sources of livelihood," he said.

Ebere disclosed that the ministry plans to initiate some incoming generating activities that will mostly target the parents of street children who cannot even provide the basic needs of their families. Over the past few years, widespread insecurity in Western Equatoria state has driven thousands of residents out of their homes as the government grapples with the LRA menace. In most cases the LRA have struck vulnerable villages with utmost impunity leaving thousands of acres of farmland unattended to. Despite the state being regarded as South Sudan's bread basket due to its agricultural potential, the insecurity has contributed to ever increasing poverty levels amongst local residents with the associated impact on children. Despite the efforts of the local authorities there is still much work to be done to address the issues that force children on to the streets to work.



Director for Child Welfare Mr Justin Ebere with State Minister of Social Development -Norma Fadul