

Tim Flatman - Abyei

Click [here](#) for news from Tim, updated on 17th May 2014, including urgent points for prayer. An earlier update, from March 2014 can be accessed [here](#).

Abyei is a contested region on the border of South Sudan and Sudan. The Dinka Ngok residents of Abyei want to be part of South Sudan and were promised a referendum to decide whether Abyei should be part of the North or the South in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which led to the independence of South Sudan. However, this promise was never fulfilled. Instead, the Sudanese Army invaded the area in May 2011, destroyed the main town completely (burning down homes and churches) and forced nearly 150,000 people out. Those people are now trying to return and assert their right to self-determination.



Tim Flatman travels regularly to Abyei and acts to encourage prayer for Abyei in the global church, undertake advocacy in partnership with the local church and community, and mobilise practical assistance for the community and especially those who have taken the bold step of returning to Abyei.

In October 2013 a referendum was arranged locally in Abyei - it has yet to be recognised by Sudan, South Sudan or the international community. Tim was present as an international observer; he writes:

"The referendum went very well. In our [observers' preliminary findings](#) we pointed out that the standards were higher than the 2011 South Sudanese referendum in a number of respects and that there are no technical reasons for refusing to recognise it. Most news coverage has not been too bad, but it is worth mentioning that the Ngok-organised vote had exactly the same electorate as would be the case under the African Union's own proposal. The International Observers final report can be found [here](#).

South Sudan Council of Churches has released a [statement](#) on behalf of all its member churches, including the Episcopal, Catholic, Pentecostal, Presbyterian and AIC denominations, which says it backs the Ngok-organised vote and calls on Sudan, South Sudan, the AU, UN and others to recognise it. We hope the UK church will follow the lead of the South Sudanese church. Normally the UK church does take its steer from the South Sudanese church in what to advocate for and we hope this will be the case in relation to the referendum. Today (3rd November 2013) in the Sunday service the leaders of the ECS church in Abyei said that although no-one has recognised the vote, yet God recognises it and will lead others to do so."

Since 2011 other practical assistance Tim has provided has included distributions of sorghum and seed to those newly returned to Abyei and who international charities and UN agencies would not help, provision of local building materials for returnees to rebuild homes, and bibles & devotional/theological books to the churches.

Tim is not a member of the Sudan Link Committee and operates independently in partnership with local churches in Abyei.

Contact Tim on 07595 908 405 or at tflatman@gmail.com to find out more or to receive prayer updates. Tim is happy to speak on Abyei at local churches/missionary prayer meetings, etc.

PLEASE PRAY:

That South Sudan and other countries would recognise the results of the referendum as binding, without precluding another AU referendum which even more countries would recognise;
That the African Union and UN Security Council would act to guarantee the self-determination promised to the Dinka Ngok people of Abyei;
That the displaced people who want to return to Abyei would be able to do so quickly and safely, with

assistance from the international community;

For God to remove all political and financial obstacles to the rebuilding of Abyei;

that promises to restore water provision and rebuild schools would be kept;

For the churches in Abyei: thank God for church growth during the period of exile and for using them in his provision for the community's needs;

Pray with thanks that ECSSS now have a permanent presence among the returnees and ask that the same would be possible for other churches; that they would continue to offer hope and effectively testify to God's action in the history of the community.