

South Sudan Trip Report
31 January – 2 February, 2012
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Overview

The purpose of this report is to document the key findings from my trip to South Sudan earlier this month. The objectives for the trip were to:

- Identify high impact collaborations with the international development community, educational institutions, the private sector and the Government of South Sudan (GOSS).
- Understand key risks and cost factors that need to be considered in developing funding proposals and related programming
- Build relationships with key stakeholders including, but not limited to, NetHope members and the USAID Mission in South Sudan.

Top Level Findings

1. Independence in South Sudan was realized in July 2011 after a 20+ year civil war. The challenges of nation building in one of the poorest countries in the world cannot be understated.
2. Many believe that the development of a society with contemporary information and communications assets is both possible and highly desirable. The US Government is interested in making ICTs a platform for economic development, health, agriculture and education. To that end, they are interested in putting an ICT subject matter expert in place that can advise the Mission and the Government of South Sudan on a wide range of topics including regulatory, private sector engagement, infrastructure and skills capacity building.
3. The international development community is keen to see improved connectivity options at dramatically lower prices. Most agree that the GOSS needs to encourage private carriers to make investments in the country and this will only happen if the GOSS has realistic expectations with regard to licensing fees (which is currently not the case). Improved connectivity will have near term and long term benefits. In the near term, the international development community will realize the first gains with improvements in program delivery, security and accountability. Longer term, gains will be realized in a developing economy and services in health, education, agriculture and possibly government.

4. ICT related skills are in short supply. Virtually everyone I met with doing any kind of ICT related work was expats. Everyone agreed that building local capacity through skills programs would be essential to support an ICT agenda. No one thought it would be a quick fix but all agreed it should start immediately, even on a small scale. The very good news, however, is that there are jobs to be had for qualified IT professionals.
5. There are several organizations in place that should play a part in the rollout of an ICT driven agenda. That said, the landscape of possible allies has some big gaps that will need to be addressed with short-term workarounds so that progress can be made in the near term (more on that later in the report).
6. The private sector may engage with some amount of CSR (corporate social responsibility) resources but large investments will depend on how the entire agenda develops (including governmental support). Most multinationals work through partner networks and it's expected that the first interventions will be led by their partner organizations.
7. Anything NetHope does is likely to be more expensive than even the most austere environments we have worked in. Hotels, drivers, security, food are all items that are more costly – even more expensive than Haiti post-earthquake when inflation pressures drove prices 50% higher. Computer labs and certified trainers don't exist so we will need to "import" assets from neighboring countries.

Key Inputs

The table that follows recaps who I was able to get input from (both in country and through follow on discussions). The findings in this report are my own but were greatly influenced by those that I spoke with.

Organization	Contributors
USAID	South Sudan Mission – Peter Natiello (Deputy Mission Director), David Gosney, Gregory Swain, Washington DC – Darrell Owens, Joe Duncan, David Ferguson
NGOs	Representatives from Oxfam, Plan, World Vision, Winrock, Pact, Christian Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Concern, ICRC, Relief International, South Sudan NGO Forum
United Nations	ETC, UNHCR, WFP
IDT	George Rubagumya
RedR	Karen Abs
Microsoft	Pratik Roy
Cisco	Hital Muraj

NetHope Action Items

1. Work with USAID Mission in South Sudan to identify and support an ICT subject matter expert (SME) to help shape the Mission's short-term and long-term agendas.
2. Continue to build alliances with key stakeholders including the Mission, NGOs, UN, private sector and universities.
3. Begin planning for a NetHope Academy to launch in September 2012 which will train 30-40 promising South Sudanese IT literate youth.
4. Build on initial introductions with South Sudan NGO Forum. They appear to have a senior level representation (e.g. Country Directors, etc.) from a broad cross section of NGOs working on a variety of different cluster activities. They have done little in the ICT area and it would seem natural to complement the work they are already doing with NetHope assets
5. Closely align the UN's Emergency Telecom Cluster (ETC) which is working to deliver a suite of ICT related services to the international development community.
6. Develop plans and secure funding
7. Keep key stakeholders apprised of our work