

Missions Organization Prepares for South Sudan Independence

Saturday (July 9) will be Independence Day for the citizens of South Sudan.

A 2005 peace deal brought an end to the civil war, while promising Southerners the chance to vote for independence. That referendum vote came in January when an overwhelming majority chose to split from Khartoum.

In preparation to become Africa's newest sovereign state, the legislative assembly on Thursday ratified the new constitution for the nation-in-waiting. There's a lot of hope riding on the actual secession.

Matt Parker with Kids Alive International says it's a party now, but he warns of the reality after the hoopla. "I think we have the world's youngest country being created on the weekend, but it's also going to be one of the poorest countries in the world, with 90 percent of the population living on less than one dollar a day. "

Birthing pains in Sudan have cost more than 2,300 people their lives since January. Parker says while the North has promised to honor the secession, "75 percent of the oil fields actually lie in the South, but the pipelines flow north into North Sudan."

Haggling out who gets what rights is likely to be marked in flare-ups of violence. Already, in disputed border areas, an alleged ethnic cleansing by Khartoum government forces has sent hundreds of thousands fleeing.

The United Nation estimates that roughly 400,000 southerners

living north of the new border are expected to return before the end of the year. Kids Alive has three children's homes and a school operating in Khartoum. Parker says the impact of the secession has already been felt.

"A lot of the kids that we've worked with have moved with their families," he explains. "What we've seen is that our work in the North is being reduced. We're actually merging two of our children's homes together. We haven't got enough children to start a school program again this year."

The staff is making preparations to absorb the changes in the North. "What we can see is that our program there will contract, but correspondingly, our program in the South, where we have children's home, I think will grow significantly."

The Good Shepherd Home is in the city of Wau. It consists of a Care Center serving about 40 street children and a Children's Home for the most vulnerable children. With such a need shifting to this area, there are plans to grow this critical ministry. "Certainly, our team is committed to sharing the love of Christ. At times like this, where there is turmoil, where there is uncertainty, it does create opportunities."

Kids Alive is focused on fulfilling needs of children through Christ-centered care, education and ministry, and bringing them up to become faithful followers of Jesus and pillars of their community.

"Pray for Kids Alive as we continue to be committed to working with street children to be working with orphans and vulnerable children in Sudan," Parker asks. "Pray that we would make wise decisions as we consider our future work in the North. Pray for the funding that we need to develop our work in the South."