

AFRECS E-Blast: July 31, 2013

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

### **IN THE CHURCH:**

Messages from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

#### CHALLENGES PERSIST

The multiple challenges that one might expect to confront any new nation which lacks a strong tradition of political participation are visiting South Sudan. Most significant has been the expulsion of the South Sudan Vice President, Riek Machar, by South Sudan's President, Salva Kiir. There has been a sweep of resignations requested from cabinet ministers, some of whom are finding their way back into the government. News received thus far does not suggest a great political tragedy at this point. This rearrangement of the country's leadership along with efforts to launch a peace and reconciliation process while dealing with the cessation of oil production combine to make the task of governing this new nation daunting. Given this convergence of events and crises, your prayers are requested.

Richard Parkins

#### SMALL BUT IMPORTANT GIFTS

Sometimes, and some would say almost invariably, modest gestures at helping a nation or a community to develop are the most enduring with the most tangible results. I recently read William Easterly's book, published in 2007, "The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good". ([See here](#) for more information.) While it might be a disservice to summarize his thesis so simply, it does not seem to be too far amiss to underscore the positive attention which he gives to modest projects nurtured by the aspirations of those whom they serve when they are designed and implemented with a first hand knowledge of the beneficiaries. Without getting into a discussion of more ambitious foreign aid projects, a task that would be well beyond me, it does seem worth noting the many occasions mentioned by Easterly where simple, straightforward efforts help folks when their needs are accounted for and where all elements of a problem are parsed. As a guide, this is a pretty good way to go.

It's worth sharing this perspective when considering South Sudan and the temptation only to lament its slow progress while overlooking the good that is beginning to dot the landscape of this new nation. While reality requires identifying areas where infrastructure and services are sorely lacking and larger infusions of foreign aid required, those many modest but successful efforts at development tell a different story - one that speaks to what can be done when true partnerships exist and communities own what their external friends offer.

Examples come to mind of projects that have enjoyed success. They are tailored to their local setting, giving close attention to local engagement and ownership. Most noteworthy are those where clinics and health services have taken hold or where schools have been established. These suggest prime examples where a difference can be made by a focused effort of an outside group, often a faith based organization. The key seems to be a real understanding of what is needed locally, how the input of local residents can be solicited and used, and what steps are needed to ensure that implementation leads to sustainability. These modest investments in a discrete, local project can have a major transformative impact on those whom they touch. Demonstrable success such as young women being able to safely and openly attend school for the first time delivers a message well beyond the benefit that comes to that initial student. Likewise, one who regains strength and well-being following an illness because of visiting a clinic alerts others to the possibility of overcoming illnesses that might otherwise be viewed as life-threatening. Multiplying such projects with due attention to local circumstances would do much to strengthen the well-being of our South Sudanese friends. The smaller projects allow local realities to matter in terms of how services are provided.

Certainly South Sudan needs much; and one can hope that the infusions of foreign aid that come will serve as building blocks for this new nation. However, the dedicated work of private partners will help make an equally, if not more, significant contribution towards developing South Sudan. These kinds of efforts, often reflected in the work of AFRECS partners, customize services and assistance to meet the particular needs of communities and their residents. Those who extend this kind of friendship bring the hope that is so essential to building this new nation. Our prayer should be that such efforts will be multiplied and developed, always with local aspirations and realities in mind.

Richard Parkins

### **AFRECS INFORMATION:**

REMEMBER THE AFRECS NATIONAL CONFERENCE - OCTOBER 18-20, 2013

THE CONFERENCE BEGINS AT NOON, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18TH AND CONTINUES THROUGH SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20TH AT THE ST JAMES COMMON ADJACENT TO ST JAMES CATHEDRAL, THE SEE OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CHICAGO. THE FORMER CATHEDRAL OFFICE SPACE HAS BEEN TOTALLY TRANSFORMED TO BECOME A WONDERFULLY ATTRACTIVE AND STATE OF THE ART CONFERENCE CENTER. THE DEAN AND THE CATHEDRAL STAFF ARE EAGER TO HOST THIS YEAR'S AFRECS CONFERENCE AND TO WELCOME THE CONFEREES.

### **E-Blast Schedule Information:**

*After a brief break in schedule during the month of August, the E-Blast will resume on Wednesday, September 11th. It will continue its bi-weekly broadcast until the end of 2013 under the leadership of guest editor Debra Morris Smith. As a former board member and the founding*

*editor of the E-Blast, Debra is a long-time member of AFRECS. With thanks, we welcome her back to the editor's desk while our current editor, Ellen J. Hanckel, is out of the country, teaching for the fall semester at Bishop Gwynne College in Juba, South Sudan. Ellen plans to return to the editor's desk in January 2014.*

Richard Parkins

### **IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, INCLUDING THE TWO SUDANS:**

This Op-Ed Contribution from the [New York Times](#) (7/27/13) is written by Peter Buffet, son of Warren Buffet. 'The Charitable-Industrial Complex' gives another facet to the point of view discussed under 'Small But Important Gifts' by Richard Parkins. (See above.)

Following is an excerpt from the conclusion of an address given in Addis Ababa last Saturday 7/27/13 by Thabo Mbeki to celebrate the Founding Fathers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). To find the entire address, [follow this link](#).

"When he spoke on May 15, 1963, here in Addis Ababa, to open the OAU Preparatory Conference of Foreign Ministers, ten (10) days ahead of the formation of the OAU, Emperor Haile Selassie's Foreign Minister, Ato Ketema Yifru, said:

*'It is essential that in the days ahead we are guided by the fundamental principles of the cause of African Unity. We can agree on positive steps. Let us do so.*

*'Each step takes us just that much nearer our goal and makes the next step just that much easier to take.*

*'Our views are identical on many questions. Our opinions are unanimous on many matters. The areas in which African States can decide today to cooperate their activities include virtually every aspect of national and international life.*

*'If we begin from these premises and work together in good will, Africa will prove not only that ultimate Union is possible, but also that we are more than worthy of the independence which we enjoy and the increasingly important role which we are playing in world affairs.'*

"Our task today, as we celebrate the OAU Founding Fathers, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of our erstwhile Organisation, is to take on board exactly what Emperor Haile Selassie's Foreign Minister, Ketema Yifru, said fifty (50) years ago, and thus recognise that:

*Each step takes us just that much nearer our goal and makes the next step just that much easier to take.'*

'Thus our urgent contemporary task is to identify each of these steps, and actually take

them! Africa Must Unite! Thank you."

### **IN SOUTH SUDAN:**

The recent reshuffle of the government in Juba has brought concern from many in the international media and from individuals around the world. Here's an article and comments on it published by [Gurtong](#). In addition, here is an opinion piece that brings perspective by Aly Verjee, a senior researcher at the Rift Valley Institute, published in [African Arguments Online](#). The site is hosted by the Royal African Society and World Peace Foundation, part of the Guardian Africa Network. They promise to make their site the place where the most vigorous debates on Africa are available on the internet.

This article from the [Sudan Tribune](#) details President Salva Kiir's appointment of Barnaba Marial Benjamin as the new foreign affairs minister of South Sudan.

The following is an excerpt from the conclusion of an open letter by Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, Chairperson of the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation. The letter, "A Message on the current situation in Jonglei State" is dated 7/29/13 and may be accessed by [following this link](#).

"We look forward to the day, hopefully not too far distant, when Jonglei State can return to peace; when ongoing disputes between the communities can be resolved through peaceful means as agreed in 2012; when relief and development programmes are assisting all the people of Jonglei to improve their lives and work towards self-sufficiency; when the government provides infrastructure such as roads and communications networks to increase trade and interactions between communities and to enhance security and access to the rule of law for all; when the cattle camp youth live in peace with each other; and when David Yau Yau himself resolves his issues through a peaceful due process. Then we will indeed slaughter the fattened calf and feast with the prodigal son who has returned. May God bless you all."

This [Policy Brief from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation \(IJR\)](#) addresses "Opportunities for Gender Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan." Published in July 2013, it covers many important topics for consideration as the new nation of South Sudan develops. One leading South Sudanese educator in Juba made these comments regarding these concerns: "I think the best way to address these issues of gender imbalance and violence in South Sudan is through... education. Nobody in the South denies it. The government of South Sudan and institutions (such as faith based ones) are taking that into account. There is no other way to empower women in this country unless they are educated like their fellow brothers."

The conclusion of this IJR document begins..."While this Policy Brief celebrates the progress and successes achieved to date in furthering social justice and gender justice in particular, it also highlights the many challenges that lie ahead for South Sudan to ensure that all its citizens enjoy equal rights, irrespective of gender or ethnicity." As it says on this website, the IJR was launched in 2000 in the aftermath of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission with

an aim of ensuring that lessons learnt from South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy be taken into account in the interests of national reconciliation. IJR works with partner organisations across Africa to promote reconciliation and socio-economic justice in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing democratic transition. IJR is based in Cape Town, South Africa. For more information, visit <http://www.ijr.org.za>, and for comments or inquiries contact [info@ijr.org.za](mailto:info@ijr.org.za).

### **IN SUDAN:**

This article from the [Sudan Tribune](#) gives an overview of the situation regarding the threat of an oil shut-down: "Sudan has no intention of reversing oil shut down decision, minister says."

Written by Luka Blong Deng, a Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School, [this paper](#) gives a fuller analysis of the challenge of Bashir's threat of oil shut down. Also see this [press release](#) from the African Union (AU) detailing efforts by AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to negotiate this challenging situation as well as the violent border disputes. The last paragraph of the press release reads:

The AU and IGAD urge South Sudan to respect all aspects of the Security Agreement and to ensure that all its forces are redeployed out of the SDBZ (Safe Demilitarization Border Zone). The AU and IGAD further strongly urge that Sudan refrain from any action to shut down the oil pipeline used to transport South Sudanese oil to Port Sudan, bearing in mind that any decision to do so threatens to cause irreparable damage to the integrity of the pipeline and adversely affect the economies of both states.

### **Pray:**

Pray for successful negotiation of the oil/ border disputes. Pray for governmental stability in both South Sudan and Sudan.

Give thanks for the continuation of the Healing, Peace & Reconciliation Committee in South Sudan under the leadership of Episcopal Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul with the support of Roman Catholic Bishop Paride Taban. Pray for the strength of the other religious leaders who comprise the membership of the committee. Pray for this process to proceed towards healing, peace & reconciliation for all concerned in the new nation of South Sudan.

Pray for an overwhelming response to the advocacy efforts detailed in these E-Blasts. Pray especially for the cessation of continued indiscriminate bombing in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile States of Sudan. Pray for the people of Yida, as well as other refugee camps, located in Unity State of South Sudan, as well as in other neighboring countries.

### **Give:**

Give a modest amount today to further the work of AFRECS by becoming a member. ([See here](#)

[for how to join.](#))

**Learn:**

Learn more by reviewing the last E-Blast, [July 10th](#) and by going to the AFRECS [home page](#).

A note from the editor:

Dear Reader,

During my time away, I will be giving thanks for AFRECS and the team that works together so well to produce this E-Blast for bi-weekly publication.

I am looking forward to returning to teach at Bishop Gwynne College in Juba for the fall semester. I'll be giving updates from there which you may access by a link that will be included in this E-Blast. I ask for your prayers for journey's mercies, a productive semester - especially for the students, and for a safe return at the end of the year. Also, I seek your prayers for my husband and family who will be getting along (quite well, I'm sure) without me during the fall semester.

Sincerely in Christ, with many thanks for the efforts of each one of you and with continuing prayers for peace,

Ellen J. Hanckel, Editor.

PS If you have received this E-Blast as a forwarded message and would like to sign up to receive it regularly, [subscribe here](#).