



The Civil War in Southern Sudan and Its Effect on Youth and Children

Melha Rout Biel¹, Thüringer Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft e.V.

1 Introduction

The Civil War in Sudan, which began in June 1983, has caused a numbers of social, cultural and economical problems for Sudan. Many social changes took place, not only in the southern Sudan, where the war has been fought since its inception, but also in the Sudanese Nation as a whole. In this contribution, I would like to give a short summary about the effect of the war on the Sudanese society, in general, and on youth and children, in particular. This is important, because youth and children are the future of every nation. Because the youth and children in southern Sudan are gravely affected by the current war, this article will specifically address these effects. Youth and children in the North of the country are, however, almost equally affected by the conflict. After discussing historical background of Sudan and its political and developmental condition, I will briefly summarize the social situation and the role of social work in Sudan during and after the conflict.

2 Historical background of the Sudan

Since the beginning of the Sudan Conflict in 1955, many people used to ask the Sudanese citizens whether they come from the South or the North of the Sudan. Many of my countrymen and women will confirm this. This question is associated with the political situation in Sudan and, in particular, the war between the South and the North. People question whether the war between these two parts of the country is a religious, racial or economical war, or if it is a war between Arab and Africans of Sudan. Responding to those questions, one could give various answers. The conflict in the Sudan has many historical reasons, some of which relate to the colonial era. Thousands years ago, before Christ, Arab traders came to Sudan through Egypt. Their main aim was to find ivory, slave, gold and other minerals, which were very useful in the Arab peninsula and to the Europeans. Arab invaders met a lot of resistance from the Nuba and Funj, who were at the time the inhabitants of Northern Sudan and rule there today. After many years of war between them, they signed agreements which allowed both sides to coexist in the North. [...] (Deng 1995, p.9). Arab traders settled among the indigenous population and integrated themselves. Between the 13th and the mid-19th century, Arab traders and settlers gradually gained power over Egypt and parts of Central Sudan. In 1869, the Suez Canal was opened. This resulted in a British intervention that was followed by a successful Islamic uprising of the Mahdis in 1880 against the British invaders. Between 1898 and 1899, the combined forces of Britain and Egypt attacked Sudan and reoccupied it for the second time. The two invading forces established a condominium rule over Sudan. Southern populations such as the Nuer, Dinka and Azande

¹ Melha Rout Biel had a Bachelor degree in Social Work and Social Pedagogic at the University of Applied Sciences in Jena / Germany. He worked in different Fields of Social Work in Sudan and Germany. From January 2002 until February 2003 Biel was employed by the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, department of Developmental Psychology as Technical Assistant.

resisted the extension of the British-Egyptian condominium (Lobe 1998, p.2) rule over Northern Sudan until 1930. After Britain successfully brought the South under its control, they established two administrations in the Sudan between the South and the North. The teaching of the Arabic language was banned in the South. English and Christian missionaries were encouraged to Christianise the South, and English became the official language in that part of the country. After the Second World War Britain changed its policy toward the Sudan and the process of independence was initiated. As a result, the Republic of the Sudan became independent from Britain in January 1956.

Sudan, situated in East Africa, is the largest country in Africa and has nine neighbours. Until June 1983 Sudan had about 30 million inhabitants. Around 50 percent of the Sudanese are Muslims. The majority of them lives in Northern, Western and Eastern Sudan. A good number of Sudanese citizens in the South of Sudan believe in Christianity. However, the number of animists and those who practise African religions is very high.

Causes of the Sudan conflict

As the British administration prepared for Sudanese independence between 1931 and 1945/6, it did not have a clear plan on the future of Southern Sudan. The British believed that Southern Sudan could not exist as an independent state on the grounds of its poverty. This belief has, however, since then been proven wrong. After the 1978 discovery of oil in Bentiu in Southern Sudan, people argued that the North could not independently survive, if South Sudan were to be separated.

The British proposed that South Sudan should be annexed to Northern Sudan or to another East African country, such as Kenya or Uganda. In the end, Egypt managed to persuade the British to give Northern Sudan free hand over the South. In 1946, England decided that the South was to be one state with North Sudan. The South was informed of this decision during the Juba conference in 1947. The Sudanisation was initiated. A 93 member assembly was founded to oversee the process of independence and constitutional arrangement. Southern representatives were, however, against this annexation. They set several conditions in order to agree with the annexations such as the introduction of a Federal or Confederal constitution for the Sudan. Northern representatives agreed to the demands of the South. Nevertheless, the North did not keep its promise to the South. Only 13 out of the 93 vacancies in the assembly were given to the South. The rest was occupied by the North. "A committee of British and Egyptians, with only Northern Sudanese as consultants, discussed the steps to self-rule. In the legislative assembly the safeguards were withdrawn. The next step after the establishment of self-government was to establish a Sudanization committee. They identified 943 posts that the British and the Egyptians had to give up. Only 6 positions were given to the South and 928 to the North" (Alier 2001, p.1-3). British Army officers in both the South and the North were replaced by Northern Sudanese. Only a few junior positions were delegated to Southern Sudanese. The Southern Army in the South was dissatisfied with their representation. On August 18, 1955, they began rebelled against the Northern Officers stationed in the South. More than 1000 Northern and Southern Sudanese died in the uprising. The response of the Sudan government was decisive. More mutineers were arrested, imprisoned and some were executed. So began the first civil war between the South and the North. The government in Khartoum blamed Christian Missionaries for the preaching Christianity in the South and for deepening the differences between Muslims and Christians (Alier 2001). Government officials in Khartoum felt as though missionaries were an obstacle to islamization and arabization" (Alier 2001, p.2). As result, the Government in Khartoum introduced an Islamic curriculum and Islamic preachers as well as an Islamic administration in the South in 1959,

with the aims and objectives to correct the system introduced in the South by the western world, particularly by the missionaries and the British. Meanwhile, the mutiny in the South developed itself into civil war, which was finally brought to an end after 17 years of war. In 1972 the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed. The South was guaranteed a self-rule within the united Sudan. The islamization of the South was stopped; the English language was re-introduced as the official language in the South. Southern people were made responsible for the administration of their parts of the country. They received the right to make their laws, and the South had its own autonomous parliament in Juba. With the Addis Ababa Agreement, Sudan lived in peace for almost 12 years. There was progress in all aspects in both North and South. Schools and universities as well as institutions of higher education were opened in the South.

In 1980 the government of the Sudan under President Gaafar Mohamed Al Numeiri decided to abrogate the Abbis Ababa Agreement, which he himself signed with the South. Numeiri reshaped the boundaries between the South and the North after the discovery of oil and other minerals in Southern Sudan. He went on to divide the South into smaller regions and introduced Islamic laws throughout Sudan. In June 1983, Southern Officers revolted against President Numeiri's regime. They founded the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, the SPLM/SPLA under Col. John Garang de Mobar, a Christian from the South. As the war continued in the South, the economy and social situation of Sudan deteriorated day by day. Numeiri could not bring the war to an end by force as he intended. He was overthrown by a popular revolt in April 1985. A care-taking government under General Abdel Rahman Siwar Al-Dhab was established. In 1986 parliamentary elections were carried out in the North. Al- Sadig Al-Mahdi and his Umma Party won the election. He became the Sudan Prime Minister from 1986 to 1989. Sadig was engaged in peace talks with the Sudan People Liberation Movement and made progress towards peaceful settlement of the war. However, many parties in the North, such as the National Islamic Front (NIF) under the leadership of Dr. Hassen El Turabi, were not happy with the progress made by the Sadig's Government and the conditions demanded by the SPLM/SPLA, in particular the call for the adoption of a secular constitution in Sudan, the abrogation of the introduced Islamic Laws of 1983 and the declaration made by Numeiri that Sudan is an Islamic and Arab state. With support from Turabi's National Islamic Front, a military coup under General Omer Hassen Ahmed Al Bashir over threw the government of Prime Minister Sadig Al- Mahdi. Al Bashir intensified the war against the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army and massively islamised and arabised the Sudan. Due to the pressure on the government of Sudan by the international community, Al Bashir had to declare peace with the SPLA. In 1994 both the SPLM and the Khartoum Government agreed on the so-called Declaration of Principles (DOP). In the DOP, it was agreed that in the future agreements on a peaceful solution in Sudan, the right of self-determination, the separation of religion and state and a referendum on autonomy or separation of the South from the North must be guaranteed. By 2001 human rights organisations and relief agencies working in Sudan estimated that about 2.9 million people in the Sudan have died in the war since 1983, the majority of whom are from the South. Millions are internally displaced and others have fled to neighbouring countries. In July 2002, both the government and the SPLM have committed themselves once again to peace by signing the "Machokos Protocol" in Kenya, in which self-determination or a referendum will be held in Southern Sudan after the interim period, which will be agreed upon by the parties concerned.

3 Effect of the war on the Sudanese society in general

Effect of the war on youth and children

The military government of the Sudan under General Omer Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir has totally dismantled the Sudanese civil society. When it took power on June 30, 1989, the Government of Al Bashir carried out a massive arrest of political leaders opposed to Al Bashir and their supporters. Political parties throughout the country were disbanded or prohibited. An objective of this massive arrest was to reshape the civil society according to the will of the military and their radical Islamic supporters. "The civil service, trade unions, the judiciary, educational institutions and the media have all been purged. Institutional structures have been created, which ensure that political supporters of the government have overwhelming influence.

As mentioned above, the war in Sudan has not only cost the Sudan 2.9 millions lives, but the country is economically destroyed. The Sudan government has been investing in the war. The war cost Sudan approximately two million US Dollars per day.

Between 1983 and 1984, it was estimated that 500,000 Sudanese died in the war between the Khartoum Government and the rebels of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, the SPLA. In 1994 the war was mainly fought in the South. For this reason, the number of dead is assumed to be greater than in the North. Millions of Sudanese citizens were or are displaced. By 1994 there were about 20,000 displaced children between the ages of 7 and 17. Most of these children had lost their parents in the war. The UNICEF calls these children "Lost Children of the Sudan". Due to the war, these Sudanese children are forced to walk long distances looking for security, food and education. For instance, about 30,000 Children had to walk from Sudan to Ethiopia in 1991. After President Magisto of Ethiopia was overthrown in May of 1991, the children had to return back to Sudan. On their way back to Sudan, most of the children died of hunger, thirst and diseases and so on. A few of those survivors were settled in refugee camps in Kenya. They live in refugee camps without a clear future or education. In 1992 UNICEF managed to unify about 1,200 children with their families. However, 17,000 children were still reported to be in the refugee camps in Kenya (Unicef 1996). The number of displaced children displaced has increased since that time, approximately 1.2 million. "Peter Dut and his two brothers belong to an unusual group of refugees referred to by aid organizations as the Lost Boys of Sudan, a group of roughly 10,000 boys who arrived in Kenya in 1992 seeking refuge from their country's fractious civil war, which pits a northern, Khartoum-based Islamic government against Christian and animist rebels in the South. What is remarkable about the Lost Boys, who were named after Peter Pan's posse of orphans, is that they arrived in throngs, having been homeless and parentless for the better part of five years. As a group, they covered in the neighbourhood of 1,000 miles, from Sudan to Ethiopia, Ethiopia back to Sudan and finally to Kenya- a slow-moving column of mostly children that stretched for miles across the equatorial wilderness. The majority of the boys belonged to the Dinka or Nuer tribes" (Corbett 2001). Shortly after the Lost Boys settled into Kakuma, which is set on an arid plain 60 miles from the Sudan border in northwest Kenya, various psychologists documented the group's extreme exposure to violence and death: as many as 74 percent of the boys survived shelling or air bombardment, 85 percent saw someone die from starvation, 92 percent said they were shot at and 97 percent witnessed a killing. Scott Peterson, a journalist and the author of "Me Against My Brother: At war in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda," described the Lost Boys, whom he met several times during their itinerant years, as "among the most badly war-traumatized children ever examined". These children did not learn anything other than war and destruction. They do not have the chance to get education. They are totally

tormented. Most of the children have witnessed the killing of their parents or sisters. Many people believe it will be very different to rehabilitate them after the war. The warring parties in Sudan have been engaged on recruitment of children as “Child Soldier”.

Displaced Children in Khartoum

Because of the war, many people from Southern and Eastern Sudan came to Khartoum looking for security, food or treatment. In 1995 there were about three million internally Displaced Persons (DPS) living in and around the Sudan capital of Khartoum. Every month the number of the DPS increases. Among these displaced are thousand of children. Majority of those children live in the streets of Khartoum. In 1995 there were about 25,000 children between the ages of 8 and 15 around Khartoum as Street Children. The Khartoum government began to remove these children from the street by rounding-up action. Those captured are taken first to the police station, where they are screened and interviewed. The lucky ones are taken to special camps or to schools. This government action of rounding-up street children was criticised by human rights organisations. The Government argues that they are trying to protect the children from the various risks and dangers facing the street children, such as addiction, pornography, prostitution and the sale of organs. Human rights organisations like Amnesty International were very concerned about the government policy toward the Street Children from Southern and Eastern Sudan: “According to most independent sources, children are rounded up by the police in an arbitrary manner and are often held for some days in police stations before being taken to the special camps”. “There are reports of police violence against children when they are being rounded up and of cruel, inhumane or degrading punishments, including flogging and being placed in leg-irons, for children who try to escape from the camps”. “At least a million people have lost their lives either in battle, as a consequence of the war, or due to diseases, malnutrition or starvation. Many more live in Diaspora either in neighbouring countries or far away in Europe, Canada, and North America. Thousands who have fled to Northern Sudan in search of peace and hospitality found very little of this. Instead they were subjected to continuous harassment, forceful relocation and have no easy access to food or shelter. This is dehumanising. School-age children, too, find difficulty to secure education, and if they do, are instructed in Arabic and taught the Islamic faith against their will and the will of their parents, if still alive. None of the successive governments stand free of blame from this abuse of power since eruption of the ongoing conflict in May 1983. It has to be noted that any infrastructure that was established during the relative peace, 1972-1982, has been reduced to rubbles” (SPLM 2000).

4 Education Policy of both Sudan Government and the SPLM during the current war

The educational policy of both Sudanese Governments in the war torn Southern Sudan has been characterised or dominated by the arguments that there is war and instability in the South and that it would be a waste of money and energy to invest in that part of the country, where 80 percent of the territory remains under the SPLA/SPLM. In fact, the government is not in control of many towns except Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan, Malakal and Wau. So Khartoum sees no reason to open schools or higher education institutions in the South. Besides that, many people in the South are considered supporters of the SPLA/SPLM by the Khartoum government and, therefore, should not be offered government services. The only Southern university, the University of Juba; was transferred to Khartoum in 1987 due to security reasons, according to the government. Both the government and the SPLM thought that the war in the South would not last long and that it is important to concentrate on the restoration of law and order. Meanwhile, the government in Khartoum made a lot of progress toward education in the North. Many new schools, higher education institutions and

universities were established. The government went as far as opening universities for the South, such as Malakal University and Bahr el Ghazal University, to mention only a few. However, the Southern universities remain, for security reasons, in the North or in Khartoum. One of the biggest problems for these universities is that they have no qualified staff or professors which can teach. Besides that, the new universities are not equipped with the necessary instruments a university should have. In general, they are called Universities on the Paper. Most of the graduates at the new universities are classified as not qualified enough for the job they are supposed to do. But many absorbers believe that the opening of Universities is a good thing.

For the SPLM, education was not a priority until 1994/5. The Movement was very busy aiming to liberate more territories from the Khartoum government. Perhaps, they thought that the war would come to an end very soon. At the SPLM “National Convention” of 1994, the Movement came up with a number of recommendations on education. For the first time, the Sudan People Liberation Movement saw the necessity to provide education for the citizens under its control or administration. “Education for self-reliance is therefore a key factor in achieving the Movements’ mission to liberate the individual and society from all forms of political, economic, social and natural constrains to freedom, development, pursuit of happiness and self-fulfilment, social justice, democracy, human rights and equality for all irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender (Res. 7.3 of First National Convention, 1994)”. However, the educational policy of the SPLM is not directed or limited to Southern Sudan alone, but for what the SPLM calls, the “New Sudan”. The New Sudan is the area under the SPLM control and is comprised of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria, Southern Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Upper Nile Regions. According to the Movement, the New Sudan has about 12 million people and is larger than Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya (SPLM 2000). Since the SPLM National Convention, The movement has undertaken a great deal to ensure the establishment of education in the New Sudan. By the year 2000, there were about 2,000 primary schools in the liberated Areas of the Southern Sudan. “These schools operate under difficult circumstances illustrated by poor facilities, inadequate supplies and lack of qualified teachers.” The need to enrol children to the primary school is increasing, where the number of qualified teachers remained unresolved. The SPLM intends to open more primary schools in the New Sudan; however, due to lack of teachers and facilities, it is not in a position to provide this vital service to the people there”. The importance of education, in the process of social development and human capital formation is well established. In this regard, the SPLM’s objective is to establish an educational system that is oriented towards technical education to provide functional skills and to produce a New Sudanese citizen who is socially responsible and sensitive to all norms and cultures of the New Sudan and indeed of humanity. Moreover, the SPLM would like to see that a culture of peace and reconciliation becomes an integral part of the curriculum at all levels of the education system. This would in turn ensure a sustained culture of peace within and between communities of the New Sudan” (Education Policy of the New Sudan and Implementation Guidelines 2002).

At the moment, there are many young people in the SPLM liberated areas, who have finished high schools, but could not make further education due to the fact that there are no colleges or universities in the liberated areas. The only chance for college or university study is to apply for admission at the colleges and universities in the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda or Ethiopia. However, the majority of those displaced young people of South Sudan lost everything in the war, including parents. Both parents and the children could not afford to pay college or university fees in East Africa. In order to address this problem of higher education,

a group of Southern Sudanese scholars and professors met in 1999 to work out a project proposal to open a higher education institution in the New Sudan. They proposed that a college of education should be opened in Rumbek Bahr el Ghazal, and the other one in Yambio in Western Equatoria. It was also recommended to establish a community college in Rumbek, which would be later on transformed into a university of the New Sudan (UNS). The intended Institute in Yambio was proposed to be called the Institute of Development, Environment and Agricultural Studies (IDEAS). It is planned to open Distance Learning and Peace Centre (DLPC), Farm Management and Policy Analysis Centre (FAMPAC) as well as Teacher Training Centre (TTC). IDEAS should provide technical education and skill development. It should provide short courses of one week to a four-year college degree. In addition to that, an institute for legal studies and public administration should be established and be a part of UNS. Last year the above two mentioned Institutions of higher education were in fact opened. They are currently in operation. However, the existence of the two institutions in the New Sudan can only be the beginning of the establishment of a wider educational system in Southern Sudan. They cannot meet the educational demands of the people in the New Sudan.

5 Health System in the government controlled Sudan and the New Sudan

Before the war began in 1983, there was a well-functioning health system in Sudan, and in the North in particular. However, as the war continued in the South, the health system deteriorated in the North. Medicine was either not available or very expensive in many hospitals in the North. Many people could not afford to visit a doctor. Today it is becoming more difficult to go to a doctor. Meanwhile, the health situation in the South or “New Sudan” has broken down since 1994. The few hospitals which were built after the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 were destroyed during the war. There is no single hospital in the South that is functioning. The SPLM has, therefore, made the rehabilitation and reconstruction of social structures and institutions of health care an urgent priority. As result, the SPLM have initiated a number of primary health care units and some hospitals. Some of these are currently in operation. The SPLM is engaged in the rehabilitation of primary health care, maternal and child health units in all the liberated areas of New Sudan. The SPLM calls for a comprehensive awareness on HIV/AIDS in the New Sudan. The HIV/AIDS campaign has been in some parts of the New Sudan. “In fact, HIV/AIDS is more than a health problem, it is a social problem that requires change of attitudes and behaviour. Any change of attitudes and social behaviour calls for political, religious and community leaders to take the lead in the fight against this pandemic. Health policy-makers of the Civil Authority of the New Sudan (CANS) will have to draw lessons from Uganda and other countries that have placed HIV/AIDS on the agenda of their leading issues of public policy. Since 1994 there was an outbreak of deadly diseases in Southern Sudan, notably, the Kalazaar. About five thousand Southern Sudanese from Western Upper Nile died of Kalazaar. In general, the humanitarian situation in Sudan is very bad, especially in the Upper Nile region (Ayoti 2000). In recent fighting between the government and the SPLA, hundreds of thousands of civilians in Leer, Western Upper Nile were displaced (Statement by the European Coalition on Oil in Sudan 2003). There was not enough medicine to fight this disease. However, diseases like sleeping sickness, river blindness and tuberculosis broke out, too, and killed a sizable number of Sudanese. According to the SPLM, 90 percent of the population in the liberated areas are either sick or suffer from malnutrition. The international organisations and indigenous NGOS were not in the position to provide the necessary medicine.

6 Social work in both North and South Sudan

Before and after the Sudanese independence in 1956, there has not been a well-established social work system in Sudan. Church related agencies mainly conducted social work. The government of Sudan has a Department of Social Welfare; however, this department is based on the Islamic welfare system and has limited welfare services. The majority of those who benefit are Muslims. By the beginning of the war in 1983 social work activities increased in Sudan. As many people from wartorn Southern Sudan came to the North and settled around the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, the government saw itself not in position to offer services to these internally Displaced Persons (DPS). Many international organisations came in to take care of the DPS in Khartoum, but also in Southern Sudan as well as in the neighbouring country such as Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. After the war, there is a great need for social work in both the North and the South of the country. It is very important to educate indigenous psychologists, doctors, social workers and social pedagogues as well as other professionals who could take care of these fields. It would be wrong to rely on foreign NGOs after the war. One of the problems in Southern Sudan is that there is almost no education since the beginning of the war. Only very few Southern Sudanese managed to educate themselves in neighbouring countries. So it is imperative to prepare people who will help rebuild the country after the war. This should happen now and not after peace agreement has been settled.

7 Future Perspectives for Youth and Children of the Sudan

As mentioned above there is a great need to take care of youth and children during and after the war. The social situation in Sudan can only be better if there is a peace agreement. It will take a very, very long time to re-establish social, economic, health and educational systems in Sudan and in Southern Sudan, in particular. International involvement in rebuilding the above systems is more than necessary. For the time being, it is of great importance to assist children in South Sudan, in particular, and Sudan, in general. They badly need security, medicine and education. The Sudanese government and the rebels of the Sudan People Liberation Movement can not afford to offer these basic services. International help is needed.

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Author's Address:

BA Melha Rout Biel
Thüringer Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft e.V.
c/o Melha Rout Biel
Magnus-Poser-Straße 2
D-07749 Jena
Germany
Tel: ++49 162 43 83 963
Email: melha@unique-online.de

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