

South Sudan



South Sudan, a land-locked country with one of the world's youngest countries after gaining its independence from Sudan in 2011, and it has one of the youngest populations, with a median age of 18.

Located in northeast Africa, this nation of 11 million people shares borders with some of the continent's poorest countries, some of which have seen civil conflicts in recent years:

Ethiopia, Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Kenya. In square miles, South Sudan is slightly smaller and has slightly less than half the population of Texas.

The country is yet to recover from a brutal five-year civil war: two years after the independence, fighting broke out, characterized by extreme violence, the use of child soldiers, and attacks on civilians along ethnic fault lines. About 400,000 people died, and more than a third of the country's 11 million people were uprooted. The peace deal signed in 2019- with much help from three local Christian leaders as well as Pope Francis and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby, head of the Church of England, has done little to stop endemic violence. The Pope and the Archbishop visited South Sudan Feb 3-5.

It is estimated that 2.2 million people, nearly 20% of the population, are internally displaced following the conflict- with the United Nations warning that up to 10 million will need food aid in 2023.

The capital city of South Sudan is Juba. The official language of South Sudan is English – meaning it is taught in schools - but there are over 60 different tribal languages spoken in the country. Most people who live in South Sudan are subsistence farmers: they depend on their own crops for food.

Many South Sudanese follow an Animist, or traditional African religion. Estimates vary widely on the number of Catholics in the country – the most common number used is 2.5 million, from the World Christian Encyclopedia. The Comboni Fathers are believed to have been the first to bring the Catholic faith to the area.

"Walking for Peace"



Catholic Bishop Christian Carlassare of Rumbek, right, is joined by Anglican Bishop Alapayo Manyang Kuctiel of Rumbek, left, and Rin Tueny, the governor of Lakes State, center. The pilgrimage took off from Rumbek Jan. 25, 2023, in the company of 80 youths. They walked for 9 days to meet Pope Francis in Juba, upon his arrival Feb. 3.

Info

Population 10,750,000

Religion

960.5% Christianity

- Roman Catholic
- Protestant
- Other Christian

32.9% Traditional faiths

26.2% Islam

Dioceses

7 dioceses, 10 bishops.

Other data

There are 124 parishes in South Sudan, and 781 pastoral centers, tended for by 300 priests, 218 religious sisters and 9 lay missionaries.

The Church also runs 235 schools and 7 universities, 10 hospitals and 9 centers for orphaned children.



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It is estimated that over 1.2 million of South Sudanese have ended up in resettlement camps in neighboring Uganda. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 63% of these refugees are children.

Because of a law enacted soon after Uganda's independence called the Control of Alien Refugees Act, people who are forced to seek a new life in Uganda are welcomed and even given land to farm so that they may feed themselves, become productive citizens, and contribute to the local economy. Refugee children attend local schools—when they are available.



Father Onesimo in his village

Those who were able to remain home in South Sudan have very difficult lives: Violence is ongoing, making it very difficult for civil authorities to repair the infrastructure. Roads are in poor condition and there is a severe lack of health care. Not only were hospitals destroyed in the violence but many health care professionals were either killed or forced to leave. Maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world.

Receiving a proper education is also very difficult due to the lack of facilities, trained teachers, and materials. Less than a third of the population knows how to read and write. This rate is even lower for girls who are encouraged to drop out of school young, marry, and have children in their teens. Understandably, violence marked the entire life and vocation of Father Onesimo Keneyi Joseph Venansio. When the second Sudanese civil war broke in 1984, the village where he lived with his family was besieged, and no one was allowed in or out for months.

Last year, Missionary Childhood sent \$290,000.00 to South Sudan. MCA members in South Sudan sacrificed \$ 1.660 so that other children in the world may come to know the love of Jesus, too.

No one was able to leave the village, until the entire community was transported into Juba, where they lived as refugees. In 1994, at the age of 17, Father Onesimo joined the minor seminary. They were a small group back then, he said, but today, there are over 80 young boys in South Sudan's central minor seminary- each of the 7 dioceses has one-, and 46 young men in the only seminary in the country.

There was only one exception: Father Michael Barton, a missionary from the United States. "I feel like, without a priest, people in situations such as that one could easily lose hope, lose sight of the fact that life, when infused by the enormous gift of faith, is a tremendous gift that we are called to protect," he said from Rome, Italy, where he was sent by his archbishop to study civil and canon law. "There is a dire need for highly educated people in my country, that is why I am here, though my heart, and my thoughts, are always in my home, with my people." Sending a priest to Rome is an incredible sacrifice to a diocese in South Sudan: they receive no salary for their jobs, and most bishops can barely afford the estimated USD300 a month that help cover a priest's meals for a month in a religious community. "If you need gas to visit the many parishes that are far from the centers of the city, or when the time comes to buy a Bible, medicines, or even a light bulb, we rely exclusively on the faithful, who are poorer than we are, or from Catholics all over the world, who support us through MCA." An estimated 82% of the country lives with USD 1.9 a day.

By supporting MCA's programs such as the Mite Box, you are helping priests like Father Onesimo answer the call of being witnesses to the faith- sharing the Gospel, building peace, fostering life- in all the ends of the earth.

