

## Working with Médecins Sans Frontières in Southern Sudan

I worked for three months in Southern Sudan for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). My location was Gogrial in the middle of the vast savannah next to one of the tributaries to the White Nile. It takes three days to travel by car to Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan.

Since December 2009 the clinic is in operation, using tents, inflatable operation halls and shelters of semi-permanent building materials. The clinic has 1000 patient visits a week. The staff is accommodated in comfortable tents. We are a team of 15 persons from various corners of the world. Local staff serves as drivers, nurses, cooks, cleaners, attendants, day labourers. The local people, Dinkas, live from animal husbandry and a certain degree of cultivation. Cattle is the most important sign of wealth. Polygamous relations with many kids is very common in this strictly Catholic area.



*Houses of concrete blocks and thatch*

In 2005 a peace agreement was signed after 20 years' of war between North and South Sudan. To a large extent the conflict is about water and oil, but there are also ethnic conflicts. Both parts of the conflict want to control the sources of the White Nile and the oil pipeline to the Red Sea. It has been decided that a referendum will take place whether Southern Sudan shall gain independence or not. During my stay the area was calm, but people fear that there will be violence in connection with the referendum. Gogrial is situated South of the disputed border. MSF is prepared to receive refugees and wounded people.

### Manually produced concrete blocks

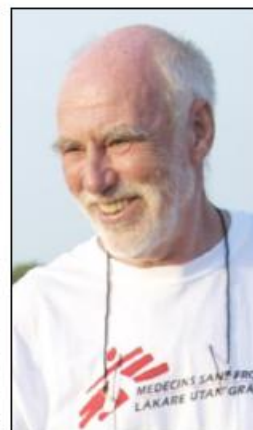
My job consisted of planning for a new extended primary health clinic – a small hospital. I worked out a program

and a proposal for permanent buildings together with the medical staff. I documented the existing situation and made drawings for the clinic. The proposal consists of one-storey buildings of concrete blocks produced manually (400 pieces a day). Roofs are made of mahogany trusses covered by corrugated metal sheets.

The situation in this camp is very different from my previous work for MSF. In 2009 I worked nine months in Burma (Myanmar) with access to restaurants, cinemas and other attractions of the 4-million city of Yangon. As a contrast Gogrial is situated in the middle of nowhere. One can walk down to the river or visit a road crossing with a simple market. During the war Gogrial was erased to the ground. Today people live in simple mud huts with thatch roofs. However, above the roofs one may see mobile phone masts. Many people have mobile phones. Electricity comes from diesel-driven generators. I have my own solar-driven IKEA lamp, which provides good reading light during the dark tropical nights.

After three months of camping life in fairly strict geographical and social isolation it feels good to leave Gogrial.

*Jerry Ramnitz, member of ASF Sweden.*



*Comfortable tents for MSF staff.*