

**Supporting farming associations and the cassava industry/sector in the
Lobonok province**

by

Edward Benedict Lorimer*



****Researcher***

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Abstract

The project “Sostegno all’associazionismo contadino e alla filiera della manioca nella provincia di Lobonok” included amongst its activities the production of a field study of the agricultural-productive and cooperative context in 3 Boma of the Lobonok Payem’s and the successive evaluation of the possibilities of structuring or activating the local cooperative network.

This study, carried out between November 4 and December 17 2014 aimed at:

- Estimating the number of informal productive groups in the three Bomas where the project is active and their current organization
- Verify the productive system, the informal groups’ type of productive activities, the techniques of production and the relative ability to produce
- Study the legislative, socio-economic and associative context (both current and past; for example, looking at the previous organization, the presence of norms and laws relating to the management of organized groups of producers, propriety laws etc.)
- Detect the presence of NGOs/associations working the area and the type of interventions carried out so far in the agricultural-production sector
- Enquire the possibility to officialize and legalize the pre-existing informal groups
- Verify the existence of laws protecting labour and ensuring social care (in collaboration with the local trade union, SSWUF – South Sudan Workers Trade Unione Federation) and their application in the specific social context.

The research was articulated in three phases. An initial online research phase, followed by field work consisting of meetings with groups of local farmers and key informers in South Sudan and finally an analysis of collected material.

The research highlighted a changing legal context, whose application is nevertheless endangered by the worsening of pre-existing internal conflicts.

An association of farmers has been created in one of the areas affected by the Mani Tese project, while another two are currently in an advanced state of development, although it might take some time before one or more cooperatives are created.

Methodology

The research was articulated in three phases. During the first phase in Italy, relevant contextual information was collected in order to structure the field work. This first phase drew mainly upon web sources, which combined with the material provided by Manitese/Isocos/Nexus allowed for a first overview of the relevant questions to be faced in the field.

The second phase led the consultant to meet groups of farmers, authorities and key informers in South Sudan and expand the previous research by drawing on the information collected online and on data concerning rural development in South Sudan collected in government offices.

The final phase consisted in analyzing and elaborating the collected data.

General Context

South Sudan is a country comparable in size to Germany (or France). The latest 2008 census (when it was still a region of Sudan) counted its population at 8,260,490. However, the census was carried out during the wet season, when many rural areas were unreachable. According to the South Sudanese government, the population should be between 11 and 13 million inhabitants.

During the colonial period, South Sudan was the last southern province of Sudan. It was characterized by a prevalently animist and christian population, as opposed to the rest of Sudan where Islam was the main confession.

As a region dedicated mainly to raising livestock and subsistence farming, South Sudan always lived in a situation of conflict with the northern part of Sudan. These tensions turned into a first civil war between 1955 and 1972, and were followed in 1983 by a second conflict. The conflict ended only in 2005, after the creation of the 'Comprehensive peace agreement'. The agreement drew the line that led to the 2011 referendum marking the birth of the 54th African state.

However, the years following independence have been rough, thus leading the organization 'Fund for Peace' to place South Sudan at the top of the 2014 list of 'weak states'.

As the EU noticed in its “South Sudan Joint EU/MS Programming Document 2011-2013”, following the referendum the country was facing “a multiplicity of formidable political, development and security challenges. The path ahead will undoubtedly be marked by uncertainties, including probably increased tensions and instability”¹.

The document also highlighted difficulties related to the non-resolution of some aspects (mostly connected to the future of the oil rich Abyei region and to the management of border issues) of the CPA and post-CPA.

That document reminded how the country may suffer from the lack of a stabilizing peace agreement for Darfur. In addition, it pointed out that South Sudan would have to find a way to solve tribal conflicts fueled by political rivalries and made worse by the availability of weapons in the region.

These considerations and fears can be found in several studies presented by the main agencies operating in the country and have so far been proven accurate. Only two years after independence, internal conflicts transformed into open conflict in December 2013, provoking the death of thousands of people and leaving behind almost 2 million displaced persons (about one fourth of the estimated population).

The acute phase of conflict is now over and the sides are trying to reach an agreement which, however, at the moment of writing is not in sight.

In the meanwhile, adding to the internal difficulties, the conflict in the bordering regions of Sudan fosters tensions between Khartoum and Juba, with the former accusing the latter of supporting the rebel groups and producing humanitarian crises on both sides of the border.

At this point, it is unsurprising that most of the post-independence initiatives proceed slowly. The full revision of the legal context alternated short moments of activism to long periods of stalemate. Suffice it to quote the over 25 policy papers discussed and finalized a long time ago, but which are still waiting to be promulgated.

Concretely, the executive power limited its non-security concerns to daily administration, and rightly so, as the central focus of peace agreements related directly to the structure, powers and to the overall institutional design of South Sudan.

1 South Sudan Joint EU/MS Programming Document 2011-2013

It must be noticed that even though policy papers have not been officially enacted, they nevertheless represent a source of inspiration for the various ministries. The lack of official recognition, however, deprives external operators of a precious source of information and guidelines. An entirely separate chapter could be dedicated to the difficulties faced by researchers trying to find documents which are often hidden in the drawers of public offices and rarely reach the public eye.

In one of the last short term programmatic documents, presented 4 years ago with the telling title “Realising freedom, equality, justice, peace and prosperity for all” the problems faced by the country for the years 2011-2013 were thus presented:

“The plan represents the next important step in the development of South Sudan. It addresses the critical challenges the country faces:

- The relatively fragile post-conflict situation in South Sudan, where continued instability and
- insecurity limit economic growth and undermine development gains;

- Extreme poverty – with over 50% of South Sudanese living below the poverty line.
- Weak service delivery, especially in the rural areas;
- A rapid population growth rate from both high fertility levels and massive in-migration associated
- with independence and the end of conflict that is putting pressure on social service delivery;
- South Sudan’s oil dependence, with 98% of public revenue currently coming from oil and export
- earnings also heavily dependent on oil;
- A shortage of skilled human resources in the key sectors of education, health, agriculture, industry and oil services; and Fragile institutions of the state that need to be strengthened to provide key services.

“2

SSDP national priority programme areas			
Governance	Economic development	Social and human development	Conflict prevention and security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Executive function of the Presidency. · Development of institutional and human resource capacity. · Promulgation of legislation and oversight of the Executive. · Statistics. · Economic management and resource mobilisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased agriculture production. Improved and expanded road infrastructure. · · Good management of oil sector resources. · Increased livestock production. Expanded and improved water and sanitation infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introducing a child benefit cash transfer. Expanding access to basic health. Expansion of number and quality of teachers. Expanded access to general education. · Introducing a Payam Youth Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National DDR programme. National Security Architecture (NSA) and Security Sector Transformation (SST). Legal framework. Community security. Criminal justice system.

Table 1: SSDP national priority programme areas - South Sudan Development Plan 2011-2013

In order to respond to these challenges, the plan suggests intervention in several areas:

A goal-driven action plan, presented in the document ***Southern Sudan Vision 2040, Towards Freedom, Equality, Justice, Peace and Prosperity for all*** aimed at: “By 2040, we aspire to build an exemplary nation: a nation that is educated and informed; prosperous, productive and innovative; compassionate and tolerant; free, just and peaceful; democratic and accountable; safe, secure and healthy; and united and proud.”³

But also a project that in the short term sets intervention in the rural areas as its key objective. A priority which also appears in the “EU Single Country Strategy (Response Strategy) for South Sudan 2011-2013”:

The revenue potentials of a vibrant agriculture sector are vital to a Government budget dependent on dwindling oil revenue. Agriculture also creates jobs and improves food security. Entrepreneurship and private sector development can also meaningfully facilitate conflict mitigation. Key to growth in the agriculture sector are: better transport, access to production inputs, market information, extension services and financing.⁴

Based on a 2011 estimate of the WFP, the South Sudanese population is mostly rural (83%), and about 51% lives below the poverty threshold (55% in rural areas and 24% in urban areas). About 80% of poor families depend entirely on self-consumption and subsistence farming and 20% of the population is in conditions of food insecurity even when the harvest is rich. These results are paradoxical in a country where the abundant natural resources allow for a higher production. It is the contradiction of a country where 47% of the population suffers food deprivation while only 4% of the arable land is cultivated and where the resources of raising livestock and fishing are at 20%, and exploited at only 10% of their potential.

It is necessary, then, to invest in agriculture, in order to emancipate South Sudan from its dependence on oil.

Sectoral context

The challenge for South Sudan now is to produce more and better starting from a context where years of wars deprived the country of basic human and economic resources, reducing significantly the potential for development of the agricultural sector and depriving it of important pre-conditions for better rural development.

The most evident shortcomings are:

- a) The complexity of laws regulating land ownership and associated rights
- b) The low level of competence in the agricultural sector coming on the one side from the loss of the traditional farming culture due to war displacements and on the other side, from the necessity to develop the necessary competences to face commercial farming.
- c) Low literacy levels in the scientific and literary domain
- d) A poor road network which hinders selling surplus products in other areas
- e) Low levels of support from governmental structures, who are often dependent on 'extension' services provided by international agencies' and NGO projects.

4 "EU Single Country Strategy (Response Strategy) for South Sudan 2011-2013"

These issues are highlighted in the “National Strategy for Cooperative Development 2012 – 2015”: “the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) faces a magnitude of complex challenges attendant to a country emerging from 22 years of war: high levels of poverty and vulnerability. disease. displacement. poor infrastructure, disrupted governance structures and clannish linkages, unemployment and underemployment - to mention but a few. The country is engaged in post war construction in which development of the rural areas where 83 per cent of the population lives - is underscored in the country’s first National Development Plan. Support to the formation and strengthening of cooperatives and farmers’ groups will be an important catalyst, including for the promotion of agriculture trade and reducing cost of production..”⁵

In spite of the difficulties, the country’s potential is strong. Over 95% of the 650km² of South Sudanese territory are apt for agricultural exploitation, and 50% of these territories are of excellent quality. The soil and climate, in addition, provide for a good environment for a wide variety of cultures. At the moment, only 4% of the best lands are cultivated (and mostly through rain-led irrigation), while 29% of the land is forest-covered and rich in other resources such as wood.

On its side, the government reminds that agriculture has a high potential for quick expansion, and especially so in the framework of small, family-led agricultural activities. However, it is necessary to overcome the hurdles to rural development: “Through rapidly boosting human capacity, particularly around economic literacy and numeracy and modern farming and livestock production methods, and improving access to inputs, basic farming tools and markets” “Moreover, enabling returnees and former combatants to participate in this renewed rural growth requires them to have access to land.”⁶

A strategy aimed at: “Encourage market-led private sector participation in agriculture Mobilize, organize, and support farmers, entrepreneurs, and investors, Building a stronger enabling environment for investment, Strengthening Cooperatives / Farmers’ Organizations”⁷

The primary sector is often presented as the central area for South Sudan’s development because as stated before, 83% of the population lives in the countryside, and its development carries the potential to reduce the food deficit and increase the possibilities of creating a commercial agricultural sector, ready to export in the region.

5 National Strategy for Cooperative Development 2012 – 2015, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, COOPERATIVES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT - May 2012

6 South Sudan Development Plan 2011-2013

7 “A New Path Forward: Agriculture and Food Security Strategy for South Sudan” - Betty Achan Ogwaro Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Cooperative and Rural Development - IFPRI, Washington DC - October 23, 2012

In particular, the country's green belt, the region of great Equatoria (Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria states) is often presented as one of the most promising areas for rural development. It is telling in this sense that the US cooperation indicated Great Equatoria as the part of the country where their cooperative program 'Farm' should be set. A program, whose aim was to "increase agricultural productivity in selected commodities, increase agricultural trade, and improve the capacity of producers and private sector and public sector actors in South Sudan to develop commercial smallholder agriculture. The FARM Project will foster economic growth to reduce poverty and food insecurity by improving the competitiveness of staple food value chains⁸ in five years.

USAID's intervention was not the only one in the agricultural sector. Norwegian and German cooperatives also implemented their own projects, intervening on the strengthening of the institutional and educative-agricultural sectors. Japanese and Dutch cooperatives also supported strongly the sector, as did the Canadians.

Finally, the remarkable contribution of multilateral agencies such as FAO and WFP, the European Commission and the many NGOs present in the country must be reminded. Most initiatives focused on strengthening the agricultural sector and reinforcing agricultural institutions in the country.

Outline of the history of the cooperative movement in Sudan and South Sudan

Amongst the different actors called upon to make a contribution to the development of the agricultural sector, the government recognizes the central role of the cooperative movement. In South Sudan, as in other parts of Africa, the movement plunges its roots in traditional forms of rural cooperation, however, it became modern only at the beginning of the 20th century, when the first groups of farmers start organizing themselves in order to build irrigation systems in the northern part of the country, along the Nile.

These groups soon realized the importance of cooperation and started organizing in cooperatives.

The first 'Cooperative societies Law', written along the lines of the "Indian Cooperative Law" as was the case in several British colonies, was promulgated in 1949, one year after the creation of the Department for cooperatives in Khartoum.

In 1953, a similar department was installed in the Southern part of the country, in Juba, with the specific mandate to promote and develop cooperative societies in the rural and basic consumer items' sectors.

In 1955, the first civil war (1955-1972) blocked the development of the cooperative movement. In the 11 years of peace that followed, the movement gained momentum. A ministry for cooperatives and rural development was introduced at the regional level, as well as a register for cooperatives set to regulate, supervise and promote their development. Finally, in 1976, a first act of law for cooperatives was promulgated.

These years of growth had a significant impact both on rural and consumers cooperatives and on second level associations. The outbreak of the second civil war (1983-2005) cancelled plans for the institution of a cooperative college, a cooperative bank and other programmes aimed at consolidating the cooperative movement's economic power.

However, the idea of cooperation as a valid organization and development mechanism was not abandoned, and already in 2003 the SPLM worked on a specific law for the New Sudan, the "CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES Act" presented by the Secretariat of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development. This initial draft contained several of the elements which are present in the current text, made official in 2011.

In addition, it must be said that there are several other forms of rural association, born of the evolution of previous traditional movements and often sponsored by the government. It is the case of the many consumers cooperatives linked to the management of food aid programs in times of famine.

Finally, there are also the cooperatives created by the activities of the many NGOs present in the country. These associations' statutes are mainly based on emergency measures. This element is creating some issues because it is not clear if organizations are supposed to register with the Ministry of Justice or with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. This topic has also been discussed in the national strategy for cooperative development, where the difficulties of self help associations have been pointed out: "It has been noted that registration of these associations under the current NGO laws has met with some challenges — mostly relating to the registration fee which is considered very high compared to that charged for registering under the Cooperative Act." " 9

Sectoral context: governmental policies for the development of cooperatives

The development of the cooperative movement is indicated as one of the primary intervention sectors for the government, both in the rural field and more in general, in the rural development area. The law on cooperatives, in fact, does not only concern rural cooperatives; it also regulates the general modes of cooperation (production, saving, consumption).

9 National Strategy for Cooperative Development 2012 – 2015 - May 2012

In its National Strategy for Cooperative Development, the government reminds that “Cooperatives and other member based and member—controlled economic associations (MCEAS) can make a significant contribution not only to rural development but also in other sectors of the economy.” e aggiunge “The Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) is fully aware of this. drawing from its past experience when the country had a vibrant cooperative movement that was later disrupted in the course of a long period of war. The government is now determined to revive that movement and other member-controlled economic associations and groups so that they can play an active role in the national effort to achieve inclusive economic growth. The main focus will be on rural areas although promotion of urban cooperatives including workplace, artisanal, micro-finance, and micro, small and medium-sized cooperatives will also feature. The role of cooperatives is spelt cut in the current National Development Plan (2011-13). A Directorate of Cooperatives has been created within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Cooperatives and Rural Development.”¹⁰

In spite of its pre-arrangement and the preparation of FAO-led workshops, however, the document has never been made official because the council of ministers has not yet passed the bill.

It must be added that South Sudan’s institutional architecture is still in the making. Some regions already have an assigned ministry for cooperatives, as opposed to the central government which oscillated between having a specific ministry in the years following independence, to reallocating competences, thus leading the Ministry for agriculture, forestry and cooperatives and rural development to be in charge of these questions.

This element certainly shows the willingness to reinforce agricultural cooperatives, however, it may also weaken connections between governmental policy and cooperatives’ actual and potential range of action (mutuality, distribution, non-agricultural production).

Another element to take into consideration has to do with the distribution of power amongst institutions. It is one of the biggest open questions of the Addis Abeba negotiations, where one side is striving for a fully federal system, while the ones in power attempting to maintain the system of delegation inscribed in the constitution, which in its last 2011 draft reads:

““ Political Objectives 36. (1) All levels of government shall promote democratic principles and political pluralism, and shall be guided by the principles of decentralization and devolution of power to the people through the appropriate levels of government where they can best manage and direct their affairs.”¹¹

10 National Strategy for Cooperative Development 2012 – 2015 - May 2012

11 THE TRANSITIONAL CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN, 2011

The phrasing mirrors closely article 39 of the existing transitional constitution, introduced after the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement: “Governance in Southern Sudan shall promote democratic principles and political pluralism, and shall be guided by the principles of decentralization and devolution of power to the people through the appropriate levels of government where they can best manage and direct their affairs.”¹²

It is probably safe to say, however, that no matter what changes the peace negotiations in Addis Abeba may bring, the current relevant legal context and sectoral policies should be confirmed.

Concerning cooperatives, the 2011 law and the 2012 policy paper remain our landmarks, if anything because of the political will that emerges from the documents.

The law on cooperatives

In its administrative parts, the “CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES ACT” of 2011 is not significantly different from the 2003 “CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES ACT - An Act to regulate the formation and functioning of Co-operative Societies in the New Sudan”. The main difference lies in the presentation of articles. The current law in fact counts of 90 articles, 40 articles more than the previous law. What is more significant is the presence of a reference, in the articles concerning the statutory requirements for the registration of a cooperative, to the principles of cooperation described in the ILO recommendation 193¹³.

“CHAPTER V - REGISTRATION OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

14 Societies Which May be Registered.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, a society which has as its objects

(a) the promotion of the welfare and economic interests of its members; and

(b) has incorporated in its by-laws the following co-operative principles;

(i) voluntary and open membership;

(ii) democratic member control;

(iii) economic participation by members;

(iv) autonomy and independence;

(y) education, training and information;

12 THE INTERIM CONSTITUTION OF SOUTHERN SUDAN, 2005

13 http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/fp=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R193

- (vi) co—operation among co—operatives;
- (vii) concern for community in general; and
- (viii) protection and preservation of environment;

may apply to be registered as a co-operative society under this Act. ”¹⁴

Note the introduction of an eighth prerequisite, not present in the ILO recommendation, concerning the protection of the environment. This element was added to foster the creation of virtuous cooperatives, as opposed to initiatives (already present in the country) who work in highly polluting industries such as coal production. These industries, if not correctly regulated and sustainably developed could cause severe damages to the environment.

All in all, the South Sudanese cooperative law follows closely the lines of ‘Classical British Indian’ agreements present in Africa. This model involves the state directly as a ‘friendly advisor’. The most important administrative figure in this system is the ‘Registrar’, who acts as a consultant, assisting in the writing of statutes and introducing the principles of cooperative work to new associations.

In South Sudan, this model is clearly set out in law, where the registrar’s duties are duly described, and in the administrative architecture.

In addition, the previously cited policy paper refers to the directorates mandate, stating that it is supposed to promote a member-based cooperative movement that is efficient, accountable and transparent. Whilst its primary duties are to ensure that cooperatives operate in conformity with the Cooperative Societies’ Statute and the universal cooperative principles, practices and values. The Directorate also provides cooperative extension and adviser's services, education and training, cooperative marketing advice and support, cooperative credit and banking promotion, and cooperative audit services. The main challenges faced by the Directorate include: creating an enabling policy; implementing the legal and regulatory framework for cooperative development; improving cooperative society governance and accountability; and tackling the market, institutional and other structural constraints that usually limit the Operational efficiency of cooperatives.”¹⁵

The development strategy for cooperatives also foresees the creation of the National Cooperative Development Advisory Committee, a specific consulting organism based at the “Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry Cooperatives and Rural Development”.

14 CO-OPERATIVE ACT 2011

15 National Strategy for Cooperative Development 2012 – 2015 - May 2012

This is the legal context and development plan that should affect the 241 existing cooperatives at the national level in 2010, and that should encourage the registration of new associations.

Although the legal context and development plan points at cooperatives as the central force for rural development, it does not mean to exclude other forms of association.

It is true that many farmers' associations are not registered as cooperatives, and that only a few of them may transform into one. This does not exclude, at least in the policy's intention, that services designed for cooperatives or managed by second level associations may be used by other forms of associations.

The legal and administrative context sounds extremely favourable on paper and is reinforced by the administrative structures' willingness to organize a 'soft' transition to the new set of rules for cooperatives whose statute is not consistent with the new legislative arrangement.

If the legal and administrative context appears extremely favourable to the development of cooperatives, the experience in the field presents a more complex framework. In particular, what the November 2014 experience pinpointed is that adding up to contextual difficulties coming from a post-war settlement, many aspects of the relevant legal and policy framework are not followed.

For example, the law refers to other laws that have not been adopted yet; the policy calls for a specific support for cooperatives in the statute writing phase, but said support is simply not present.

Several informers met during the mission in the department for cooperatives underline how the movement is currently facing some difficulties because of a lack of government support.

This happens at a time when cooperatives need specific training and where they could benefit from a centre similar to Uganda's Cooperative School.

Nevertheless, the registration and re-registration process continues, and at the moment there are 421 registered cooperatives (120 in central Equatoria).

It must, in addition, be said that problems concerning the registration of community development groups have yet to be solved. These groups can break the ground for future cooperatives or can be valid interlocutors for second level subjects, but it remains unclear whether such groups should register with the Ministry of Justice or with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.

Finally, we must notice that many projects aimed at the reinforcement of rural compartments, many of which specifically designed to benefit women, have yielded contradictory results. In fact, once they ceased receiving external support, a lack of attention even from part of the community led projects to fail. A classical example is that of beekeeping projects which literally burst into flames because of fires lit to facilitate hunting in the dry season.

Similar observations emerge from the words of local administrators who notice that those who should support in the registration process and supervise cooperatives' work, as well as assist and provide accounting training (the law speaks about externally prepared balance sheets) at the moment do not have the necessary skills, which means that cooperatives need to resort to private contractors.

Farmers' organizations and their composition in the Lobonok Payam

In developing countries, the division in farmers' organizations is the most frequent method used to put into place agricultural divulgation and service distribution programs.

Most of these programs are often implemented by the government, with the help of big aid development agencies. The central figure in these programs is the 'extension personnel', present either in villages or in the zone in general.

These programs are present even in South Sudan, however, there appeared to be no extension figures in the Lobonok Payam who could inform about the presence and composition of informal groups of farmers.

Data collected by the various NGOs in the zone, nevertheless, allows to make a few assumptions; however, the scope is limited to the zones covered by their programmes.

The first element emerging from these programs is that in spite of the presence of other income support activities such as the preparation and sale of coal, hunting and fishing and small mining activities, most inhabitants of the Lobonok Payam are involved in rural activities.

However, as pointed out before, most people practice subsistence agriculture and are rarely able to produce enough surplus to access different markets. The creation of groups could contribute to achieving such goals. As the government pointed out, in fact, one of the problems of the country is "The lack of a critical mass of farmer and rural producer associations as a means of entering the market place with the aim of minimising the cost of inputs, accessing loan finance at affordable rates and influencing farm-gate prices"¹⁶.

16 Government of the Republic of South Sudan - South Sudan Development Plan 2011-2013

Part of the problem is that the route leading groups of farmers to become associations of farmers and economic players is long, and it is not successfully completed by all NGO-sponsored groups.

In the Payam at hand, there are several rural projects being carried out by MANI TESE – ISCOS – NEXUS e Acord. The following table summarizes the number of groups and activities for each Boma:

Boma	Manitese Groups	Manitese activities	Acord Groups	Acord Activities
Kit 1	7	Agriculture and Horticulture	4	Agriculture
Kit 4	4	Agriculture and Horticulture		
Karpeto	7	Agriculture and Horticulture	4	Agriculture
Nyarubanga			4	Agriculture
Pager			n.d.	Training gender issues
Yapa			n.d.	Training gender issues

Table 2: Lobonok Payam - Farmers' groups

The overall number of farmers' organizations, then, oscillates between a minimum of 22, in case we assume the groups that follow the activities led by Acord in the Kit 1, 4 and Karpeto coincide exactly with those who follow the activities proposed by Manitese/ISCOS/NEXUS, and a maximum of 30. The number of people touched by the programs, then, considering that each group counts of 30 people, should be between 660 and 900.

In the three Boma where we have statistical data concerning family units, we can then suppose that there are between 540 and 780 farmers involved in the different groups. This means that more than one in three family units have at least one member involved in group activities.

Drawing conclusions on the whole Payam based on the available data presents some arbitrariness, however, it can be a useful reference. What the data tells us is that not everyone joins the groups. We can make several assumptions as to why that may be. For example, the distance of certain villages from the meeting points certainly has an impact on the choice to join groups, but so does the individualistic mentality present amongst a part of South Sudanese small farmers.

Finally, the small differences in economic activities (raising livestock, hunting, fishing, small commercial activities) may lead some to decide not to associate. Last but not least, in some cases, the benefits of becoming a member may not be immediately evident.

To conclude, if we leave adhesion percentages unchanged, we can still expect about 12 to 17 more groups to exist on the territory.

Agricultural production of the Lobonok payam

Even in Lobonok Payam, as in the rest of the South Sudanese greenbelt, the conditions are conducive to an agricultural structure based on two cycles. The first cycle starts end of March-early April and ends in June with the first harvest. In this period, farmers usually grow both cassava and other products such as corn, beans and peanuts.

In this cycle, farmers tend to avoid growing cassava and sorghum, because it is believed that the latter prevents cassava from growing correctly. In addition, the presence of heavy rainfalls makes the land too damp for sorghum.

The second cycle starts between June and July and lasts until November. The dry climate of June and July is followed by rainfalls that reach their peak in the month of October. In this season, farmers plant mostly sesame, sorghum, sweet potatoes and cowpeas, as they grow better in this period.

Peanuts, corn and manioca are often planted in this season too. However, for maize to grow well, it is necessary to prepare the ground on time.

The following table presents a quick estimate of the yield of each crop in the three boma covered by the Manitese/IscoEr/Nexus project:

Component	Unit	Target Project Areas			Average
		KIT4	KIT1	Karpeto	
Average Household farm size	Feddan	2.68	2.68	2.68	2.68
Average annual household harvest					
Sorghum	Kg	350	200	200	221
Sesame	Kg	150	100	50	74
Maize	Kg	200	200	33	90
Cassava	Kg	500	200	400	373
Groundnut	Kg	500	70	200	214
Sweet potato	Kg	700	700	700	700
Total average annual harvest/HH	Kg				1,672

Table 5: Crop yield - source Market Analysis Study for 3-Target Project Areas (KIT1, Kit4 And Karpeto) Lobonok Payam - OPTIMA DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT CONSULTING LTD Novembre 2014

Horticulture is not very frequent in the area, however, an increasingly large number of women's group have been organized in order to pursue market gardening activities. These activities are sponsored mainly by NGOs and are leading to the production of small quantities of Okra, Sukuma, Kudra, eggplants, peppers, cabbage, tomatoes and onions.

Presence of other NGOs/associations and their intervention in in the productive-agricultural sector.

At the time of writing, Acord and Manitese were the main actors in the agricultural field. Other organizations who worked on similar issues are Cafod, ACF and AMREF. ACF and AMREF also operated in the health sector, particularly by fighting the cholera epidemic that broke out a few months ago.

Possibilities to legalize and formalize existing informal groups and associations.

All groups we met were completing or had just completed the procedures to formalize their associations. In particular, one of the Kit 1 associations had already formed and registered, while another two were registering in Kit 4 and Karpeto.

However, the formalisation of associations has been guided mostly by donors and has been made necessary in order to access programs such as those of the WFP, who does not appreciate non-regulated associations.

Therefore, we have not yet reached the point where these associations can become consolidated organizations with structured economic aims and able to reach self-sufficiency.

The interviews underlined a situation of fluctuating leadership and a lack of know-how, especially in book-keeping. These elements will need further attention.

Moreover, it must be said that in the early phases, the drive to associate, especially where the main drive for association is the presence of incentives such as economic inputs, can produce groups of farmers driven by different expectations and different ideas of collective action.

In some of these groups, not everyone is interested in a cooperative, and often different members commit differently. For example, key informers in one cooperative pointed out that in an association of 210 people, only 160 were engaged with a good level of continuity.

Finally, it must be reminded that some associations have different aims, and consequently different operative methods. As Shankariah Chamala and P. M. Shingi wrote in a FAO manual dedicated to extension work:

“Farmer organizations can be grouped into two types: one is the community-based and resource-orientated organization; the other is the commodity-based and market-orientated organization.

Community-Based, Resource-Orientated Farmer Organizations. This type could be a village-level cooperative or association dealing with inputs needed by the members, the resource owners, to enhance the productivity of their businesses based on land, water, or animals. These organizations are generally small, have well-defined geographical areas, and are predominantly concerned about inputs. “

And the authors add: “There are many primary-level agricultural cooperatives in the developing world, but the majority of them have been financially vulnerable and ineffective.

Al contrario per gli autori le caratteristiche del secondo tipo di organizzazioni sono le seguenti: “Commodity-Based, Market-Orientated Farmer Organizations. These organizations specialize in a single commodity

and opt for value-added products which have expanded markets. They are designated as output-dominated organizations.”¹⁷

Meetings with locals assuredly suggested there was potential for the birth of one or more cooperatives in Lobonok. For example, one of the associations has a very big warehouse in Kit1. This could lead it to become a reference point for farmers in the region who want to stock products and sell them when market prices are higher.

In Kit 4 3 and Karpeto, some leading figures it would be worth investing on emerged. Finally, all meetings with farmers underlined the need for specific services, ranging from the provision of seeds to ploughing to marketing, that only cooperatives can provide.

However, there is still a long way to go and it is unlikely for all groups to make it.

The following table provides short information about the groups the Manitese/IsocosER/Nexus project worked with, pointing out some of the observed problems

17 FAO - Improving agricultural extension. A reference manual - Establishing and strengthening farmer organizations
- Shankariah Chamala and P. M. Shingi

Name	Members	Number of groups	feddan cultivated as an association	individually cultivated feddans	Notes	Issues
Kit 4 farmers association (in the making)	120	4	10	4	Chairman excellent farmer. His group collected 60 sacks of mais and 20 of cabbage. 160 active members. Need for skills development. Tractor? Horticulture (irrigation).	Product transportation, protection of seeds, farmers' dropout.
Kifa (Kit1)	210	7		3		Other interests. Production limited to the wet season. Peanuts sown in the wrong place (wet). Plots too far from water.
KARPETO Farmer association (in the making)	210	7		3		Ploughing of virgin soil is an issue. Some seeds failed.

Table 6: Summary groups Kit 1 - Kit 4 - Karpeto

Existing laws on labour and social protection

South Sudan inherited the legal framework for labour protection from South Sudan. The main text to consider is the 1997 Labour Code.

The existing laws guarantee rights in matters of occupational safety and freedom of organization. In addition, the 1990 Social Insurance Act includes provisions on sick leave and pensions.

Nevertheless, the lack of controls voids the law of part of its power.

There are no unemployment benefits, although in its first three-year development plan, the government committed to making sure that at least 20% of families receive some form of monetary help as part of a wider social protection program.

Finally, we should point out that in 2013 the president signed a new law on social security which should lead in due course to the institution of the South Sudan Pension Fund and Civil Pension Scheme.

South Sudan, in addition, ratified 7 of the 8 basic ILO conventions: Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

Trade Unions in South Sudan

There is only one trade union in South Sudan. The South Sudan Workers Trade Union was born after independence of a part of the pre-existing sudanese trade union.

In the course of the research, we met several trade union directors, both at the national and local level. These meetings underlined the existence of an organization which is deeply rooted in the public sector but far less present in the private sector. At the moment, the union has 47,000 members (paying one pound per month), mostly working in the public sector. They are trying to organize in the private sector. There are, in fact, a farmers' union and an organization of bankers.

The meeting with the general secretary of the Union underlined that for the good development of the union, it was necessary to foster peace between the workers of different ethnic groups. Moreover, it was pointed out that it is necessary to train more executives and supervisors. Finally, the necessity for a new law defining the Union's action and prerogatives was pointed out. At the moment, in fact, the Union is still regulated by Sudanese legislation.

Final remarks

- at least on paper, the legal context appears to promote the creation of new cooperatives or at least, the use of associations as a means to pass from subsistence agriculture to forms of agriculture able to create enough surplus to make the country more self-sufficient. On the legislative and administrative plane, the most relevant policies are the 2009 Land act, the 2011 provisions updating the 2003 law on cooperatives, and the 2012 policy for cooperative development which is still waiting to be approved.
- However, the public bodies whose duty is to ensure the application of the law and the implementation of policies are still very fragile and unevenly distributed. They are more present (but still insufficient) in regions of ancient cooperative tradition, while they have very little or no relevance in zones where farmers associations are newer.
- Rural development programs in the country still have many shortcomings. Poor infrastructure and a politically unstable situation limit the positive outcomes of such programs. In particular, the failed attempt to design a peace agreement after December 2013 deeply affected South Sudan's public bodies' ability for long term planning; moreover, the conflict is still limiting non-defence spending.
- In the area affected by the Manitese/Isocos/Nexus projects, public groups' ability to create cooperatives was still in the initial phases and presented a high degree of variation in attitudes and preparedness amongst groups.
- It has not been possible to estimate how many farmers are present in the Lobonok county. The absence of an extension manager at the time of our research hampered our ability to find out more about the composition of farmers' organizations not included in the NGOs agricultural programs. At the time of our research, only Manitese and Acord were still operating in the agricultural sector, while another two NGOs were working in the health sector.
- The presence of big cooperative bodies working in rural development suggests that there are many potential areas of intervention in the country, but also show the limits of a strongly supply-side approach.

- The South Sudanese trade union, albeit being born of a split within the Sudanese trade union, is still in the making and is mostly present in the public sector. However, within the organization, there is also a farmers' organization which could become a good representative for initiatives aimed at rural development and support cooperatives and farmers' groups in their work. As for possible initiatives aimed at enhancing labour protection, the country faces difficulties linked to its recent formation and to a fluid administrative context. Even on the legal plane, much needs to be structured.

Appendix I – List interviewees

Tamara Littamé – Ufficio Manitesse Juba

Emmanuel Kenyi - Kit field officer

Juma Korsuk – Karpeto Field officer

Isaac Lado Samson - General director - Ministry of Agriculture Central Equatoria

Amos Benyamin - General director cooperative department Central Equatoria

Wani Bini Stephen - General Secretary SSWTU Central Equatoria

Mustafa Kenyi – Director Peace Corps Ngo

Alex Mawa - Peace Corps Ngo Yei

Nixon Jaml Panga - Administrator Lobonok Payam

Leaders of Karpeto farmers' organizations

Hon. Ismail Mathews Mukhtar - depute

Natukunda Abel Kigaizi – cooperative consultant

Tekelai Andom – OPTIMA DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT CONSULTING LTD

Association KIFA – Kit 1

Silva Kir - administrator Boma Kit 1

Leaders Kit 4 farmers' organizations

Leaders - OROBE Farmers / saving credit cooperative

Leader - AFOYI Hill Farmers

Agostino Lubari- Deputy director Mugwot Payam

Christopher Lumore – extensionist Mugwot Payam

Cooperative Union Yei

Emanuel - Assistant cooperative commissioner Yei

Agostino Neto - "Iyete coffe growers coop" Otogo Payam

Tinati womens group Otogo Payam

Girre Farmers association Otogo Payam

David - Otogo Payam Deputy Director

Philip Amule - Kalava cooperative society Otogo Payam

Pasqueala Apai – National Secretary SSWTU

Antonette Benjamin – SSWTU Board

Monyluak Kuol – Lawyer and ex Human Rights Advocate

Felix Dzvurumi - Agriculture Coordinator FAO Sud Sudan

David Okot – Seeds replication programme FAO Sud Sudan

Alfred K. Lado – Lawyer and association expert

Akille Maridi - Coordination Office Eastern Equatoria

Emmanuela Mashayo – World Food Program P4P coordinator South Sudan

Abdon Ayuen Kuol - Director General for Co-operatives

Aggrey Maluk Lueth - Director for Community development Ministero Agricoltura

Paolo Girlando -Attaché EC Delegation - rural development, economic governance