

PEACE AND UNITY THROUGH SPORTS

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

Mitsuaki Furukawa



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its Inaugural Olympic Participation

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JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute
for Peace and Development

Cover: March at South Sudan's First national sports event "National Unity Day"
(Photograph courtesy of Ayako Oi)

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Foreword

This book is about the efforts to promote “Peace and Unity” through sports in the Republic of South Sudan following its independence in 2011. The author, Mitsuaki Furukawa, was involved throughout this process as the Chief Representative, JICA South Sudan Office. The book records the struggle of one Japanese person, along with a great many South Sudanese people, who held out the hope of realizing Peace and Unity in a country that had seen more than 50 years of conflict, both before and after its independence. It also documents the struggle to host the first-ever National Sports Event (National Unity Day) and participate for the first time in the Olympic Games.

There are three special characteristics of this book. The first is the fact that the Japan International Cooperation Agency, or JICA, had the rare opportunity to contribute to these historical events by facilitating the hosting of the First National Unity Day shortly after the country became independent, and by supporting South Sudan’s participation in its first Olympics. In addition, this cooperation was provided in the area of sports to bring about Peace and Unity, which was a new challenge for the many officials and staff involved. It was a first for Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) as well.

In light of the above, the second characteristic of this book is the fact that it describes in careful detail the process of realizing this unprecedented project, from the inception of the idea through to the realization of the support for it, including all of the issues and problems that were faced along the way. The Government of South Sudan, amid continuing conflict and a worsening economic situation, had to decide on the rules for the hosting of the National Unity Day, develop the procedures for choosing athletes, and make all of the other arrangements themselves. Working together, the South Sudanese government and JICA brought in many people to address each of the various problems that arose, making it possible to successfully host the historic National Unity Day. However, conflict broke out again on the eve of the Second National Unity Day, making it necessary for JICA staff to leave the country. Despite this, JICA staff members were able to support the participation of South Sudan in their first Olympics. The experiences in this book provide a concrete example to follow for other countries in need of Peace and Unity.

Finally, the cooperation shared in this story is very much a result of Japan's knowledge and experience. Japan's annual hosting of its own National Sports Festival, popularly called Kokutai, and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, which symbolized Japan's recovery from World War II, as well as preparations for hosting the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic), greatly assisted in aiding South Sudan's path to Peace and Unity. Moreover, in addition to the government and people of South Sudan, the Japan Self-Defense Forces were involved in assisting the country. Finally, it would not have been possible to realize National Unity Day without the wisdom of the Japanese and South Sudanese people.

This book is number 23 in our "Project History" series in Japanese and is the third English-language volume of the series. The Project History series is dedicated to carefully documenting the individual facets of projects that JICA has cooperated in, while at the same time seeking to recreate the history from a larger perspective. In addition, the individual authors include important messages in the text based on their personal insights and experiences. This book is the first to explore support for peacebuilding through sports and may be an interesting example of a new type of international cooperation by Japan. I will be happy if this book and others in the series can provide a reference for the reader in order to help his or her understanding of and research into these issues.

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Prologue

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe introduced JICA's role in his policy speech before the 193rd Parliament on January 20, 2017, in which he discussed the importance of making a proactive contribution to peace. Specifically, he talked about JICA's support for a national sports event that would contribute to the peace and independence of South Sudan. The Government of South Sudan named the event National Unity Day.

As Prime Minister Abe stated,

At South Sudan's first national sporting event since the country gained its independence, athletes from different regions and ethnicities gathered together and marched into the main venue proudly with their country's brand-new flag in their hands. As chance would have it, the soccer final held on the final day of the event was a match pitting politically opposed ethnic groups against each other. However, the players and the spectators remained committed to fair play throughout the match. At the end of the match, members of the winning team put their arms over the shoulders of the members of the team that lost, and the players praised each other on putting up a good fight. A Juba City resident who had taken their young son to watch the match expressed how moved they were by the actions of the players saying, "I hope South Sudan becomes the kind of peaceful country where sports can be played every day."

What was this National Unity Day—the first-ever National Sports Event in post-independence South Sudan—that Prime Minister Abe referred to in his speech? Much of the reporting in Japan about South Sudan is negative, regarding its repeated conflicts or the internal mishandling of the daily activity reports of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) regarding the safety of the area to which they were assigned. In many of the books and articles, South Sudan is presented as a dangerous country to which the JSDF were sent. Moreover, why was a National Unity Day held in such a dangerous country, and why did a Japanese Prime Minister refer to it as a model for his "Proactive Contribution to Peace" program?

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 a year and a half after gaining independence, fighting broke out between presidential guards that spread into a civil war. Even

though a peace agreement brought about an interim government, fighting broke out again with the guards in July 2016, leading to a nationwide conflict.

Despite its independence, South Sudan has continued to see fighting and violence. In order to bring people from the various regions and ethnic groups together through sports, the first-ever national sports day was held in January 2016, in which 350 male and female athletes from nine cities around the country came together for eight days to compete in soccer and track and field events. Despite the on-again, off-again peace negotiations and concerns by spectators about the security of the venue, the event was held successfully, with players and spectators demonstrating fair play throughout. This event came to symbolize Peace and Unity for the country.

However, the road to National Unity Day was not an easy one. As civil war and fighting continued, the economic situation worsened, and the Government of South Sudan found itself in a desperate financial state. Not only was there no money for that government's Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MOCYS) to sponsor a national sporting event, there was not even enough money to pay its officials. Moreover, while there was a national soccer stadium of sorts in the capital city of Juba, it was in a state of disrepair, and worse, there was no level ground or running track for the athletic events. Furthermore, no one in the country had the experience required for organizing and running a national sporting event. Everything had to be done from scratch: drawing up the rules, deciding on the qualifications for the competitors, etc. Despite these troubles, the staff of the JICA South Sudan Office and the MOCYS did not give up. By involving the Japan Self-Defense Forces, Japanese companies, and others who were already located in-country, we were able to resolve the various challenges one-by-one and hold the event.

The National Sports Event was a huge success, and as its next goal, the MOCYS set its sights on participating in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, to be held that August. South Sudan had yet to participate in the Olympics as a nation. South Sudanese wanted to raise their flag at the games, be watched by people around the world, and be publicly recognized as a country. Moreover, the MOCYS hoped that the participation of athletes from South Sudan would contribute to national unity, as the people would be cheering for their countrymen and countrywomen, and

not just someone from their ethnic group or region.

However, many problems stood in the way. South Sudan did not have proper sports facilities and only had limited money for travel to sporting events. Even if it had potent athletes, these men and women had limited experience of participating in international games, and there were few who had cleared the minimum qualifications to join the Olympics. Moreover, they were unable to find a way to raise the money to travel all the way from Africa to Brazil in South America. JICA helped as much as it could, and in July, with one month to go before the Olympics, it finally seemed that the South Sudanese athletes would be able to participate.

July 8, 2016 was supposed to be the day when the list of members of the first-ever South Sudan Olympic squad was to be announced. However, fighting broke out within the Presidential Palace in Juba between factions of the president and vice president that same day. As the situation worsened, Japanese staff members at the JICA South Sudan Office were told to stay home, and on July 13, when the conflict got out of control, the JICA staff evacuated South Sudan for Japan. With the date of their return to South Sudan unclear, the staff supported the participation of the South Sudanese squad in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics from Tokyo.

Subsequently, the members of the JICA South Sudan Office relocated operations to neighboring Uganda and supported the in-country activities from there. Since the first National Sports Event in 2016, JICA has supported National Unity Day annually in January. At the opening ceremony of the 3rd National Unity Day in 2018, a congratulatory message from Japan Sports Agency Director General Daichi Suzuki was read out, including the remark that he “was looking forward to meeting everyone at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.”

In August that year, the Japanese staff of the JICA South Sudan Office were allowed to return to Juba in a fulltime capacity, and in January the following year (2019), JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka himself attended the 4th National Unity Day and stated,

As Kitaoka stated,

I want all those who are involved in the preparation process and the organizing process to share the factors essential for the development of South Sudan. They are: fairness, the acceptance of diversity and unity.

I sincerely look forward to seeing the 4th National Unity Day facilitate peace and social cohesion further.

It will likely take more time before peace is established in South Sudan, but I fervently hope that the process of building unity and cohesion among the ethnic groups and regions continues through the annual holding of the National Unity Day and participation in the Olympics.

I also hope the reader will learn a little more about South Sudan—a country you may not have had anything to do with before or even heard of—through this book. This is because it is an appealing country that, while possessing a dangerous image, also has diverse scenery and ethnic groups. Due to the repeated conflicts, the people of South Sudan are tired of fighting and earnestly want peace. I especially want the reader to know that there are Japanese people seeking to help South Sudan's hopes to become a reality. Japanese people can understand their desires. Japan hosted the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, which symbolized Japan's postwar recovery, and the Japanese people have overcome many large-scale disasters to rebuild the country. I hope that at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics—a celebration of peace—the countries of the world will proudly display their national flags and cheer on their athletes who are proudly competing on behalf of their countries. I also hope that South Sudan will one day become a peaceful country where sports can be played every day.

This book consists of seven chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of South Sudan, allowing the reader to become more familiar with a country that became independent only recently. It then introduces the history of conflict in South Sudan and the situation it finds itself in today.

In Chapter 2, based on my own experiences, I describe the reasons for the continued conflict in South Sudan. In particular, I look at the close relationship between conflict and the social culture of South Sudan, the relationship between ethnic groups and conflict, and the connection between youth and conflict.

Chapter 3 introduces the reasons why JICA became involved in supporting a National Unity Day in South Sudan. It begins by introducing an overview of the types of projects JICA has supported in South Sudan, one

of the least-developed countries in the world. Subsequently, it describes the reasons for supporting a new project known as a National Unity Day in a conflict-torn country.

Chapter 4 explains the important points of the National Unity Day and the efforts toward hosting it. The path towards its realization was not easy and involved larger problems and different solutions than first anticipated. It introduces how those involved were able to overcome the problems.

Chapter 5 introduces the hosting of the first National Unity Day after independence, how officials handled the hosting, and what their feelings were at the time.

In Chapter 6, I record the situation at the time that hostilities re-ignited in July 2016, necessitating the evacuation of Japanese personnel from the JICA South Sudan Office. I also introduce how South Sudan was able to overcome the civil war and participate for the first time in the Olympics held later that summer in Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter 7 presents, from the perspective of the athletes, spectators, and Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports officials, what it meant for South Sudanese to participate or otherwise be involved in the first National Unity Day and their first Olympics.

I published the original Japanese version of this book as Japan was gearing up for the 2020 Olympics, which unfortunately had to be postponed to 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The English version of the book was completed in the interim, and I hope you will enjoy it. I also kept in mind the feelings of my colleagues at JICA as we work toward implementing the 16th Sustainable Development Goal, "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions," and sought to reflect their accomplishments in this book.

On a final note, I should mention that this book is my own account of events of this time and does not necessarily represent the views of JICA.

Chapter 1: An Overview of South Sudan and the History of the Conflict

1) What Kind of Country is South Sudan?

When you hear the name “South Sudan,” what comes into your mind? Perhaps you think of it as the world’s most recent independent country. Or as a destination for the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). Maybe you think of a dangerous country, one that has seen repeated conflict. Or perhaps you think of it as an impoverished country whose development has fallen far behind.

As the author of this volume, I have worked at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for many years and have experience of providing ground-level development assistance in numerous developing nations. Before I ended up working in South Sudan myself, my mental image of the country was greatly influenced by the stories I had heard from colleagues who had been posted there. They had told me that even



Figure 1-1 South Sudan and Neighboring Countries

Juba, the country's capital, lacked tall buildings and that those living in less developed parts of the country lived in shipping containers that became extremely hot inside. I was warned of the risk of contracting typhoid from the local food. Given these conversations, I imagined an impoverished country, one with a low level of development, even for a developing nation. These were the thoughts in my head when I visited Juba for the first time to attend an investment conference in early December 2013.

Before joining JICA, I worked for two years in a major construction company in Japan after graduating from universities in the United States and Japan with economics degrees. However, I really wanted to contribute to developing countries and wrote a letter to the then-president of JICA and was hired. It was with this passion that I joined JICA in 1989, and twenty-four years later, I set out for South Sudan with the same passion.

I departed from Narita International Airport, but a delay meant that I missed changing planes in Ethiopia and ended up spending the night there. As I left for Juba the following morning in a small propeller plane, I

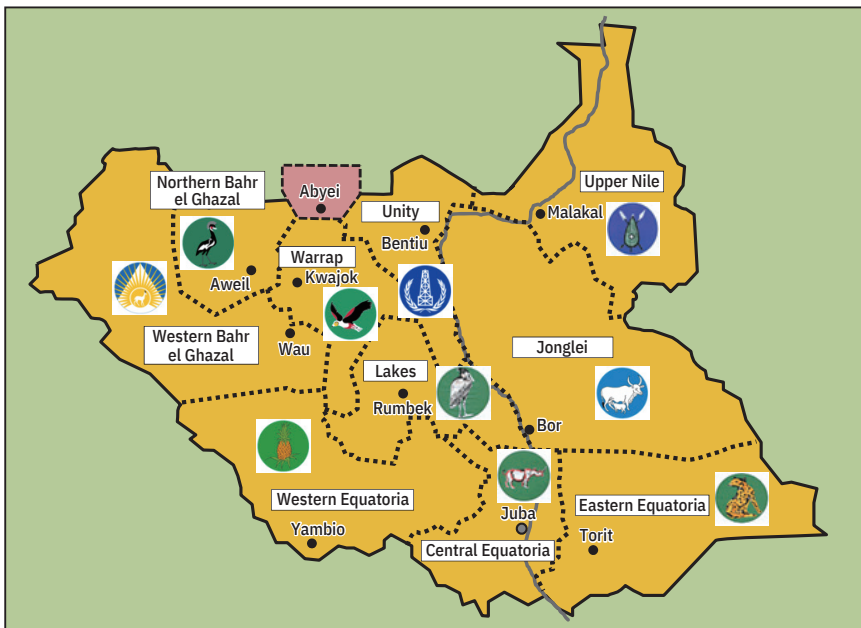


Figure 1-2 Republic of South Sudan

realized just how far the city was from Japan. In all, it took me three days to reach my destination. I landed at Juba Airport, which is quite small. It is incapable of supporting night flights and all its buildings only have a single story. Now that I had arrived, I had to obtain a visa, a process that took quite some time. The airport did not have an automated baggage handling system as there would have been in Japan or other countries. Instead, as bags were unloaded from the plane, they were carried to the baggage claim area by hand, one after another. The baggage claim was crowded and, as there was no air conditioning, it was extremely hot and humid. When bags were claimed, an attendant immediately marked them with chalk (no matter how expensive the bag). Having recovered my luggage, I finally made it out of the airport. As I did, I could immediately tell that Juba was underdeveloped to a degree that I had never imagined possible for a capital city. Most of the roads were unpaved and, because of the heavy rains of the rainy season, the dirt roads were extremely uneven. There were almost no tall buildings in the city, and numerous empty



Investment conference in December 2013.
Photograph courtesy of author



View from Mt. Jebel.
Photograph courtesy of author



View from author's compound.
Photograph courtesy of author



Street scene in Juba, where the roads are bumpy.
Photograph courtesy of author

water bottles lay scattered along the side of the road.

A large tent had been erected to serve as the venue for the investment conference, and it was overflowing with government officials and businessmen. The conference had a vibrant energy to it, and it made a strong impression on me. I was sure that this country—which had only become independent a year and a half earlier—would commit itself to the pursuit of economic growth and try to attract foreign investment.

As will be discussed in detail later, however, South Sudan's first large-scale conflict since independence broke out between the government and opposition just a week later, on December 15, 2013. As such, my image of South Sudan changed, and I began seeing it as a dangerous country where conflicts were a regular occurrence and as an impoverished country that lacked development. But after being posted there, I came to see something quite different. And it is for that reason that I would like to provide an overview of South Sudan and touch upon the history of its conflicts so that you, the reader, can learn more about it.

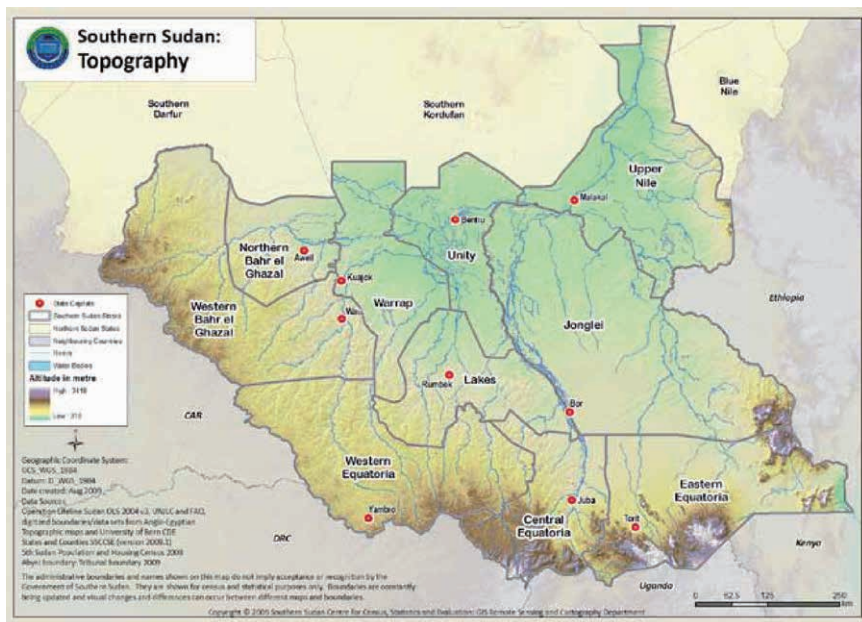


Figure 1-3 Geography of South Sudan

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2010). Southern Sudan Statistical Yearbook 2010, p.5.

2) An Overview of South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan (hereafter, South Sudan) is the youngest country in the world. It only gained its independence from Sudan and became the 193rd member of the United Nations on July 9, 2011. It has an area of about 640,000 square kilometers, making it 1.7 times larger than Japan. It is a landlocked nation in eastern Africa bordered by six neighbors: Sudan to the north, Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the south, the Central African Republic to the west, and Ethiopia to the east. The country has a population of about twelve million, roughly a third of whom are either refugees or internally displaced persons.

Geographically, its capital of Juba is located in the south of the country. Outside of the mountainous regions in the southeast near the borders with Kenya and Uganda and to the northwest near the Central African Republic, most of the country consists of the extremely gentle slopes of the White Nile's floodplains and wetlands (see Figure 1-3). The White Nile, which flows south to north through the center of South Sudan, originates

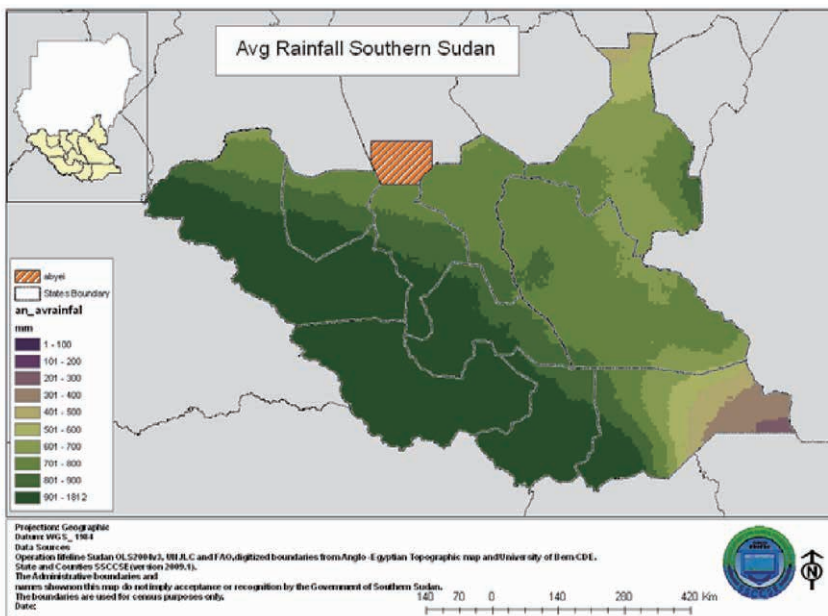


Figure 1-4 Average Rainfall in Southern Sudan
Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2010. p.5.

in Jinja in neighboring Uganda. A massive marshland known as the Sudd (from the Arabic word sudd, meaning “barrier”) stretches as far south as Bor, the state capital of Jonglei (one of the ten states of South Sudan). Even during the driest times of the year, the area of the Sudd is comparable to that of Denmark; during the rainy season, its size increases three-fold. As the Sudd has been registered under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, development of the area is restricted. South Sudan’s elevation ranges from 366 to 1,293 meters above sea level, with the capital of Juba having an elevation of 460 meters. All told, it is quite an attractive country boasting diverse environments and vistas, as well as numerous wild animals such as lions and elephants.

In terms of the weather, annual rainfall gradually declines as one moves from the southeast (which sees heavy rain) to the northwest. The southern regions bordering Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo see a relatively high 1,800 mm of rain a year and are believed to have great potential for agriculture. Meanwhile, along the border with Sudan, annual rainfall drops to a mere 500 mm. South Sudan’s neighbor Kenya is affected by monsoons from the Indian Ocean, and the border area between them is extremely arid (see Figure 1-4). The southwest of the country experiences two rainy seasons a year, stretching from April to November, while other regions have only a single rainy season that lasts from May to September. The national capital of Juba and the cities of Malakal in Upper Nile state and Aweil in Western Bahr el Ghazal state all have an average annual temperature of about 27 degrees Celsius (World Climate 2021).



The late Manute Bol. (Dinka tribe)
(At 231 cm, he was the tallest player at the time in the NBA)

Sixty-four ethnic groups live in South Sudan. The languages these groups speak belong to Western Nilotic, a language family that also stretches across Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The most notable of these ethnicities include the Dinka (to whom President Kiir belongs), the Nuer (to whom First Vice President Machar belongs), the Azande, the Shilluk, and the Bari. The Dinka are the largest ethnic group in the country, with the highest population, followed by the Nuer and the Shilluk.

The Dinka and Nuer, both very similar in terms of their culture and language, are largely pastoral and subsist by engaging in an agro-pastoralist lifestyle. They live in the north of the country in a stretch spanning from Bahr el Ghazal to Jonglei. The Shilluk, who live on the shore of the Nile in Upper Nile state, possess a unique political system (a type of divine monarchy). During the dry season, members of these largely pastoralist groups frequently migrate in pursuit of water, something that leads to frequent struggles over pastures for grazing and watering holes (as well as the common fighting over cattle). Members of these ethnic groups are known for their great height, a factor that has led a number of South Sudanese to play professional basketball in the NBA. One of these players, Manute Bol (a Dinka), was 231 cm tall and weighed 100 kg. His father was reportedly 203 cm tall, his mother 208 cm, and his great-grandfather 240 cm.

Meanwhile, many of the groups engage in sedentary agriculture and speak the local languages of the Bari peoples. These include Kuku, Pajulu (Central Equatoria), and Bari itself. There are also agro-pastoralist groups in Eastern Equatoria, such as the Lotuko, Acholi, and Didinga and Murle in the southwest of Jongli state.

Traditional animistic religions are the most common form of belief among South Sudanese peoples, followed by Christianity and Islam. Many Muslims live in the northwest as well as in the northern parts of Unity and Upper Nile states along the Sudanese border.

South Sudan is thus a country composed of a multitude of peoples, one blessed with diverse geography, climates, and cultures. Its irregular development has been shaped by a state of affairs that predates its current existence as an independent state. Even before the achievement of Sudanese independence in 1956, the region that is now South Sudan received little in the way of public services from the government, based in

Table 1-1 Main Social Sector Indicators in South Sudan

Area	Indicator	Numeric Value
Health	Years remaining after giving birth	42 years old
	Maternal Mortality Rate	2,054 persons/100,000 births
	Infant Mortality Rate	75 persons/1000
	Mortality Rate (under 5 years old)	105 persons/1000
	Vaccination Rate for Children under 2 years old	6.3%
	Assisted Births	19.4%
	Literacy Rate (over 15 years old)	27%
Education	Elementary School Attendance Rate	44.4%
	Intermediate School Attendance Rate	1.6%
Water / Hygiene	Access Rate to Improved Water Sources	55% (rural 67%, urban 53%)
	Amount of Potable Water in Humanitarian Crises	6 liters
	Usage Rate of Improved Hygienic Facilities	14.6% (rural 37%, urban 9%)

Source: OCHA (2011, 2012)

Sudan's national capital of Khartoum. And what did come was limited to and centered in a few cities, which reflected the government's intention towards the development of South Sudan. During the Sudanese civil wars, the little sanitation, health care, and treated water available in the region came from the United Nations, NGOs, and religious organizations. Under the Sudanese regime, southern Sudan's development had largely been neglected. For this reason, many of the people of South Sudan did not have access to basic social services, the results of which can be seen in Tables 1-1 and 1-2: social indicators that are generally among the lowest in the world. As a country, it is extremely poor with a per capita GDP of just US 790 dollars (World Bank 2015).

Due to the repeated conflicts that have plagued the country and the aforementioned inferior socio-economic conditions, the average lifespan in South Sudan is less than fifty years, and its social indicators are low even when compared to fellow African nations (many of which are also impoverished). While more than 80% of citizens in neighboring countries have graduated from primary school, only 44.4% of South Sudanese have,

Table 1-2 Regional Country Comparison of Social Sector Indicators

	Elementary School Attendance Rate		Literacy Rate (over 15 Years Old)		Maternal Mortality Rate/100,000 births		Improved Water Sources Access Rate	
Burundi	89.7	(2007)	66.6	(2009)	620	(2005)	72.0	(2010)
Ethiopia	81.3	(2010)	29.8	(2008)	670	(2005)	44.0	(2010)
Kenya	82.8	(2009)	87.0	(2009)	488	(2009)	59.0	(2010)
Rwanda	98.7	(2010)	70.7	(2009)	750	(2004)	65.0	(2010)
Tanzania	98.0	(2008)	72.9	(2009)	450	(2010)	53.0	(2010)
Uganda	90.9	(2010)	73.2	(2010)	440	(2006)	72.0	(2010)
South Sudan	44.4	(2010)	27.0	(2008)	2,054	(2006)	55.0	(2010)

Source: For South Sudan, National Bureau of Statistics.

For other African countries, World Development Indicators.

and the country suffers from a low literacy rate (27%). There is a lack of educational infrastructure such as schools, with about 30% of existing schools lacking roofs or walls and thus are left exposed to the elements. Many primary schools have class sizes of more than 120 students. Students at more than 60% of schools have no access to clean water or bathrooms, and 98% lack electricity. Education quality is another major concern, with 43% of the nation's 26,000 primary school teachers and 56% of its 2,700 middle school teachers having received no formal training. Roughly a third of primary school teachers receive no compensation and work as volunteers. The national electrification rate is 2%. Even in Juba, electricity only reaches 9.5% of the population.

In South Sudan, only 55% of the population (67% in urban areas and 53% elsewhere) have access to improved water sources. Juba's water infrastructure was built in the 1930s. While improvements continued to be made to this infrastructure through the 1970s, as with other urban infrastructure, it received very little in the way of maintenance during the civil wars. A new water treatment plant capable of providing 7,200 cubic meters of drinking water a day was completed by a multi-donor trust fund in May 2009, but this only raised the percentage of Juba's population supplied with water to 3%. Past humanitarian assistance efforts toward improving the water supply outside of the capital have been primarily focused on agricultural villages. While the level of access to improved water sources in these is thus higher than in the cities, there is still only an

extremely low level of water available: six liters per person per day. The South Sudanese government is working to construct new water supply facilities, rehabilitate and maintain existing infrastructure, and create a new community-based facility maintenance system. However, at present, 30-50% of water supply points are not being effectively managed.

There is extremely limited usage of improved sanitation facilities as well. The existing sewage infrastructure has not been adequately maintained, exacerbated by a failure to increase the number of septic tanks. It is thus commonplace even in cities for residents to substitute rivers and unoccupied land for sanitation facilities. Trash is typically disposed of in rivers or along the side of the road. While larger cities like Juba do offer some level of municipal trash collection services, this is extremely irregular and the trash that is collected is not ultimately disposed of in ways that are environmentally appropriate and sanitary.

Road infrastructure is a necessary prerequisite for socio-economic development, and South Sudan has roughly 8,000 km of major roads. Of these, only about 270 km are paved. There are 80 km of roads within Juba and a 192 km road connecting Nimule and Juba, over which 95% of freight travels from Mombasa, Kenya (this was paved in September 2012 through support from USAID).

Almost 98% of the country's national income comes from oil, and industries unrelated to oil production have not been adequately developed. The country faces a host of other serious problems as well: there is only inadequate provision of basic social services, social development indicators such as literacy are well below world standards, there is a serious shortage of skilled labor, and the region's security is unstable.

South Sudan's development has thus fallen far behind, the legacy of protracted civil wars and the contempt shown towards the region dating back to the colonial era.

3) History of the Conflict

Upon hearing the name South Sudan, many readers will picture a dangerous place. When JSDF personnel were dispatched to the country for peacekeeping activities in 2014, it was widely reported on by the Japanese media, particularly due to the expansion of the range of permissible JSDF

missions under the Shinzo Abe administration's 2015 security legislation. There was also a scandal over missing JSDF logs covering the daily activities of JSDF personnel. I would now like to take the time to provide a historical overview of the region's conflicts, including those dating from the period when it was still part of Sudan. This history is closely tied to one of the central subjects of this book, the holding of the National Unity Day sports event.

A major factor in these conflicts has been the region's north-south divide and its historical consequences. Nilotic people are believed to have settled in what is now South Sudan by 1000 AD. The wetlands caused by the White Nile (the Sudd) served as a barrier to transportation and, until the late 19th century, stymied entry by Europeans into the region, rendering it an "unknown frontier." With the exception of the Shilluk Kingdom, located along the lower reaches of the White Nile at the entry to the Sudd, residents of the region did not form political states, living instead in ways that were economically and materially simplistic (Ryle et al. 2011; Kurimoto 2004; Watanabe 2009).

Meanwhile, Arab settlement of the northern Sudan region dates back to the gradual expansion of Islamic influence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Funj Sultanate and the Sultanate of Darfur were established in the sixteenth century and Islam widely permeated the area. Following the Egyptian invasion of Sudan in 1821, traders gradually began to settle north of the Sudd (in what is Upper Nile and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states today) for the purpose of capturing slaves. This contributed to the increased Arabization of the region. In 1881, the Sudanese leader Muhammad Ahmad (called the Mahdi, an Arab term for the Messiah) led an armed uprising against Turco-Egyptian control known as the Mahdist Revolt. These efforts culminated in the victorious siege of Khartoum in 1885, after which he secured control over all of Sudan. A British army under Lord Kitchener was dispatched in 1898 as part of their efforts to gain control over Africa, and these Anglo-Egyptian forces ultimately toppled the Mahdist state the following year.

When Anglo-Egyptian rule of Sudan began, Britain introduced a system of "indigenous control," a policy of maintaining control through traditional leaders. Additionally, to insulate southern Sudan from further Arabization and Islamization, the Arab population was expelled from the region. Under the British "blockade" of the south, introduced in 1928, the

proselytization of Islam in the south was prohibited and travel between north and south was effectively severed.

British control of Sudan was thus characterized by a policy of “divide and rule,” with the Islamic society of the north separated from the south, where society was organized more along ethnic lines. North and south were effectively administered as separate countries: not only was travel between the two restricted but they had different administrative and legal systems, dominant religions (Islam in the north, Christianity in the south), and common languages (Arabic in the north, English in the south). The British invested in the economic development of the north to make the region self-sufficient by creating infrastructure, such as widespread irrigation and railroads. Similar investment in the south was not seen as worth the cost, and as such, did not occur. The same was also true of social services such as education, with little investment in the south. Instead, this aspect was delivered entirely by the church, which focused more on the pursuit of enlightenment through religion. These policies resulted in a north-south divide, not just in terms of economics but also in regard to whether or not citizens were able to participate in governance.

First Civil War

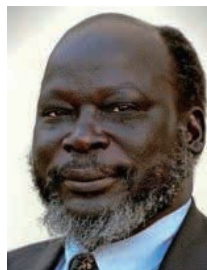
When Sudan achieved independence from Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1956, the new government operated under northern leadership, reflecting the political and economic priorities that had previously been given to that region. Northerners now held almost all governmental and administrative posts that had previously been controlled by the British (legislators, administrators, police officials, teachers, etc.). This monopolization of political and economic interests by the north caused increasing concern in the south, and soldiers mutinied in the southern city of Torit in 1955. While this revolt was soon put down, the mutiny served as the catalyst for the spread of anti-government activities in opposition to “northern colonization” and the rise of the Anyanya (“snake venom”) guerilla insurgency that sought independence for the south.

The First Civil War was a protracted struggle that lasted for seventeen years. It came to an end in 1972 when the Nimeiry government (which had gained power in Sudan in a military coup in 1969) signed the Addis Ababa Agreement recognizing southern autonomy. Anti-government groups had received assistance from Ethiopia and Uganda during the fighting.

Therefore, this move by the Sudanese government was intended to cut this off and restore national relations with its two neighboring countries. The Addis Ababa Agreement established the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region (SSAR) based in Juba. The First Civil War is estimated to have caused 500,000 deaths and produced hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Second Civil War

While the south had hoped that the conclusion of the civil war would lead to development, the newly established peace would not be a long-lasting one. With the discovery of oil near the southern city of Bentiu in 1978, the Nimeiry government moved to ensure that the benefits were secured by the north. Exploration rights were allocated to major Western oil companies without the consent of the south. and—because of the proximity of the resources to the SSAR border—the regime attempted to have the border changed. Nimeiry also worked to stir up ethnic conflict in the south by reorganizing the autonomous southern Sudan region into three new ones divided along ethnic lines. To gain the support of northern opposition parties, he applied Sharia law to Sudan—including southern Sudan—and unified the southern army with the central army. During this period, he also attempted to construct the Jonglei Canal, which would have bypassed the Sudd and allowed regions downstream to benefit from the waters of the White Nile that normally evaporate in the wetlands. This was done without taking the opinions and interests of the south into consideration.



Deceased Rebel Leader
and First Vice-President
Jon Garang.
(Dinka tribe)

These policies prioritizing the interests of the north caused widespread anger in the south that culminated in the outbreak of the Second Civil War in 1983, following a mutiny in Bor. When the government dispatched General John Garang (a Dinka) to suppress the uprising, he chose to defect instead. The Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) was formed under his leadership shortly afterward. The goal of the SPLA/M was the realization of Garang's vision of a "New Sudan," a nation free of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender, and where all—whether from the north or the south—were completely equal.

While the SPLA/M was based in the south, it was not a southern independence movement; it was a force aiming for national liberation and the creation of New Sudan. This does not mean that it was a monolithic group, however, and Dinka and Nuer factions within the SPLA/M would repeatedly split off and rejoin over the course of the civil war. From 1983 to 1989, the SPLA/M enjoyed support from the Eastern bloc and Ethiopia's communist government. By 1989, it had expanded its control to almost all of southern Sudan as well as part of the northern Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.

In 1991, Riek Machar (the current first vice president of South Sudan) and others split from the SPLA/M to form the SPLA-Nasir. While Garang's mainstream faction advocated for a reformed but unified Sudan, the Machar faction pushed for the creation of an independent South Sudan. Shortly after the split, ethnic Nuer fighting for Machar resulted in the massacre of an estimated 2,000 civilians in Bor and created thousands of internally displaced persons in Jonglei state (most of those killed in the incident were Dinka).

Ethiopia's communist government collapsed in May 1991, and by August, the country had fragmented politically. The Sudanese government (and the SPLA-Nasir) seized the opportunity offered by the chaos and steadily recaptured territory from the SPLA/M. The SPLA/M formed the National Democratic Alliance with groups in the north opposed to the government and managed to hold out against the government's superior numbers. By 1995, they slowly began launching counter-offensives. At around this time, groups in eastern Sudan also began fighting for self-rule, spurred on by the SPLA/M's calls for a "New Sudan." With this development, the Second Civil War changed in nature from a north-south conflict to a

struggle that enveloped the entire country.

Machar and his forces rejoined the SPLA/M in 2002. This was welcomed, but when a report was released showing that he had received assistance from Khartoum, he came to be viewed with suspicion. He apologized in 2011, but this was not regarded as sincere by many. His involvement in the massacre of ethnic Dinkas at Bor in 1991 has also not been forgotten by that group.

South-North Peace Established

Throughout the Second Civil War, many international organizations, nations, and individuals attempted to mediate between the Sudanese government and the SPLA/M, and between the SPLA/M's factions, in the hopes of achieving peace. And the United Nations and the broader international community were involved in the civil war in that they provided humanitarian assistance such as large-scale food assistance. But it was the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) that was involved for the longest in mediating between the various parties. In 1994, IGAD released its "Declaration of Principles," which called for recognition of the right of self-determination for the south and the separation of church and state in the region.

IGAD-sponsored peace negotiations began in Machakos, Kenya, in 2002 with the active support of the United States under the Bush administration. As a result, the Machakos Protocol was signed by the Sudanese government and the SPLA/M. Some of this agreement's provisions included the exemption of the south from Sharia law and the granting of provision autonomy for a period of six years (to be followed by a popular referendum on its status, to remain in united Sudan or to be an independent country). Negotiations continued at Naivasha, Kenya, and in 2003, an agreement was reached on security issues. This was followed by more agreements in 2004 on the distribution of natural resources (including oil) and political power, and the treatment of disputed territories such as the Abyei Area, Nuba Mountains (Southern Kordofan), and Blue Nile. All of these agreements were then incorporated into the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), concluded in January 2005.

The Government of National Unity was established in Khartoum in July 2005 in accordance with the provisions of the CPA. The Government

Table 1-3 Six Main Documents in Comprehensive Peace Agreement

Component of CPA	Main Contents
Protocol of Machakos (July 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional self-government for six years in south (until July 8, 2011) • Referendum in south to determine future status • Sharia Law would only apply to north, and not to south
Protocol on security arrangements (September 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties agree to respect dialogue and political negotiation to resolve problems related to ceasefire • Sudanese Armed Forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army continue to exist and joint/integrated units will also be formed with equal numbers from SAF and SPLA • SAF forces in the south and SPLA forces in the north will be redeployed (or integrated) during the interim period as per the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement
Protocol on wealth-sharing (January 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% of revenue will go to oil-producing states • Remainder of revenue will be divided on equal (50/50) basis between north and south • Equal opportunity for development to be secured • National Reconstruction and Development Fund to be established
Protocol on Power-sharing (May 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main posts of Government of National Unity to be divided: 52% for National Congress Party, 28% for Sudan People's Liberation Movement, 14% other Northern political forces, 6% other Southern political forces • Main posts of Government of Southern Sudan to be divided: 70% Sudan People's Liberation Movement, 15% National Congress Party, 15% non-SPLM forces from south • President Omar al-Bashir will be National Government President, and President of Government of Southern Sudan will serve concurrently as Vice President of National Government.
Protocol on the resolution of conflict in Abyie (May 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net oil revenue from Abyie area should be divided: 50% to national government, 42% to government of Southern Sudan, 2% to Western Kordofan, 2% to Bahr el Gazhal Region, 2% to Ngok Dinka people locally, and 2% to Misseriya people locally • Simultaneous to the referendum on Southern Sudan, residents of Abyie will vote on whether to maintain special administrative status as part of north or to be part of Bahr el Ghazal • an Abyie Boundaries Commission will be established to discuss and demarcate borders of Abyie
Protocol on the resolution of conflict in southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile States (May 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive agreement will be subjected to the will of people of two states • Governor will be directly elected by voters in state (Governor and Vice Governor will be from National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement, sharing power and alternating position; Governor of southern Kordofan will be from SPLM and Governor of Blue Nile will be from NCP • 75% of National Reconstruction and Development Fund will go to war-affected areas

Source: Watanabe Keiko (2009), "Suudan: Heiwa no Teichaku to Fukko no Tsuikyū (Sudan: The Establishment of Peace and the Search for Rebuilding), FASID.

of Southern Sudan was also formed with its capital in Juba and given authority over Sudan's ten southernmost states. In March of that year, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was created to support the implementation of the CPA and carry out peacekeeping operations.

The Second Civil War is believed to have resulted in two million dead, six hundred thousand refugees, and four million internationally displaced persons over the course of twenty-two years.

From the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to Independence

Less than a month after the establishment of the Government of Southern Sudan as a provisional governing body, in accordance with the CPA, the new government met with tragedy when the President of Southern Sudan and First Vice President of Sudan, John Garang, the man who had led the struggle for independence, died in a helicopter accident while returning from Uganda. While there were concerns that Garang's death would lead to domestic turmoil, the Vice President of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, was able to overcome the potential crisis by appealing for national unity.

Two years after the completion of the national census in April 2008, Sudan held a general election in April 2010 in both the north and the south of the country. Omar al-Bashir was reelected as president of Sudan, and Vice President Kiir, who had been chosen to succeed Garang after his death, was also reelected.

The popular referendum on the independence of southern Sudan was held in January 2011. Independence enjoyed fervent support from the public and captured 98% of the vote. The CPA had not been written under the presumption that an independent south was inevitable. Indeed, it had called for making national unity with Sudan an attractive option in its preamble in accordance with the vision of John Garang, the founder of the SPLA. However, with the population of the south having overwhelmingly chosen independence in the referendum, the region began following a new course. The Republic of South Sudan was established as an independent nation on July 9, 2011, and was granted admission as the 193rd member of the United Nations.

The three most important post-independence tasks facing the nation were

as follows: the reorganization of the SPLA into a national military and modernizing its forces, the reorganization of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) into a national political party capable of governing a modern democratic state, and the formation of a government capable of providing the fruits of peace. Peace would entail guaranteeing peace and security to the people, carrying out fair socio-economic development through effective development of the nation's extensive natural resources, and delivering prosperity to a people frustrated by decades of war.

But this is not how things played out. The referendum on the status of the Abyei Area has never taken place. Likewise, the popular consultations over the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states agreed to under the CPA have not been held. Moreover, new conflicts have arisen as both the government and opposition have continued to maintain military forces.

The Situation After Independence

South Sudan's independence has been achieved through the passionate support of its people. However, many South Sudanese have experienced nothing but conflict since the birth of the new state. The independence that these people have experienced has been one that is socially, economically, and spiritually broken. Many are in an extremely tenuous situation as their nation faces domestic and foreign conflicts, large numbers of returning refugees, unstable economic conditions, unmaintained infrastructure, and inadequate systems for the provision of social services. All they have is the pride of having fought for their freedom and dignity.

In 2011, the year that South Sudan achieved its independence, the country saw more than 400 incidents of armed conflict. These produced more than 3,000 dead and 300,000 internally displaced persons. The following year, fighting erupted over the oil fields that lie along the border with Sudan. The area that is now South Sudan accounted for more than 70% of the formerly united Sudan's oil production. In January 2012, the government decided to halt that production. Oil revenues, which had accounted for 98% of the South Sudanese government's income, ceased and—a mere six months after independence—the government was forced to implement austerity policies. There were 177 incidents of armed conflict in the first half of 2012 and 165,000 people were driven from their homes. Violence continued to threaten the livelihoods of the South Sudanese people. These included attacks by the Sudanese military (stemming from unresolved

issues between the two countries and from internal Sudanese separatist movements), civil strife resulting from cattle raids, land disputes between returning refugees and local communities, and attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Oil production resumed in April 2013, a month after South Sudan reached an agreement with the Sudanese government. This allowed the national budget to return to the level it had been at the time of independence and for the government to begin work on nation-building. The international community also expanded its humanitarian and development aid in the hopes of furthering the country's growth.

Just as it seemed that the newly independent state was finally back on track, a clash broke out between members of the presidential guard on December 15, 2013. This fighting grew into a conflict between the military and opposition forces under Machar (who had been dismissed from his post as vice president in July). President Kiir appeared at a press conference the following day in a military uniform and announced that Machar had led an attempted coup d'état against the government. President Kiir ordered the arrest of former SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum, along with eleven former government ministers and governors who had appeared at a press conference held by Machar earlier that month. Several days later, Machar (who had fled Juba) adopted a confrontational stance against the Kiir government. Machar formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) and released a statement in which he denied having been involved in a coup.

This confrontation expanded to reach military facilities in Juba and developed into an ethnic conflict between the Dinka (who backed Kiir) and the Nuer (who supported Machar). Civilians were not spared from this violence as soldiers began targeting members of the other ethnic group for atrocities. The fighting has led to the creation of 1.5 million internally displaced persons since December 15, 2013, and a total of 470,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries. The number of South Sudanese in need of emergency humanitarian assistance rose to 4.1 million men, women, and children.

JICA personnel had no choice but to evacuate the country during this conflict. Given that this fighting broke out a mere week after the hosting of the investment conference I discussed earlier, it seems fair to say that

these developments were completely unforeseen.

While the situation in Juba cooled down, other areas of the country—particularly in the north—continued to see sporadic clashes. There was intense fighting in the area between Juba and Bor for several days in January 2014, before government forces achieved victory with the aid of the Ugandan military. South Sudan's neighbors demonstrated their support for the government, including a visit by Sudanese President al-Bashir to Juba on January 6, during which he voiced his confidence in the Kiir government. Government forces gradually regained control of the country's major cities, and a ceasefire was signed with the SPLM-IO at Addis Ababa on January 23. Fighting resumed only a few days later, however, and while another ceasefire was soon reached, that too was broken. Battles in Unity and Upper Nile states flared up in August, and both sides agreed to a 3-day local ceasefire in November. In Upper Nile, however, fighting soon resumed.

During this period, JICA's South Sudan Office moved its operations to

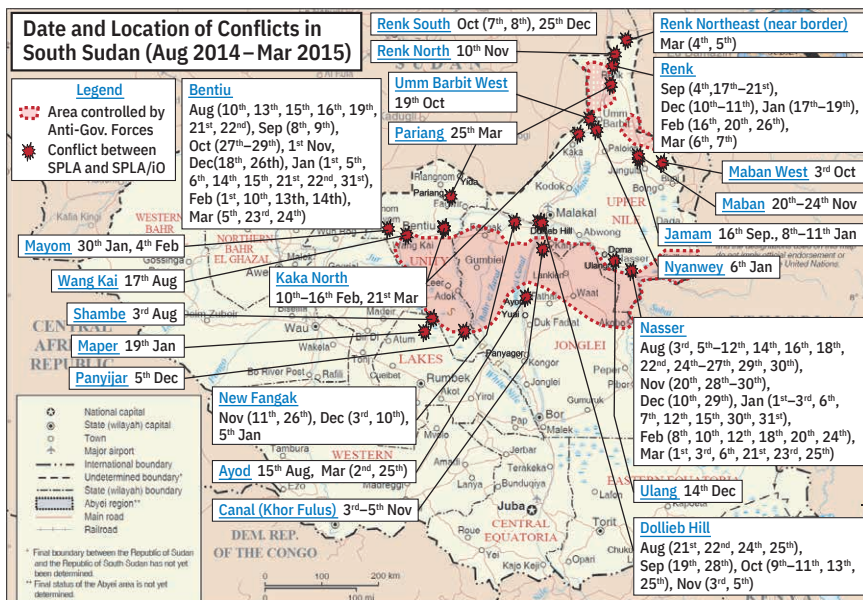


Figure 1-5 Map of Internal Security Situation. (Fighting August 2014–March 2015)

Source: Prepared by author based on information from UNMISS.

JICA's headquarters in Tokyo. In April 2014, it relocated again to Uganda, from where it continued to provide assistance to South Sudan through remote operations. Finally, in November 2014, the Japanese government withdrew its travel advisory for Juba and allowed us to resume our operations in the city. That same month, I was appointed to the office.

But while the situation in Juba had calmed down, sporadic fighting continued elsewhere, particularly in northern areas where the country's oil fields were located, and many Nuer lived. Figure 1-5 shows clashes between the SPLA and the Sudan People's Liberation Army–In Opposition (SPLA-IO) between August 2014 and March 2015.

Amidst this continued conflict, peace negotiations between the two sides proceeded under IGAD auspices. The sides were unable to come to an agreement, however, with "the division of power," "maintaining two military forces," and "federalism" continuing to be major points of contention. Finally, on August 17, 2015, Machar signed the Compromise Peace Agreement in Addis Ababa as the representative of the opposition. President Kiir initially refused to sign but, after being pressured by the international community, ultimately did so in Juba on August 26 (albeit with an attached list of twelve reservations).

A peace agreement may have been signed, but as shown in Figure 1-5, fighting continued in Upper Nile, Unity, and Jonglei states. With violence still ongoing, the government announced in October that it would be increasing the number of states in the country from ten to twenty-eight. The



President Kiir and Machar signed the Peace Agreement on August 2015.

national legislature amended the transitional constitution in November, giving its de facto approval for the work of moving to a twenty-eight-state system to begin. Kiir ordered the creation of the new states on December 23. Given the way that South Sudan's ethnic composition varies by region, the question of how the new state boundaries would be drawn was an extremely sensitive issue. These boundaries would have a great impact on the relative amount of power that each ethnic group held in each state, and their demarcation thus inevitably became a political issue. The sudden introduction of new states threw the government's relations with the opposition and international community into chaos. Neither has recognized the new states and arguments over their legitimacy have continued to the present. Furthermore, the South Sudanese government announced on December 14 that it would be moving its currency to a floating exchange rate system beginning the following day. It was amidst this increasingly chaotic politico-economic situation that the first post-independence National Unity Day sports event was held in January 2016.

While the implementation of the Compromise Peace Agreement had fallen behind, 1,370 members of the opposition to the government (most notably Machar) returned to Juba at this time. Machar was sworn in as first vice president in February. South Sudan was recognized as the sixth member of the East African Community at its summit in Arusha, Tanzania, in March, and the transitional government was finally established on April 29.

July 9, 2016, marked five years from the achievement of South Sudanese independence, a point in time that was initially believed to signify the start of a new history for South Sudan. One day before this anniversary, however, fighting broke out between soldiers loyal to the president and those loyal to the first vice president. This violence marked the outbreak of the second large-scale conflict in the country since independence. As the conflict rapidly spread through the nation, 93 JICA personnel and other Japanese had no choice but to evacuate from South Sudan on July 13 aboard a JICA-chartered plane. The number of refugees has rapidly increased since the beginning of the conflict, reaching a total of 1.5 million. According to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), this number is the largest in Africa and third in the world after Syria and Afghanistan. There are also more than 1.8 million internally displaced persons, meaning that more than a third of South Sudan's population of twelve million are either refugees or internally displaced persons, a truly

perilous situation for the country. There is increasingly a national food crisis as well.

As shown in this chapter, the territory of South Sudan has been marked by repeated conflict over its history, not just during its decades as a part of Sudan but during the time that has passed since it achieved independence as well.

Chapter 2: Why is Conflict Repeated?

In the first chapter, I provided an overview of South Sudan and the history of its conflicts. Having read that chapter, you will no doubt have gained the impression that, while South Sudan is a newly independent nation with diverse scenery and peoples, it is also a dangerous one that has been repeatedly wracked with conflict.

As someone who has in fact lived in South Sudan, however, I can say that things were peaceful enough in the capital of Juba. The scenery of the city would make anyone doubt whether there was any actual ongoing conflict in the country. The majesty of the Nile as it quietly flows through the city from its source in Jinja, Uganda, is enough to make it seem as if time has come to a stop. Vegetables and various sundries are transported to the city from Nimule town at the Ugandan border along a 190 km paved road. Arriving at the grand Nile near the entrance to Juba, these goods cross over the only bridge in the country. This bridge was originally built by the Dutch military in 1974, originally only intended to serve as a temporary crossing.

However, its condition has deteriorated over time as the many crossings over the years are causing it to fall apart, and weight and speed restrictions have been put in place for traffic as it crosses, despite its fragility. The bridge is key to transportation in South Sudan as it links the eastern and western halves of the country and serves as a central point for its economy and travel. Ever-crowded markets can be found at both ends of the bridge, where transported goods are unloaded and sold. Lying at one end of the



The Nile River in all its grandeur.

Photo courtesy of author

bridge is Juba, the national capital. While it lacks high-rises, a number of hotels and apartment buildings have been built since independence, and the number of cars on the streets is increasing. There are those who—in accordance with their ethnic customs—have numerous scars on their foreheads, enabling them to frighten you with only a glare. However, people in the city are generally friendly, and greeting a passerby will cause them to smile cheerfully and gladly return the greeting.

Walking through town, you will see many young people, including small children, playing soccer. As you watch people go about their daily lives, you would think them entirely removed from the country's conflicts. This is not just true of Juba: when I asked one of the drivers at JICA's local office about his hometown of Yei (which is located several hours away), he told me it was also unaffected by the conflict and boasted about what a pleasant place it was to live and how prosperous its farms are. Coffee is among the local crops, and this is now reportedly sold to a major foreign coffee brand. This same driver is also a serious soccer fan and would lose himself whenever the topic came up. While primarily a fan of the English Premier League, he was also quite familiar with Japanese players. This was not an isolated case; asking other members of our local staff about their hometowns produced similar boasting. One weekend, I was invited to the Juba home of one of these staff members for a meal. The garden was well maintained, and while the home did not have electricity, everything in it was in good order. It struck me as a modest environment, but one that would be easy to live in. As I greeted the neighbors who had also been invited to the meal, I could see that everyone got along and lived in harmony with one another. It was impossible for me to imagine that this same city was the site of a massacre during the December 2013 conflict. And yet, looking over the history of the city, it has seen repeated fighting. During the July 2016 conflict, a car that I was riding in was fired upon by soldiers. What on earth could be the origins of the conflicts that afflict a country that appears so peaceful? And why have these conflicts broken out time and again?

There are two main types of domestic conflict in South Sudan. The first is ethnic conflict over land and livestock, a type of conflict that has been going on in the country for centuries. The other are conflicts arising from the rivalry between the country's military and armed groups opposed to the current government.

Ethnic Conflict

Some studies point out that South Sudan has a “culture of violence” (De Waal and Ajawin 2002; Kurimoto 2004; Scheffran, Ide, and Schilling 2014; International Rescue Committee 2017). The population is composed of sixty-four ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Dinka (to whom President Kiir belongs), the Nuer (to whom First Vice President Machar belongs), and the Shilluk. These are all agro-pastoralists. They live with their cattle, which serve as valuable assets. At times, they are used in place of currency and for marriage payments. Because of their value, the practice of rustling cattle from other groups tends to occur from place to place. Some believe that successfully rustling a cow is a sign of masculinity. But while this practice is long-standing, the nature of these raids has changed with the use of firearms. Cattle raids are now responsible for numerous deaths and serious injuries. In some cases, agro-pastoralist groups possessing firearms have become militarized. One example is the armed Nuer group known as the “White Army,” after the Nuer practice of covering their skin with ash.

While conflict occurs within a given ethnic group, there is also a characteristic tendency for these groups to band together when necessary. Each group is composed of numerous clans, and these clans sometimes fight one another. But when a need arises to stand together, they will transcend clan loyalties and unite to form an alliance. South Sudan’s post-independence conflicts are representative examples of this. As discussed in the previous chapter, major fighting broke out in December 2013 and



Cows of South Sudan.

Photograph courtesy of Shinichi KUNO

July 2016. These conflicts were over the presidency, but they took on the appearance of ethnic conflicts, as the primary group supporting the government was the Dinka under President Kiir, and the primary group opposing it was the Nuer under First Vice President Machar. When the ethnic groups of South Sudan faced the common enemy of Sudan (as they did in the civil wars that led to independence), they came together in a way that transcended ethnic groupings. Ethnicity is used by the warring elites to sustain such violence, and the brute cause of recurrent violence in South Sudan is largely attributed to governance.

Agro-pastoralists and Conflict

Now let us first consider the origins of ethnic conflict over livestock and land, one of the major causes of conflict in South Sudan. Its major domestic conflicts frequently involve agro-pastoralists (as these comprise the country's largest ethnic groups). I would therefore like to first focus on the relationship between agro-pastoralists and conflict.

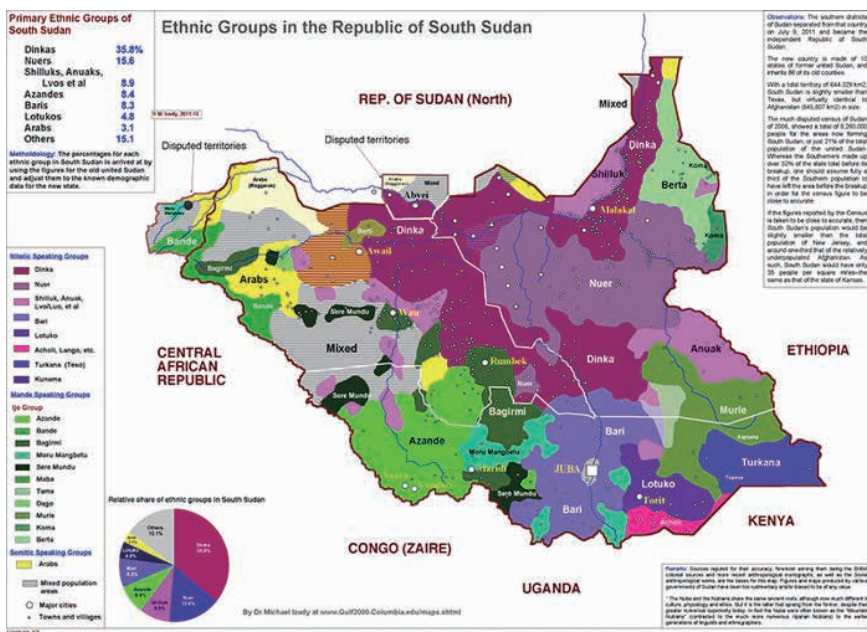


Figure 2-1 Ethnic Groups in the Republic of South Sudan

Source: Dr. Michael Izady

As mentioned earlier, livestock—particularly cattle—serves as an important asset for the country's agro-pastoralists. Among African nations, South Sudan ranks as one of the highest in terms of livestock. While the exact number differs depending on the source, there are an estimated twelve million cattle in the country, a number roughly equivalent to the number of people. Thus, there is about one cow per person in South Sudan, a number that does not take into account the number of sheep or goats in the country. But while the sheer number of cattle per capita is high by global standards, these cattle are not part of a well-developed industry. There is little trading of cows via markets or beef consumption. Cattle are not of great importance for the country in terms of their economic value. But to the agro-pastoralists of South Sudan, they are something special that cannot be measured in these terms. It is instead a matter of tradition, culture, social customs, and values. Cows are an important asset, a tangible sign of wealth, and a symbol of social status.

They also serve as a cornerstone for socio-political relationships, being used for marriage dowries, compensation for crimes, and ritual offerings to

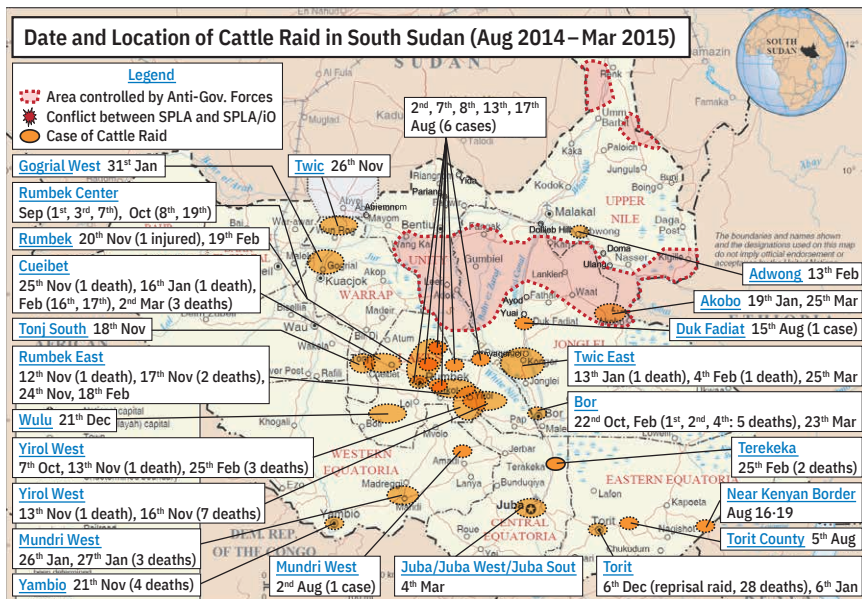


Figure 2-2 Map of Internal Security Situation regarding stealing of cows

Source: Prepared based on information from UNMISS.

the dead. For this reason, cattle are only eaten when absolutely necessary. When it comes to marriage, women will usually choose to marry the suitor offering the most cows. Cattle influence social status as they serve as the assets and wealth of a given family. For this reason, among those cultures that practice polygamy, men with many cattle are able to marry numerous women, increasing the size of their family and therefore their social status and authority.

The Dinka make up 35.8% of the population, the Nuer 15.6%, and the Shilluk 8.9%. The regions controlled by the Dinka are referred to as "Dinkaland" and those controlled by the Nuer as "Nuerland." Oil can be found in regions controlled by all three groups, and there are clashes between the military and anti-government forces over the rights to these deposits. Conflict also continues in each region between these groups (and between the clans within each group) over cattle and land for grazing. South Sudan has both a rainy season and a dry season; when the dry season comes, clans move in search of water, frequently coming into conflict with other groups as they do so. We can therefore see that there is also a pattern of conflicts that is closely tied to factors of geography and weather.

The number of cattle a man possesses determines his social status within his group. Cows are a symbol of power. This not only causes the aforementioned competition over access to water and land for grazing with others (without regard for their ethnic group) but has led to a tradition of widespread cattle raiding (and subsequent reprisals). This continual fighting both within and between ethnic groups has continued to the present day.

In addition to this fighting between agro-pastoralists, conflict between agro-pastoralists and farmers is commonplace in South Sudan. While the country has ample land for grazing, grazing is rarely carried out in an organized fashion. Because the water sources for a large portion of South Sudan's grazing land dry out during the dry season, cattle herders move their herds for three to four months a year in search of alternative grazing areas. As they do so, their cattle intrude upon the land of other groups, damaging fields and crops belonging to farmers. And in cases where there is insufficient water along the cattle herders' travel route, frequent conflicts (sometimes violent) arise with farmers and fishermen over access to water.

Following the adoption of the CPA in 2005, cattle herders began traveling with armed soldiers to protect their herds. This introduction of armed men further worsened and complicated relations between the various agro-pastoralists and between the agro-pastoralists and farmers. What had previously been minor squabbles now became “collective violence.” The frequency of theft of cattle and crops increased, as did the amount of damage inflicted in these incidents. In some cases, these clashes resulted in large numbers of deaths on both sides. The violence that occurred in Yei following the July 2016 conflict is a perfect example of this. While there are multiple explanations for what happened there, it seems that Dinka from the north moved south in pursuit of grazing land and water and repeatedly came into conflict with local farmers in the area. A UN report into the violence stated that the better armed Dinka pillaged the area and suggested that what happened could potentially be considered genocide.

Figure 2-2 shows incidents of cattle theft over the eight-month period from August 2014 to March 2015. The map makes it apparent that these incidents were frequent in the areas north of Juba.

Thus, traditional fighting between ethnic groups over cattle and land serves as one of the causes of South Sudan’s domestic conflicts. I hope that you now understand the importance that agro-pastoralists place on cattle as an asset and how they are closely tied to these conflicts.

Hierarchies and Patronage

I will next discuss the confrontation between the military and groups in opposition to the government and how the conflicts between them are another factor in South Sudan’s domestic discord. I will go over how these armed groups came to be and the particular form they have taken. My goal is to explain how these are also closely connected to the country’s agro-pastoralists and their conflicts.

As we saw in the first chapter, during the period when South Sudan was part of Sudan, the country saw numerous conflicts aimed at securing autonomy for the south or the creation of an independent southern state. Beginning in 1983, the SPLA/M became the central southern actor in these conflicts. While the major fighting seen in the country since securing independence has been a struggle for power, there is another dimension to it: these conflicts are essentially the splintering of the pre-independence

SPLA/M. On one side, there is the faction led by President Kiir with the support of the nation's military (the successor to the SPLA). On the other is the faction led by First Vice President Machar with the support of the SPLA-IO (a splinter faction of the SPLA). This current rivalry reflects the factional struggles within the SPLA prior to independence. The SPLA repeatedly had factions break off, fight against it, rejoin, and then split off once again. Moreover, the Kiir faction is primarily composed of Dinka and the Machar faction of Nuer. And as fighting in the capital of Juba for power within the SPLM expands into the rest of the country, these political conflicts take on the overtones of ethnic conflicts.

The factors behind the repeated clashes between the government and the in-opposition are closely related to South Sudan's national system, the mechanisms that support it, and South Sudan's social culture.

One of the characteristics of South Sudan's national systems is the presence of an "administrative cadre" within their political structures. Leaders in South Sudan who hold public office attempt to use their control over public funds to build personal bonds of loyalty and thereby maintain their authority. Thus, the president (a person with power) will use the public funds and authority at his disposal to control the public (those subject to his power). And the means through which this is done is the administrative cadre, who support those with power. In the process, the cadre can also maintain their own control over those subject to presidential power.

In exchange for guaranteeing the livelihoods of those under their control and providing them with protection and favors, leaders receive their subservience, support, and cooperation. But because these relationships are voluntary and can be dissolved by either party, those with power must continue to provide these benefits if they wish to maintain their allegiance. Multitiered patronage relationships of this type are pervasive in South Sudan, with negotiations over the allocation of benefits occurring at each level of the hierarchy.

Examples of these kinds of patronage relationships include those between the president and his cabinet, cabinet officers and their administrators, the president and military commanders (whom he appoints), and military commanders and their soldiers. They can also exist between the president and the state governors (whom he appoints), state governors and local administrators, local administrators and local citizens, influential figures

in Juba and influential figures outside of the capital, and influential figures in Juba and agro-pastoralists herdsman outside of the capital. The same kind of relationships exist within the opposition forces as well.

Because these relationships are subject to renegotiation and the availability of benefits to be distributed, neither the government nor those opposed to it are monolithic. The desires of those at the top do not necessarily reach those at the bottom of the hierarchy. The failure of ceasefire agreements to necessarily mean that fighting comes to an end is a practical example of the consequences of this. And if the government fails to provide adequate benefits to a given figure, they may choose to change their fealty to the opposition (and vice versa).

These relationships mean that there is a strong tendency in South Sudan for those in the upper echelons of hierarchies to misappropriate the government for their own private use. There is an inherent linkage between authority and self-interest. The most important cabinet positions are given to members of the same ethnicity as the president, and important positions in the military are distributed among influential figures. The October 2015 decision to expand the number of states from ten to twenty-eight is an archetypical example of the connection between authority and self-interest, as it was done to strengthen patronage relationships among the upper echelon. So, let us turn to the new twenty-eight-state system.

Under the previous ten-state system, South Sudan was divided into seventy-six counties and one special autonomous area. Let us look at the effect the adoption of the new state system had on the ethnic composition of local governments. Under the old system, the Dinka formed a plurality in twenty-six counties which accounted for 25% of the country's area. Under the new system, the Dinka have control of twelve states (42% of the country's area), the Nuer have control of five states (13%), Equatorian people have control of eight states (31%), and three states (14%) are under the control of other ethnic groups. Thus, we can see how changes in the state system were implemented to strengthen Dinka hegemony. While the greater Upper Nile region in the north of the country contains many counties with mixed Dinka and Nuer populations, these were treated differently. Areas with Dinka populations were incorporated into the Dinka sphere of influence. Meanwhile, the Nuer, who had formed a plurality in Upper Nile state, were split among different states.

About 85% of South Sudan's oil production is located in Upper Nile state, with the rest in Unity state. All the oil production areas in Upper Nile have now been placed within the Dinka sphere of influence, as have about 60% of those in Unity (the remainder are under Nuer control). The demarcation of the new state borders was done with this goal in mind.

It is thus clear that the intention behind the introduction of the new state system was to cement the government's influence. Increasing the number of states almost threefold also created a number of new government posts. In addition to the new governorships, there were about 300 new state minister and 600 state legislator positions, as well as a great many lower-ranked posts. Because the power to appoint and dismiss state governors lies with the president, by creating these new positions, President Kiir gained the ability to form new patronage relationships on a grand scale. The opposition has continued to push for the creation of new states that would be favorable to them for the same reason.

Thus, since independence South Sudan's leaders have taken every possible opportunity at their disposal to maintain personal power relationships through the use of their authority and access to public funds. And the country's ethnic groups form the foundation that these relationships are built upon, particularly among young men and the agro-pastoralists militias. Skilled use is made of ethnic nationalism when governing. Both the government and opposition have solidified their positions by turning these militias into private militaries and turning cattle herders with guns into their personal soldiers.



Youth with automatic rifle.

Source: Tariq Zaide/ZUMA Press

Cows, Guns, and Their Relationship to Militia Groups

For agro-pastoralists groups who live alongside their cows, cows are like family and are closely associated with the men of these groups. They are given names and nicknames based on their appearance. When a cow dies, it is mourned like a part of the family. Cows are thus not considered a food source. As already discussed, they are used to pay marriage prices, and suitors who can provide the most cows are those who are chosen for marriages. To give a specific example of how polygamy among these agro-pastoralists groups works, the grandfather of one of our staff members, Daniel J. Deng, at the JICA South Sudan Office, was the headman of Abyei and married to 200 women. If we assume that his grandfather had to provide fifty cows as the marriage price for each of these women, he would have had to have possessed at least 10,000 cows. And given Africa's high birth rate, he must have had an enormous number of relatives. The size of your family and the number of cows you own are connected to your social status in South Sudan.

For unmarried young men, cows are a matter of life and death. These agro-pastoralists groups are patriarchal, and young men only have access to a limited number of cows. Some go as far as stealing cows from others to increase the number of cows they have. The same is true of times when their number of cows has fallen for whatever reason. Prior to the spread of firearms, primitive weapons like spears were used during cattle raids. These raids thus tended to result in only limited casualties. But just as southern Sudan experienced repeated conflicts in the latter half of the twentieth century, the same period saw frequent civil wars and incidents of regime change in East Africa. The Amin regime in Uganda collapsed in 1979, the Second Sudanese Civil War began in 1983, the communist government of Ethiopia fell in 1991, and that same year saw the beginning of the Somali Civil War. Each of these events saw weapons formerly under the control of state security forces find their way into the hands of civilians through merchants, former soldiers, and refugees. A steady supply of automatic rifles and other firearms flowed into South Sudan, and these weapons became widespread among its agro-pastoralists. Firearms became another valuable asset for these groups, similar to cows.

The diffusion of firearms changed the nature of cattle raiding and upended the traditional political system within these groups. Cattle raids became even more common, and the number of casualties incurred in these raids

increased dramatically. The use of firearms made the act of stealing cattle easier, but they also became necessary for self-protection. And they were a source of power. As young men gained the power provided by firearms, they stopped respecting the authority of their elders. The traditional patriarchal political system steadily changed. And the agro-pastoralists groups began forming militias with which to protect themselves. Notable examples of these militias include the Nuer White Army and the Dinka Titweng ("cattle guards").

The introduction of firearms into the cattle-centric society and culture of these agro-pastoralists groups has also changed the nature of their relations with the country's powerful figures. As has been discussed, cows are the most important asset possessed by these groups, and these figures provide them with firearms and cows. They have these groups to protect and maintain their own herds. That is, influential individuals in Juba accumulate large herds in their hometowns outside the capital and arrange for local cattle herders to care for these. The figures in Juba will provide the firearms necessary for carrying out the raids. In exchange, the nomads will receive cows that they can then use for marriages. The relationship does not end there, however; these powerful figures also recruit young men from these groups to fight for them.

There are thus patronage relationships between the president and his cabinet, cabinet officers and powerful individuals, and powerful individuals and local cattle herders. The same is also true for those relationships formed by members of the opposition. This means that conflicts can be influenced by the structure of their chains of hierarchical relationships. For example, the Dinka and Nuer are rival groups. They conduct cattle raids against one another that result in numerous casualties. They each possess their own militias. Given these circumstances, a clash between the groups can easily lead to outright conflict on a larger scale.

Because of the social structure formed by these chains of patronage relationships, it is difficult for conflicts to end once they have begun. When South Sudan was part of Sudan, the SPLA/M was able to maintain a certain degree of unified direction because there was a common enemy (northern Sudan). Since independence, a power struggle among the ruling elite has been taking place, often involving ethnic groups. Those connected to these figures or leaders have banded together around them. But should that figure fail to provide benefits to those men and women

underneath him, these relationships will be dissolved, and the former recipients will realign themselves under a new figure who will provide such benefits.

The young men of South Sudan's agro-pastoralists groups are raised to act manly, possess firearms, and form the central force of their local militias. And because these groups are incorporated into the above patronage chains, these men are also recruited to serve in the conflicts that arise. One result of the numerous conflicts that the country has seen is that 75% of its population are under the age of 30. Unless something can be done to change the aggressive attitudes that these young men possess, the causes of the country's conflicts cannot be eliminated.

Ethnic conflict over livestock and land has long existed in South Sudan. Confrontations between the military and the opposition's armed groups still occur, as do conflicts between militias. This chapter has provided a lengthy explanation of the factors underlying the country's conflicts. To summarize, South Sudan's repeated conflicts are closely related to the country's history, the nature of its power relationships, and its agro-pastoralists groups. To ease these conflicts and guide South Sudan along the path to becoming a democratic state, actions need to be taken at the governmental level. Measures to combat the continuous conflicts in the realization of a stable South Sudan must form a part of this. Efforts aimed at the young men being recruited for war are needed in particular. If South Sudan is to move towards becoming a stable state, efforts that seek to create a united people who trust one another in a way that transcends ethnicity are indispensable.

Chapter 3: Why Support a National Sports Event (National Unity Day)?

The previous chapters have provided an overview of South Sudan and explored the reasons why it has repeatedly experienced conflict. As we saw in Chapter 1, the country's socioeconomic indicators are low, and it is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world. So, why did JICA provide its support for National Unity Day, a sports event? Why provide assistance for such a seemingly lower priority event? There is no question that South Sudan has many development needs, and we at JICA have fully devoted ourselves to its development.

As a meeting point for the Middle East/North Africa and East Africa, the stability of Sudan and South Sudan is directly linked to that of Africa as a whole, and Japan has recognized this fact. It has thus made these countries a top priority for peacebuilding, one of the most important areas for Japan's diplomatic efforts towards Africa. This is why our branch in southern Sudan was immediately expanded following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Treaty in 2005. It also shows why we have continued to provide technical assistance and grant funding for infrastructure improvements, the provision of basic social services, and other areas. Recognizing the high expectations of the South Sudanese government amidst the country's enormous development needs and the importance of the local donor community, we have focused on the following specific areas as we have provided assistance.

The first area has been the improvement of the country's basic economic and social infrastructure. Over the many years of civil war, this infrastructure fell into decay. Japanese cooperation and support have focused on urban areas, and we have provided assistance in areas where Japan has a comparative advantage: urban development, road improvements, transportation, water treatment, and sanitation. A major project in this area has been the grant funding for the "Project for the Construction of the Nile River Bridge," an effort to construct a permanent bridge over the Nile. While this bridge is referred to as the "Nile River Bridge" in Japanese, the South Sudanese government has chosen to name it the "Freedom Bridge." The Nile cuts South Sudan in two, but at present, the only bridge offering passage across it is the forty-year-old "temporary"

one previously discussed that could collapse at any time. And should travel across that bridge become impossible, it would mean that traffic between the east and the west of the country would be cut off. The new “Freedom Bridge” would truly be worthy of its name. Not only would



Existing “temporary” bridge.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



View of construction of “Dream Bridge”.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Image of completion of “Dream Bridge”.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

it join east and west and be indispensable to South Sudanese economic development but it would also help tie the nation's people together.

Another project that the citizens and Government of South Sudan are greatly looking forward to is the "Project for the Improvement of the Juba Water Supply" (for which JICA is also providing grant funding). While Juba has an estimated population of 1.2 million, less than 3% of them, a mere 34,000 people, are supplied with water. There is likely no other country in the world where the level of water provision in the national capital is so low. By expanding water purification facilities and increasing the network of water pipes, this project is projected to increase the proportion of the population receiving purified water to 40-50%. Because of the low availability of tap water in Juba, roadsides in the city are littered with empty plastic bottles. And because much of the population currently uses untreated water from the Nile, the project will also have a major impact on sanitation within the city.

A third large-scale JICA undertaking is the "Project for the Improvement of the Juba River Port." Currently, freight from Uganda and Kenya is transported to Juba, and from there, it is distributed to towns further north via the Nile. In times of peace, the river also sees the transport of a large volume of goods from Sudan. As mentioned earlier, South Sudan's year is divided into rainy and dry seasons, with each lasting for about six months. During the rainy season, the area north of Juba becomes a large marshland that is untraversable by car. This makes the section of the Nile running from Juba to Sudan key for the transportation of goods and people. Juba lacks port facilities, however, which makes their construction



View of water being carried in Juba City.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



Broken water line.
Photograph courtesy of JICA

necessary.

It is important to ensure that the above three projects can continue to operate once their construction is complete, and so, JICA is also carrying out training to build the necessary skills, such as organizational management. These three major projects will serve as a cornerstone for the nation's economy and culture, tying the entire nation together. As such, the South Sudanese government and people have been eagerly awaiting their completion. Unfortunately, work on these projects has twice had to be halted due to the outbreak of large-scale hostilities, and as such, they are still ongoing.

The second area in which JICA has been focusing its assistance has been the development of alternative industries. South Sudan's economy and finances are excessively reliant on income from oil. We have assisted in the formulation of a comprehensive development master plan that provides a roadmap for improving agriculture, such as by expanding irrigation. This field has great latent possibilities for South Sudan. While providing support for increasing the country's administrative capacities to aid in the implementation of this plan, we are also carrying out agricultural assistance at the community level and thereby contributing to improved living standards and promoting industrial farming. An estimated 95% of South Sudan's land is believed to be suitable for agriculture, meaning that the potential for the development and expansion of the agricultural sector is enormous. We have also been studying how our efforts towards



Vegetables being sold at market.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

preventing traditional conflicts can serve as part of our support for agriculture.

The third area we have been focusing on is the improvement of basic livelihoods. In addition to providing technical assistance for medical care and basic education with the goal of improving the country's extremely low social development standards, we have developed programs for medical care, basic education, and employment creation. These programs are intended to promote infrastructural improvements in regional areas and provide them with emergency assistance. For example, under our vocational training project, we have provided instructor training, assistance to improve the financial standing and managerial capacities of vocational training centers, help in the formulation of training plans, training materials, revenue activity assistance (automotive maintenance workshop management), and training facility/equipment assistance. We have also provided support for the construction and repair of lecture halls, libraries, computer rooms, bathrooms, workshops, classrooms, and administrative offices.

JICA has also worked to support the empowerment of conflict victims such as refugees. For example, while we worked to improve the technical skills of South Sudanese instructors as part of our assistance for vocational training, we also provided assistance to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Three South Sudanese instructors were sent to a JICA-supported vocational training school in Nakawa, Uganda, where



Car repair job training. Photograph courtesy of JICA

they undertook two weeks of on-the-job training to improve their skills in their respective fields of sewing, carpentry, and plastering. They then left for the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, located 200 km north of Kampala, for a period of three weeks. There they provided vocational training to refugees, most of whom had fled from South Sudan. After completing this training, most of the ninety-eight students were able to secure employment, a truly wonderful result.

In fact, two of the three instructors chosen to visit Kiryandongo were themselves former refugees who had spent years living in the camp. Grace, who provided instruction in sewing, spent her childhood there before leaving to teach in South Sudan. Her mother still lives in the camp. Omer, the carpentry instructor, had previously taught at the camp's vocational school for almost ten years. The two former refugees had both been able to return to South Sudan and were now providing assistance to those South Sudanese refugees who had not yet had that opportunity. It was because of their personal experiences as refugees that they were able to teach so effectively and show such pride as they did so. Seeing these two people return to the camp, not as refugees but as instructors, offered great encouragement to the current refugees.

Fourth and finally, as part of our assistance for strengthening governance and security, JICA has implemented administrative capacity development programs to provide support for the South Sudanese media and customs service (one of its sources of tax revenue). The goal of this assistance has been to improve governance and help build a new, peaceful nation. The



At graduation ceremony for job training facility within refugee camp. Photograph courtesy of JICA

“fourth estate” media plays an important role in the process of building and maintaining a democratic state, and the “South Sudan TV and Radio Capacity Development Project” (a technical cooperation project) is a major part of our support in this area. This project is intended to assist in the process of converting the state-run South Sudan TV and Radio into a public broadcaster free from political control. South Sudan TV and Radio has the greatest coverage in the country, and our goal has been to help foster human talent capable of delivering accurate, fair, and neutral information to the public.

The theory underlying the peacebuilding assistance provided to countries that have seen repeated conflict like South Sudan holds that it is absolutely necessary for the dividends of peace to be made apparent to the people, for them to be given a new vision, for the governmental capacities necessary for nation-building to be increased, and for support for basic human needs and governance to be provided. All these points are incorporated into our efforts in South Sudan.

We have recognized that, in order to carry out peacebuilding in South Sudan, our approach must incorporate military, political, and economic and social frameworks. I would like to now look at how our responses under each of these frameworks play out.



South Sudanese trainees receiving briefing at NHK.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

Military Framework Response

A military framework response is necessary because having a stable security situation is indispensable for carrying out nation-building in a country that has seen repeated conflict. As already discussed in Chapter 2, the Second Civil War, a conflict between the Sudanese government and anti-government forces from the largely Christian southern part of the country, lasted from 1983 to January 2005. The war came to an end with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) by the Sudanese government and SPLA/M following extensive mediation efforts on the part of East African nations, the United States, and others. UN Security Council Resolution 1590 was adopted in March 2005 and created the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), a force of up to 10,000 troops to support the implementation of the CPA. Japan was one of the nations requested by the United Nations to participate in UNMIS, and two members of the JSDF were dispatched in October 2008 under the auspices of the International Peace Cooperation Law to serve in UNMIS Command. UNMIS' mission came to an end in July 2011 with South Sudan's declaration of independence. In the same month, it was replaced by the newly created UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which had the goals of preventing conflict and maintaining public order in the new state. UNMISS also consisted of 10,000 troops and the Japanese government dispatched three JSDF members to its headquarters in November of that year. A JSDF engineering contingent was sent the following month and remained in the country until May 2017 (with individual troops being replaced every six months). This contingent had a maximum size of 330 members and 40 maintenance personnel.

Following the outbreak of hostilities in December 2013, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution increasing the size of UNMISS. The mandate of UNMISS was amended in May 2014 to limit its roles to protecting civilians and promoting the return of internally displaced persons, investigating and verifying cases of human rights violations, creating the conditions necessary for humanitarian aid, and supporting the implementation of a ceasefire in cooperation with IGAD.

By providing support for this military framework, JICA has contributed to the prevention of post-independence conflict and the maintenance of public order and helped create the security necessary for nation-building.

Political Framework Response

We now turn to our support for the political framework response. I have already described how the peace negotiations prior to independence took place under various political frameworks (in “South-North Peace Established” and “From the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to Independence” in Chapter 1).

The international community undertook various political efforts to support governance in South Sudan following independence. Despite these efforts, large-scale conflict broke out on December 15, 2013. As fighting continued and large numbers of refugees fled the country, IGAD, a leading actor behind the CPA, immediately confronted the situation and began mediating for peace. Following repeated discussions with the government and opposition, both sides agreed in late December to begin peace negotiations. A ceasefire was signed in Addis Ababa on January 23 (2014), the result of twenty days of talks. This agreement only lasted for three days, however, as renewed fighting in parts of Unity and Jonglei states on January 26 effectively nullified it. A second round of negotiations began in February, and both sides agreed to submit to IGAD ceasefire monitoring. The government and opposition recommitted themselves to upholding the January 23 agreement and agreed to a two-month ceasefire. This new agreement was broken in mere hours. IGAD continued to intercede with both parties, and it was hoped that a third round of negotiations that began a year later in February 2015 would result in a final resolution. Later that year, IGAD announced on March 6 that the parties were unable to reach an agreement on matters such as the division of powers during the pre-election transition period and when their military forces were to be merged. It stated that further negotiation was being postponed indefinitely.

Parallel to these negotiations, efforts began in October 2014 with the support of the Tanzanian government to reach reconciliation and unity within the SPLM. The “Agreement on the Reunification of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement” was signed at Arusha, Tanzania, in January 2015. The signatories included President Kiir, First Vice President Machar, and ten members of the opposition who had been briefly held under arrest in December 2013. Under this agreement, the signatories agreed to cooperate on reform of the SPLM, work towards national unity, and bring the peace negotiations to a conclusion. As such, the March 6

announcement that the peace negotiations could not reach a resolution was met with great frustration both inside and outside of South Sudan.

In light of the ongoing difficulties that the peace process was experiencing, IGAD proposed a new “IGAD Plus” approach in early March. This would have included the African Union, the UN, the United States, Britain, Norway, the European Union, and China as additional mediators. Machar welcomed the proposal as he believed that the interests of IGAD’s members had acted as a hindrance to the negotiations. However, these outside parties were unable to coordinate this effort among themselves. This failure, combined with the continued chaotic domestic conditions in South Sudan, made prospects for the peace process seem utterly hopeless.

The peace negotiations were making, at best, slow progress, but the international community, including IGAD, did not abandon their efforts and instead resolutely continued to engage with the country. At times, the United States and other countries used a carrot and stick approach, implementing sanctions and making demands for reform while the negotiations were ongoing. For example, the United States froze the financial assets of military leaders from both sides in May 2014 and barred them from entering the country. The European Union announced that it would take similar measures in July of that year. And the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on March 3, 2015, that provided for targeted sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes. Finally, in August 2015, a peace agreement was reached.

Despite these efforts, however, the country’s second large-scale conflict since independence began in July 2016. The international community including IGAD has persevered in supporting the peace process in this new conflict as it did during the previous one.

Economic and Social Framework Response

I will next provide an overview of the assistance provided under the economic and social frameworks. Following independence, the international community formulated the South Sudan Development Plan in conjunction with the South Sudanese government. This plan outlined major national development goals and included multiple projects that were intended to achieve these goals within the three years following independence. The overall objectives for the plan were to “ensure that by

2014 South Sudan is a united and peaceful new nation, building strong foundations for good governance, economic prosperity and enhanced quality of life for all.” The plan’s four major areas were: 1) governance; 2) economic development; 3) social and human development; and 4) conflict prevention and security. The primary means through which these were to be achieved were: 1) activities that contribute to peacebuilding and security; 2) the expansion and improvement of social services; and 3) regional development through improvements to infrastructure.

With the adoption of this plan, South Sudan began receiving support from international organizations like the UN and numerous bilateral aid organizations (which were mainly based in Western Europe). Some of the international organizations that contributed included the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, various UN agencies, and the African Development Bank. Numerous NGOs (many of which were Christian) also entered the country and worked to provide services in rural areas. With this support, everything seemed to be moving forward as planned, and when an investment conference was held in December 2013, it attracted many investors.

But just as things seemed to be going well, the new country’s first major conflict erupted on December 15, 2013, a mere eighteen months after independence. This conflict came as a great shock to the international community, with JICA having no choice but to evacuate. As a leading actor behind South Sudan’s independence, the United States was greatly disappointed. Under its leadership, Western nations embarked on the “Donor Principles for Engagement, Priorities, and Working Requirements.” Under this new policy for support to the country, it was agreed as a matter of principle that assistance would not be carried out through the South Sudanese government. Funds that had been allocated for development assistance to the country would be diverted to humanitarian aid that did not rely on government involvement. Of the developed nations, Japan was the only donor that, while expressing its understanding of this new policy, continued to provide development assistance to the country—an approach it viewed as indispensable to nation-building. The consequence of this choice was that Western nations repeatedly questioned Japan regarding its decision.

Allow me to give an example. In May 2016, I was invited to the Brookings Institution, a world-famous American think tank, to give a presentation

on what it was like in South Sudan and what needed to be done, the framework and direction of JICA's efforts, our major development aid activities, and our future plans for the country. One of those in attendance for my presentation was the American special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, and he asked me why Japan had decided to continue providing support, while other major donors have united behind the principle of not implementing any new assistance following the outbreak of the December 2013 conflict.

My answer was as follows:

We are continuing to provide assistance that brings benefits to the people. When a government is unable to deliver services to its people, they are the ones to suffer. Even if changes are made at the cabinet level, lower officials such as undersecretaries remain the same. South Sudan has low administrative and financial capacities and attempting to improve these over a short period would prove difficult. JICA believes that increasing the administrative and financial capacities of the central government will not only provide more benefits to the people but it will also contribute to the peace process. The South Sudanese people are exhausted from these protracted conflicts. It is important to provide them with tangible, visible assistance like the Nile Bridge if we are to give them hope and revitalize the economy. Furthermore, the primary users of the port are currently humanitarian aid organizations and UNMISS; it is not being used solely for economic activities. Providing clean water is another benefit that aids the public. And the agricultural development master plan requires the government to show it has a vision. We believe that providing this assistance is important. Also, while what you describe may have worked as a policy lever for South Sudan during the period when assistance was monopolized by major donors, that is not necessarily true in the present situation. Pressure alone is unlikely enough to lead to action. Assistance that gives hope is also important. We believe that a balanced, comprehensive approach to assistance is important.

The policy of the United States, however, was that new assistance should not be provided until the government showed improvement. It continued to hold to its position that Japan should also adhere to this policy so that donor nations would present a united front. I do not know which of these approaches was the correct one. But I do know that I personally had great doubts about whether the South Sudanese government would obediently

submit when confronted with a hardline approach that predicated aid on reform, given how its national control structure was based on patronage relationships—every level of which was potentially subject to renegotiation at any time. It was necessary to increase the South Sudanese government's understanding. I understood the necessity of reform but thought it important to adopt a balanced approach when providing assistance.

For example, undertaking painful reforms, such as those affecting the bureaucracy, would require both the government and the opposition to make changes to their personnel. And given the unstable nature of the already described hierarchical relationships in the power structures of both groups, I found it difficult to believe that these reforms would proceed as the donors hoped.

Previously, the government and opposition had recruited those under their control for war by awarding them with the rank of general or giving them cattle. These people needed to receive benefits in a different form. They needed to join together for their own futures and that of their country. And they needed to know that it was important that they do so not with guns but by undertaking capacity improvements such as vocational training. The people needed to be provided with tangible results that they could see.

When the United States cut off its aid to the South Sudanese government, this included the assistance that it had been providing for improving the government's management of its public finances. But capacity building is not something that can be undertaken on a short-term basis and the government had made little progress in this area. The United States said that it would not provide new aid until the government had carried out financial reforms. And yet, without assistance, the government was incapable of implementing such reforms regardless of any desire to do so. Was this kind of use of "carrot and stick" truly the right way to go about things?

As shown above, members of the international community—including the United States and Japan—took up the tasks of peacebuilding and nation-building in South Sudan through assistance implemented through a variety of frameworks: military, political, economic, and social. This is true, even though their individual positions and how they approached

the economic and social framework may have differed.

The task of preventing conflict and ensuring security for South Sudan has proven more difficult than imagined, however. The work of stabilizing the country's security situation has proceeded slowly, as has the progress in peace negotiations. The current situation is an extremely difficult one and the country's development needs are massive. While it is important that we continue to tenaciously engage through these frameworks, I wonder if the things listed in this chapter are really enough. Perhaps the international community needs to add an additional level of response to the things I have described. Perhaps some element is missing from the peacebuilding assistance being provided to South Sudan.

When intervening in and providing assistance to developing countries, the international community has made furthering democracy a requirement and goal for the provision of economic assistance. It has also demanded the introduction of a market economy. Democratization has been considered an indispensable part of peacebuilding under the belief that it promotes peaceful relations between nations. One reason given for this has been the idea that democratic nations are less likely to engage in war. But for democracy to take root in a country, all actors, both institutional and non-institutional, have to accept the premise that a country exists, and that democracy is desirable. If they do not, and if democracy is only present in terms of systems and structures, then instability will continue. A quite long path must be traveled before the systems needed to support a civil society are accepted. Ongoing interest and long-term commitments on the part of those providing aid to a country are indispensable to the building and entrenchment of democratic institutions that will be acceptable to a given country.

This fact is also applicable to the provision of peacebuilding aid to South Sudan, a country that has experienced repeated conflict. In order for South Sudan to become the democratic nation that the international community hopes to see, trust must be fostered across its population. Trust and solidarity need to be built up among a people who have been splintered by conflict, and distrust of officials and their government must be done away with. Yet, despite these needs, insufficient attention has been paid to popular unity under the political processes and development assistance provided thus far. The formation of social capital (trust, norms, reciprocity, association, and social participation) is necessary for peacebuilding and

nation-building. But as we saw in Chapter 2, while firm solidarity exists within ethnic groups, linkages between ethnic groups are rare. This poses a major challenge to nation-building.

Social capital can take two forms: bonding and bridging. In the case of South Sudan, social capital of the second kind is needed if cross-ethnic solidarity is to be created. The country's lengthy conflicts have resulted in the loss of public trust in the government and the loss of trust and solidarity among the people. Adequate attention has not been paid to fostering national unity in the years since independence. Thus, I suggest that what South Sudan needs (in addition to the aid it currently receives) are efforts to foster unity between its ethnic groups and build trust in the government. The public has been exhausted by the country's repeated conflicts. And they are fed up with political processes that only result in slow progress, if indeed any progress is made at all.

Chapter 4: National Unity Day: Moving from the Initial Inspiration and Concept to Active Preparations

Development of Aims and Formulation of the Concept for a National Sports Event

In Chapter 3, we looked at the background for JICA's decision to support a national sporting event in South Sudan. My career has been involved with the implementation of development aid at the operational level. Prior to being posted to South Sudan, I had only a hazy idea of the state of peacebuilding in the country. I assumed that whatever was currently being done was likely fine. Then, in November 2014, I found myself appointed Chief Representative of the JICA South Sudan Office.

South Sudan became the world's newest independent state in July 2011. As previously discussed, a clash between members of the presidential guard on December 15, 2013, expanded into a nationwide conflict. The investment conference I attended in Juba the week earlier had been a vibrant occasion, with representatives of governments, private businesses, aid organizations, and citizen groups gathering together. No one could have predicted that a mere week later, Juba would become the site of a tragedy that would go on to produce numerous casualties and spread like wildfire across the nation.

JICA's personnel had no choice but to evacuate from South Sudan for the first time when the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) issued a Level 4 travel advisory ("evacuation recommended") that covered the entire country. Our grant funding cooperation for the Nile Bridge ("Freedom Bridge") and Juba water supply projects—things that the country had been greatly looking forward to—had to be put on hold. In order to continue providing assistance to the country, the JICA office had to operate remotely from Japan. After the office was moved to South Sudan's neighbor of Uganda in April 2014, an investigation was carried out in July of the same year to confirm whether it would be safe for JICA to operate in the country, and travel restrictions were relaxed to allow for short-term (three-week) business trips to Juba. The JICA South Sudan

Office resumed its operations in Juba after our foreign ministry lowered its travel advisory for the city to Level 3 (“canceling travel recommended”) in late November. It was at this time that I was appointed as the office’s Chief Representative.

While the conflict had spread throughout the country following the initial clash in December 2013, the situation in Juba had remained relatively stable. At the time the South Sudan Office reopened, there were three JICA staff members in addition to me: Tomoki Kobayashi, Shimpei Taguchi, and Tomohiro Kuwabara. As part of increased security measures we adopted, based on the staff’s experiences of evacuating the country in 2013, it was decided that we should all be housed together. We thus all came to live together in a type of freestanding house. The atmosphere was like taking part in a training camp. The house had communal living and kitchen spaces, and each bedroom had its own shower and bathroom. We left for work together in the morning, spent the day together at the office, and then returned home together at night. We adopted a system of taking turns for who was responsible for making dinner each night.

With the adoption of increased security measures, our living environment was quite restrictive. And as the foreign ministry still had a Level 4 travel advisory in place for areas outside of Juba, this was true of our working lives as well. We were in the position of having to carry out aid operations for South Sudan while being unable to leave the city.

The theory underlying the peacebuilding assistance provided to countries that have seen repeated conflict like South Sudan holds that it is absolutely necessary for the dividends of peace to be made apparent to the people, for them to be given a new vision, for the governmental capacities necessary for nation-building to be increased, and for support for basic human needs and governance to be provided. As outlined in Chapter 3, our development efforts in South Sudan incorporated all of these points.

However, something I had to take into consideration upon my appointment, as I followed the above normal theoretical approach to assisting a post-conflict country, was how to interpret the fact that the country continued to see conflict despite having achieved independence. That is, at the time of my appointment, the country had been divided by the December 2013 conflict. I would like to again refer to Figure 1-5, which shows the dates and locations of the numerous incidents of fighting in South Sudan from

August 2014 to March 2015. As we can see from Figure 2-2, which shows the dates and locations of cattle raids over the same period, these also continued. It was thus a fact that South Sudan continued to see conflict even after the conclusion of the December 2013 fighting.

This continued conflict was evidence that the inter-ethnic trust and popular unity necessary for the country to thrive had been damaged. Ethnic groups in South Sudan had fixed conceptions and negative preconceptions of one another and had little real knowledge of other groups. These factors served to intensify the many conflicts that occurred between the country's regional societies. Furthermore, 75% of South Sudan's population is young (under the age of 30) and there is a severe shortage of employment. These young people are the primary actors in the above conflicts.

These two factors were the reasons why I felt a vague sense that we needed to help foster interethnic solidarity and trust, even as we engaged in the other forms of assistance outlined in Chapter 3. The repeated conflicts in the country meant that opportunities were being lost, and other forms of assistance were needed for nation-building in this, the newest nation in the world. And I thought it important that a message of trust and solidarity be conveyed to its people.

This is why the first thing I did after being appointed to South Sudan was to go out and see for myself what the lives of its people were like. As I have already mentioned, we were not allowed to leave Juba. I was thus only able to gain hands-on experience with the situation in the city. But even so, I was able to get a sense of things as I rambled through the city, even if it was just looking through a car window. The first thing I noticed was the large numbers of young people enjoying soccer in every corner of the city. Juba gets extremely hot during the daytime, sometimes reaching close to forty degrees Celsius, and for that reason, I would only look around the city until about 10 a.m. But even in the evening, I would see young people having fun as they played soccer on narrow, rocky strips of earth. One weekend, upon seeing from my car that a game was in progress, I decided to get out and talk to the players. I learned that they belonged to the Central Bank of South Sudan's team and, after introducing myself, I suggested that we play together some time. Similarly, when I saw that a soccer game was being played near our house, I also invited them to play. I formed an impromptu team from the JICA and Japanese embassy staff who had an interest in the game, with the intention of playing against the

local teams.

I thus saw that soccer was being played throughout Juba. And by talking to South Sudanese, I learned that soccer was indeed the most popular sport in the country. Whenever our team played, the field would be surrounded by spectators watching the match. And should we be shorthanded and invite some of these youths to play with us, they would always accept happily. And once we had played soccer together, we experienced the sense of unity that sports can provide. We instantly opened up to one another without regard for nationality or skin color; by the time the game was over, we all felt like comrades. This experience led me to begin considering the possibilities for peacebuilding through sports and the way they can bring people together and encourage interethnic interaction and solidarity. I also began to think about potentially recreating some of the roles that sports played in Japan's postwar reconstruction.

These thoughts led me to visit the South Sudanese MOCYS early on in my tenure as Chief Representative of the JICA South Sudan Office. I did not have an appointment when I arrived, but I asked if I could meet unofficially with the director in charge of sports. The man in question turned out to be Edward Settimo Yugu, a large man who stood 190 cm tall. Unsurprisingly, he had previously been on the Sudanese basketball team years earlier. He welcomed my visit and told me that he had once sought a meeting with the JICA Chief Representative but been turned away. Our conversation was an energetic one as I told him about my recent arrival, and he spoke about the state of sports in the country. He confirmed that



Edward Settimo Yugu, Director General, Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports.

Photograph courtesy of author

soccer was the most popular sport in the country, followed by basketball. He added that, “When we were part of Sudan, the south was divided into three provinces: Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile. From 1972 to 1983, a sporting event was held in these provinces, changing its location each time. The event lasted for fifteen days and included soccer, basketball, volleyball, boxing, and athletics among its events.”

He emphasized how “this event increased popular solidarity” and said that “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.” As we spoke, my sense of the possibilities that could be achieved to promote peacebuilding through sports increased. As we parted, I told him that I wanted to discuss the idea with him more and that I would make an official appointment next time.

Later, Director General Yugu would look back on this day and say that “I had previously been rebuffed by JICA, but Chief Representative Furukawa came to see me in December 2014. I wasn’t sure how serious he was at first, but he had gone out of his way to come to see me, and I began to trust him.”

As promised, I held an official meeting with him on January 21, 2015, in which I offered my greetings following my arrival in South Sudan and talked with him. In South Sudan, each sport has a designated governing body, with the largest ones covering soccer, judo, basketball, volleyball, handball, taekwondo, and athletics. There is also a national sports committee under the ministry’s jurisdiction that serves as a bridge between the MOCYS and individual sporting bodies. I learned that South Sudan planned to take the necessary steps to become a member of the International Olympic Committee later that year, sometime between April and June. As the world’s youngest country, South Sudan felt that it should participate in the Olympics.

Although the unified Sudan had seen regular conflict, the partial autonomy of southern Sudan had been recognized under the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, as noted in Chapter 1, and this lasted until the Second Civil War broke out in 1983. During this eleven-year period, a national sports event was held to increase Sudanese solidarity.

As he had on the first day that I met him, Director General Yugu once again argued forcefully that this sporting and cultural event would increase national unity by allowing the South Sudanese government and people to interact with those of different ethnicities through sport, and that this was desirable from the perspective of peacebuilding. When I inquired about the support that the MOCYS had received from other donors, he told me that UNICEF had provided a little over 2,000 soccer balls (made of rubber) but that they had received no other assistance. Given the state of development in South Sudan, it was not very surprising to me that few donors had offered their help to the MOCYS. Our meeting ended with an agreement to continue to work closely together.

This conversation further strengthened my belief that JICA should consider the possibilities for peacebuilding through sports. South Sudan had become independent in 2011 but experienced renewed domestic conflict in December 2013. And while peace negotiations were ongoing, the level of trust between the country's ethnic groups and between the people and their government had fallen remarkably. Given the situation, fostering trust among the people and assisting peacebuilding were absolutely necessary tasks. It seemed to me that sports could play an extremely effective role in promoting increased national unity. And I believed that the situation in South Sudan was at the right stage for doing so.

This approach also fit into my *modus operandi*. While investigation and analysis are important, I also believed in my gut feeling after many years of experience. Of course, there is some risk in trying something new, but if one simply took the safe, easy way, there would be little improvement. I would rather take the responsibility for any mistakes than regret any missed opportunities.

Because of my interest in soccer, the story of Didier Drogba and the Ivorian Civil War came to mind. Drogba is a national hero in the Ivory Coast and played a role in ending its civil war. Ivory Coast was split in two in 2002 following a failed coup attempt by rebel forces. The north of the country fell under the control of the rebels (led behind the scenes by former President Robert Guéï), while the military under President Laurent Gbagbo controlled the national capital of Abidjan and the south. As had been the case in unified Sudan, the Ivory Coast experienced continual conflict.

And then something strange happened at a World Cup qualifier against Sudan in October 2005. Following the match, Drogba called a cameraman into the locker room and made an appeal directly to the camera: “Men and women of Ivory Coast, from the north, south, center, and west [...] today we beg you on our knees. [...] Forgive. Forgive! The one country in Africa with so many riches must not descend into war. Please lay down your weapons. Hold elections. All will be better.” While this was of course not the only reason, it was a major impetus behind the fighting in the country coming to an end within a week.

When the team’s African Cup of Nations qualifier against Madagascar was to be held in Abidjan in 2007, Drogba pleaded with President Gbagbo to have it held in Bouake instead. Bouake is a city in the north of the Ivory Coast, in territory controlled by the opposition government. The change that Drogba had requested was made, resulting in a stadium where members of both opposing Ivorian groups stood and cheered for their national team together. The members of the team included players from different religions (Muslims and Christians) and regional backgrounds (northern and southern). And as the rivals in the crowd mixed with one another and watched their team play as one, a similar sense of “solidarity” emerged among them. The entire country seemed to come together that night. The Ivory Coast can thus be given as an example of the ways in which sports like soccer can bring a divided people back together.

I began to think:

Couldn’t we attempt to use sports to achieve popular unity in the same way in South Sudan? Wouldn’t watching teams composed of different, rival ethnic groups and athletes from different regions of the country compete with one another help bring South Sudan’s divided people closer together? If we held the nation’s first national sports event, couldn’t it help foster trust and unity between the nation’s ethnic groups and between the government and the people? Wouldn’t it serve as a symbol of hope for all of the young people in the country?

The “Sports for Tomorrow Program,” announced by Prime Minister Abe in his speech to the IOC in 2013, also came to my mind as I considered these questions.

This program aims to:

Contribute to the world by helping spread sports and the Olympic

movement to more than ten million people in more than one hundred countries over the following seven years, particularly developing nations (by providing both hard and soft support by improving sports facilities and equipment, providing support for physical education, etc.), and training international sports leaders (by constructing international sports academies).

I believed that South Sudan was an appropriate country to benefit from that program. It was also attempting to become an Olympic member and intended to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, which would likely make it a little easier to get those involved to show understanding of the idea of peacebuilding through sports. And given the role that the National Sports Festivals played in Japan's postwar reconstruction and the way that the 1964 Tokyo Olympics served as a festival of peace and symbolized the nation's recovery from the war, perhaps we could apply Japan's experiences to South Sudan. It was with these thoughts in mind that I began preparing for JICA to provide support for National Unity Day, South Sudan's first national sports event.

Promoting the Understanding of the Stakeholders

A first challenge was that there was very little precedent for Japanese ODA being used to provide support for peacebuilding through sports. Some athletes had previously been sent abroad under the auspices of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, but there had never been a full-fledged technical support project of this kind. And given that South Sudan was a fragile state and there was still progress left to be made in securing a peace agreement, no discussions had been held on the possibility of providing support for peacebuilding through sports.

I was honestly unsure of the best way to proceed. If my proposal for peacebuilding through sports was to get anywhere, I would absolutely need to first obtain the support of experts in that field. And as I was unable to put forward any past results from this kind of ODA project, I would need to gain the understanding of the local Japanese embassy, the foreign ministry, and the JICA headquarters in Tokyo. As a member of JICA's soccer team, I sought out Masato Togawa (Director General of the Department of Human Resources for International Cooperation), the team's "coach," and Eiji Inui (Director General of the Africa Department), the team's former "coach" for advice.

At the time, Director General Togawa had been privately looking for a way for international cooperation to be carried out through soccer. More specifically, he had been wrestling with putting together a memo on the “3J” idea (a joint effort between the Japan Football Association, J-League professional soccer, and JICA). He was well aware that dispatching soccer experts overseas under Japan’s existing ODA programs would be difficult and had been hoping that he would find a breakthrough through his work on the 3J collaboration. We both recognized that JICA was not currently the vehicle through which the idea of carrying out aid through sports could be pursued. For that reason, he provided me with an introduction to the International Exchange Department of the Japan Football Association (JFA). Joined by Director General Togawa and Miwa Ito, the Africa Department official responsible for South Sudan, I visited JFA, explained the situation in South Sudan, and exchanged views with them on the possibility of cooperation. The impression I received was that, while they could not immediately dispatch experts to the country, they were interested in finding a way to help. Director General Inui also showed an understanding of my ideas and proposal and told me that he would offer his support.

Because gaining the understanding of the Japanese embassy in South Sudan would be essential for proceeding with the project, I decided to begin by having them personally experience the appeal of sports in South Sudan. That is, because I believed that incorporating multiple Japanese groups into the project would be important for gaining acceptance of



Soccer team comprised of staff from Japanese Embassy and
JICA, and SDF personnel. Photograph courtesy of author

it, I formed an “all-Japan” soccer team consisting of members from the embassy, the JSDF, and JICA. We created a team uniform for ourselves and played against local teams, the South Sudan Football Association’s team, and the Central Bank’s team. I wanted everyone to see how soccer could be used to foster camaraderie and how playing together created a sense of solidarity among players. The fields we played on were uneven and often had many stones scattered around and falling meant getting scrapes. The team was a very mixed group, with players ranging in age from those in their twenties to those in their fifties. Some had a lot of experience playing, while others had none. I was honestly a little uneasy about how good of a match we would be able to put on. But once we started playing, we developed a sense of solidarity and enjoyed ourselves. Our opponents also always gave their all. As I have mentioned before, Juba is an extremely hot place, and we would hold our matches at 8 a.m. for that reason. Our matches allowed everyone on the team to experience camaraderie and a sense of solidarity. Everyone was able to see first-hand how interacting with others through sports breaks down barriers regardless of skin color or nationality.

But despite this progress, I knew that we would be unable to make any headway without the understanding of the MOCYS. South Sudan had no money, and even if it had, sports are generally given a low priority in developing nations and rarely given any funding. The government derived 98% of its income from oil revenues; with the global decline in oil prices, its finances had fallen into the red, and its currency reserves had been wiped out. With only a small share of the national budget, the MOCYS was effectively unable to provide any administrative functions. And in addition to being an inherently powerless ministry, it had also been unable to secure support from aid organizations in the past. In particular, the ministry was unsure whether it could truly trust JICA or not, having been previously rebuffed before.

That is why I needed to gain the understanding of Director General Yugu. As the man in charge of sports for the ministry, he was a key figure. I believed that he needed to visit Japan and see how 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. At that time, Mr. Taguchi learned that the “Tsukuba International Sports Academy,” a short-term program hosted by the University of Tsukuba for the purpose of training leaders for the 2020

Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, would be held in May 2015 as part of the Sports for Tomorrow project. We contacted those in charge of the program and requested that they find a way for Director General Yugu to participate. Fortunately, they decided to accept him. His participation in the program served as an opportunity for him to learn about Japan's efforts for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics and personally experience the way that Japan undertakes sports administration and see how effective it is. He was able to begin developing some understanding and trust towards JICA and Japan.

To get the project off the ground, we also needed to coordinate with JICA's Africa Department. At that time, Miwa Ito, Kensuke Oshima, and Izuru Kimura were responsible for South Sudan in the department. To be perfectly honest, I was a little skeptical of whether or not they would accept the idea of peacebuilding through sports in South Sudan, but they expressed interest in the idea and were unexpectedly positive about it. But despite their interest, a project of this kind was still unprecedented. I needed to find a way to make it more concrete. From the perspective of traditional ODA efforts, such as those aimed at improving medical care and education, the idea was unimaginable. But they stuck with me despite this and discussed its possibilities. Based on these discussions, I made the following proposal for making "peacebuilding through sports" an assistance project for South Sudan for the 2016 fiscal year.

I proposed that "a basic information collection and verification study on sports" be undertaken in preparation for the development of "a full-fledged project for the 2016 fiscal year onwards for cooperation in this area, with a focus on the concept of peacebuilding through sports in South Sudan and the hosting of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo." Once the results of the study were known, we would carry out research and preparations for a scheme for full-fledged cooperation.

The headquarters in Tokyo formed a team to carry out the proposed study and dispatched its members to South Sudan in August 2015. I served as team leader; the other members were Chiaki Okada (an assistant professor of human sciences at Osaka University), Yasuo Ohno (the president of the JIN Corporation), and Miwa Ito and Nanaho Yamanaka from JICA. Despite the unprecedented nature of peacebuilding through sports as an ODA effort, Ms. Ito had worked hard to turn the concept into a reality. Professor Okada was a specialist in sports who was able to provide a

wide variety of advice based on her copious experience and knowledge. President Ohno had experience with the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and had worked as a consultant in developing nations for many years. He had a lot of ground-level experience and was highly trusted. And Ms. Yamanaka had volunteered for the South Sudan Office because she wanted to provide assistance for peacebuilding.

In order for the team to gain a good grasp of the state of sports in South Sudan, we met not only with personnel from the MOCYS but also with representatives of the South Sudan Athletics Federation, the South Sudan Football Association, the Japanese embassy, and others. Through these meetings, we worked to ascertain the state of the MOCYS, its development needs and issues, and how sports are administered in South Sudan (what the major organizations are, what support is provided for sporting activities, how events are promoted, etc.). We also examined what progress was being made towards the establishment of the South Sudan Olympic Committee, an overview of that committee, what sports-related assistance was being received from other donors, and information on any other activities related to peacebuilding through sports.

Based on our findings, the next step was to invite South Sudanese sports officials to Japan so that they could consult with those on the Japanese side and gain an understanding of the actions that Japan was taking to promote sports and its preparations for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. We also decided that we should seek to have a national sporting event held in South Sudan along the lines of the national competitions that had been held in the region while it was part of Sudan.

We needed to decide who it was that we were going to invite to Japan. We decided to invite Director General Yugu but given the need to build trust with the MOCYS, we also decided to invite his superior, Undersecretary Agum Rin Mabeny, who had just been appointed in June. She was new in her position and also seemed at times to be unsure of whether or not we were trustworthy. For example, there were typically other ministry leaders (such as Director General Yugu) present during our meetings with her. And when discussing the country's sports administration and other topics, she would sometimes begin speaking in Juba Arabic or give the impression of not being particularly knowledgeable about the topic at hand. Due to this, we were sometimes uneasy about her suitability for her position and did not initially have faith in her. It was also important that

we gain the understanding of sports-related organizations in the country, given the state of sports administration in the country and South Sudan's desire to join the International Olympic Committee. We thus also invited representatives from groups like the South Sudan Olympic Committee and the South Sudan Football Association, in addition to Director General Yugu and Undersecretary Mabeny.

At the JICA headquarters, Hiroto Kondo (Ito's successor at the Africa Department), Mr. Oshima, and Mr. Kimura worked hard to make the necessary arrangements for inviting these figures to come to Japan. This effort was necessary because this was a new program, and they thus had to decide everything themselves without any existing guidance. Once the invited officials had arrived, who should they meet to gain an understanding of Japanese sports administration? What facilities would it be beneficial for them to see? These were the types of questions they had to find answers to. And it was also necessary for those on the Japanese side to understand how sports administration was carried out in South Sudan if they were to provide support in the future. Mr. Kondo and the other members of the Africa Department's South Sudan Team began their preparations by negotiating with groups like the Japanese Olympic Committee and the Japan Football Association. With the aid of Professor Okada, arrangements were made with the city of Suita in Osaka Prefecture to have the invitees see how a community-based stadium operated in Japan. And because it was important for the JICA headquarters and Japanese sports officials to learn about the state of South Sudanese sports



South Sudan study delegation calls on Suita City Mayor Keiji Goto, who explained detailed efforts by city to promote sports.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

administration, the invitees also prepared a presentation for Japan. Finally, in November 2015, they arrived in Japan.

Once they had completed their program in Japan and returned home, the attitude of the attendees changed completely. Undersecretary Mabeny, whose previous behavior had caused us to doubt whether she was truly qualified for her position, began showing us what she could do. She became quite proactive and positive when responding to us. We were pleasantly surprised at the change.

Looking back at this period, the undersecretary later recalled:

I was appointed undersecretary of the sports ministry on June 25, 2015. It was the first time that I had served as an undersecretary, and I was initially disoriented in my new position. I hadn't yet developed an adequate understanding of the kind of organization that JICA was. Usually, we are the ones making requests of donors. Because this time it had been JICA who had come forward with an initiative to help the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, I had faith in them from the start. But as I had only just assumed my position, I didn't know how I should respond to their initiative. I didn't know, for example, by what system JICA operated. JICA's invitation to come to Japan in November 2015 meant that I was able to learn about how JICA's assistance is structured and to gain a better understanding of the organization. This led me to trust them even more.

Reflecting on his experiences at the University of Tsukuba and as one of the invitees, Director General Yugu had the following to say:

Participating in the training at Tsukuba in May 2015 allowed me to learn about many things such as sports management, judo, sumo, and Japan's history, reconstruction assistance, society, and culture. The fact that no one stole anything following the Tohoku earthquake made me believe that Japan was a country worthy of being trusted. I saw how diligent they were and how their cities showed no signs of fighting. During the training, I came to trust Japan more. Then, I was able to visit Japan for training again in November 2015 and visited the stadium in Suita, Osaka. When I learned that the stadium had been constructed using donations from the public and that all of the public could use it for sports activities and to better their health, it made a big impression on me. I learned many things while I was in Japan and became convinced

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

We were thus able to gradually obtain a mutual understanding of one another and build a relationship of trust between us. With this, serious work on preparing for the national sports event picked up speed.

Preparing to Support the National Sports Event

I would like to first introduce the primary figures involved in the local preparations for assisting the national sports event. From JICA's South Sudan Office, Ms. Yamanaka, Junko Uchida (a project formulation advisor), and Mr. Taban Koma (a member of our local staff) were put in charge. At the MOCYS, in addition to Undersecretary Mabeney and Director General Yugu, Mr. Yugu selected a special six-member team for the work. Lemor William served as the leader of this team. With the personnel chosen, the two teams began work on the national sports event.

I strongly believed that the South Sudan Office needed to make the first post-independence national sports event a success. But at the same time, I knew that it was unprecedented for JICA to undertake a project like this and was aware of the current situation in South Sudan and the state of the MOCYS. I recognized that there were many difficulties standing in our way. And this is why I had chosen to put staff members known for their courage and passion in charge of the project. At the time of her assignment to South Sudan in May 2015, Ms. Yamanaka was a young woman only in her third year at JICA. She had felt so strongly about wanting to be involved in peacebuilding, however, that she had told the Personnel Department that she would leave if she was not assigned to the South Sudan Office.

On the other hand, Ms. Uchida had previous experience working in South Sudan from her time at the Japanese embassy in Sudan. She had also worked for an international NGO that had dispatched her to northern South Sudan. She once told us a story from her earlier work about a time that she had caught a large number of flying ants, plucked off their wings, and then stir-fried them to have for dinner. She is a small and adorable woman, and you would never guess from looking at her that she experienced working in the harsh environments of South Sudan. When

some of the JSDF personnel deployed to the country asked her to relate stories about her past experiences, they were all shocked and declared that she was a better survivor than they were. In any case, she is a person with strong feelings about South Sudan. Taban is an extremely talented member of our local staff who is very sociable and skilled at bringing people together. He is able to get anyone to open up and he was committed to making the national sports event a success, no matter what.

As the leader of the six-member MOCYS team, Mr. Lemor was a key figure in the ministry's efforts, alongside Undersecretary Mabeny and the popular Director General Yugu. A teacher at the University of Juba, he was very capable of bringing his team together. The ministry was in a poor state, however. As mentioned earlier, South Sudan was suffering from financial difficulties and the ministry was not really in a condition to be administering sports. It had also been falling behind on salaries. And because there was no one at the ministry who had been involved with the national sports events of several decades earlier, we were truly all beginning with a blank slate as we began our preparations.

We first needed to decide what direction to go in. While our goal was to host an event similar to those held before independence, many of those involved did not envision our event being as large in scale. However, all of us on the JICA/South Sudan joint team began to share the dream that Director General Yugu had expressed when we first met in his office: "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." And so, both teams met together every day for lively discussions of how best to make that dream a reality.

To begin with, we needed to decide exactly what kind of event we would be putting on. That is, we had to undertake the work of making detailed decisions such as those regarding the event's scale, venue, themes, name, schedule, organization, athletic competitions, participants, rules, housing, cost-sharing, and preparations. The MOCYS was not adequately furnished for carrying out this work. The ministry had no budget and even holding discussions was difficult due to inadequate electricity and lack of a suitable place for holding meetings. But its staff tenaciously strove on despite these obstacles. And in August 2015, we reached an agreement with the ministry on how to move forward.

It was decided that we would strive to put on an event with such a visual impact that it would encourage further peace through sports, increase the event-hosting capacities of the organizations involved, and lead to future cooperation among the participants. We decided that this was the sort of sports event that modern South Sudan needed, one that would create bonds between people regardless of their state of origin or ethnicity. The South Sudanese government named it National Unity Day and adopted the slogan of “National Sports Day Celebration—Peace, Unity, and Reconciliation.” It was thus decided that the event would be held on a national scale.

Opinions on the types of events to include varied, but it was ultimately decided to have soccer (as the most popular sport in the country and a game played nationwide), athletic events, and activities related to peace. The event would be held over a ten-day period in late January so that young people would be able to participate (as this was during their school vacation). This would also allow the event to take place during the country’s dry season. All ten states and the country’s two administrative areas would participate. The soccer teams would consist of eighteen players and four staff members (including the coach), with young men aged nineteen and younger eligible to play. The athletics teams would also consist of twenty-two people: ten men, ten women, and a coach for each group. These teams would have no age restrictions. The selection of athletes was to be done by each state’s sports ministry in a fair and unbiased manner, in accordance with criteria supplied by the MOCYS and in cooperation with each sports’ governing body.

The National Stadium in Juba and Buluk Athletic Field were provisionally chosen to serve as the venues for the event (for soccer and athletics, respectively). The soccer tournament would be run using either single-elimination or round-robin matches, and the athletics events would include 100m, 200m, 400m, and 1500m runs and relay events. Taking into account the country’s security situation and other factors, all events would be held in Juba, with travel costs from each state being taken from that state’s budget. The costs for Juba would be covered by JICA and the MOCYS. Participants would stay at Rombur National Teacher Training Institute, a facility that had been constructed with assistance from JICA. Peace-related activities would be held and t-shirts bearing slogans promoting peace would be created. Messages of peace would be broadcast via television, radio, and newspapers during the games and statements

promoting peace included in the opening and closing ceremonies. There would also be musical and dance performances incorporating such messages and opportunities for participants to think about peace.

Judging from the event's results, it may appear that all of our discussions on which direction to go in went smoothly. But there were differing opinions on each of these points, and coordinating these views required lengthy discussions. First, were we really capable of putting on a sports event involving participants from the entire country? As explained in the introduction and elsewhere in this book, there was still fighting going on across South Sudan at this time. Furthermore, we did not have a large budget. Would we be able to raise enough money to fund the travel costs for teams to come from each state? It was argued that perhaps a smaller-scale event that only involved Juba would be better. We worked tirelessly to convince everyone involved that it was precisely due to the state that South Sudan was in that a National Unity Day was needed. The event needed to be on a national scale that would transcend regional and ethnic divisions.

Bringing in delegations of more than forty people from each state meant that we also needed to arrange lodging for at least five hundred people once coaches and various other personnel were included. Juba did not have enough hotels to accommodate that many people. And even if it had, we did not have the funds to pay for that. This is why the decision was made to use Rombur National Teacher Training Institute, a school that had been built on the outskirts of Juba with JICA assistance. But Rombur was a school; it had not been built to house a large group of people. It had inadequate electrical generators, bathrooms, and showers, especially for five hundred people over ten days. Having the participants stay there would not be easy, but we had nowhere else that could accommodate so many people.

The debate over the athletic events was also intense. South Sudan's young men have repeatedly been recruited to fight in the country's conflicts, and those from agro-pastoralist groups are raised in a society and culture that encourages belligerency. These young men are also the primary perpetrators of cattle raids. We thus wanted to largely draw our participants from these youths. The issue was raised, however, that it would be difficult to confirm the age of the competitors. The country's repeated conflicts meant that many records were either missing or had

never existed, and even when records did exist, there was no guarantee that they would include a date of birth. Concerns were also raised about whether the selection of participants could truly be done in an impartial manner. Surely, the athletes chosen would be those with connections to the powerful, no matter what steps we took. But we decided to move forward on the basis described above, despite these uncertainties.

Now that JICA and MOCYS had decided on a plan, we needed to ensure that those who would execute it—that is, the individual states—had a shared understanding of it. We needed to hold discussions with those involved from each state to ensure that they would be able to choose athletes, could afford to send them to Juba and that they understood the various regulations that would be in place for the event (such as the rules for each competition). We needed to gather all of these officials under one roof and talk with them. We thus ended up holding the first meeting of all the states since independence in October 2015.

The meeting came with some difficulties of its own. First, there was the issue of how to get in touch with the states. Letters needed to be sent to each state, but the MOCYS did not have enough computers or printers. Even those that did exist could not always be used due to issues such as inadequate electricity. The ministry also lacked an appropriate venue for holding the meeting. In sum, they had only limited means with which to coordinate communications with the states and no money with which to do so. And naturally, there were limits to the types of assistance that JICA could provide. But we did lend the ministry a space that we had previously used as a project office. While the office was a prefab, it was adequately equipped to host the meeting. With that settled, the ministry was finally able to send letters to each state concerning the meeting, which was held in Juba on October 6 and 7.

During the meeting, the participants discussed our aforementioned plans for the event. The state officials showed enthusiastic support for holding a National Unity Day and were basically in agreement with the plan put forward by the MOCYS. And their discussions produced more constructive agreements on some areas. For example, a committee was established that consisted of the directors of the technical committees for each state's sports ministry (these technical committees were made up of the heads of that state's sports associations). Age verification of athletes would be done by consulting their national identification papers. In cases

where this was impossible, other evidence would be used, such as a letter from their school confirming their age or an identification card from the sports association they belonged to. The state officials all agreed to strive to have athlete selection be carried out impartially. They agreed to the proposed list of events and it was decided that National Unity Day would begin on January 16, 2016. However, having the state governments assume their travel costs remained a concern. Some places like Western Equatoria had no commercial transportation to Juba and other states only had the budget to pay to send their soccer team. But as all the officials wanted to participate in the event, they said that they would return to their states and find some way to get their state legislatures to provide them with the needed money.

Roughly three months remained before the date that the meeting had agreed upon for the beginning of the national sports event. That was how much time we had to make the necessary arrangements for a national tournament. Would the states really be able to come up with the necessary funding? Would we really be able to turn Rombur National Teacher Training Institute into suitable lodgings for the participants? Would the repairs be done in time? How exactly would the athletes stay there? How were we going to feed them? How were they going to be transported around Juba? Given the number of planned soccer matches and the size of the National Stadium, we needed to find more venues for the soccer tournament. But there were no other fields suitable for soccer. Buluk Athletic Field was effectively just an empty lot covered in stones. Work would need to be done to make it suitable for holding the athletic events there. We needed lots of spectators to watch the events and wanted the messages of peace to reach as many people as possible. There was still just so much to be done for the actual hosting of the event, and it would not be easy work. Even so, the joint team strove on, tackling each problem one by one.

One day, as this work was underway, I received an urgent message from Ms. Yamanaka requesting that I meet with Director General Yugu. She said that the ministry team had decided to go on strike.

Mr. Lemor, the leader of the MOCYS team, described the incident as follows:

The problem at that time was that the division of duties between JICA and the sports ministry was unclear. And we both lacked the knowledge

necessary for National Unity Day. I knew that JICA carried out projects to build bridges and water purification plants, but I didn't know about its internal affairs. [Uchida] Junko was very friendly and knew a lot about South Sudan. But [Yamanaka] Nana acted in a high-handed manner and that caused us to butt heads at first. I wondered why she was so inflexible and got the feeling that Junko was mediating things between us. But despite these clashes, we were making progress on the preparations for National Unity Day."

This was the situation under which the "strike" (Ms. Yamanaka's description) occurred. Mr. Lemor asserted that there had been no strike, merely an unresolved issue. He continued,

During one of our regular weekly meetings, the members from the sports ministry complained that, since we were working more than eight hours a day, JICA should provide us with some kind of compensation. Nana countered that because this work was for the South Sudanese government, the government should be the one to provide any compensation. We were at a deadlock over the issue. Nana's argument was correct: although JICA was providing assistance, National Unity Day was a South Sudanese effort. What we were doing was properly part of our work, and the South Sudanese government should have been compensating us for it. But at the same time, the work of preparing for the event had truly become a major burden for us. We were working more than eight hours a day, day after day, and the government frequently failed to pay us on time. With our limited budget, we worked under poor conditions. There was no electricity and we had only limited means of communications. Sometimes, we had to pay our working expenses out of our own pockets. Because the sports ministry had so little money, we had previously not been doing much serious work. Now, we were suddenly working overtime every day, and that caused dissatisfaction. So we, the ministry team, said that we wouldn't work anymore unless we received some kind of compensation. It was Nana who left the room once the discussion had deadlocked. So, we weren't striking. It's just that the matter hadn't been resolved.

Director General Yugu looked back on it this way:

Nana always adhered strictly to JICA's rules and I had wondered if she

couldn't be a little more flexible while working with us. She always, always pushed JICA's rules on us. But she was very passionate about her work. Junko was as well. The sports ministry lacked money and, honestly, administrative ability as well. We lacked personnel and had no experience hosting a large-scale event like National Unity Day. Also, it was normal to receive a bonus when hosting a major event, but JICA wasn't paying one. The lack of money meant that the ministry team had only extremely limited operating funds and this was a major problem for them. The ministry should have been providing more operating funds and paying the bonus, but the state of the country didn't allow for that. And because it was the first time we had hosted National Unity Day, many of the workers viewed it as extra work at first. And many of them wondered where JICA's money was going. Some even asked me, "Are you eating JICA's money?"

When Ms. Yamanaka told me about the strike, I immediately visited Director General Yugu to discuss the situation with him. I patiently listened to him as he explained the ministry team's views and then politely explained JICA's rules. And ultimately, because the ministry team was repeatedly working overtime despite a limited budget and the irregular payment of their salaries—and because it was necessary for both sides to compromise and work together in our preparations for National Unity Day in January—I decided to pay the seven members of the team \$20 a day. In fact, Mr. Lemor later told me that because the seven members of the team had been unable to complete all the needed work on their own, there were actually a total of fifteen people from the ministry working on the preparations. They thus apparently divided the money between fifteen people rather than seven.

While there was still the occasional flare-up afterward, working alongside one another led to a true sense of unity among the teams and additional respect for one another. And so, the two teams continued to work together, day after day. But despite their best efforts, problems needing to be overcome continued to arise. These included the improvements to the Rombur school, preparation of the athletic fields, and the twenty-eight-state issue. We had decided that the five hundred participants needed to stay at the school. But as it was not a hotel, we had to at the very least secure enough mattresses so that everyone had somewhere to sleep. We also needed to procure additional electrical generators for the school and enough food. Because South Sudan is a very poor nation, however, it was

very difficult to come up with enough mattresses. Ms. Yamanaka and Ms. Uchida struggled for days with the issue of getting them.

Improving the fields for the soccer and athletics events was also extremely difficult. We ended up deciding to use three fields for the soccer matches in addition to the National Stadium. One of these was Buluk Athletic Field, which was also being used for the athletic events. None of these fields were in a condition comparable to what we had in Japan. There were numerous stones and, not only were they not level but they had many holes in them. We were all concerned that athletes might injure themselves during the events.

As Buluk Athletic Field lacked a perimeter fence, people and motorcycles entered the grounds at will. There were numerous stones on the field and the whole place seemed like an empty lot. At the very least, we needed to put up a fence to prevent people from entering the grounds easily and create a circular running track for the athletic events. Ideally, the surface of the track and its approaches would be made of a hard material so as to catch the spikes on athletes' shoes, and the track itself should be uniform and level. But we did not have the budget for that. Instead, our thoughts were that we should try to remove as many stones as possible and do what we could to make the field level. I consulted on the matter with Colonel Hiroji Yamashita, head of the 8th JSDF Dispatched Engineering Contingent, a man who I regularly worked with while coordinating ODA and PKO efforts. Col. Yamashita immediately understood the nature of the situation and promised to build a track and improve the field so that the athletic events could be held. The South Sudan Office procured the boundary markers for the track and JSDF personnel buried them for us. In addition to improving the grounds, the JSDF also dug a ditch around the field to prevent people and motorcycles from entering easily. The skills of the JSDF contingent were truly impressive; Buluk Athletics Field was so improved as to seem like a completely different place.

I consulted with Norio Umeda of CTI Engineering International and Kiyoshi Kusaka of Dai Nippon Construction (both of whom were in South Sudan working on the construction of the Nile Bridge and the water treatment plan) about improving the other grounds, and they agreed to help. They mobilized their workers and equipment at no cost to us and worked to ensure that the athletes would be able to compete safely. The public works ministry also assisted, thanks to Mr. Uchida contacting

them. The hosting of the games truly involved assistance from a number of Japanese groups. That everyone was so willingly offered their cooperation made me so happy that tears came to my eyes.

Meanwhile, everyone at the South Sudan Office joined together and worked on the National Unity Day preparations. Tomomi Uchikawa had been appointed Senior Representative of the office in November 2015. She was an extremely talented staff member who had experience working in East Timor and was seconded to the foreign ministry. She assisted me in my duties and oversaw the overall management of the office. As I mentioned earlier, the South Sudan Office was responsible for a number of projects. And as National Unity Day was an unprecedented assistance project, many issues arose that none of us had any experience dealing with. Despite having only just arrived at the office, Ms. Uchikawa immediately threw herself into her work. In addition to the above, she needed to provide guidance to our younger staff members like Ms. Yamanaka and Ms. Uchida and handle our local staff with courtesy and precision. She neatly addressed one problem after another. She was truly a key figure behind the support that JICA provided for National Unity Day.

As mentioned earlier, JICA staff members were not allowed to travel outside of Juba. This meant that the work of publicity was extremely important, both for conveying crucial messages and for informing the South Sudanese people about the work we were doing. The very talented Ayako Oi was appointed to our office in August 2015. A former employee of Nippon TV who had also worked at the UN and Japanese embassies, she also had some experience of working in post-conflict states like Afghanistan and East Timor. At the time of her appointment, the office still lacked a senior representative, so its management was quite difficult. Ms. Oi was put in charge of public relations, a central position in the office. In addition to being involved with the overall management of the office (including its finances), she was placed in charge of certain projects like the South Sudan TV and Radio Capacity Development Project. She exceeded all expectations in her job performance.

Ms. Oi had actually been hired by the office in the spring of 2015 to serve as a public relations advisor to Atong Demach, South Sudan's first contestant in the Miss World beauty pageant (Ms. Demach went on to win the titles of Miss Africa and Miss Interviewer). In other words, Ms. Demach had the kind of talent that made her capable of working at a

world-famous modeling company. While I had been able to arrange for her to come in for an interview, I did not think that she would actually come work for us given the type of salary that we would be able to pay. I described the benefits package and offered her the position of public relations advisor for the office. I expected her to turn the offer down, but instead she accepted, saying, “I don’t care about the money. I would like to make a contribution to South Sudan.”

Another factor in the importance of the office’s public relations was the low level of literacy in the country, a mere 27%. Because not many people could read newspapers, political cartoons and caricatures tended to have considerable influence in society and be very popular. There was no precedent in this, but after thinking about the best way to get the word out, we decided to hire the country’s most popular cartoonist, Adija Acuil, as a public relations advisor. He had been an employee of the finance ministry, but he also drew newspaper cartoons through which he had informed the South Sudanese people of things that he thought they should be aware of, including JICA’s projects. Ms. Oi worked hard to publicize National Unity Day, working together with Adija, consulting with South Sudan TV and Radio, and holding press conferences.

Atsushi Murakami and Mr. Kuwabara worked hard on the event’s security precautions. Mr. Murakami came to JICA from the defense ministry and had experience of working in Afghanistan. When making decisions, he was always calm and precise. A very reliable staff member, he was in charge of the office’s security alongside Raji Gurung, our security advisor. He was also involved in overseeing projects. Mr. Kuwabara oversaw the office’s agricultural projects but also served as a deputy to Mr. Murakami. The preparations for National Unity Day were truly a joint effort of our entire office. The event was built upon the hard and sincere work undertaken by these men and women.

We were making steady progress on the preparations for the tournament when a major problem arose: the introduction of the twenty-eight-state system in October 2015 (as discussed in Chapter 3). Our preparations for National Unity Day had been based on the premise that there were ten states in the country, and each would be sending teams. With the government suddenly declaring that there would now be twenty-eight states, we needed to consult with the MOCYS on how to respond. It was an extremely sensitive political issue. We ultimately decided to divide

the country into regions. While there would also be some difficulties in determining what these regions should be, we decided that the teams would be sent from these larger regions rather than the states and left the determination of these regions up to the state governments. We also decided to use city names to represent each region. So, rather than having ten states and two administrative areas participating, we now had ten cities and two administrative areas. This was done out of political considerations. As the twenty-eight-state issue was also a delicate matter for the ongoing peace negotiations, a Japanese government official placed pressure on us to postpone the event—even up until right before it was due to begin. “Are you really going to hold your tournament with this kind of problem going on?” I responded by declaring that we would not postpone, that we would hold the event for the sake of peacebuilding in South Sudan. Our event would contribute to peace, not take away from it.

Chapter 5: Holding the First National Unity Day since Independence

As we saw in Chapter 4, the National Unity Day preparations involved extraordinary efforts from the MOCYS and everyone else involved. None of us in MOCYS or JICA had any experience planning or running a sports tournament on a national scale, and South Sudan's sports infrastructure (such as athletic fields) was in need of improvement. Therefore, the work of planning and running the tournament—choosing athletes and securing means of transportation, for example—had to be done from scratch with JICA support. Finally, having overcome numerous difficulties along the way, we made it to early January 2016, just before the games were to begin. Everyone involved had been sustained by their passion and the conviction that we would be able to create a tournament in South Sudan, finally allowing people to connect with one another regardless of their state of origin or ethnicity. Clashes between government and opposition forces were still occurring during this period, and while a peace agreement had been reached in August 2015, the implementation of that agreement was making little-to-no progress. The government's sudden announcement in late October 2015 that it would be increasing the number of states from ten to twenty-eight further heightened tensions between the government and opposition, and between South Sudan and the international community. And on December 15, the government announced that it would be moving its currency to a floating exchange rate. It was amidst this unstable security situation and increasing political and economic turmoil that we prepared in January 2016 for the opening of the first National Unity Day sports event since independence.

Honestly, given the unstable security situation in certain regions and the national government's complete lack of money (to say nothing of the individual state governments), we had no idea how many states would actually be able to send teams of athletes to the event. There were regions where the very idea of going to Juba sparked fear among the populace. It would take a fair amount of courage for these young people—who previously had no opportunities to interact with members of other ethnic groups—to travel to distant Juba. We were thus worried that less than half of the states would participate. Contrary to our expectations, however, a steady stream of about 350 athletes from eight states (cities)

and one administrative area arrived. These teams were (with the name of the former state in parentheses): Juba (Central Equatoria), Torit (Eastern Equatoria), Bor (Jonglei), Pibor (Pibor Administrative Area), Malakal (Upper Nile), Rumbek (Lakes), Kuajok (Warrap), Wau (Western Bahr el Ghazal), and Bentiu (Unity). Kuajok had only been able to send athletes for the athletic events due to budgetary restrictions. Unfortunately, the teams from Yambio (Western Equatoria), Aweil (Northern Bahr el Ghazal), and Abyei (an area whose status was disputed with Sudan) were unable to participate. The reasons for this included security instability and an inability to secure transportation to Juba.

As teams arrived in Juba from across the nation, so did officials from the JICA headquarters in Tokyo. Kondo, who was in charge of South Sudan, and President Ohno of JIN Corporation came to help us host the event. Senior Vice President Hiroshi Kato (in charge of the Africa Department) and Africa Department South Sudan Team Leader Oshima also came to participate in the event and hold consultations with the South Sudanese government. Everyone at the South Sudan Office joined together and did all they could to aid in the hosting of the first National Unity Day since independence while still overseeing their normal tasks.

The athletes, coaches, and officials who arrived in Juba were first taken to Rombur National Teacher Training Institute, where they would be staying. We had wanted to create an environment at Rombur where everyone would be able to get to know each other and form lasting bonds without regard for their states of origin or ethnicities as they interacted through sports or peace activities. So, for example, efforts had been taken to ensure that the room arrangement was such that the teams would mingle, and meals were provided in a way that made it easy to interact with those on other teams. Mattresses were placed close together so that athletes would inevitably talk to one another. For the athletes, Rombur was an environment where they would come into contact with certain other languages and ethnic groups for the first time, or even with ethnic groups that they had always viewed with hostility. It was possible that, should fighting and arguments break out there, the games would be canceled. And with the increasing political instability in the country, we needed to prevent any harm from coming to these athletes that we had gathered from across the country. In addition to increasing security at Rombur, the MOCYS also took steps to provide 24-hour support for the athletes during their two-week stay.

An Incident Before the Opening of the Games

As the athletes arrived prior to the start of the games, we carried out a dress rehearsal of the peace activities. One of the events we had planned was “tug of war.” I had been under the impression that this was an athletic contest unique to Japan, but it turns out that it is also played in South Sudan. President Ohno went to great lengths trying to find a rope that could be used for the activity before finally learning that the SPLA had one and arranged to borrow it from them. The rope was impressive and looked as strong as the ones we use for the contest in Japan. The athletes lined up on both sides of the rope and—when the signal was given—pulled. An instant later, as soon as the athletes pulled with their incredible strength, we heard a snapping sound and the rope broke in half. The athletes were thrilled at this development and began jumping around and shouting with happy expressions on their faces. Our faces, on the other hand, had gone white. The rope we had borrowed from the SPLA had snapped in a seemingly impossible event. The rope was the only one we had available to use, and it was a valuable piece of equipment that had belonged to the SPLA.

In marked contrast to the athletes, we were shaken by this development. Tug of war was an important part of the peace activities program that we had organized and if we did not have a rope, we could not do it. After wondering what we could possibly do, we decided to approach



Construction equipment of CTI Engineering International Company, which is doing grant aid work in South Sudan, being used to prepare grounds in Juba City with the assistance of the Central Equatoria Ministry of Infrastructure.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

Norio Umeda of CTI Engineering International and Kiyoshi Kusaka of Dai Nippon Construction to ask if we could borrow ropes from their worksites. They immediately agreed, but the ropes they had were not strong enough to be used in a tug of war. It then occurred to us that the JSDF might have brought one with them from Japan, perhaps to use in introducing Japanese culture. This suspicion turned out to be on the mark. We were able to borrow their rope and thus managed to overcome this unfortunate difficulty.

Also, on the seventeenth, the first day of the games, Ms. Uchida went to carry out a final inspection of the sports fields. She reported back that there were holes in one of the fields that we had planned to play soccer on. Visiting the site, I saw that the condition of the field was such that the athletes would risk injury if they played on it. But there was no longer time to make arrangements for someone to come fix it. I consulted with Mr. Umeda again and explained our situation. He immediately said that he would do something about it and contacted the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Rural Water. A grader arrived the next day and fixed the field.

On the day before the opening events, we held a welcoming ceremony for the athletes and a briefing for the coaches during the day and then carried out peacebuilding activities in the evening. Everyone involved in running the event was extremely busy. We were also anxious about whether the next day's opening would really go smoothly or not. And so, everyone in the office not directly involved in carrying out that day's activities—people like Senior Representative Uchikawa, Ms. Oi, Mr. Murakami, and Mr. Kuwabara—voluntarily went around and carried out final checks for the games. When they did so, we realized that we had made insufficient arrangements for guiding government officials around and managing the large number of cars that would arrive, given the scale of the event. We were thus up until late at night talking over the new arrangements to be made and making sure that everyone knew what their responsibilities for the next day were.

The Opening Ceremony

We had made it to January 16, 2016, the day of the opening ceremony. We were truly blessed with perfect weather for the ceremony, which had been planned for 3:30 p.m. at the Juba National Stadium. We opened

the stadium at 2:30 p.m. and spectators gradually filed in. This was the hottest part of the day, and I believe the temperature was roughly 40 degrees Celsius. I felt a little uneasy, as there were not as many spectators as I had hoped for, and I wondered if the heat was the reason why. Government officials began entering the stadium at 3:00 p.m. and taking their seats. Major guests from the South Sudanese government planning to attend included the Vice President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Labor, Public Service, and Human Resource Development, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, and the Governor of Jubek State. The head of the local UNESCO office was also in attendance, and Ambassador Masahiko Kiya, JICA Vice President Hiroshi Kato, and I represented Japan.

Once most of these officials had taken their seats, we awaited Vice President James Igga, who was yet to arrive. As I mentioned, the ceremony was supposed to begin at 3:30, but things in South Sudan rarely go according to schedule. When holding workshops with members of the government, it was typical for people with important positions—ministers



Players entering during opening ceremony.

Photograph courtesy of Ayako Oi (JICA)

and undersecretaries, for example—to arrive thirty minutes to an hour late. I do not know if this was meant to be an intentional expression of power, but that day proved no exception; Vice President Igga arrived an hour late. While we in the Japanese contingent were impatient as we waited, the South Sudanese were unphased by the development. In fact, spectators continued to enter the stadium as we waited, as if they had timed their arrival to coincide with that of the Vice President. I could not say if this was because they had expected a late start or whether they had just not wanted to sit under the blazing sun. When the Vice President did arrive (accompanied by numerous guards), the spectators and athletes cheered wildly.

With the Vice President now in attendance, the athletes began filing into the stadium at 4:30 p.m., an hour later than scheduled. They were accompanied by school and military bands and waved their national and state flags. 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. One of those with tears flowing down her face was Rebecca Okwachi, the Minister of Roads and Bridges, who said, “I never thought I would see this day come.” She had arrived at the stadium earlier than the other ministers, despite having other tasks that needed to be done that day. This was because she had played volleyball in the 1972 National Unity Day games before South Sudan’s independence. The years afterward had seen repeated conflict, something that had not come to an end, despite the ultimate achievement of South Sudanese independence, and this had caused her to think that this kind of day would never come. As she watched the athletes proudly march in, she cried. Education Minister Deng Deng Hoc had been a student during the previous National Unity Day games and had participated in the opening carnival, where he carried a book full of messages. He, too, was filled with deep emotion as he watched the athletes enter. National Unity Day truly was a long-awaited desire for the people of South Sudan.

I myself was also moved to tears as National Unity Day began and I watched the athletes proudly march in, the result of the extraordinary passion shown by everyone involved. Mr. Oshima, who had come from the Africa Department in Tokyo, also cried. He had the experience of

watching the region from the JICA Sudan Office prior to its independence and had continued his involvement with the country through his work in Tokyo. He was deeply moved as he had also thought that his kind of day would never come.

Once the athletes had finished entering the stadium, the national anthem was sung, and prayers were offered by Muslim and Christian clerics. This was followed by speeches from the South Sudanese and Japanese guests of honor, including Vice President Igga, the Sports Minister, Ambassador Kiya, Vice President Kato, and myself. The South Sudanese officials said that what South Sudan most needed at that time was Peace and Unity, and they called for the nation's young people to play a primary role in that process as the country moved towards the formation of a transition government. They frequently mentioned how important the games were and offered praise for the assistance provided by Japan. Performances took place between these speeches, including taiko drumming by the 9th JSDF Dispatched Engineering Contingent, traditional South Sudanese dances, and singing by Emmanuel Kembe, a popular local folk singer. The dancers, wearing colorful clothing, enchanted the audience as they danced nimbly to a uniquely African rhythm. And I have no doubt seeing taiko drumming was a rare experience for the South Sudanese audience as they witnessed the powerful impact of the drums and the agility with which the drummers struck them. Mr. Kembe also sang "Our Unity," a song that he had written at JICA's request. Please allow me to introduce the lyrics of the song, which speak of the importance of unity for the new nation of South Sudan:

*The star is shining up, is shining in the night and in the day
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
Slowly, slowly, slowly, we will forget the problems of the past
The star is shining up, is shining in the night and in the day
I have seen the star is shining up, is shining in the day and in the night
To show us the way, to show us the way on how to build new Sudan
So that it can show us the way, to show us the way on how to live in Peace
and Unity
With music our unity can be strong and also with sport our unity can be
strong*

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

The image of Kembe singing as the athletes surrounded him and danced along made a big impression.

Thanks to the efforts of Ms. Oi, not only was the opening ceremony broadcast live on South Sudan TV but it also became the primary story on the nightly news. The ceremony was also widely covered in the country's newspapers the next day. Vice President Kato's and my speeches were reprinted in full, and there were large pictures of the JSDF engineering contingent's performance.



Drum and dance performance.



Photograph courtesy of JICA



Dance performance.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Japanese drum performance by Japan Self-Defense Force personnel.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

An Overview of the Sports Events on National Unity Day

The soccer and athletic events began on January 17, the day following the opening ceremony, and continued through January 23 (with the exception of the 22nd). The preliminary soccer matches were held on the fields that CTI Engineering International, Dai Nippon Construction, and the JSDF had worked to improve, and the championship match was held in the National Stadium. With eight teams participating, there were a total of fifteen matches: twelve round-robin matches, two semi-finals, and the finals. As mentioned, daytime in South Sudan is extremely hot, particularly in January (the middle of the dry season), with temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius. We therefore chose to have the matches begin at 4 p.m. each day. Tents were set up at the soccer fields, but these were only large enough to accommodate special guests. The athletes lined up on both sides of the field, and the spectators stood around it as they passionately cheered. The matches had announcers who provided a live play-by-play that could be heard everywhere on the field and was also broadcast by radio. This was in Juba Arabic, the common language of Juba. While South Sudan's official language is English, this dialect of Arabic is frequently used in the capital. I was thus unable to understand what was being said, but I did make out the word "JICA" several times. When I asked the members of our local staff what had been said, they told me that the broadcast had frequently talked about the importance of the event's theme of Peace and Unity and given thanks to JICA for its assistance. As we had not made any requests for them to do so, I took this as evidence that the announcers had understood the purpose of the sports event and shared our desire for Peace and Unity.

Over the course of the matches, the athletes, coaches, and referees showed they had a thorough awareness of the importance of fair play. The athletes were proud, however, having been chosen to represent their local areas. They were thus loath to lose, and the matches were naturally intense. Opposing teams included members of different ethnic groups, including some that they had traditionally been hostile towards. And yet, once each match began, the only thing any of us saw was players doing their best to score goals and prevent the other team from doing the same. I had played against many local teams during my time in South Sudan and learned that soccer is a mysterious thing. As you play, all of your focus becomes concentrated on that single round ball. Nationality and skin color do not matter. Once you touch that ball, a sense of unity is born. I

believe the athletes felt the same thing. They transcended ethnicity and became as one during those soccer matches. Sometimes, there were fierce collisions during the games. Players fell, only for members of the other team to immediately lend them a hand and pick them back up. There was no jeering from the crowd. In other countries, including Japan, you will sometimes see spectators loudly complain about members of the opposing team (or even members of their own team), but nothing like that occurred during these matches.

Spectators surrounded the field several times over and cheered loudly as they watched the matches. None of the violent incidents that we had feared happened; both the athletes and the crowd showed nothing but fair play. Many of the players cried when they lost, but there were also many scenes that embodied the concepts underlying National Unity Day, such as players shaking the hands of their opponents after losing a match and helping each other up. The major newspapers provided daily coverage of the matches, and the number of spectators increased over the course of the tournament.

In a strange twist of fate, the championship match ended up being between the primarily Dinka city of Wau and the primarily Nuer city of Bentiu. As I have discussed previously, nation-building in South Sudan had made progress since its independence in 2011 with the assistance of the international community, only for a new conflict to erupt in December 2013 due to a power struggle between President Kiir (a Dinka) and Vice



Beginning of fair play.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

President Machar (a Nuer). This conflict had resulted in rampant rape and looting, as well as many civilian deaths. Many of the victims were targeted because they belonged to one of these two ethnic groups. And now, the teams facing each other in the finals were primarily composed of these two groups who had clashed so fiercely in the past. The match would truly symbolize National Unity Day and its theme of Peace and Unity. Would the two teams and their supporters really be able to remain calm? Juba National Stadium was filled to capacity (about 6,000 people) for the finals.

The match was intense, and both teams can be described as having fought desperately. Neither gave an inch to the other. As I watched, I felt the same sense of tension that comes from the high school baseball championships in Japan played at Koshien Stadium near Kobe. Everyone, athletes and spectators, watched intently. And at the end of this desperate struggle, the team from Bentiu was victorious. When the referee blew his



View of spectators.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Athletes playing on well-prepared grounds.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Helping a fallen player during a game.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Spectators carrying goalkeeper after Wau team won in preliminary match.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Spectators filled seats at soccer finals.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



Final match.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



View of Bentiu players exploding in happiness following victory in final match.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



Wau players collapsed in sorrow after losing finals.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



Bentiu player comforts Wau player after latter's team loses in finals.
Photograph courtesy of JICA



Players and spectators celebrating after finals.
Photograph courtesy of JICA

whistle, the losing team fell to the ground and cried, while the other team celebrated its victory. I was moved when I saw that, 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. Both the players and spectators thoroughly embraced the spirit of fair play. The spectators and officials cheered enthusiastically, regardless of whether they belonged to the government or opposition factions.

As with the soccer matches, the athletic events were scheduled to avoid the midday heat, although in this case, this was accomplished by having the athletes compete in the morning. They ate breakfast at their lodgings from 6:30 to 7:30 a.m. and then headed to the field for that day's scheduled



Some athletes competed in track events without shoes.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Heated competition.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

events. The athletic events were held at Buluk Athletic Field from January 18 to 20 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. These included short and mid-distance sprints, relay races, the long jump, and throwing events like shot put. There were roughly ten events each for the men's and women's teams. While we had improved the conditions of the field, we had been unable to completely remove all of the stones. It was thus not as good as what would be found in Japan. Some of the athletes had no running shoes and competed barefoot. Even so, they all eagerly ran on the track for several days.

Gatkuoth Jany (19) drew attention during these events for the overwhelming speed with which he won the 100 and 200m events. Jany



Victory lap after race.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Spectators closely watching race.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

lived and trained in South Sudan's neighbor of Uganda but had returned to his homeland to compete in its first national sports tournament. He said, "South Sudan fought for a long time, but peace is returning. I came home not just to compete in this race, but to share peace with everyone." On his two gold medals, he said, "I'm so excited. Being able to participate in an official race in South Sudan is a big encouragement for the athletes." He mentioned that his dream was to set a new world record someday.

The competition in the athletic events was as fierce as we had seen during the soccer matches. The crowd cheered as one. And here, too, it was common to see athletes congratulate each other when they did well without any concern being paid to their ethnic backgrounds.



Author presenting award to athlete Gatkouth Hero Jany Wal.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Athletes competing in relay race.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

National Unity Day consisted of more than just soccer and athletic competitions, however. To promote the event's theme of Peace and Unity, workshops were given on topics like "Peacebuilding through Sports," "Fairness and Following the Rules," and "Reconciliation and Dialogue." These were held on January 16 and 17, and then again from the 20th to the 23rd. They included peacebuilding games and educational activities. Because it was important for the athletes to get to know one another, we held sessions where they could introduce themselves and talk about where they came from. And because of the significant influence religious institutions have in South Sudan, we also invited religious leaders to come



Three-legged race, otherwise known as "Together Run".

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Tug-of-war.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

and hold workshops and give talks on themes related to peace.

The peacebuilding games included three-legged races and tug of war. The former was given the English name “Together Run.” In this game, pairs of participants were bound together at the ankle so that they had to coordinate their movements as they raced towards a goal. Doing well required the pair to act in sync with each other. We thus asked them to practice at their lodgings after we explained the game to the athletes. We wanted them to enjoy themselves as they communicated. None of them had ever played this game before, and they were unable to work together at first. They seemed to adapt quickly, however, and soon were doing well at it. When the actual event was held during the games, both the athletes and spectators became very excited.



Large attendance for peace workshop.

Photograph courtesy of JICA



Athletes participate in activities to foster relationships during holding of national sports event.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

For the tug of war event, the athletes were randomly assigned a number from 1 to 12 so as to create 12 teams with members coming from a variety of regions. Our goal was to promote interaction between athletes from different states, so we held a tournament using these teams. We also held an exhibition match in which both the athletes and those who had organized the games (including myself) formed teams together.

The tug of war event was more exciting than we had expected. Everyone pulled on the rope with all their might under the blazing sun. The youth of South Sudan are extremely strong, which made the matches quite thrilling.

In addition to the peacebuilding games, campfires were held at the lodgings each night to encourage the athletes to interact with people on other teams.

The national sports event was a project that involved a number of elements that had to be dealt with at the last minute, such as including additional athletic events in accordance with the wishes of the athletes. This made running them an extremely difficult task. Despite this, we were able to complete all of the competitions without making any serious errors, thanks to the unyielding handling by the MOCYS and JICA South Sudan Office.

The Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony was planned for 2:00 p.m. on January 23. The plan was to have the mayor of Juba give a speech and then hold the championship soccer match. This would be followed by an entrance parade for the athletes and speeches from the Japanese and South Sudanese guests interspersed with performances of traditional dances and award ceremonies. The ceremony was scheduled to end at 7:00 p.m.

On the final day, however, we experienced another incident: the athletes and coaches who had made it to the finals refused to play as it was the hottest part of the day. They wanted us to delay the match. We had actually been concerned about having the match start at 2:00 p.m. due to the high temperatures and had only scheduled it at that time after consulting with state officials and others and obtaining their agreement. However, the starting time for the match had already been widely circulated through

newspapers, television, and radio, so it was well known by this point, and it was too late to change the time. An argument broke out between the teams' coaches and the MOCYS organizers. When I learned of the situation, my thoughts were that we should go ahead as scheduled. The start time was well-known, spectators were looking forward to the match, and government officials had already started to arrive. Changing it at this point would be an impermissible inconvenience to them.

But MOCYS was the host of the event, not us. I told Director General Yugu that I would be leaving the stadium. He told me, "Chief Representative Furukawa, please don't leave. We'll calm this situation down somehow." But I briefly left, thinking that it would be inappropriate to remain and influence their decision. I have never seen Director General Yugu so shaken. Afterward, the normally affable director did his best to work out a solution but—perhaps being overexcited as he argued—apparently got into a scuffle with those involved. After all the fierce arguing, they had no choice but to make a sudden, last-minute change to the schedule, as the teams remained adamant that they would not play at 2:00 p.m. This meant that the schedule for the closing ceremony had to be changed as well. The speeches were rearranged, and I ended up speaking before the soccer match. As a representative of the organizers, I apologized to the many people who had been inconvenienced at the beginning of my speech.

The closing ceremony finally began at 4:00 p.m., at which point the



Player from Wau receiving trophy for second-place award.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

wonderful championship match that I described earlier was held. The stadium was filled to capacity and loud cheers rang out from all sides. Bentiu was victorious. Afterward, we held the planned parade of athletes, speeches, traditional dances, and awards ceremony. We all joined in together during the traditional dance performance, including the organizers and athletes. They all seemed to be truly enjoying themselves as they danced rhythmically to the beat. Finally, medals and trophies were given out for fair play and to those who had excelled in the athletic competitions. I was one of those giving out the awards, and the pride shown by the athletes as they received them made a real impression on me. And, in a surprise gesture, the MOCYS also awarded medals to the JICA organizers. We were very happy to receive them. And with that, the first National Unity Day sports event since independence safely came to an end. They had truly fulfilled the desire for “South Sudan, a country that has seen repeated conflict, to have a national sports event that fostered bonds between people without regard for their state of origin or ethnicity.”

Following the end of the closing ceremony, the athletes continued to mingle in the stadium, not wanting to leave. They took pictures together, congratulated one another on how well they had done, and embraced each other. I shook hands with a number of them and posed with them for pictures. By the time of the closing ceremony, Mr. Kondo from the JICA headquarters had become familiar with a number of the athletes and



Player from Bentiu raising winning trophy high.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

many called out to him with affection. South Sudanese have a difficult time remembering Japanese names, but strangely, they all said “Kondo, Kondo.” He had been pale at the time of his arrival from Japan but had now tanned quite a bit. He shook hands with many athletes and embraced a number of them. As I watched, I got a real sense that not just the athletes but everyone involved had been brought closer together by these games. I truly felt from the heart that this had been a wonderful event.

The events of the games had been covered by the local media for several days, with the opening ceremony and soccer championship match broadcast live on television and radio. This had caused many members of the public to visit the event. Taban Awadi (36), who had come to watch the championship match with his son Kawo (4), wished for peace on his son’s behalf, saying, “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.”

And thus, the first National Unity Day sporting event to be held since South Sudan became independent in July 2011 came to a peaceful close, having overcome many difficulties along the way. Behind that result lay the extraordinary efforts of many people from the MOCYS and elsewhere. The athletes returned to their home states following the games. When the winning soccer team arrived home, they were welcomed by their state



Mr. Taban Awadi and his son, Kawo, came to watch the competition.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

governor and the day was made a holiday in their honor.

I asked the key figures from the ministry—Undersecretary Agum, Director General Yugu, and Team Leader Lemor—to reflect on the hosting of the first National Unity Day sports event. Undersecretary Mabeney, who had initially been disoriented in her new position at the ministry and had not adequately understood the kind of organization that JICA was, had the following to say:

Because I was invited to Japan by JICA in November 2015, I was able to learn about how JICA's assistance is structured. I learned how, unlike other donors, JICA does not provide money. They manage the money and work together with recipients on projects. When working with other donors, they provide money and then we carry out the projects. This causes many people to believe that the money received as assistance from donors actually goes to various government officials. And sometimes, that's how people viewed the assistance that the sports ministry received from JICA. I was told, "You are very rich!" but that's not the case.

On the preparations for the national sports event, she said,

The Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports has financial difficulties, and we often have no choice but to cover expenses ourselves because salaries are not always paid on time. This means that there is only limited money for gasoline with which to travel; even when we pay for it ourselves, we do so in groups. We worked a lot of overtime during the preparations [for the games]. We all worked really hard despite the meager pay and increasingly having to pay for expenses ourselves. Mobile phones and email were essential for communicating with others during the preparations, but the ministry lacked a modem to make this possible. We had only limited funds for communications and no means of transport, which was a major problem as we prepared to run the games. But we were greatly helped by JICA's support in these areas. The first National Unity Day sports event was an unprecedented national project, and that meant that we were running blind as we worked together with JICA. I honestly wasn't able to imagine how the event was going to turn out.

As I actually experienced National Unity Day, I realized what was

important. I learned the importance of peace. And I was overcome with tears. All of these people joined together. They came together with people from other states. They stood together in a way that overcame ethnic group and state of origin. National Unity Day taught me the importance of that kind of peace. There were many people in Bentiu and Malakal, areas that seen repeated fighting, and in Protection of Civilian (POC) sites that were afraid of participating in the games. But by having everyone stay together at the same lodgings during the games, they started to interact and make friends. They bonded with one another. The people living in POC sites feel like they are cut off from everyone from the outside. For example, when the national examinations are held, they are escorted to the testing locations and then returned to the sites afterward. But participating in National Unity Day allowed them to realize the connections they have with others. And once they've returned to their sites, they will communicate the importance of Peace and Unity to the others there and the fact that we are all part of one nation. The athletes of the first National Unity Day sports event spread that message after returning home. And some of the athletes from POC sites did not return to those sites afterward.

National Unity Day also had other effects, like improving the security situation. People gave the event their support. They came to the games in person, watched them on television, or listened on the radio. And they witnessed athletes of different ethnic groups joining together and playing as a single team. They heard the messages of peace sent out over the radio. These things caused them to recognize the importance of Peace and Unity, which helps stabilize the security situation.

Looking back, it had been my first meeting with Director General Yugu that led to the holding of the National Unity Day sports event. He reflected on the events as follows:

By gathering young people and having them stay together, travel together, sweat together, and sometimes dance together, the first National Unity Day sports event allowed young people to meet those belonging to other ethnic groups for the first time and fostered seeds of friendship among them. Having these athletes mix with one another regardless of ethnic group was great, wasn't it? Surely one of the event's greatest results will be the seeds of friendship born out of these interactions. I heard many things from athletes over the course of the

games. They told me that they wanted National Unity Day, this event that brought them all together, to continue to be held in the future. They spoke of their earnest desire for peace, for the fighting to come to an end. They told me that sports bring people together and unify cultures. Before it began, I didn't know what kind of even the first National Unity Day would turn out to be. But it has produced great results and, by doing so, it has opened doors to the future for all people.

And Mr. Lemor, the leader of the MOCYS team, reflected on the event this way:

Because the athletes slept and ate together, friendships bloomed between them. They cried when it came time to part. Over the course of the games, they had become just like a family. Before the games started, we had the athletes speak messages of peace. Regardless of whether they won or lost, it was very important that they were there together. Everyone knew that these competitions were being held for peace. We didn't have a single fight during the event. The task members from the sports ministry stayed with the athletes in their lodgings. Some of them came down with malaria. National Unity Day is bringing about social change. It calls for Peace and Unity. That's what we're hoping for: for the ring of interaction to naturally expand. For example, athletes from other ethnic groups sang in Dinka and danced together. They learned and danced together. They danced each ethnic group's dances together. During the games, everyone in Juba was busy talking about Peace and Unity and going to see the matches.

The MOCYS, the host of the event, was thus convinced that the first National Unity Day sports event had led to people coming together regardless of state of origin or ethnicity. They felt that their efforts had evoked a tangible response and that they had been able to contribute to Peace and Unity.

Chapter 6: The Evacuation of JICA Officials and Other Japanese Abroad and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics

As shown in the previous chapter, the first National Unity Day sports event lit the torch of ethnic harmony and national reconciliation and unity for South Sudan. And JICA, recognizing anew the significant power of sports, began preparing not only to provide assistance for the second National Unity Day but to take further steps in support of peacebuilding through sports. In policy terms, it also began preparing to “develop the administrative and financial capacities of sports in South Sudan by strengthening the organizational capacities of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports” and to “promote social unity that fosters opportunities for peace.”

Meanwhile, the South Sudan National Olympic Committee (SSNOC) had been established in June 2015 and was admitted to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) just two months later. The Rio de Janeiro Olympics—the festival of peace—being held in August 2016 were to be the first Olympics in which South Sudan would participate as an independent nation. However, with the country’s unstable domestic security situation and the slow progress being made on a peace agreement, the financial situation had become dire. It was impossible to know whether or not South Sudan would really be able to participate in the Rio Olympics.

In April 2016, as these efforts were underway, a meeting of the directors of JICA’s overseas offices was held in Tokyo, and I was presented with the opportunity to explain the situation in South Sudan to JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka. I touched upon the first National Unity Day in my explanation and also mentioned that, while South Sudan had been admitted to the IOC in August 2015, it was unknown whether they would really be able to participate in the Rio Olympics. President Kitaoka responded by suggesting that JICA provide assistance so that they could send their delegation to the Olympics. I was honestly quite surprised to hear this, as while I had felt that it would be great if we could do something along those lines, I had thought it too difficult. In fact, I actually asked him if he was sure. President Kitaoka said that he felt it important that South

Sudan participated in the Olympics, the festival of peace, given the need for national unity amidst its ongoing conflict, and that this was especially true because it would be their first time to do so. In light of that fact, JICA should offer its assistance for the effort. And so, it was decided that we would provide support for South Sudanese participation in the Olympics.

As soon as I was back in Juba, the Africa Department in Tokyo and the South Sudan Office immediately joined together and got to work on aiding South Sudan's participation in the Olympics. We held several discussions with the SSNOC, the South Sudan Athletics Federation, and the MOYCS. They welcomed our request to provide assistance. Ms. Yamanaka and Ms. Uchida were put in charge of working out what the specifics of our assistance would be and devoted themselves to the task. As they did, we gradually grasped the procedures needed for South Sudan to send an Olympic delegation and learned which events South Sudan could hope to compete in. These were track and field events.

However, athletes are required to reach a certain qualifying standard in order to be allowed to compete in those events. At the time, the South Sudanese national athletics team consisted of nineteen men and women chosen from across the country. They trained at Buluk Athletic Field, used during the first National Unity Day sports event. As mentioned earlier, the field had lacked a perimeter fence, allowing people and motorcycles to enter freely. Its grounds had been in a poor state, with many stones. It had resembled a mere vacant lot and lacked a track. It had been for these reasons that we had contacted the JSDF and asked them to improve the conditions of the field and construct a track. The national athletics team had been training there before these improvements. The team also faced a myriad of other tasks that needed addressing, such as the lack of athletic equipment and uniforms, the need to train qualified coaches and referees, and the need to secure revenue sources to fund athletic training.

The director of the South Sudan Athletic Federation lamented the situation, telling me that "Our javelin throwers have no actual javelins and have to make do with substitutes while training. But when one of our athletes used a modern javelin for the first time at a tournament in Kenya," the director observed, "he came in third. South Sudanese athletes have great physical capabilities—we just suffer from a total lack of equipment. The country only has a single mat for the high jump. While a tournament was being held in Wau, we were unable to train in Juba as the mat had been

taken there.”

He was proud of the potential for the country’s athletes, saying that “There are many children who run long distances every day as they chase cattle. I feel that we have many athletes suitable to becoming long-distance runners. Those from the ethnic groups along the Kenyan border in particular have a lot of potential.”

I recognized the physical abilities of the South Sudanese athletes and their great potential, but I was concerned about whether any of them would really be able to reach the required qualifying standards given their inferior training environment. In fact, the Olympics would be starting in three months and none of their athletes had qualified. I learned that the athletes had to reach these standards in international competitions to qualify for the Olympics, and that the athletics competition being held in Durban, South Africa, in June would be their last chance to do so. We thus assisted South Sudan in sending the fourteen athletes believed to have the best chance of qualifying to this competition. The SSNOC, South Sudan Athletic Federation, MOCYS, and JICA all prayed that as many athletes as possible would reach the required standards and qualify to compete in the Olympics.

The results were heartbreaking. Not a single athlete was able to reach the required standard. We were all crestfallen, as we believed that South Sudan would now be unable to participate in the Rio Olympics, which were now a mere two months away. We then learned that South Sudan would fortunately be allowed to send a single male and female athlete to compete in the track and field events without fulfilling any requirements. Guor Marial, one of the “Lost Boys of Sudan” (children who had been driven from their homes during the civil war), would also be allowed to participate. He had participated in the marathon in international competitions.

We continued our work, making the specific preparations needed to send a delegation consisting of these three athletes and 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.

Conflict and Evacuation Abroad

At around 4:30 p.m. on July 8, 2016 (a Friday), Ms. Yamanaka was meeting with Director General Yugu and members of the SSNOC at the MOCYS when he suddenly told her to quickly return to our office. Rumors had begun to circulate that the area of Juba containing the government offices was in danger. We confirmed that agitated government officials were evacuating their offices en masse, and Ms. Yamanaka immediately returned to our office.

The purpose of the meeting that day had been to discuss our assistance for the South Sudanese Olympic delegation. Because they had been unable to iron out their disagreements, I had her ask the SSNOC officials to come to our office, which they did at 4:50 p.m. (accompanied by Director General Yugu). During these discussions, the SSNOC said that they wanted to speak with their president to resolve the issue. It was agreed that we would meet again on Monday. It was at this point that gunfire began to echo from the direction of the presidential palace. Our meeting was happening about 500 meters away. We had occasionally heard gunshots in Juba before, however, so we did not realize that this was the beginning of large-scale fighting in the capital.

I will now provide a condensed chronology of the period from 5:00 p.m. on Friday (July 8) to our evacuation from Juba on the following Wednesday (July 13). The fighting near the presidential palace expanded into repeated clashes between the forces of the presidential faction (the SPLA/the government) and those of the vice-presidential faction (the SPLA-IO/the opposition). It would result in more than 270 dead between the two armed forces and 42,000 refugees in Juba before spreading across the entire country. This conflict would ultimately create 1.85 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.77 million refugees out of a population of 12 million (this is according to a February 28, 2017 report by UNHCR). Nearly a third of the population would lose their homes in this terrible tragedy.

The original spark for this fighting was an incident that occurred at 8:00 p.m. on July 7 at an SPLA checkpoint in Gudele (an area of northwest Juba). SPLA (government) soldiers attempted to search SPLA-IO (opposition) soldiers, leading to an argument. "How dare you try to search fellow soldiers!" The situation then devolved into a firefight. The

gunfire continued for roughly five minutes and left two SPLA soldiers dead and multiple SPLA-IO soldiers wounded. Some civilians were also killed in the crossfire. The gunfire ended at about 8:50 p.m.

This fighting led the UN to raise its alert level to Grey (only go outside in an emergency), but this was reduced to Green (situation normal) by the following morning and the city seemed as peaceful as usual. We accordingly went about our normal activities that day. It was under these conditions that Ms. Yamanaka visited the sports ministry for her discussions on the Olympic delegation. As these were going on, President Kiir and First Vice President Machar held talks aimed at preventing any escalation of the previous night's violence. SPLA soldiers and the first vice president's bodyguards were waiting nearby. At about 5:20 p.m., other SPLA soldiers arrived and ordered the bodyguards to move their vehicles. This resulted in an argument that again ended in gunfire. This fighting then caused SPLA and SPLA-IO troops to exchange gunfire throughout the capital. It began at 5:20 p.m. and continued sporadically through the middle of the night.

During a brief lull in the fighting at 6:00 p.m., our staff members withdrew to their houses in accordance with instructions from our office's security officer. We also picked up an advisor to South Sudan Television and Radio who had been stranded in the city. While heading home, we encountered what we believe to have been an SPLA checkpoint near the US embassy compound. Multiple soldiers stood on the road and one directed us to stop. We were all extremely nervous. He beckoned with his hand to tell us to slowly pull up to them. After soldiers checked the inside of our bulletproof car, we were allowed to proceed through the checkpoint without any issues. Just as we were to turn right onto the road to our house, however, what appeared to be soldiers in civilian dress in front of us made some kind of gesture to the other soldiers. The SPLA soldiers then ran up to our car from behind.

Now, this is just conjecture, but what I suspect happened is that the non-uniformed soldiers in front of us mistook the "IO" on our car's license plate (which stood for "International Organization") as standing for "In Opposition" (i.e., the SPLA-IO). Looking in the rear mirror, I saw two soldiers running towards the car raise their rifles and begin firing. I told the driver to step on the gas and get us out of there. The soldiers fired four shots at our car, one of which hit its rear. We were only a few hundred

meters away from our house at this point, close enough to see it with the naked eye. This meant that we were at risk of the soldiers following us if we returned home. On the advice of our security officer (who was in the car), we withdrew to the EU compound adjacent to the US embassy. The officer reasoned that, while the US embassy would not open its gates for any reason, the EU compound might, as he knew a guard who worked there. But when we blared our horn outside the compound gates, they did not open. Just as we were about to leave, we were allowed inside. I have serious doubts about our safety had we given up and left at that time.

Multiple ambassadors and UN officials were also stranded in the compound, as the weekly ambassadorial meeting had been underway. Shortly after arriving, we were led to the EU meeting room where the meeting's participants were also waiting. This was fortunate, as that room became the most well-informed place in Juba: as each of the ambassadors received information, they passed it on to the others in the room. Other than those attending the meeting, there were few people in the compound, as many of the European embassies were closed on Friday afternoons.

As it would have been difficult for us to all remain in the EU meeting room for a lengthy period of time, the German ambassador proposed that everyone (including the four JICA personnel and our security officer) move to the German embassy. This was located in the compound about a few dozen meters from the meeting room. We then stayed in the embassy's first-floor lobby and meeting rooms until morning.

Things seemed to have calmed down somewhat by Saturday morning. The commander of the SPLA visited the German embassy at 9:00 a.m. at the request of the UN and explained that the security situation had quietened down and that he would personally accompany foreign diplomats and international organization officials to ensure their safety as they traveled. Seizing the opportunity, I negotiated with the commander for transportation of not just the four JICA personnel in the EU compound but also three experts who had been left behind at a project site. My request was unexpected, as the commander had only come to guarantee the safety of the diplomats and officials. But when I strongly insisted that it was necessary, he said that he would move the others in the compound and then return.

With the exception of our security officer and myself, the JICA personnel

in the compound joined the diplomats (including the ambassadors) and left for home in the company of the SPLA commander. At that time, I honestly did not expect the commander to actually return for us. But he did do so a short while later. At this time, some German diplomats who had not been present for the commander's initial arrival surrounded him and strongly pressed him to give them an escort, as he had the others. I was heartened to hear the commander tell him that "We have returned for the Japanese."

The commander decided that he would pick up the JICA experts from their worksites first and transport the remaining German diplomats afterward. At 11:00 a.m., the security officer and I left with the commander to get our experts. Arriving at the site, I headed for our office, which was not far from where we had parked. I had contacted the experts earlier to tell them that we would be coming to get them and that they should be ready to leave immediately. Perhaps because the area around the project site was relatively peaceful or because they felt safe inside a government facility, however, I found them seated and not yet packed. Shocked, I told them to get ready to leave right away. Our security officer entered shortly later and said, "The commander is growing angry at your failure to return. He's saying that if you aren't going to come, they'll just leave." We were in danger of being left behind. I urged the experts to pack their things quickly and we then headed for the car. The mood of the commander and his soldiers had soured, so I ran to the car in a comedic manner in an attempt to lighten things up. They must have found it amusing, as smiles appeared on their stressed faces and the atmosphere became more friendly. This reinforced my view that humor is important in stressful times. The three JICA experts and our security officer were dropped off at their homes, and then I was finally able to go as well.

Ms. Oi, Mr. Kuwabara, Ms. Yamanaka, and I gathered in one of the rooms of the apartment we shared and carried out operations in coordination with Mr. Murakami, Ms. Uchida, and Etsuko Osumi (who lived elsewhere). We continued to share information with those affiliated with JICA.

At 9:00 a.m. the following morning (Sunday), we heard heavy gunfire in the city. From the information we were able to gather online and from other sources, there was fierce fighting near UN House. Some said that UN House itself was under attack. At about 10:30 a.m., we received information from South African embassy personnel living in our building

that the US, UK, and EU embassies had decided to evacuate the country. Al Jazeera reported around noon that a large explosion had been heard near the airport. They also reported that at least forty UN personnel had been injured. JICA then also made the decision to evacuate. We heard intense gunfire and explosions from mortar shells during the day, but heavy rainfall began during the night, and the fighting was reduced to sporadic exchanges of gunfire.

The airport was closed down on Monday (July 11). A meeting of the National Security Council was held at the Prime Minister's office in Japan. At the following press conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga announced that land transports and C-130s were being dispatched to South Sudan. At this time, I told our staff that we would board the earliest available flight out of the country, and we began exploring the possibility of using JSDF flights, charter flights, or commercial aircraft to evacuate. However, this was all based on the large presumption that we would be able to secure safe transportation to the airport. I directed our security officer to look into our options on that front.

As we did so, the intensity of the firefights within the city only increased. We sometimes heard and felt mortar shells going off. South Sudan's electrification rate is nearly non-existent. While our housing was supplied with electricity via generators, we were unable to secure additional fuel for this due to the fighting. We only had our current supply to rely on, and when it ran out, we would lose our means of communication. Because of the low availability of tap water in Juba, we were reliant on purchasing drinking water and only had our emergency stores left. The same was also true of food. If we did not practice conservation with everything, we would find ourselves in trouble. I was concerned that our current situation was not easily sustainable.

We closed all the curtains on our windows to prevent light from escaping and sat in the dark, waiting for the fighting to die down. However, it showed no sign of doing so. The terrible sound of gunfire echoed nearby. Soldiers had also begun forming groups and engaging in looting and raping. That morning, rioting soldiers had broken into a building housing aid workers. Their civilian guards had run off, but their armed guards had somehow managed to resolve the situation. We also received a call that day from one of the office's drivers. He reported that SPLA soldiers had broken into his home, stolen his money and mobile phone, and beaten

a male relative who lived with him. His home was only five minutes away from where we were. SPLA soldiers were going house to house, demanding money, and threatening to kill those who did not comply. We also received information saying that businesses and NGO offices in other areas of Juba were being robbed. We heard that the SPLA commander had issued a public broadcast ordering all soldiers to return to their barracks. I later learned that the driver's younger sister had been raped by soldiers. We had no armed guards in our building and, with looting and violence occurring nearby, the situation seemed all the more tense.

At 6:05 p.m., there was an incident where 15 – 20 opposition soldiers broke into and robbed a compound housing international staff near UN House on Yei Road. We received no reports of injuries at that time, but we later learned that a South Sudanese journalist staying there had been killed and several foreign women had been raped. From 7:35 p.m., another forty minutes of intense gunfire could be heard throughout the city. We turned off all lights and lay down in a section of our apartment's hallway where we were surrounded on all sides by walls and waited for the shooting to end. Mr. Murakami and the others used brief breaks in the gunfire to create a makeshift barricade at the entrance to their apartment using sofas and luggage, just in case someone attempted to break in. They then turned out their lights and waited. Finally, at 9:00 p.m., the gunfire came to a complete stop.

Given the circumstances, I phoned the commander of the JSDF engineering contingent and requested that they provide protection for our trip to the airport, but he told me that he had not received any instructions from Tokyo. I tried again later and received the same response. This day was the most stressful of this period.

On Tuesday (July 12), arrangements were made in Japan for us to board a charter flight. Mr. Murakami and Mr. Kuwabara, who were in charge of our safety, spent the night meticulously planning the transportation route from our building to the airport. Finally, on Wednesday (July 13), the JICA South Sudan Office transported 93 people (JICA staff, including Americans and Egyptians, and Japanese nationals) to the airport in bulletproof cars. We then boarded the charter flight that had been arranged by the JICA headquarters and left for Kenya.

During the extremely tense period between the outbreak of violence and

our evacuation from South Sudan, Mr. Murakami, Ms. Oi, Mr. Kuwabara, Ms. Yamanaka, Ms. Uchida, and Ms. Osumi were calm and collected. Despite the extreme stress, they continued to work and occasionally made jokes as they did so. They were reliable and I was extremely proud to have such wonderful staff members. It is worth making special note here that not a single member of the JICA staff lost their composure—everyone remained helpful.

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 wellbeing. Something that made a profound impression on me was that, while they were relieved at being able to evacuate, all the JICA personnel spoke about how they absolutely would return to South Sudan and how they wanted to continue to provide assistance to the country. That we were able to successfully evacuate without a single injury was due not just to the competence of our personnel on site but also to the tireless efforts made through the night in Tokyo by Senior Representative Uchikawa (who happened to be in Japan on leave at the time), the Africa Department, President Kitaoka, the executive vice president, the members of the General Affairs Department's Security Management Office, and the negotiations undertaken by the government.

On July 14, we departed Kenya and returned to Japan.

Supporting the South Sudan Delegation to the Rio Olympics

After returning to Japan, I immediately met with President Kitaoka and reported on the situation. I remembered how, just three months earlier, he had spoken about wanting to assist South Sudan in participating in its first Olympics. He asked me how the work on the Olympics was going. I felt that it would be difficult for the country to participate, given the current situation. But he replied, "Isn't it precisely because of the difficult situation they face that it is important to foster unity and pride among the South Sudanese people? For both those from South Sudan and from JICA to speak to them of Peace and Unity?" I was honestly once again surprised by his words. The current circumstances had not been enough to make him give up on supporting the South Sudanese Olympic delegation. Indeed, I was greatly impressed that he believed that it was because of those circumstances that South Sudan should participate in the Olympics—the festival of peace. JICA thus made the decision not to abandon its efforts supporting South Sudan's participation in its first Olympics.

Immediately after evacuating, all of our staff (including myself) were granted special leave. Having only just evacuated a country experiencing heavy fighting, I found myself sensitive to even small noises. And even though I had previously done so with no discomfort, I was unable to watch movies with scenes of combat. Given these circumstances, I decided to end my vacation and reopen the South Sudan Office so as to prepare our assistance for the Olympics. There were only three weeks remaining before the opening ceremony for the Rio Olympics.

I had thought that the South Sudanese government might have given up on participating in the Olympics because of the conflict. I learned, however, that with the end of fighting in Juba, the MOCYS and SSNOC had returned to work and were preparing for their three athletes to participate. I actually found this reassuring and to be expected of a country that had seen so much conflict. Even though I had told our local staff that it was alright for them not to return to the office for a while, they voluntarily returned to work. Along with Ms. Oi, Ms. Yamanaka, and Ms. Uchida, the local staff communicated daily with MOCYS and the SSNOC and worked on the necessary preparations. It was decided that the Olympic delegation would consist of Vice President Igga, the President and Vice President of the SSNOC, Undersecretary Mabeney, Director General Yugu, the coaches, and the athletes. The athletes chosen to participate were Margret Rumat Rumat Hassan (competing in the women's 200m), Santino



Ms. Nadia Arop Dudi (center), Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports giving interview at Juba Airport flanked by Mr. Santino Kenyi Warnyang Kenyi on left and Ms. Margret Rumat Rumat Hassan on right.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

Kenyi Warnyang Kenyi (competing in the men's 1500m), and Guor Marial (competing in the men's marathon). Kenyi had previously competed in the first National Unity Day sports event.

While the large-scale farewell party planned for the athletes for July 24 was unable to be held, Ms. Oi, in charge of public relations, contacted the local staff remaining in our office and made arrangements for the athletes and sports minister to hold a press conference at the airport. The press conference, which was aimed at the local media, was used to introduce the athletes and call for Peace and Unity through the Olympics. Kenyi spoke about his aspirations: "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." Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports Nadia Arop Dudi, who saw the athletes off at the airport, thanked JICA for its assistance and said, "Sports have the power to bring people together. The South Sudanese government will continue to promote sports for Peace and Unity in South Sudan." She also said that she hoped to send more athletes to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The opening ceremony for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics was held on August 5, 2016. We, the members of the South Sudan Office, waited anxiously in Japan and cheered on the athletes. We all stayed up together to give them our support.



South Sudan's historic appearance at Rio 2016 Olympic Games.
Africa Media Australia

The South Sudanese delegation waved their flag with pride in the ceremony and seemed truly happy as they marched. They were taking part in their country's first Olympics. It was truly a day for South Sudan worth commemorating. When the athletic competitions began, Hassan placed 71st of 72 in the women's 200m with a time of 0:26.99. Kenyi placed 24th out of 43 in the men's 1500m with a time of 3:45.43. The Japanese live broadcast of the event's preliminary round introduced him as an athlete to be watched.

JICA Brazil Office interviewed Dr. Tong Chor Malek Deran, the Secretary General of the SSNOC on August 20, as the games were going on. Dr. Tong talked about his feelings on South Sudan's first Olympics, saying, "It's a very exciting experience. Our country is still young and competing in the Olympics is like a dream for us. Our team is still very small, but this is just the start. Also, it is thanks to support from JICA that the Vice President, Sports Minister, and the National Olympics Committee including myself are able to be here. We are very grateful for the assistance that JICA has provided."

On the efforts of their athletes and the gap between his country and the world, he said, "We have three athletes competing in the Olympics this time. Two of them have already finished their events. The one who competed in the 200m was about four seconds slower than the other athletes. Just four seconds slower. Unfortunately, our country still lacks



Dr. Tong Chor Malek Deran, who has sought to realize the dream of bringing athletes from South Sudan to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Photograph courtesy of JICA

adequate training facilities and equipment. But our athletes will receive more opportunities going forward. Our athletes are also all very young, under the age of twenty. They've only just started. This is our start on the way to Tokyo in 2020."

He was also asked about the state of sports in South Sudan and JICA's support. He answered, "This applies to all of Africa, but we have wonderful cultures and sports in Africa. We also have sports-like cultural activities in our country, like dancing. African cultures have a great affinity with sports. South Sudan's neighbors like Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda have great potential for sports. It's clear that they have great talent, especially when it comes to long-distance running. The biggest differences between those countries and ours unfortunately lay in sports equipment, training coaches, referees, etc. I believe that if we obtain these things, we can produce great results."

There was also a question about the South Sudanese athlete who would be competing in the marathon the following day: "That's right. We're really happy about it. Guor Marial also participated in the 2012 London Olympics. But he did so under the Olympic flag at that time [Marial competed as an independent Olympic athlete, not for South Sudan]. Our country didn't have a national Olympic committee then. This time, he will compete as an athlete for South Sudan, under the flag of South Sudan."

Guor Marial had fled the Sudanese Civil War and moved to the United States as a refugee via Egypt. South Sudan had not yet been authorized to participate by the time of the 2012 London Olympics, and he rejected an offer to compete as part of the Sudanese delegation because of the many South Sudanese who had been killed in the war, including some of his family members. Instead, he chose to compete under the Olympic flag. In Rio in 2016, he was able to realize his desire to appear in the Olympics as a representative of South Sudan.

When Marial competed in the men's marathon on August 22, he placed 82nd of 155 with a season's best time of 2:22:45. While none of South Sudan's three athletes had won medals, they had all completed their events honorably. Their participation in the Olympics—which was widely publicized in the media and through the public support they received upon their return home—strengthened national unity in South Sudan and helped to foster a national identity.

Then the closing ceremony was held.

I later asked the South Sudanese undersecretary of education to look back on the country's participation in the Rio Olympics. He told me that "I myself was a finalist for 1992 Barcelona Olympics in the 200m when we were part of Sudan, but I was unfortunately unable to participate."

He then continued,

We had previously been regarded as southern Sudan, that is, as a part of Sudan. But when we participated in the Rio Olympics, we did so as South Sudan, raising its flag high. It was a very emotional thing for us. I experienced a very happy feeling that I didn't have when we were part of Sudan. And we felt very proud. 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. I was able to feel this intensely. I want us to continue to participate. It is very important that we participate in the Tokyo Olympics.

I also asked Director General Yugu to give his thoughts on South Sudan's first Olympics:

On July 8, the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, the South Sudan National Olympic Committee, and Ms. Yamanaka were holding consultations at the ministry. Word spread around 4:00 p.m. that the



Guor Maria (right) competing in the men's marathon.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

guards of the President and the First Vice President were pointing guns at each other at the presidential palace, and we heard that unsettling things were happening in the government district. I immediately sent Ms. Yamanaka back to her office to get her out of the district. Ms. Yamanaka and the National Olympic Committee leaders continued their discussions at JICA's office. I was also there, and we all agreed to meet again on Monday. But large-scale fighting began the following day.

I asked whether the July 2016 conflict had caused him to give up on the idea of participating in the Rio Olympics. "I believed that no matter what happened," he answered, "JICA would continue to give us their support. I knew that your car had been shot at and that you had evacuated the country, but I absolutely believed that you would still give us your support as we sent our country's first Olympic delegation to Rio. I remember that you called me just before you evacuated. I was very happy. I was convinced that JICA would continue to support us despite the conflict."

As the Rio Olympics were being held, there were still reports of fighting between the presidential and vice-presidential factions in areas near Juba. The unstable political situation was still ongoing. First Vice President Machar had fled the city, and a power struggle had developed within the opposition to the government. And yet, South Sudan had decided to send its athletes to Rio de Janeiro anyway. The Olympics is an event that captures the attention of the world, and the officials at the MOCYS and elsewhere had earnestly hoped that, by having their athletes participate and wave their flag high, it would bring global acknowledgment of the nation of South Sudan. They also hoped that the appearance of the nation's athletes in the Olympics would give hope to the country's young people and serve as an appeal to national Peace and Unity.

In the wake of the South Sudan Office's evacuation, the logistics and arrangements needed to support this effort were carried out through the coordinated efforts of the local and Japanese staff. JICA continued its support even under these difficult circumstances in order to contribute to fostering national unity in a young nation that had become independent just five years earlier. And I imagine that our decision to help make South Sudan's participation in its first Olympics a reality, even amidst the country's continued political, economic, and security confusion, made an impression. As the sports ministers and others spoke of wanting to

train and send even more athletes to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, I believe that it had also increased expectations for their participation in the Tokyo Olympics.

Chapter 7: What National Unity Day Achieved

As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, despite the difficulties encountered along the way, the National Unity Day sports event was held in the South Sudanese capital of Juba from January 16 to 23, 2016, the first since the country's independence. And South Sudan also overcame the outbreak of a new conflict in Juba in July to participate in its first Olympics as a country that same year. Truly, for South Sudan, 2016 was a year for the celebration of peace through sports.

The JICA South Sudan Office had no choice but to evacuate the country following the beginning of the July 2016 conflict. Its Japanese staff continued their work, however, operating first from Tokyo and then from South Sudan's neighbor of Uganda. Despite being unable to return to Juba, we began preparing our support for the hosting of future National Unity Day sports events so that the torch of Peace and Unity did not go out. The South Sudan Office communicated remotely from Uganda during these preparations. Thanks to the efforts of the local staff of our office and the MOCYS, progress continued in Juba as well. And, while we have continued to face difficulties along the way, National Unity Day sports events have been held in January of every year since.

Because of the limited place for women in South Sudanese society, women's volleyball was added as an event for the third National Unity



A team celebrating an important point during a volleyball match.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

Day sports event, increasing the ratio of female athletes. In South Sudan, most women's roles have traditionally restricted them to housework such as drawing water, doing laundry, preparing meals, and caring for younger siblings. They frequently marry and have children before reaching adulthood. They face other restrictions such as a lack of bathrooms in schools and concerns about sexual violence, and thus the number of girls who go on to secondary education is less than half that of boys. As their opportunities to participate in sports are also somewhat restricted, the women's volleyball event was added to provide them with a space where they could be more active. It was also intended to challenge the country's fixed conception of gender that says that "women should be inside the home and men outside of it" by giving the public an opportunity to see women engage in energetic activities. Five teams participated from across the country, increasing the percentage of female athletes in the national sports event from 21% to 36%.

All of these sports events featured several days of passionate competition and large numbers of transfixed spectators. Mixed crowds watched as multi-ethnic teams and athletes from rival groups participated together. They saw the athletes transcend ethnicity and become united, congratulating one another after each match. I have no doubt that this sight reinforced the importance of Peace and Unity for all who witnessed it. A total of 600,000 people, or half of Juba's estimated population of 1.2 million, came and cheered on these fierce matches.



Eyes of the spectators riveted on the volleyball match.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

In August 2018, Japanese staff members were allowed to return to Juba permanently, and the fourth National Unity Day sports event was held from January 27 to February 4, 2019, without incident. JICA President Kitaoka, whose support for the event and South Sudan's participation in the Olympics had been unwavering, was also in attendance for these games. It was a wonderful event, with large, excited crowds calling for Peace and Unity.

The management of the sports event has improved with each year. The rules governing athlete selection and registration have become fairer and clearer. And throughout every day of the events, each venue has been filled with spectators. The national radio station covers the matches and issues while calling for Peace and Unity. National Unity Day has truly become a national event, with more people attending every year.

What National Unity Day Meant to South Sudan

When I first visited Director General Yugu at the MOCYS in November 2014, shortly after my appointment to South Sudan, he expressed his view to me with the following words: "What the South Sudan of today needs is the formation of bonds between people without regard for their state of origin or their ethnic group. I really want to revive [our] national sporting event." This was the beginning of the National Unity Day sports event and its theme of Peace and Unity. But what is the significance of these games for South Sudan?

In the sections below, I will show what National Unity Day means for the South Sudanese people by introducing some of the thoughts that the athletes and spectators have shared about the games and how they have changed their perceptions and attitudes. These are derived from my interviews with the MOCYS team and surveys of National Unity Day attendees conducted by the JICA South Sudan Office and Africa Department.

As mentioned previously, South Sudan has an extremely high proportion of young people. Of its population of 12 million, 75% are under the age of 30. Despite becoming the world's newest independent nation in 2011, major fighting over the position of the presidency broke out only eighteen months later. While the capital of Juba is now relatively safe, a state of civil war continues in more rural areas.

While this conflict is at its core a political dispute, it has developed into a confrontation between South Sudan's major ethnic groups. Violence has thoroughly torn its society apart and fighting between regional groups has become widespread. The distrust between residents of rural areas has been enflamed by defamatory fixed perceptions of rival ethnic groups. The lack of knowledge of other ethnicities and the negative views held towards them creates barriers to the country's sustained peace and security. And many of the people stoking the conflict and directly promoting the use of violence have no tangible issues with the groups they are targeting that violence at. They are controlled only by their anger towards those groups and their fixed preconceptions about them. Many of those recruited for this conflict are young. Of a population of 12 million, a full third has lost their homes as a result of the country's repeated conflicts, becoming either refugees or internally displaced persons. These conflicts have produced many victims, to the extent that it can be said that everyone in the country has lost at least one family member.

It is necessary to create a foundation that unites the people in order to create interpersonal and interethnic networks and promote a common responsibility for achieving a positive peace. Doing so requires doing away with fixed preconceptions of other ethnic groups and easing the tensions between them. Given that young people make up most of the combatants in the country's conflicts, it is particularly important to reduce their fixed preconceptions of other ethnic groups and strengthen the bonds between them, whether through sports competitions or other activities. By having spectators and the media watch these young people play, recognize the importance of Peace and Unity, and communicate that message across the country, we can hope to make that ideal a reality.

What changes has National Unity Day really brought about among the young people who fear they would be killed if they go to Juba or leave their POC site? How did the people watching these games feel as they did so? And what were the thoughts of the members of the MOCYS who worked with us hosting the events?

Athletes' Voices

The young people who gathered in Juba from across the country lived together during the ten days they spent there. Through this experience, they interacted with people their age from other regions and ethnic

groups. In addition to participating in soccer and athletics events (and for the third games, volleyball), they also attended public awareness seminars on topics like “fair play,” “promoting peace at home,” “gender equality,” and “AIDS.”

We were very uneasy about whether these young people would really be able to peacefully interact with those from rival parts of the country. But contrary to our fears, almost all of them talked with athletes from other regions. They interacted constantly, both as they slept and ate at their lodgings and during their free time. They did so voluntarily, borrowing sports equipment to practice in their free time or making plans to go and see events together. While there were those who told us they felt emotional barriers that prevented them from interacting with others, or who did not want to become friends with people from other areas, these were the exception. Nearly all the athletes, whether male or female, made friends from other regions through their interactions. And 90% of these told us that they had promised to keep in touch with them.

For the athletes, the National Unity Day sports event was a place where they were provided with the opportunity to interact with South Sudanese from other regions; it also seems to have been a place where they could constantly talk with them as they shared ideas, food, and living facilities. And these interactions changed the way they looked at other ethnic groups they had always had hostile feelings towards and enabled them to understand other regions better. The athletes told us that this led them to understand the importance of peacefully coexisting with other ethnic



Young athletes eating together with one another team and conducting exchanges.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

groups. One even said that “I had always been hostile towards the Dinka, but after meeting the other athletes at our lodgings, my attitude towards them changed remarkably. I now understand their culture and will no longer regard them as bad people.” Some said that the sports competitions and cultural dances were the most interesting parts of National Unity Day “because they brought much joy between the athletes and the ordinary people.” They also noted how these kinds of interactions promote peace in the country, saying that “National Unity Day is becoming part of the peace process.” The lodgings where the athletes, coaches, and MOCYS personnel stayed and ate together thus served as a venue for promoting interaction between these young people.

The lodgings were, in a sense, a microcosm for South Sudan. As this multi-ethnic group of athletes slept and ate together, those who initially held feelings of hostility towards other groups bravely interacted with them anyway and made new friends. Just as sporting competitions have rules and principles of sportsmanship and fair play that need to be followed, there were also unspoken rules in the lodgings about respecting one another. None of the fighting that we organizers had feared happened. Indeed, the way that the athletes and coaches accepted those of other ethnicities and came to regard them as fellow South Sudanese exceeded our expectations.

I would like to introduce some of the other comments by athletes here:

“I became aware of the importance of peace. We all slept together peacefully and shared time together. I think it is very important that



Athletes on their mattresses crammed in together on the floor.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

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 20-year-old male soccer player.

"I learned many things from National Unity Day. 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. I want to promote peace at my church and the place where I study" – a 19-year-old female volleyball player.

"I personally saw that many of the participants really wanted to interact with players from other regions and to get to know them. We did a lot of things together in our free time. We practiced, chatted, went to Juba Market together, and washed our uniforms together to be ready for our next match. The athletes I met were really good people. They were really trustworthy people who I hope to be able to spend time with again next year or in the near future. I also learned new goalkeeping skills from other goalies" – a 17-year-old male soccer player.

"I learned about peace at this event. That's because peace is being together without fighting, and that's something that happened here. It made me think that our country can develop in peace. What made National Unity Day different from other events is that the referees treated all the athletes equally. There was love without any abuse" – a



Athletes enjoying dancing at their dormitory.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

16-year-old female track athlete.

“Through National Unity Day, I have come to believe that it is possible for social activities like this one organized by JICA to make a Peace and Unity that transcends South Sudan’s regions become stronger. 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 because I didn’t know what kind of place it was or how the teams from the other regions would treat me. But ever since we met on that first night, they were calm and friendly and shared bathrooms, sleeping spaces, and soccer fields with me. I began to like them. And I was able to enjoy sharing experiences and sports equipment with them. 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 during my several days there. And if people from other ethnic groups or regions come to my region, I think I want to be with them” – a 16-year-old male soccer player.

In addition to the above comments, others said:

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

“I became more sociable towards people in my daily life.”

“I learned the importance of coexisting with other communities.”

“After National Unity Day, I became able to interact with people from other states with confidence.”

“National Unity Day changed my life from something bad to something good. I became able to love things from other regions that I had disliked.”

“I was able to change my attitudes towards people from other communities.”

“National Unity Day changed my negative attitudes towards people from other regions to something positive.”

We can understand from these comments that the athletes who participated in the National Unity Day sports event overwhelmingly began to change the feelings and attitudes towards people from other regions. Their previously fixed preconceptions became more positive. The event helped change distrust to trust and led to greater unity.

From Changes in Perceptions and Attitudes towards Concrete Actions

The athletes actually worked towards Peace and Unity after they returned home. Specifically, they spoke about Peace and Unity, and their experiences of becoming friends with people from other regions to those in their local areas. They sought out religious leaders who preached in favor of peace, love, and devotion. They also encouraged other young athletes to participate in sports and join future National Unity Day sports events. They held meetings with community members where they shared what they had learned about peace during the event. One athlete helped host an athletic tournament for the five counties of Northern Bahr el Ghazal state to promote regional peace. Another spoke proudly of how they built a soccer field with the help of other young people in their community. Yet another gave a public address on the radio after returning home in which they spoke about what they had learned in Juba and shared their experiences.

Among the female athletes, some began to feel that young people, especially girls, should concentrate on building careers rather than seeking to get married. It could not have been easy for them to speak of Peace and Unity with members of their communities when they knew people who had been killed in cattle raids and conflicts. Given that there is great resistance even towards interacting with people from hostile regions, the idea of becoming friends with them was an unimaginably difficult one. And it is easy to imagine how difficult it must be to convince those from a polygamous culture in which early marriage is preferred that women should build careers.

Some of the participants in the third National Unity Day sports event were young people from Upper Nile and Unity states who lived in POC sites under the protection of UNMISS. These two areas are strongholds for the vice-presidential faction opposed to the government and have therefore seen heavy fighting. The POC sites in Juba include many

refugees from these states. The Unity soccer team played very well in that year's tournament, placing fourth. The warm cheers they received from the large crowds of Juba residents during the games and the fact that they felt no danger due to their ethnicity must have given them courage. After the games ended, I received the happy news that several members of the team had been scouted by soccer clubs in Juba who had seen them play. These players have now left their POC sites and are living with relatives in the city. It is not hard to imagine how difficult it must be to rid oneself of the fear that comes from having family members and acquaintances killed due to their ethnicity and having your own life placed in danger for the same reason. It is easy to picture the hatred and distrust felt towards the ethnic groups responsible. In this case, the National Unity Day sports event served as an opportunity for these athletes to restore their connections with society. Surely that can be regarded as one step towards the event's goal of achieving Peace and Unity.

As shown above, the experiences of the athletes who participate in National Unity Day teach them the importance of Peace and Unity and coexisting with other communities. And we can see how, as they learn of this importance, the fixed preconceptions they feel towards rival ethnic groups are done away with. They feel more at ease with them, and the seeds of trust are planted.

The attitudes and perceptions changed by the games do not end there: they are leading to concrete actions. The athletes who return home serve as true "ambassadors of peace" share their experiences from National Unity Day with those in their local communities and the members of their ethnic groups. And in doing so, they influence the negative preconceptions that their local comrades hold towards other ethnic groups, particularly those they feel hostility towards. The attitudes of the athletes themselves are not the only ones changed by the sports event. Surely this helps to promote National Unity Day's goal of the creation of a society where people acknowledge one another and all can peacefully coexist. And as this change in attitudes expands outward, perceptions will change and all South Sudanese will become more unified, regardless of ethnicity. This will lead to the creation of the trust necessary to promote peace in South Sudan, the youngest nation in the world.

These young athletes believed that they might be killed if they went to Juba or left their POC site but bravely stepped forward anyway. I believe

the fact that they found friendship instead shows us the possibilities for Peace and Unity.

Spectators' Voices

As with the athletes, some of the spectators who attended National Unity Day had felt uncomfortable about interacting with people from other states before coming to the games. However, all of the 110 spectators who completed a JICA survey afterward said that their perceptions and attitudes had been changed by their experience.

Here are some of their responses showing these changes:

"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."

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

"At the very least, I've learned that I can trust most people. I've also come to see people from other states as kind, friendly, and honest."

"I was able to interact with people from different states and regions, something I had never done before. I had previously thought that the different ethnic groups who gathered here from across the country were my enemies. Having them come and promote Peace and Unity was a very good time for us."

"I think that I can now be with people from other states without worrying about what they might do to me. And I think I can share stories at school with children from other states and play with them."

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

"I was happy to see athletes from other states participate."

"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. The makeup of the volleyball and athletic teams also helped me understand Peace and Unity" – a Juba man in his fifties.

“Everyone supporting a given team gathered at the field to cheer, regardless of their background. For me, that was proof of absolute peace. Interaction brings about peace and turns people into friends. For example, the people I met here today will be my friends forever” – a woman in her twenties.

We received passionate messages welcoming our actions from many other South Sudanese:

“Seeing athletes from various regions playing sports and interacting in a friendly way allowed me to experience peace. I wish all of our nation was this way.”

“I was moved by the sense of unity I got from having so many people all in one place cheering on these sports events together.”

“As the spectators cheered on their favorite team at the soccer matches, they mingled with those from other ethnic groups. I was able to personally feel how our support for the same team united all of us.”

There were many other comments along these lines.

National Unity Day thus seems to have changed the perceptions of the spectators as well as those of the athletes. Those who had come to watch the matches interacted with one another and saw players of different ethnicities practice fair play towards each other. They saw players belonging to ethnicities hostile towards one another congratulate each other on their accomplishments.

And, as with the athletes, this change in perceptions and attitudes can also be tied to concrete actions. For example, the soccer teams from Torit, Rumbek, Jonglei, and Aweil were unable to raise the money needed to pay for their transportation costs to the third National Unity Day sports event. They had given up on participating, but when this news was broadcast on the radio, members of the public stood up to find a way for them to do so. Despite their own poor living conditions, people donated money and made it happen. This communicates the feelings that the South Sudanese public have towards National Unity Day.

Changes in Thinking within the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports

How do those from South Sudan's Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports see National Unity Day? As mentioned earlier, their sense of ownership during the preparations for the first National Unity Day sports event had honestly been fairly weak. But as they had spent the two weeks of the event staying with the athletes in their lodgings and witnessing the passionate competition and the fervor of the crowds, their feelings towards the event changed. It became something that they felt actively involved in. Looking back, Team Leader Lemor proudly told me that "everyone in Juba talked of nothing but the games."

Undersecretary Mabeny told me that "Many cabinet officers have attended every National Unity Day sports event, beginning with the first one. The government has given the event its blessing, as shown by Vice President Igga's attendance at the first games. Currently, National Unity Day is the only event hosted by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports. The entire government is very proud of it, not just us. So, we want to continue hosting this event no matter what."

Director General Yugu felt that the event had sparked real interest among the public: "The National Unity Day matches were broadcast live on the radio and many who listened became interested. It drew a great response. We got messages from people in other states wanting to know why their



Author with Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports Undersecretary Agum Rin Mabeny Adut.

Photograph courtesy of author

state hadn't participated, for example. And as more people learned of the event, the response became all the greater."

Team Leader Lemor, reflecting on past National Unity Days, said,

National Unity Day is South Sudan's only event, and it provides a platform for all of the young people in the country. The first National Unity Day involved not only sports but also socialization. Because it was our first time hosting the games, we were somewhat at a loss. But as we ate and slept with everyone, we came to know one another. For the second National Unity Day, we were able to take the lessons from the first games and use them to have a better event. We also knew how to treat young people. So, for example, when we divided up the rooms, we listed their names and allowed the athletes to choose freely. The athletes were careful to take turns as they did so. We also held a meeting of the state governments at Kampala in Uganda. For the third National Unity Day, we allowed the athletes to freely choose their rooms and were surprised to find that they mixed ethnic groups. Because everyone ate and slept together, they increasingly interacted and became friends. A sense of unity emerged as the athletes not only competed together but also sang and danced together. The young people are always asking about when the next games will be held.

He also proudly spoke about how National Unity Day has served as an opportunity for some players to become accepted by teams and local residents:



Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports Team Leader William Joseph Lemor.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

Some of the athletes are being recruited by the South Sudan Football Association and club teams. The South Sudan Athletic Federation is doing this as well, as are regional groups. South Sudan has two soccer leagues, and scouts from both come to the National Unity Day games to watch the players. Some players from a POC site in Bentiu (a region with heavy fighting) who participated in the event are now playing for soccer teams. They learned that people are quite friendly and didn't go back to their POC site. Some of the athletes from sites like these have been convinced that the world outside of them is safe and have chosen not to return. People are accepting these athletes.

Continuing further, he noted that, "because the championship match was between Juba and Torit (at the third games), the spectators had a difficult time knowing which team to cheer for. So, they ended up cheering for both. Whenever a team wins, their local area makes the day a holiday. The players return home and those from conflict areas truly become ambassadors of peace. That National Unity Day is so safe increases people's trust. They interact and this leads to friendships and harmony."

"When I visited Tori [a city east of Juba], people came up to me saying, 'It's the National Unity Day guy.'" I clearly remember Mr. Akwok Odong from the MOCYS proudly grinning and telling me how, when he returns home, people say "Hey JICA" to him.

Expanding the Ring of Support

The goal of the National Unity Day sports event 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. During the first games, the athletic fields were improved with the help of CTI Engineering International, Dai Nippon Construction, and the Japan Self-Defense Forces. The games themselves also saw a taiko drum performance by the JSDF. And while it was a small amount, some assistance was also received from UNICEF and private businesses. During the second games, the JSDF once again performed and additional support was received from private businesses. During the third games, Daichi Suzuki, commissioner of the Japan Sports Agency, sent his congratulations, and the volleyball games were played with balls

and nets donated by the Japan Volleyball Association. And eight athletic and volleyball teams consisting of 122 people were able to participate due to support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation that paid for their airfare. Special Representative Shearer from UNMISS gave a speech at the opening ceremony and the Bangladeshi engineering contingent improved the stadium, provided a performance for the opening ceremony, and sent lecturers for the self-improvement seminars. UN Radio also assisted in publicizing the games.

We have also been able to secure support for the games from the private sector as well. AMS, an Australian soccer apparel company, provided soccer uniforms, and medals and trophies were purchased with funds provided by Bollore Logistics, a French company. Notifications about the games were sent at no cost thanks to support from Viva Cell, a mobile phone company. The ring of support has also expanded further to include members of the public, such as the people mentioned above who raise money to pay the travel expense of teams having financial difficulties.

According to Secretary Mabeny, "The games are having a positive influence. Education Minister Deng Deng Hoc began a School Cup event modeled on the games after attending." Director General Yugu has said that "National Unity Day has the power to unite the people. It must continue." The MOCYS is firmly resolved to continue to host this annual event calling for Peace and Unity.

With each National Unity Day, the ring of support for this symbol of Peace and Unity grows. It has come to be accepted not just by the people, but also by businesses, governments, and aid organizations.

Epilogue

After half a century of conflict, South Sudan became the world's newest independent country on July 9, 2011, with the passionate support of 98% of its people. Eighteen months later, JICA was forced to evacuate the country following the outbreak of a major conflict. I was posted to the country in late November 2014 to reopen our Juba office. The people were exhausted by the constant fighting.

The path that led to the National Unity Day sports event and its call for Peace and Unity began when I met Director General Yugu of the MOCYS in December 2014. The first games were held in January 2016 and—despite difficulties along the way—have continued to be held every year since. A second, large-scale conflict following independence began in July 2016, and the JICA office was once again forced to evacuate the country. But we did not give up on our goal of providing assistance for South Sudanese participation in its first Olympics. As we saw, three athletes, including one who had participated in the first National Unity Day sports event, were able to compete in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August 2016.

As shown in Chapters 6 and 7, the annual National Unity Day has brought both athletes and spectators together, just as Director General Yugu wished for when he told me, “what the South Sudan of today needs is the formation of bonds between people without regard for their state of origin or their ethnicity. I really want to revive this national sporting event.”

It is also the case that, when the athletes return home, they serve as “ambassadors of peace,” speaking of the importance of Peace and Unity to those they know and helping them to accept those from rival ethnic groups. The same is true of the spectators. And there is no question that the people who engage with the games by listening to them on the radio or watching on television also recognize the importance of Peace and Unity. Support for the games has expanded from just the public to include private businesses and aid organizations like the United Nations.

It was through the assistance of the many Japanese who hope for peace to be realized in South Sudan that the country was able to host the National Unity Day sports event and participate in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in the face of many difficulties.

The preparations for the first National Unity Day sports event began from nothing, and all of us struggled to find our way. But no matter what situation they were placed in, Ms. Uchikawa, Mr. Murakami, Ms. Oi, Mr. Kuwabara, and Ms. Uchida of the JICA South Sudan Office refused to give up on hosting the event. They persevered, giving up their weekends. At the headquarters in Tokyo, those at the Africa Department, including Director Kimura, Mr. Oshima, Ms. Ito, and Mr. Kondo, worked desperately not only to secure the funds we needed but also in other areas like arranging for South Sudanese officials to be invited to Japan. Japanese companies like JIN Corporation, Dai Nippon Construction, and CTI Engineering International provided unflinching support, as did the JSDF. It was through the support of these people and groups that the hosting of the first National Unity Day sports event became a reality.

JICA's support for South Sudan's participation in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics was thanks to a resolute decision made by President Kitaoka. Even when we had been forced to evacuate the country following the July 2016 conflict, he felt that this situation made it all the more important that JICA provided its support to ensure that South Sudan could participate in the festival of peace that is the Olympics for the first time.

We had been forced to evacuate from South Sudan during a time of intense fighting in which our bulletproof car had come under fire. And yet, Japanese aid workers again returned to the country, desiring to contribute to its peace and development. Even after evacuating, the South Sudan Office continued to provide support through remote operations. Shortly after our evacuation, I left my position as Chief Representative of the office in late September 2016. I became Director General of the Security Management Department, from which I continued to be involved with the country, albeit indirectly.

In October 2016, the South Sudan Office moved to Uganda, and from there, it provided support for the second National Unity Day sports event by communicating with our local staff members in the country. Ms. Yamanaka and Ms. Uchida were in charge of the event, with Senior Representative Uchikawa overseeing them. Ms. Oi was responsible for publicity, and Mr. Murakami for the security precautions. At the Africa Department, Director Daisuke Watanabe (Mr. Kimura's successor), Takayuki Uchiyama (Mr. Oshima's successor), and Mr. Kondo also provided support. For the third National Unity Day games, Senior Representative Uchikawa and Project

Formulation Advisor Mariko Hattori (Ms. Uchida's successor) at the South Sudan Office and Yoshifumi Yamanaka of the Africa Department (Mr. Kondo's successor) assisted. The hosting of the fourth National Unity Day sports event was accomplished by the South Sudan Office under its newly appointed Chief Representative Shinya Tomonari and, in Tokyo, the South Sudan team members under Africa Department Director Kumiko Uchida (Mr. Watanabe's successor). All these people have shown the same passion and dedication that we had in providing support for the first National Unity Day sports event. The JIN Corporation has also continued to be involved with the games with the same enthusiasm as always.

Project Formulation Advisor Junko Uchida, who had overseen sports at the South Sudan Office and risked her life evacuating the country at the time of the 2016 conflict, worked at the relocated office in Uganda to provide support for the second event. Her term as an advisor expired afterward, but strongly believing that Japanese teams would be allowed to return to South Sudan eventually and wanting to continue her involvement in peacebuilding through sports, she took a job as a consultant at the JIN Corporation. She has continued to be involved in sports assistance in that capacity.

Ms. Yamanaka, who had also overseen sports at the office, left JICA after her time in South Sudan ended. Making the most of her experiences, including those with National Unity Day, she started graduate school in the United States to become a specialist in peacebuilding.

No Japanese staff members were permitted to be permanently stationed in South Sudan from our evacuation in July 2016 until August 2018. The second and third National Unity Day sports events were held during this period, with our Japanese staff smoothly providing support for the games from an office in Uganda. As mentioned previously, all four of the National Unity Day sports events were hosted under circumstances in which it would not have been at all strange for them to be called off. Senior Representative Uchikawa played a key role in the hosting of all these events.

With the fourth National Unity Day games having ended, the work began on supporting the fifth games (held in 2020) and South Sudan's participation in the Tokyo Olympics (subsequently postponed until 2021

due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic). In the meantime, the sixth National Unity Day is to be held in 2021 in a “scaled-down” manner due to the COVID-19 virus.

After returning to Japan, I had the opportunity to discuss the National Unity Day sports event with Ms. Yuko Obuchi, a member of the House of Representatives, Diet of Japan. I also spoke to her about South Sudan’s participation in its first Olympics and how the country also hoped to participate in the Tokyo Olympics. She provided me with an introduction to the mayor of Maebashi, who worked as her late father’s secretary when he too served in the House of Representatives, telling me that the city takes a very active role in hosting foreign athletic delegations and suggesting that I discuss the possibility of the city serving as a host for South Sudan in 2020 with him.

In August 2018, I visited Maebashi city hall to meet with the mayor and other city officials. Accompanying me were South Sudan Office Chief Representative Tomonari (who had not yet departed to take up his new position) and Mr. Yamanaka (who oversaw South Sudan for the Africa Department). We explained the situation to Mayor Ryu Yamamoto, showed photos from past National Unity Day events, and discussed the possibility of the city serving as host for the delegation. Mayor Yamamoto showed a surprising understanding of aid work in developing nations and responded very positively to the idea. This meeting was followed up by more specific discussions between city officials, Mr. Yamanaka, and Chief Representative Tomonari (who departed for South Sudan later that month). Ultimately, Mayor Yamamoto made the following statement at a press conference on October 24, 2018:

South Sudan is a new country that is even now still in the process of developing and has recently ended a civil war. It is small, but we have decided to take in their Olympic delegation. Rather than having their athletes come here for a camp immediately prior to the start of the Olympics, we would like them to come sooner so they can train in Japan. Some time ago, officials from JICA showed me what athletic competition in South Sudan looks like. I saw their athletes competing barefoot on an uneven sports field made of bright red earth. I was struck by the desire to host them in our city as quickly as possible so that they may benefit from a good training environment and improve. I proposed to JICA that we take them in early rather than merely serve

as a pre-Olympics host. They are currently making arrangements along those lines. South Sudan does not have many athletes that have met the criteria for the Olympics. However, I have heard that the delegation will likely consist of one short-distance and two long-distance runners. I would like various channels in Maebashi—such as the track teams from Yamada Denki, Ikuei University, and Kyoai Gakuen University—to help take care of them during their time here and aid in their development. I would also like to request that the citizens of Maebashi support these young people... I would like the city of Maebashi to adopt the attitude of wanting to be useful and provide good opportunities to the world, particularly Colombia and South Sudan.

This was the beginning of the relationship between South Sudan and Maebashi. I get excited just picturing the South Sudanese Olympic candidates running at training facilities in Maebashi in the lead-up to the Tokyo Olympics, and how their hopes will swell as they do so.

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics served as a symbol of Japan's postwar reconstruction and as a festival of peace. Similarly, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics were to be a symbol of Japan's reconstruction after the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake. Postponed due to COVID-19 until 2021, the Olympics will again be a festival of peace, this time amidst a world where new victims of terrorism and civil war are being created in many countries, and the number of refugees has swelled to 79.5 million worldwide. I want South Sudan, a country that has seen repeated conflict, to participate in those games as part of its journey towards achieving peace and unifying its people. The athletes who feared that traveling to Juba or leaving their POC sites meant being killed learned the importance of Peace and Unity through their participation in the National Unity Day sports event. I want them to participate in the Olympics, the true "festival of peace"—especially the 2020 Tokyo Olympics—a nation that has been successfully reconstructed following a war. I have no doubt that the many Japanese who have supported the National Unity Day sports event will be brought to tears by the sight of South Sudanese athletes at the Tokyo Olympics, competing with all their might and proudly waving their flag high.

The Tokyo Olympics is held in 2021. Actions are currently being taken by many nations including Japan to reach the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. One of these, Goal 16, is "Peace, justice, and strong institutions." I truly hope that South Sudan will be able

to meet this goal by 2030. I learned many things from the athletes during the National Unity Day sports event. South Sudan has seen repeated conflict for half a century, to the extent that it is said that there is no one in the country who has not lost a family member to it. Since the country achieved its independence in 2011, it has seen two major conflicts that have produced many victims.

It is not at all odd, given these conditions, that there have been those athletes who have feared that they would be killed if they traveled to Juba or left their POC site. And yet, they bravely gathered in Juba despite these fears. They then shared lodgings and ate with members of ethnic groups they had hostile feelings towards. I believe that just taking that step took quite a lot of courage on their part. Then, as they spoke and interacted with one another, they formed friendships and came to trust one another. They increasingly recognized that they were all South Sudanese. This was also true of the spectators who came to see the National Unity Day sports event. The Dinka and Nuer had committed atrocities against each other during the conflicts of December 2013 and July 2016. I can only imagine how uneasy they felt about gathering together in one stadium. But they gathered even so, and as they watched multi-ethnic teams compete, they recognized that Peace and Unity is possible and how important it is.

Even now, I remain convinced that having young people—those who have been recruited into the country's conflicts—come into conflict with those from rival ethnic groups and form bonds of trust with them serves as a step towards the realization of peace. I believe that if they can muster the courage to take that step, it will lead to peace and fairness.

I consider the achievement of the SDGs as something I can personally be involved in, and I act where I can to further them. I believe that the young people and crowds of South Sudan have taught me how.

On February 21, 2017, about a month after Prime Minister Abe gave his speech, President Kiir delivered his own policy speech to the South Sudanese legislature. Not only did President Kiir give thanks for Japan's assistance (the only one of the country's major donors to be so mentioned) but he asked for construction to resume on two of JICA's grant-funded cooperation projects (which had been suspended following the July 2016 conflict). In his statement, he said, "I would like to take this opportunity to give my thanks to Prime Minister Abe, the Japanese government, and the

Japanese people for their development projects and to the United Nations Security Council for their continuing support to the South Sudanese government and people.”

South Sudan has great expectations of Japan. Both nations’ leaders made reference to the other in their policy speeches that year. And it was unusual for a developing nation like South Sudan to be referenced in a Japanese prime minister’s speech. Aid organizations including JICA have refused to give up on South Sudan despite having twice had to evacuate the country and suspend their assistance. They continue to provide support.

While things are relatively stable in Juba, the security situation in South Sudan continues to be unstable outside of the capital. Since the July 2016 conflict, the number of South Sudanese refugees has increased dramatically, reaching 1.5 million. According to UNHCR, this is the largest number in Africa and surpassed only by Syria and Afghanistan worldwide. There are also more than 1.8 million internally displaced persons in the country, meaning that a dangerous situation exists where about a third of South Sudan’s 12 million people are either refugees or internally displaced persons. There is also an ongoing food crisis. These difficult circumstances make it all the more important to continue fostering the unity and pride of the South Sudanese people and call for Peace and Unity.

Japan successfully rebuilt itself following a major war and has experience as a model peacebuilding nation. Through Japan’s assistance in South Sudan, work will continue on projects such as the construction of the Freedom Bridge, and the National Unity Day sports event will continue to be held. In the near future, I want to see the country’s athletes participating in the opening ceremony of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, standing tall as representatives of their country. I cannot help but hope that one day, as laid out in Prime Minister Abe’s policy speech, South Sudan becomes “a peaceful nation where sports are played every day.”

Afterword and Acknowledgments

Global society is becoming more complicated and confusing. Although the world was preparing the foundations for democracy and market economies to expand after the end of the Cold War, many issues of global proportion, such as global warming, Ebola, COVID-19, and other pandemics, and the increase in conflicts, have come to the forefront. What's more, the foundations for democracy and the transition to a market economy are even being lost. Terrorism, too, has been on the rise in recent years, symbolized most by the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States perpetrated by Al Qaeda. As a result of the activities of the Islamic State (IS) and their allies, numerous refugees have had to flee Syria. Due to continued conflict and concerns in South Sudan, there are many refugees and internally displaced persons as well. Today, there are approximately 79.5 million refugees worldwide. Conflict has spread since the end of the Cold War, and along with the threat of terrorism, there has been a breakdown of trust between religions, ethnic groups, countries, and among fellow citizens within countries. Some sadly symbolic examples include the fighting and tensions between Sunni and Shia factions in Islam, the genocide within Rwanda, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The case of South Sudan is an example of such a conflict. Distrust of other ethnic groups, other religions, and one's own government leads to the weakening of the personal relationships, networks, and norms that comprise social capital. The inability to sustain them leads to a chaotic situation threatening the world.

The international community has used military means, political means, and a combination of economic and social means to deal with these problems. In addition to these methods, it is increasingly necessary to add the above aspects of social capital—"trust," "networks," and "norms" to international cooperation. Using sports to build trust and unity among ethnic groups and the people of a country was an example of this, and this led to the growth of support for "National Unity Day" in South Sudan and its Olympic participation as a way to promote peace.

It was Ms. Ayako Oi, formerly with the South Sudan Office, who proposed the idea of introducing the recollections of those involved with the "National Unity Day." She said she wanted to see everything recorded somehow before memories began to fade. "What difficulties did people face, how did they persevere, what were their hopes, etc.? For example,

how did Director General Yugu and the others deal with the various problems that arose? How did national sentiment change over the course of holding the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd annual “National Unity Days”? I also want people to know that the decision of you, Chief Representative Furukawa, and Mr. Yugu, to hold a national sports event has given dreams and hopes, however small, to the youth of a country wracked by civil war and conflict.” I shared her feeling and decided to publish this book. I hope that I have been able to properly relay her desire to see the feelings of those involved in “National Unity Day” introduced in this book and that the reader is satisfied with the outcome.

There may be many things that I have missed in the process, as our memories of the details had started to fade by that point. It was more difficult than I imagined to relay in writing to the reader the difficulties we had in realizing “National Unity Day.” Certain parts may read like self-conceit. Moreover, South Sudan is far removed from Japan, and thus it is likely very difficult to understand a little-known country. For this reason, I provided an overview of the country and its history of conflict. I also introduced just what is meant by using sports as a means for peacebuilding and discussed in detail the desperate struggle of those involved to realize the hosting of “National Unity Day” and the support for the South Sudanese squad to participate in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Supporting “National Unity Day” in South Sudan and its participation in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics was an extremely unusual form of assistance for JICA. Much of it was truly done by trial and error along the way. If any single person among those involved had not been there at the time, it is likely that the event would not have been held. That is how important each and every person was to the process. Everyone had a high level of passion to see it realized. And if JICA’s president had not made the decision to lend our support, it is likely that South Sudan’s first-time participation in the Olympics would not have been realized.

During the time our personnel had evacuated South Sudan, I made four inspection trips back to Juba to ascertain the safety of the situation. My first inspection trip corresponded with the holding of the 3rd “National Unity Day,” and I was able to participate in the opening ceremony and watch several of the matches. My fourth inspection trip overlapped with the 4th “National Unity Day,” and again, I was able to watch several matches and participate in the closing ceremony. As with the 1st “National Unity Day,”

the athletes marched in with their state flags raised proudly. I was very moved by these scenes. Under the spirit of fair play, the athletes from all different backgrounds and ethnic groups did their best in their respective events and matches. At their lodging, athletes talked naturally about the importance of Peace and Unity, another scene that was impressive for me. At the different venues, there were several layers to the crowds of spectators standing watching the matches. They cheered, regardless of ethnic group. I was able to sense from this, plus the fact that they were there in the first place, that the idea of “National Unity Day” was taking root in the hearts of the people. Moreover, I came to realize that the athletes and spectators alike were bonding as one people, regardless of ethnicity. At this moment, I knew once again that we at JICA were correct to support the hosting of the “National Unity Day.”

Through these opportunities to visit Juba again, I was able to speak with Undersecretary Agum, Director General Yugu, and Team Leader Lemor. As introduced in the book, they spoke proudly of their involvement with hosting the “National Unity Day.” I was especially happy that Undersecretary Agum and Director General Yugu said I, along with them, was the founder of “National Unity Day” and that they believe JICA is a trustworthy partner that would never betray South Sudan. For the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, they had never undertaken something as big as “National Unity Day” and were operating in an unknown world, with a partner (JICA) that they knew but had never worked together in this capacity. Furthermore, their budget was so low they could not pay salaries on time and were working overtime to make the event a reality. It was a difficult time for them in many ways.

However, during the preparations for the hosting of the event, trust built up between these officials and organizers, and with the 1st “National Unity Day” being held successfully, the Ministry came to feel that it was truly an indispensable event. Many Japanese had worked to support Director General Yugu’s view that “what is necessary for South Sudan now are personal relationships regardless of ethnic groups and regions and the desire to reconstruct our nation.” “National Unity Day” is doing just that—many people have come together with the desire for peace and are expanding the circle little by little from what was once no more than a simple idea on paper. I hope this effort will one day lead to peace for South Sudan. I want to see the day when everyone, holding hands, crosses the “Freedom Bridge” together, after its construction by Japan has been

completed. And, of course, I look forward to the day when South Sudan becomes the kind of peaceful country where sports can be played every day.

As the Chief Representative of JICA South Sudan Office, I viewed Ms. Tomomi Uchikawa, Ms. Ayako Oi, Mr. Atsushi Murakami, Mr. Shimpei Taguchi, Mr. Tomohiro Kuwabara, Ms. Nanaho Yamanaka, Ms. Junko Uchida, and Ms. Etsuko Osumi, and our local national staff as comrades in arms. Ms. Oi, Mr. Kuwabara, and Ms. Yamanaka were riding in our bulletproof vehicle with me when we were shot at. None of us will easily forget our time together during the renewed civil war when we planned our evacuation out of the country in the same dwelling. Experiencing the conflict together and undertaking the hosting of the “National Unity Day,” these men and women did their very best for South Sudan. I am very proud of them, especially the work they did for the unprecedented support given toward realizing “National Unity Day.” I do not know how I fared in their eyes as a leader, but for me, I feel very lucky to have been able to work with them.



Members of the South Sudan Office gladly receiving JICA's 1st Public Relations Grand Prix Award. This award is now an annual one sponsored within JICA.

First row, from left: Ms. Yamanaka, Ms. Oi, and Ms. Uchida.

Back row, from left: Mr. Kuwabara, Ms. Uchikawa, author, Mr. Kawai, Mr. Murakami, and Ms. Osumi.

Photograph courtesy of JICA

I would also like to express my gratitude to those in the Africa Department at JICA's headquarters who supported the South Sudan Office, including Mr. Izuru Kimura, Mr. Kensuke Oshima, Ms. Miwa Ito, Mr. Hiroto Kondo, Mr. Daisuke Watanabe, and Mr. Yoshifumi Yamanaka, as well as Ms. Mariko Hattori of the South Sudan Office. In particular, I would like to thank JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka not only for his daily encouragement but also his support for "National Unity Day" and for South Sudan's participation in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. In addition, I wish to thank Mr. Hiroshi Kato, a Vice President responsible for Africa. Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Yasuo Ohno and Mr. Shigeki Handa of JIN Corporation, who contributed greatly to the hosting of "National Unity Day." I would also like to thank Mr. Norio Umeda of CTI Engineering International Company, Mr. Kiyoshi Kusaka of Dainippon Construction, and Japan Self-Defense Force personnel, all of whom provided assistance in preparing the grounds and in other areas. I am grateful to Mayor Ryu Yamamoto of Maebashi City and city officials and residents who agreed to be the host town for the South Sudan athletes during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and Ms. Yuko Obuchi and Ms. Tomomi Orita for making the introduction to the mayor. Furthermore, I wish to express my gratitude to Undersecretary Agum Rin Mabeny, Director General Edward Settimo Yugu, Team Leader Lemor William, and all of those on the South Sudanese side for their cooperation. Moreover, it was thanks to the security provided by Mr. Raji Gurung that I survived and was able to write this book in the first place. To all, a very cordial "thank you."

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I wish to dedicate this book to all those who were involved in South Sudan's "National Unity Day" and in the country's participation in the

Rio de Janeiro Olympics. I also dedicate it to those who are involved today in the annual National Unity Day and South Sudan's participation in the Tokyo Olympics.

August 2021
Mitsuaki Furukawa

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Several of the photographs and documents used in this book can be found on JICA's website under "JICA Project History Museum" at:
<https://libportal.jica.go.jp/library/public/ProjectHistory/NSFSouthSudan/NSFSouthSudan-p.html>

List of Abbreviations

AU	African Union
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EU	European Union
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
GNI	Gross National Income
GoNU	Government of National Unity
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IS	Islamic State
JFA	Japan Football Association
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
MOCYS	(South Sudan) Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports
MOFA	(Japan) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCP	National Congress Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PKO	United Nations Peacekeeping Operations
POC	Protection of Civilian (sites)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army–In Opposition
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement–In Opposition
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIS	United Nation Mission in Sudan
UNMISS	United Nation Mission in South Sudan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

About the Author

Mitsuaki FURUKAWA was born in Osaka Prefecture in 1962. While studying abroad in the United States, he became interested in development aid during his interactions with a friend from a developing country. After graduating from the Department of Economics, Hosei University, he entered the Shimizu Corporation with a desire to promote technical cooperation via the private sector. Afterwards, he joined JICA in 1989 serving in the Social Development Cooperation Department, Secretariat of International Search and Rescue, Planning Department, Tanzania Overseas Office as the Deputy Resident, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Economic Cooperation Bureau, Deputy Director of the Grant Aid Department, Team Director, General Coordination Team, Resident Representative JICA UK Office, Executive Senior Research Fellow of the Research Institute, Resident Representative, JICA South Sudan Office, and the Director General of the Security Management Department. During this time, he also participated in long-term training abroad from 1995-1997. In 2014, he received his doctorate in Social Sciences from Hitotsubashi University. He is the author of the Japanese-language book, *The Evolution of the International Aid System and the Reality of African Aid Administration: Poverty Reduction Regimes in the Post-Cold War* (Nippon Hyoronsha Co., Ltd., 2014), which was awarded the 19th Okita Memorial Prize for International Development Research in 2015.

