



When A Community Unites To Confront A Challenge

By Christine Meling Na Guya



With a population estimated to be around 7,050, Yari Boma is 16 miles from Yei town along the Yei-Kaya road which connects Southern Sudan to Uganda. A small community with few institutions, Yari village has a Primary School, three churches - The Episcopal Church of Sudan, Pentecostal Church, Roman Catholic Church and now a nursery school. The village is headed by chief Raymond Kayanga and sub chiefs representing the different clans. Like many communities in Sudan, Yari is a community with different clans, some of which include: *Muyuka, Gbaraba, Pakide, Mile, Yari, Bura, Dogi and Pakide*. Each of the clans is subdivided into smaller identities. For example, *Mile* clan is subdivided into *Mi'dola, Murjemali, Gborokurojo* and *Wayonaji*. If an outsider seeks to identify a community member in Yari village, the introduction will have to start from the bigger and ends with the smaller clans.

In the spring of 2008, the Yari community received a \$10,000 grant from the David Projects for

Peace program for the development of a nursery school in Yari village. The program is made possible by Kathryn Wasserman Davis, an accomplished internationalist and philanthropist, who has committed \$1 million each year for one hundred Projects for Peace celebrating her 100th birthday in 2006. The program aims to be a stimulus for young adults in undergraduate programs at American Colleges and Universities to design and implement grassroots projects that promote peace.



On hearing the news about the grant, the elders in the village did not wait to see the actual check. They called for a meeting and made their contribution to this project a priority. They created their own mechanism to involve community members in the implementation of the project. Their resolution is mandatory; each family head is required to participate in the collection of stones and bricks, digging of sand while women are assigned to fetch water according to their clans. Every Friday is mandatory community service day with the local shops remain closed from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm.

Starting a school construction project in Southern Sudan with only \$10,000 is like a joke. Post civil war challenges are hard to confront. Building materials like cement, iron sheets, iron rods, DPC and iron nails are imported from Uganda. Prices for these materials fluctuate according to seasons in Southern Sudan. With bad roads, transportation of materials from Uganda to Southern Sudan and from trading centers within Southern Sudan to the project site was a nightmare and very expensive. Water for mixing the mortar has to be collected from a distance. The only one borehole the community has depended on for years is broken. The community has lost hopes on the possible repair of this water source. Most families fetch and drink water from the *Kembe* river, *Injase* well and other streams close by.



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But with a united community, clan differences are minimal when it comes to a service. Encouraged with additional financial support from other organizations and individuals, community members utilized their clans for positive administration and action. The people developed a community focused objective. Local materials were made available. At the collection of the local materials, there exists a vibrant sign that the community understands they own the project. The age category at the work site sends chills down one's spine. Grandparents, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters turn up to perform their duty to the community. *"We are not doing this for Yari to have a well built nursery school. We do this because we have seen the suffering of our children under the mango tree the previous years"* (Satimon Kenyi). Today, the project has achieved most of its goals. The community has not only achieved their wish to have a classroom block for the nursery school children but they have started making history. They have gone further into planning how they want the nursery school to look like in the coming years.

I have never experienced serious community participation in the post civil war - Southern Sudan. During the project work, it is hard to recognize the differences that exist between the different clans. Elders took the project like a family activity with an aim to achieve a common goal. Each clan is given a specific day Monday - Thursday to participate in the project. Elders from each clan are charged with the responsibility of conducting attendance list for their clan members. *"Even if it takes years to finish this building, we shall not let this school collapse. We are*

determined to do what it takes to see this building stand" (Lino Lubari). Carrying out this project in a predominantly peasant farming community was a big challenge. It would mean stripping off some of their farm hours. But indirect mobilization through the leaders made a positive response from the community.

Until 2008, mango trees shadows are used as classrooms and offices for teachers at the school. But the hard community work has become an added advantage to the grant and the other donations received for the project. The kids at the school will start attending lessons in classrooms come 2009 academic season. According to one elder from the community, digging of a pit latrine and brick laying for constructing a small office (Tukul) for the school are some of the tasks the community would like to accomplish early 2009.

Returning to Southern Sudan and working with the community is simple and exciting. After spending years abroad, my wishes were to see the project on progress, re-unite with my parents, relatives and go to my favorite place-grandfather's grave and wish him my silent respect. But the project became a learning process for me. Everything within the capacity of the elders is planned. The coordination became so easy because they will only put forward complains that are beyond their administration. The community has become one of the role models that constantly stimulate my understanding of the power of unity in a community. I hope to learn more from other communities as I did with the Yari people.

Without forgetting those who contributed to this project in their own capacities, I would also like to give my appreciation to the following. Without their financial support, the project would not have been possible.

Organizations:

Davis Projects for Peace Program

NEES-Sudan

*Parents and Teacher Association (PTA)
- Yari*

*Red Cross Nordic United World College
- RCNUWC*

*United World Collages - UWC Alumni
and Teachers*

*Yei Education and Development Agency
(YEDA)*

Individuals

Amnesty International Staff - London

Brian Kern

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Newton Waniba

Stephen Gaga

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Luther College Students and Staff





THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING SOME VALUABLE LESSONS

By Martin L. Mikaya, MD

An astute observer can discover a silver lining in any difficult or even tragic situation. The current financial crisis that began in the United States and now has spread all over the world offers its own silver lining, an opportunity for us to re-examine our lifestyles and set new priorities for managing our finances. Some of the lessons we must learn are as follows:

1. We must always strive to live within our means. Contrary to what the credit card companies and others tell us, buying things we do not need with money we do not have to impress people we do not care about, will ultimately lead to financial ruin. If you need (not want) something, save your money then buy it outright.
2. Let this crisis be a reminder that human beings and our relationships with others are more valuable than material things.
3. Cut your expenses where feasible. Look at your true needs then get rid of anything you can do without.
6. Do your research before selecting a financial advisor or broker. After making your selection, never give such an advisor a free reign on your portfolio. You must be involved in making every decision. Examine your monthly statements very carefully and make sure every penny is accounted for.
7. If an investment sounds too good to be true, do not participate in it. It is almost always fraudulent or illegal. Many have had their fortunes wiped out recently due to greed and the desire to get rich quickly.
8. The deflation in the stock and real estate markets means that many people can now afford some houses and stocks that were beyond their reach just three months ago. The share prices of some strong companies have dropped by 30 – 40%. Buying those stocks now will mean significant gains in the next several years. Therefore, this is an opportunity for buying some carefully selected stocks and houses in the right locations.

These are tough times, but these, too, will pass. What is important is that we have an opportunity to learn to spend less than we earn, save consistently, delay gratification, rid ourselves of materialism and invest wisely.

For example, if you have both a cell phone and a traditional phone with a land line, disconnect the latter. You do not need a TV cable service with over 150 channels; basic cable will do. Your children do not need expensive gifts; they need your love and presence.

4. Delayed gratification is a virtue to be taken seriously. Therefore, saving money and other resources for a rainy day must be everyone’s responsibility. Even the lowly squirrel knows this and stores some seeds in anticipation of tough times. We ought to know better.
5. For those in a position to invest, the time – honored principle of diversification still rings true today. It is critical that you avoid putting all your eggs in one basket. Practically speaking, this means, for example, that you must never put all your money in one bank or invest in only one company or industry.



Malaysia Stock Market



Australian Stock Market



New York Stock Market