

Jonglei: Local taxes needed for rural development

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July 20, 2012 (BOR) – Local authorities in Jonglei say that a new “social services tax” is needed to provide government services and fund infrastructure projects across South Sudan’s largest state.

A proposed law introducing the tax was [passed by the executive branch of Jonglei's government in June](#) and was due to be presented to the state parliament.

If passed by lawmakers any person from the age of 18 to 65 will be required to pay 100 South Sudan pounds (around \$33) a year to their county or *Payam* (District).

People working at a state level who already pay other taxes will be exempt from paying the new Social Service Tax.

No details have been given regarding the progress of the bill but county leaders say there is a need to start collecting taxes in rural areas, a right granted by South Sudan's Local Government Act of 2009.

Since South Sudan stopped exporting oil through Sudan at the beginning of the year over a transit fee dispute with Khartoum the young nation has looked to increase its non-oil revenues. Before the closure, oil accounted for 98% of the government's income.

Government spending has been slashed and an austerity budget has been introduced, putting a strain on South Sudan's already struggling public services and road building projects.

There are eleven counties in Jonglei State with a total population of over 1.3 million people, according to a census in 2008. Roads connecting villages and towns are poor and many routes are impassible during the rainy season.

A 193 km road connecting Bor to Juba is Jonglei State's only passable road during rainy season.

Lack of government funds and security are often cited by officials as the main inhibitors of economic growth and development. However, following a disarmament campaign and peace agreement between Jonglei's warring ethnic groups security has improved, according to the military.

Despite the recent improvement many of Jonglei's communities remain isolated from each other, stunting trade and business.

In June the state minister of local government, Diing Akol Diing, said he hoped the tax could be introduced by October but declined to give a date of when it would be presented to Jonglei's parliament.

Local leaders say the state-wide tax is needed.

Abraham Jok, the deputy commissioner of Akobo County said Friday that the collection of a Social Services Tax would "encourage development in the area."

Paralysed by lack of transport

Speaking to reporters, Jok said that Jonglei's poor road network had meant authorities were paralysed and unable to fulfill their jobs as they could not move from one point to another.

A United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) helicopter visits Akobo every Tuesday and Friday to transport local leaders to and from the state capital Bor.

To spread news of the May's Jonglei peace agreement the Commissioner of Pibor County, Joshua Konyi, had to walk six hours to the Gurumuk and Vertet districts.

Pibor County's information secretary says Konyi has to put off many administrative duties due to lack of transport.

Article 74 (a) of the 2009 Local Government Act says that revenue can be generated by enforcing a council property tax, social service tax, council land tax, animal tax and produce taxes among others.

As well as the closure of South Sudan's oil fields corruption has also played a role in the dire economic situation in the one-year-old nation. In June President Salva Kiir has asked over 75 senior government leaders to return \$4 billion of public funds stolen since 2005.

Jonglei State Governor Kuol Manyang Juuk said on 9 July construction of roads connecting Bor and Pibor, Pibor and Ethiopia, Bor-Panygor-Duk-Ayod-Malakal and Pibor-Pochala-Akobo would commence soon. He did not give a date.

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