

South Sudan Celebrates One Year of Independence

Jubilant celebrations greeted the independence of South Sudan one year ago. But since then, the fledgling country has lurched from one crisis to another.

On July 9, the country marks its first anniversary as an independent state.

Arthur Mist, a World Vision program manager for South Sudan based in Britain, says there can be no doubt that the country faces some incredibly tough challenges, including tensions with neighboring Sudan, internal conflicts, and a too heavy reliance on oil revenues.

He adds the country has some of the worst human development indicators in the world, with up to half the country facing hunger, high levels of child mortality, and a mass influx of returnees and refugees from the north.

Despite the overwhelming need, Kon V. Dimo, a World Vision regional program manager who has worked in the Upper Nile and Western Equatoria regions, has seen the country's potential.

"I saw children rushing to schools. Though most of them are extraordinarily thin, they are enjoying a rare privilege that many preceding generations of their brothers and sisters couldn't enjoy," Kon says.

A major contributor to South Sudan's woes is the ongoing dispute with Sudan over valuable oil reserves.

Adding to the strain, in the last 18 months more than 350,000 South Sudanese have returned to their homeland putting further pressure on scarce resources.

Meanwhile, armed rebellions and inter-tribal fighting plague

no less than seven of the 10 states that make up South Sudan.

Despite the setbacks, World Vision has succeeded in strengthening aid programs for at-risk populations in Warrap, Unity, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Western Equatoria regions.

World Vision is distributing food and other essential supplies; providing child nutrition and healthcare programs; and improving water supplies by drilling new borehole wells and distributing water purification tablets.

In addition, agricultural programs aim to boost food production and generate new sources of revenue through agricultural exports.

Edwin Asante, World Vision's national program director for South Sudan, says the future holds a wealth of opportunities for the country's growth and development.

*With reporting by **Vikki Meakin**, a World Vision UK communications officer, and **Sandra Ndongye**, a World Vision South Sudan communications officer.*

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