



**SOUTH
SUDAN**



Project History (manga version)



PEACE AND UNITY THROUGH SPORTS



**SOUTH SUDAN'S FIRST "NATIONAL UNITY DAY"
AND ITS INAUGURAL OLYMPIC PARTICIPATION**



**SOUTH
SUDAN**

PEACE AND UNITY THROUGH SPORTS

I'm Mitsuaki Furukawa.
I was involved in a project that
I'm about to share with you
as the Chief Representative of
JICA South Sudan Office.

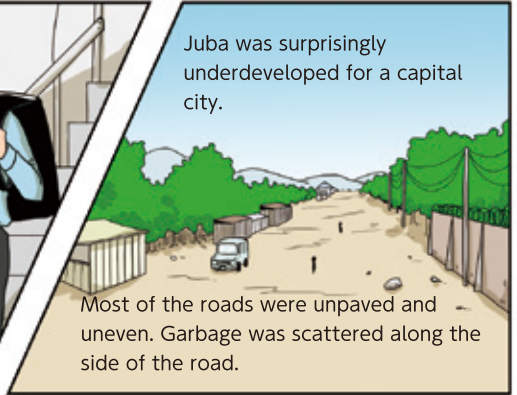


I visited Juba for the first time to
attend an investment conference
in early December 2013.



I landed at Juba International
Airport in a small propeller plane.

Juba was surprisingly
underdeveloped for a capital
city.



Most of the roads were unpaved and
uneven. Garbage was scattered along the
side of the road.

The Republic of South Sudan has
seen more than a half-century
conflict since old Sudan.



It gained its independence in 2011
as the youngest country in the
world.

This story is about those
who held out the hope of
realizing Peace and Unity in a country
that had experienced decades of conflict,
through hosting the first-ever
National Sports Event (National Unity Day)
and participating for the first time
in the Olympic Games.

The Republic of South Sudan

南スーダン共和国



The land area is about 640,000 square kilometers

The population: approximately 14.6 mil

人口約 1459 万人

Roughly 1/3 of the population, or 4.5 mil people, are either refugees or internally displaced people due to the repeated conflicts.

Juba, the capital



It is a landlocked nation in eastern Africa

中央アフリカ共和国
The Central African Republic

スーダン



6 国の国境と接している

Bordered by six countries

エチオピア
Ethiopia

コンゴ民主主義共和国
The Democratic Republic of the Congo

ウガンダ
Uganda

ケニア
Kenya

floodplains & wetlands

White Nile

ほとんどの土地がとても緩やかな勾配の

白ナイル川

Most of the country consists of the extremely gentle slopes of the White Nile

Quite an attractive country boasting numerous wild animals such as lions and elephants.

The southern regions

Annual rainfall

HIGH



Average yearly temperature is around

27 degrees

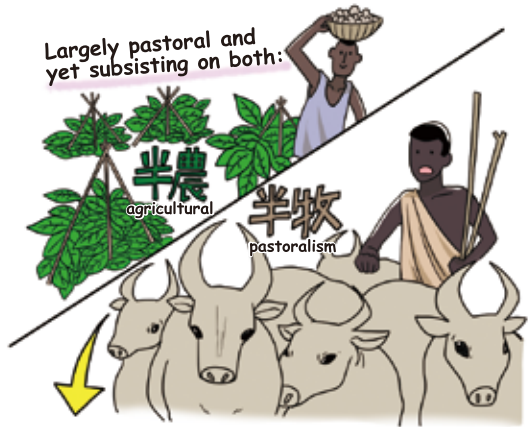
農業に Good! 適している

Having great potential for agriculture

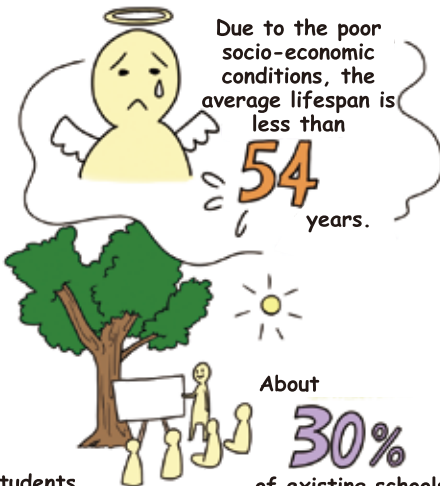




subsist by engaging in an agro-pastoralist lifestyle.



During the dry season, these largely pastoralist groups migrate in pursuit of water, which often leads to struggles over pastures for grazing and watering holes, as well as the common fighting over cattle.



Students at more than **30%** of existing schools have no roofs or walls.

60% of schools have no access to clean water or bathrooms.

98% of the schools lack electricity.

Only **3%** of Juba's population is supplied with water.

Primary school completion rate: **44%**

Literacy rate: **27%**

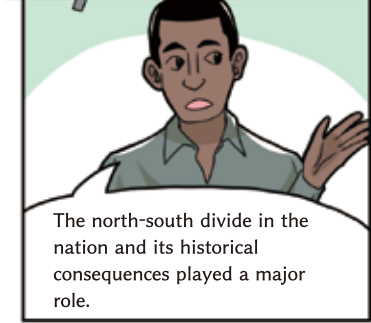
Lacking educational infrastructure.

Almost **98%** of the country's national income comes from oil...

The country is facing numerous challenges.



Can you tell us about the history of the conflict?



The north-south divide in the nation and its historical consequences played a major role.

Nilotic people are believed to have settled in what is now South Sudan by 1000 AD. The wetlands caused by the White Nile, called the "Sudd",

served as a barrier to transportation and, until the late 19th century, stymied entry by Europeans into the region. It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the Arabs settled in the northern Sudan region.

North and south were administered as separate countries. They had different administrative and legal systems, religions, and languages, and travel between them was restricted.

- 1821 During the Egyptian invasion of Sudan, traders began to settle for the purpose of capturing slaves, increasing the Arabization of the region.
- 1881 The Sudanese leader led an armed uprising against Egyptian rule, gaining control over all of Sudan.
- 1885 The Anglo-Egyptian forces toppled the Sudanese state.
- 1899 Britain introduced a system of "indigenous control," using traditional leaders to maintain control. Expelled the Arab population to insulate southern Sudan from further Arabization and Islamization.
- 1928 Under the British "blockade" of the south, travel between the north and south was restricted.

How about economic development?



The British invested in the economic and social development of the north, but not in the south.

That's how the north-south divide was created...

There are mainly two factors underlying the country's conflicts.

- ① Ethnic conflict over livestock and land
- ② Confrontations between the military and the opposition's armed groups

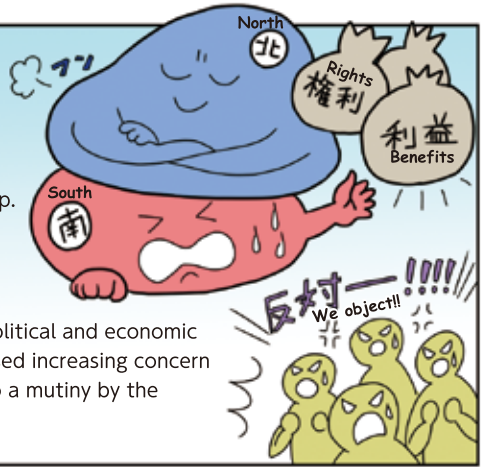


Could you also tell me about the Civil War?

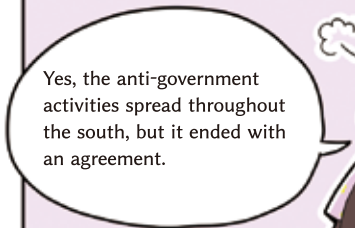


Sudan achieved independence in 1956, under northern leadership.

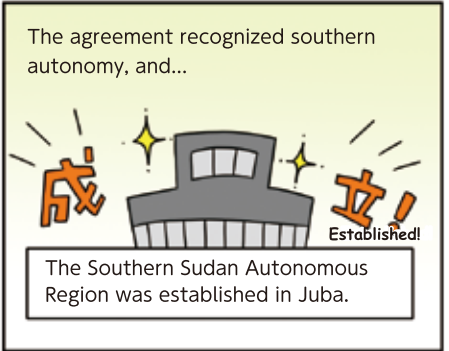
The north was given political and economic priorities, and this caused increasing concern in the south, leading to a mutiny by the southern soldiers.



And this eventually led to the First Civil War to oppose "colonization" of the south?



Yes, the anti-government activities spread throughout the south, but it ended with an agreement.



The agreement recognized southern autonomy, and...

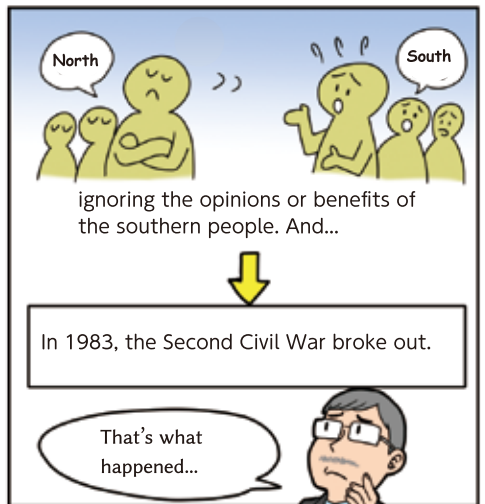
The Southern Sudan Autonomous Region was established in Juba.



How did the Second Civil War happen?



Well, oil was discovered near the North-South border. And because of that, the Sudanese government attempted to have the border changed,



ignoring the opinions or benefits of the southern people. And...

In 1983, the Second Civil War broke out.

That's what happened...

While the anti-mainstream faction pushed for an independent South Sudan, the mainstream faction advocated for a unified Sudan.



And that lasted for 22 years?

Yes. The Second Civil War is believed to have resulted in:

Dead
approx. **2 mil**

Refugees
approx. **600,000**

Internally displaced persons
approx. **4 mil**

On July 9, 2011, the Republic of South Sudan was established as an independent nation.



It was granted admission as the 193rd member of the United Nations!

Well yes, but...

Just as it seemed that the newly independent country was finally back on track—

On December 15, 2013

A clash broke out between members of the presidential guard!



Approx. 1.5 mil refugees

Plus 2.1 mil internally displaced persons

150万人
210万人

As a result, the number of South Sudanese in need of emergency humanitarian assistance rose to

4.1 mil.

410万人

The people in South Sudan are tired of the repeated conflicts.



Providing them with “tangible assistance” is necessary,



but “assistance that gives hope” is also important.

What’s needed for them right now is building up trust

and solidarity among people, isn’t it?

November, 2014.

As I had been involved with the implementation of development aid at the operational level, I was appointed as the Chief Representative of the JICA South Sudan Office.

Based on our experience of evacuating,

we should all live together for security purposes.

Hi!

Tomoki Kobayashi

Shimpei Taguchi

Tomohiro Kuwabara

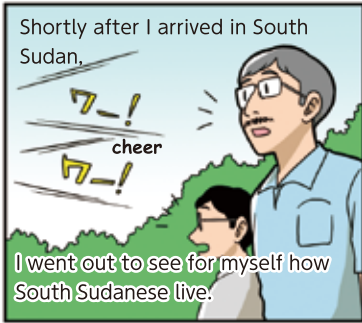
Four men in a house!

Reminds me of a training camp!

We are not allowed to leave Juba. We have to make a lot of adjustments

but let’s get through this together!

We left for work together, worked together, returned home together, and took turns making dinner.



Shortly after I arrived in South Sudan,

I went out to see for myself how South Sudanese live.



I see young people playing soccer in every corner of the city. Looks fun.

Shall we play it too?



We got so absorbed in the game. Then I looked around...



Oh

chatter

chatter



Do you guys want to join us?

Can we? Sure!

We invited these spectators to play with us, and many of them accepted.



Once we play soccer together, age and nationality don't matter.

We instantly become friends.

That sense of unity is what sports can bring.



Can sports build peace by bringing people together and encouraging interethnic interaction and solidarity?

Well, sports did play an important role in Japan's postwar reconstruction.

We started to ponder the idea of peacebuilding through sports.

I decided to visit the South Sudanese MOCYS* and was able to meet with the director.

Wow
おあ...

Nice to meet you!

Actually, I've always wanted to meet the JICA Chief Representative.

I'm glad! Could you share with us about the current situation of sports in South Sudan?

Soccer is the most popular sport in the country,



followed by basketball.

The director in charge of sports

Edward 190 cm tall
He had been a national basketball player in the old Sudan!

When we were part of Sudan, the south was divided into three provinces.

From 1972 to 1983, a sporting event was held in these provinces, changing its location each time. The event lasted for fifteen days.



Fifteen days!!

I felt this event increased solidarity among us.

What South Sudan needs now is the formation of bonds between people without regard for their state of origin or ethnic group.

I really want to revive this national sporting event!

As we spoke, my sense of the possibilities for peacebuilding through sports increased.

Then I learned that South Sudan planned to take the necessary steps to become a member of the International Olympic Committee, sometime between April and June of 2015, as the world's youngest country.

Let me share a story about the Ivory Coast.

While Ivory Coast was experiencing continual conflict, World Cup qualifying tournaments were held.



Following a match, a player from Ivory Coast looked into the camera and said:

Men and women of Ivory Coast, from the north, south, center, and west! Forgive. Forgive!



Please lay down your weapons. Hold elections. All will be better.

While this was not the only reason, the fighting in the country came to an end within a week.

In another match,



although the members of the team were of players from different religions and regional backgrounds, they play as one.

The crowd who watched the game felt a sense of "solidarity". The entire country seemed to come together.



Sports can bring divided people back together.
I began to think we could attempt to use sports to achieve popular unity
in the same way in South Sudan.
If we held the nation's first national sports event,
it might help foster trust and unity and serve as a symbol of hope
for all of the young people in the country.

As we began preparing to support the national sports event, I turned to these two people for advice.



Masato Togawa
(Director General of the Department of Human Resources for International Cooperation)
JICA's soccer team coach



Eiji Inui
(Director General of the Africa Department)
The team's former coach

Is there any way for us



to carry out international cooperation through soccer?

Dr. Furukawa, let's visit JFA* with Ms. Miwa Ito, the Africa Department official



responsible for South Sudan!

We explained the situation in South Sudan, and they were interested in finding a way to help.



Gaining an understanding of the Japanese embassy was a must as well.



Soccer team?

Shall we form an "all-Japan" soccer team with the embassy, the JSDF**, and JICA?

Yes. We create a team uniform and play against local teams and the South Sudan Football Association's team.



I'm sure it'll foster camaraderie!

On the poorly maintained fields, we formed a team of players with different experiences and ages ranging from 20 to over 50 years.

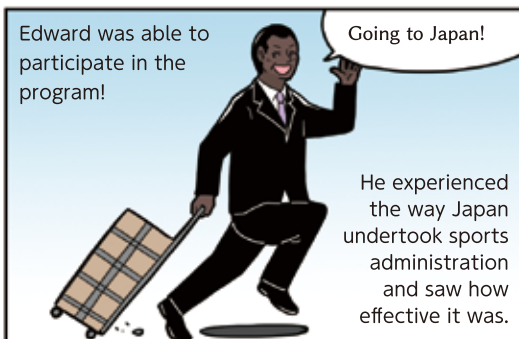


Once we started playing together, just as I expected, we experienced a sense of unity and solidarity.

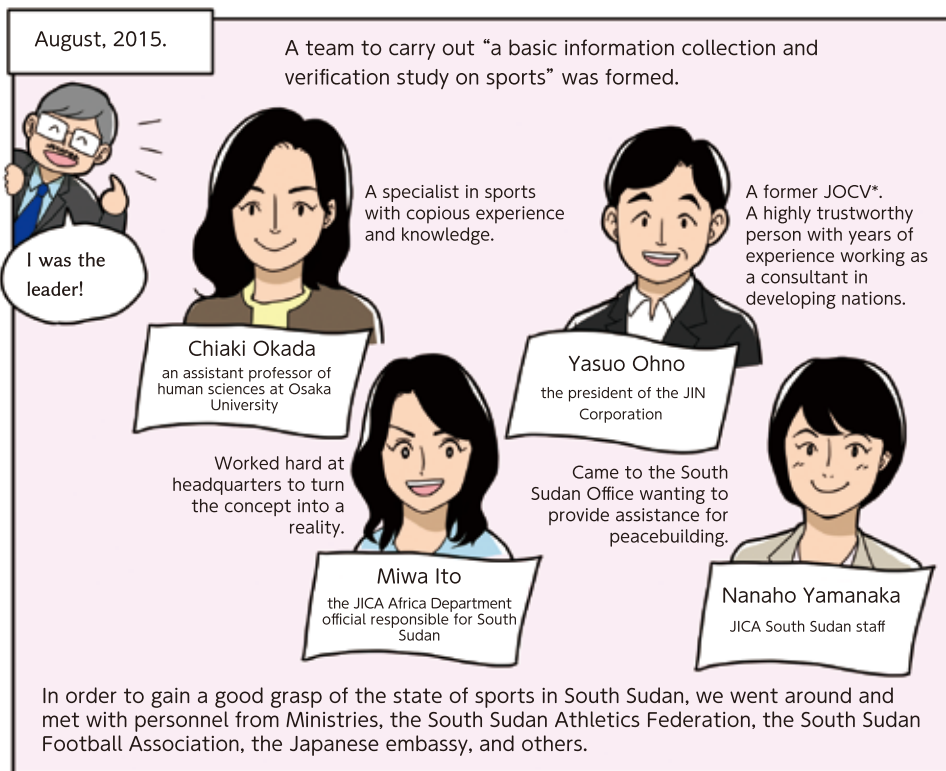
*JFA: Japan Football Association
**JSDF: Japan Self-Defense Forces

Sports are generally given a low priority in developing nations and rarely given any funding. The understanding and cooperation of Edward were needed.

I thought that he needed to visit Japan and see how the sports administration worked in our country with his own eyes before he could know whether to really trust JICA and whether working with us would be beneficial for South Sudan.



This helped him develop some understanding and trust towards JICA and Japan.



We decided to invite South Sudanese sports officials to Japan so that they could gain an understanding of how sports and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics were promoted.

And we held plan to have a national sporting event in South Sudan like the ones that had been held while it was part of Sudan.



It was also necessary for the Japanese to understand how sports administration was carried out in South Sudan to provide support.

Once they had completed their program in Japan and returned home, the attitude of the attendees changed completely.

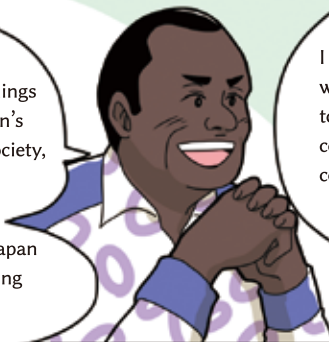
Undersecretary Agum Mabeny became quite proactive and positive when responding to us.



Edward reflected on his experiences in Japan and said:

Participating in the training allowed me to learn about many things such as sports management, Japan's history, reconstruction assistance, society, and culture,

and made me believe that Japan was a country worthy of being trusted.



I became convinced that JICA would absolutely keep its promises to us, even if it had to evacuate the country. I believed that they would continue to support us.

We were thus able to gradually obtain a mutual understanding of one another and build trust. With this, preparation for the national sports event picked up speed.

The primary figures from JICA

I will leave if I'm not assigned to the South Sudan Office!

Ms. Yamanaka

She was feeling very strongly about getting involved in peacebuilding.

She had experience working at the Japanese embassy in Sudan, and for an NGO which sent her to the harsh environment of northern South Sudan.

I ate stir-fried flying ants to live through!

Junko Uchida,
a project formulation advisor

An extremely talented member who is very sociable and skilled at bringing people together.

Mr. Taban

From the MOCYS,

Undersecretary Agum

Director General Edward

I teach at the University of Juba too!

Lemor William,
Leader of this team

The six figures were selected for the work.

With the personnel chosen, the two teams began work on the national sports event.

We felt strongly about making the first post-independence national sports event a success.

"What South Sudan needs today is the formation of bonds between people regardless of their state of origin or ethnic group." "We want to revive the national sporting event!"

Both teams met together every day for lively discussions of how best to make that dream a reality.

There are 3 goals!



- ① Strive to put on an event with such a visual impact that it would encourage further peace through sports
- ② Increase the event-hosting capacities of the organizations involved
- ③ Lead to future cooperation among the participants

The South Sudanese government named it

National Unity Day



Gather athletes from across the country

Events to be held in

JUBA

Types of Events

SOCCER



ATHLETIC & EVENTS



While feeling anxious about the ongoing fighting across South Sudan and having a little budget for the National Unity Day, we worked tirelessly to convince everyone involved that we must hold the event.

And we held the first meeting of all the states, but...

Important things **missing** in the MOCYS

- Means of communication with the states
- Computers, printers, and electricity to send letters
- Meeting space
- Means to coordinate communications
- Budget



So we lent them JICA's previous office.



The ministry was finally able to send letters to each state and in Oct. 2015,

the meeting was held!

But problems continued to arise.

Preparation of the training school and athletic fields,



securing mattresses for the 500 participants, procuring electrical generators and food, etc.



Tomomi Uchikawa, who was truly a key figure behind the support provided for National Unity Day, was appointed Senior Representative of the office in November 2015.



In January 2016, the first National Unity Day sports event since independence was about to begin.

I don't know how many states can actually send teams...

It must take courage for those young people who have never interacted with other ethnic groups to travel to distant Juba.

They may be scared of coming to Juba.

Contrary to our expectations,



however, about 350 athletes arrived.

The athletes, coaches, and officials who arrived in Juba were first taken to Rombur National Teacher Training Institute, where they would be staying.



As we wanted everyone to get to know each other, and form lasting bonds without regard for their states of origin or ethnicities, the rooms and meals were provided in a way that made it easy to interact with those on other teams.

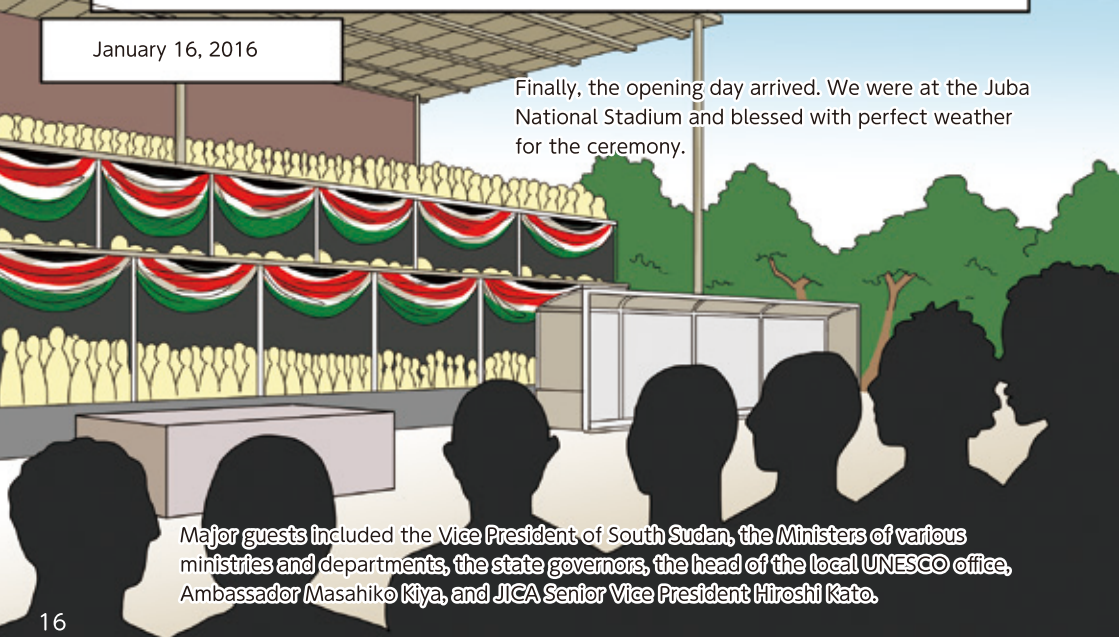
And mattresses were placed close together so that athletes could talk to each other.



For the athletes, it was an environment where they would come into contact with ethnic groups that they had always viewed with hostility.

January 16, 2016

Finally, the opening day arrived. We were at the Juba National Stadium and blessed with perfect weather for the ceremony.

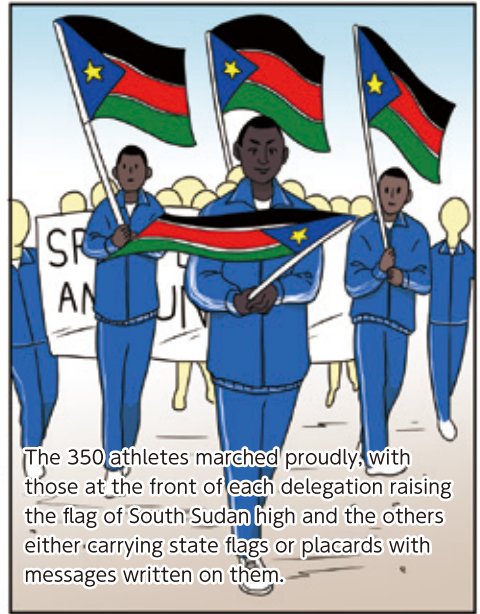


Major guests included the Vice President of South Sudan, the Ministers of various ministries and departments, the state governors, the head of the local UNESCO office, Ambassador Masahiko Kiya, and JICA Senior Vice President Hiroshi Kato.

When Vice President Igga arrived, the spectators and athletes cheered wildly.



As he was seated, the athletes began filing into the stadium, accompanied by the school and military bands.



The 350 athletes marched proudly, with those at the front of each delegation raising the flag of South Sudan high and the others either carrying state flags or placards with messages written on them.

The officials watching were greatly moved by the sight,



with some breaking into tears.

The Minister Rebecca Okwachi said with tears,

I never thought I would see this day come.

And the South Sudanese officials said in his speech,

What South Sudan most needs at this time is Peace and Unity.

Performances like traditional South Sudanese dances



and taiko drumming by the JSDF took place during the opening ceremony.



And a popular local singer Emmanuel Kembe sang “Our Unity,” a song that he had written at JICA’s request.

[part of the lyrics]

The star is shining up, is shining in the night and in the day

To show us the way, to show us the way to build new Sudan

To show us the way, to show us the way on how to live in unity and peace

Slowly, slowly, slowly, we will restore trust among ourselves

With music our unity can be strong and also with sport our unity can be strong

The opening ceremony was broadcast live on South Sudan TV and also widely covered in the country’s newspapers.



There were times when players collided and fell during the games, but members of the other team immediately lent them a hand and picked them back up. Both the athletes and the crowd showed nothing but fair play.

The major newspapers provided daily coverage of the matches, and Juba National Stadium was filled to capacity, about 6,000 people, for the finals. There were so many moving moments;



despite belonging to rival ethnic groups, the winners put their arms around the losers and praised them for the good showing they had put on.

The athletic events held at Buluk Athletic Field were also successful. Some of the athletes had no running shoes and competed barefoot. But, they all ran through.

The final day started with an incident; the athletes and coaches who had made it to the finals refused to play as it was the hottest part of the day.



But after changes in the schedule, the closing ceremony finally began.

A pleasant surprise was waiting.



The MOCYS has something for you!

A medal! Thank you so much...!



We planned it secretly.

And with that, the first National Unity Day sports event since independence safely came to an end.



Following the end of the closing ceremony, the athletes continued to mingle in the stadium, not wanting to leave.

Let's take a picture together!

We did a great job!

I hope to be able to see you in the next event...

Don't cry, we can meet again.



It was beautiful to witness how friendships were formed between the athletes through playing sports and spending time together.

In June 2015

The South Sudan National Olympic Committee (SSNOC) had been established.



The Rio de Janeiro Olympics being held in August 2016 were to be the first Olympics in which South Sudan would participate as an independent nation. It was decided that JICA would provide support for South Sudanese participation in the Olympics.

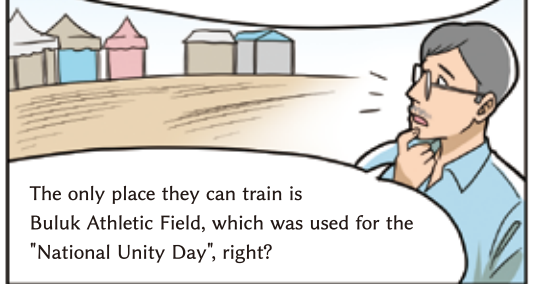


With the country's unstable security situation, not much progress is being made on a peace agreement. Besides the national budget is in red.



Well, let's look at the bright side. It seems like South Sudan might be able to compete in track and field events!

Yes. We must support those 19 chosen athletes to reach the "qualifying standard" in order to be allowed to compete in those events.



The only place they can train is Buluk Athletic Field, which was used for the "National Unity Day", right?

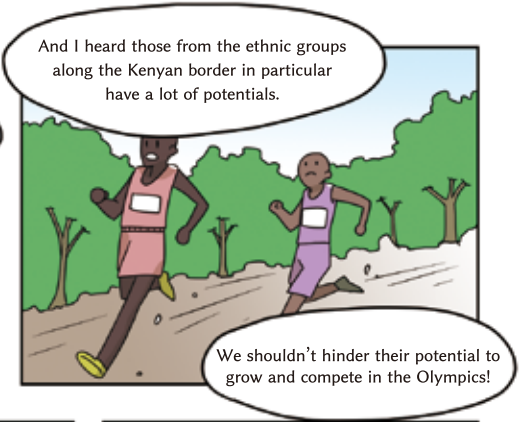
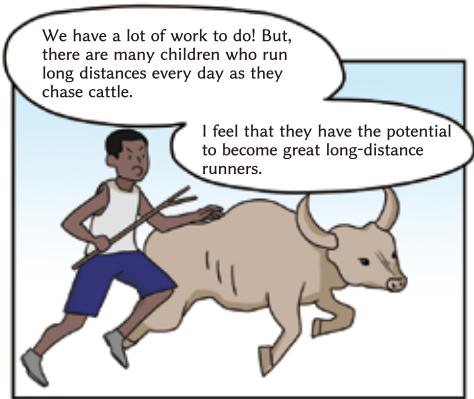
Yes. That field has no fence. People and motorcycles can enter freely. Its grounds were in a poor state, with many stones like a vacant lot.



So we asked the JSDF to improve the conditions of the field, but they had been training there before these improvements.

We also lack athletic equipment and uniforms! And we need to train qualified coaches and referees and secure revenue sources to fund athletic training!

The javelin throwers have no actual javelins and have to make do with substitutes, or the country only has a single mat for the high jump...



I learned that the athletes had to reach the standards in international competitions to qualify for the Olympics, and that the athletics competition being held in June 2016 would be their last chance to do so.

Five yellow stick figures are cheering with their arms raised. Above them is the text "We'll make it!".

We thus assisted South Sudan in sending the 14 athletes and prayed that they would reach the required standards.

The result was— not a single athlete was able to reach the required standard.

Five yellow stick figures are standing under vertical rain lines, looking sad with their heads down.A portrait of a man with short black hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt, looking directly at the camera.

However, for track and field, we then learned that a single male and female athlete were allowed to participate unconditionally, as well as Guor Marial, who had competed in international marathon competitions

as one of the “Lost Boys of Sudan”, children who had been forced to leave their homes during the civil war. In addition to these three athletes, we prepared to send their coaches.

Then...

On July 8, a mere month before the start of the Olympics, the second large-scale conflict between the government and opposition since independence erupted in South Sudan.

July 2016

Ms. Yamanaka was meeting with Edward and members of the SSNOG at the MOCYS

What??

Now??

when he suddenly told her to quickly return to our office. And so she did.

We did not realize that this was the beginning of large-scale fighting in Juba.

The chaos spread across the entire country.

This conflict would ultimately create 1.85 mil internally displaced persons and 1.77 mil refugees out of a population of 12 mil. Nearly a third of the population would lose their homes in this terrible tragedy.

We did what we could to ensure our safety,

Dr. Furukawa!

but we were finally forced to evacuate back to Japan.

At the airport, we were seen off by the office's security officer, drivers, and local staff, who had come despite the risk to their safety.

I promise!
I will come back here!

I will come back here and continue our assistance!!

As soon as I returned to Japan,

I met with the JICA President and reported on the situation.



How is the work on the Olympics going?

Has the President still not given up on sending the Olympics teams in this situation?

Well...



Is it really possible for South Sudan to participate in the Olympics which will be held very soon?

Isn't it precisely because of the difficult situation they face that it is important to foster unity and pride among them?

Now is the time for both parties from South Sudan and JICA to speak to them about Peace and Unity.



JICA thus made the decision not to abandon its efforts supporting South Sudan's participation in its first Olympics.

There were only three weeks remaining before the opening ceremony for the Rio Olympics.

The athletes chosen to participate were:



women's 200m

Margret Rumat Hassan



men's 1500m

Santino Kenyi Waryang Kenyi

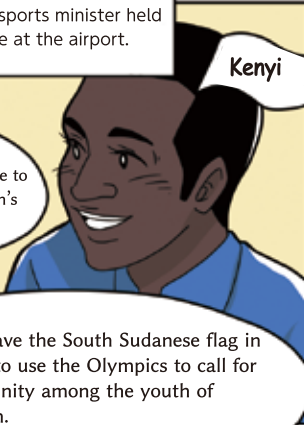


men's marathon

Guor Marial

The athletes and sports minister held a press conference at the airport.

Kenya



I'm excited about being able to participate in South Sudan's first Olympics.

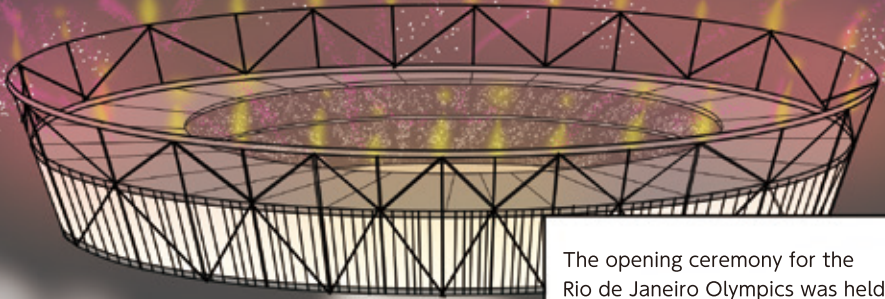
I want to wave the South Sudanese flag in Rio. I want to use the Olympics to call for Peace and Unity among the youth of South Sudan.

Sports have the power to bring people together. The South Sudanese government will continue to promote sports for Peace and Unity in South Sudan.

Nadia Arop Dudi
Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports

And we thank JICA for their assistance. I hope to send more athletes to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

August 5, 2016.

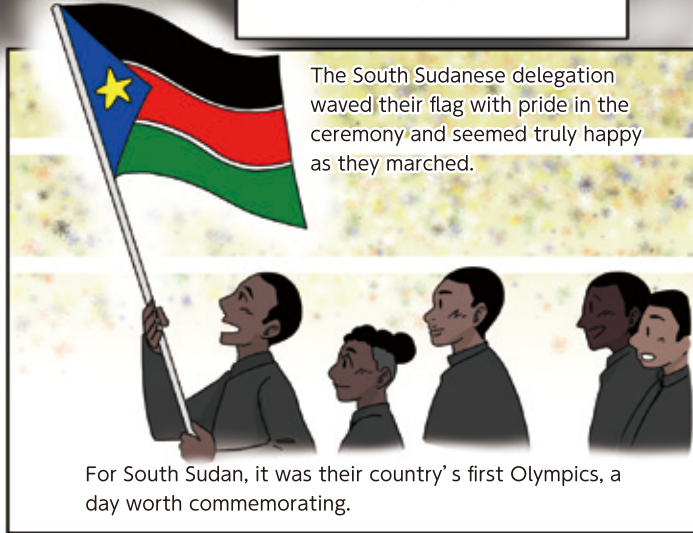


The opening ceremony for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics was held.

We cheered on the athletes from Japan.



The South Sudanese delegation waved their flag with pride in the ceremony and seemed truly happy as they marched.



For South Sudan, it was their country's first Olympics, a day worth commemorating.

After the opening of the event, we heard feedback from the local officials.

We participated in the Rio Olympics as South Sudan this time, raising its flag high. It was very emotional. It didn't matter whether our athletes won or not, not at all. Our country took pride in just having them there at the Olympics as representatives of our nation.



The South Sudanese
Undersecretary of
Education

A cartoon illustration of a man with short black hair, smiling broadly. He is wearing a white button-down shirt with purple and blue circular patterns. The background behind him is yellow.

Director General
Edward

In the midst of discussions with the ICA staff on Olympic participation, a major conflict broke out. I believed that no matter what happened, JICA would continue to give us their support. I knew that you had evacuated the country, but I absolutely believed that you would still give us your support. I remember that you called me just before you evacuated. I was convinced that JICA would continue to support us despite the conflict.

A cartoon illustration of a man with short black hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light yellow shirt, and a green tie. The background behind him is green.

Dr. Tong Chor Malek Deran
the Secretary General of the SSNOC

Our country is still young and our team is very small, but this is just the start. This is our start on the way to Tokyo in 2020.



At the Olympics, where the whole world was watching, the South Sudanese athletes entered the stadium and waved their flag high.

They hoped the world to recognize South Sudan as a nation, give hope to the country's young people, and make an appeal for national Peace and Unity.

These were the wishes of those involved.

Later we reflected on various aspects of this project.

The young people who gathered for the National Unity Day spent time

interacting with people from other regions and ethnic groups for 10 days.

I was very concerned that these young people, who used to fear that they would be killed if they went to Juba, could actually interact with those from rival regions.



But almost all of them said they were able to talk with them.

They interacted constantly, both as they slept and ate at their lodgings and during their free time.



They practiced in their free time and saw events together.

Nearly all the athletes made friends from other regions through their interactions. They told me that they would keep in touch.



Some told me that this led them to understand the importance of peacefully coexisting with other ethnic groups.

One even said that he now understood their culture

and would no longer regard them as bad people.



These kinds of interactions promote peace in the country. National Unity Day has become part of the peacebuilding process.

The athletes taught me that it's possible to develop friendships and lead to Peace and Unity if we take a courageous step forward.



A 20-year-old male soccer player

I became aware of the importance of peace. We all slept together peacefully and shared time together. I think it is very important that we all work together for the common benefit of our country.



As we all gathered together and slept and ate together, I realized that we're all not that different.

A 19-year-old female volleyball player

I learned about peace, how we South Sudanese can respect one another, and how to better understand myself. I learned about the large role that sports can play in bringing Peace and Unity to our region.



I want to promote regional peace through volleyball. And I want to share the things I learned here with the people of my region.

A 16-year-old female track athlete

Peace is being together without fighting, and that's something that happened here.



It made me think that our country can develop in peace.

A 16-year-old male soccer player



Through National Unity Day, I learned that it is possible for everyone to overcome language and culture and learn from one another. I believe that National Unity Day created peace, love, and harmony between the spectators from different regions. When I first arrived in Juba, I was nervous.

But when I met the team that first night, they were calm and friendly and shared bathrooms, sleeping spaces, and soccer fields with me.

I don't think that I will be worried about coming to Juba in the future. That's because I made friends who accepted me and who I can communicate with. And if people from other ethnic groups or regions come to my region, I think I want to be with them.

I would also like to share with you a survey we later took of the general public who came to see “National Unity Day”.

I became more sociable towards people in my daily life.

Before participating, I didn’t know why peace was important to society, but I returned home with positive feelings afterwards.

I became able to interact with people from other states with confidence.

I learned the importance of coexisting with other communities.

National Unity Day changed my negative attitude towards people from other regions to something positive.

National Unity Day changed my life from something bad to something good. I became able to love things from other regions.

I felt that people from other states were bad and that I couldn’t love bad people. But I’ve begun to like people from other ethnic groups.

By creating friendships among the spectators and athletes, we South Sudanese become more united.

I’ve come to see them as harmless and no longer need to feel the stress I did in the past.

Interaction brings about peace and turns people into friends. For example, the people I met here today will be my friends forever.

The play of the athletes gave me an understanding of peace, solidarity, and social unity. As they played, I was able to see the spirit of peace.

All of the 110 spectators who completed the JICA survey afterward said that their perceptions and attitudes had been changed by their experience.

The goal of the National Unity Day, participation in the Olympics, and other sporting events was—

the realization of a society where preconceptions and prejudices born from factors like



place of origin, ethnicity, and gender are done away with, one where people recognize the value of diversity and respect one another.

Over the process of the first three National Unity Day sports events, the right of support for this concept has expanded.

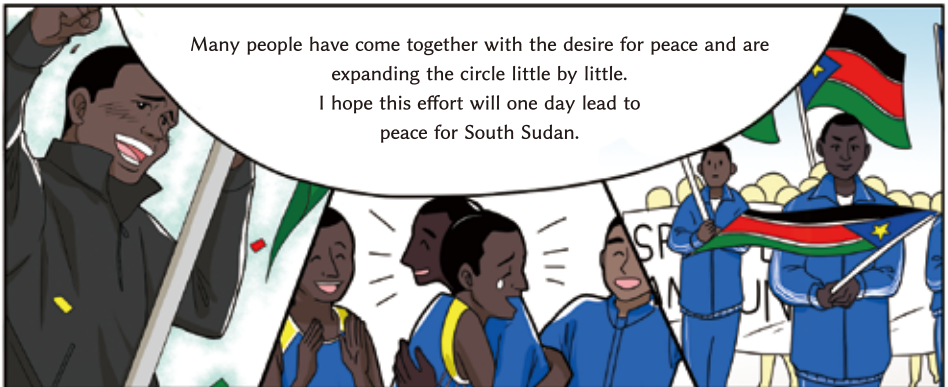


Edward's wish

What the South Sudan of today needs is the formation of bonds between people without regard for their state of origin or ethnic group.

I really want to revive this national sporting event.

Many people have come together with the desire for peace and are expanding the circle little by little. I hope this effort will one day lead to peace for South Sudan.

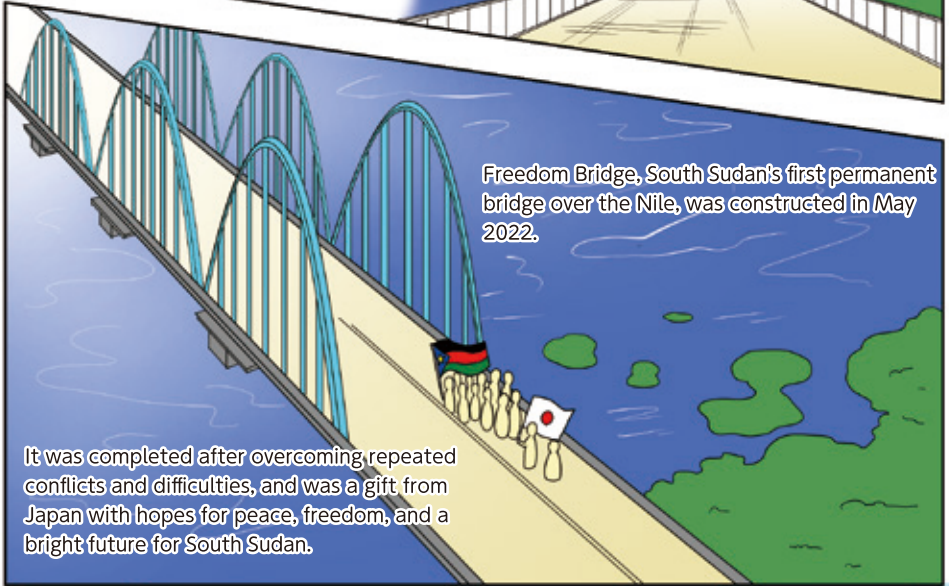


And one day, I want to see everyone, holding hands, crosses the "Freedom Bridge" together.



Freedom Bridge, South Sudan's first permanent bridge over the Nile, was constructed in May 2022.

It was completed after overcoming repeated conflicts and difficulties, and was a gift from Japan with hopes for peace, freedom, and a bright future for South Sudan.



Taban Awadi, who had come to watch the final match of the National Unity Day with his 4 year-old son Kawo, said;

I was raised by my mother as my father was off fighting for independence. Now that I have become a father myself, I want to remain at his side.

I want South Sudan to become a peaceful country where sports are played every day.





The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to promote international cooperation and provide assistance to developing countries, as a sole Japanese governmental agency in charge of Official Development Assistance (ODA) implementation. “Leading the World with Trust” as its vision, JICA, with its partners, will take the lead in forging bonds of trust across the world, aspiring for a free, peaceful and prosperous world where people can hope for a better future and explore their diverse potentials.

Peace and Unity through Sports

South Sudan is the world’s youngest country, having become independent from Sudan on July 9, 2011, after a half-century of civil war. However, in December 2013, just two years and a half after gaining independence, fighting broke out. Although a peace agreement brought about an interim government, the situation remained unpredictable.

“We want to call on the people of South Sudan to unite as one through sports in the spirit of fair play.” In an effort to realize this earnest wish of the government of South Sudan, JICA supported the holding of a national sporting event. The South Sudan government named the event “National Unity Day,” and with the cooperation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and Japanese companies in the country, the first event was held in January 2016 since independence day. Since then, JICA has supported the holding of the National Unity Day every year.



For more information please check this out!



South Sudan's National Sports Event "National Unity Day"

Unite South Sudanese
beyond regions
and ethnic groups

Give young people
dreams and hopes

Cultivate a desire
for peace

Foster children's physical
development and
cooperative thinking

JICA's Support through Sports

JICA also supported South Sudan's participation in its first Olympic Games. On July 8, 2016, just as the athletes were scheduled to be announced, conflict erupted again in South Sudan, forcing the Japanese staff of the JICA South Sudan office to flee the country. Despite these challenges, three track and field athletes were able to participate in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August of the same year, and two track and field athletes were able to participate in the Tokyo Olympics. JICA continues to support the realization of "Peace and Unity through Sports" through the participation of the South Sudanese athletes in the Olympics and the holding of "National Unity Day" in South Sudan.





Copyright© 2023 The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Supervised by: Mitsuaki Furukawa

Manga created by: birujiros

Script written/ Designed by: ROOM810, Inc.

Issued in: March 2023

Check out the Project
History Book here



This is a translated edition of the manga, which was created based on the Project History Book written by Mitsuaki Furukawa "Peace and Unity through Sports : South Sudan's First 'National Unity Day' and Its Inaugural Olympic Participation".