

The Sweet Floodwaters of Jalle

By Peter Majak Garang

Background: Jalle, formerly known as Jalle Court Center as per British administrative system is one of the five paymas in Bor County. Jalle was established as a payam in 2005 during the implementation of the CPA. The five bomas are Akuaideng, Kolmarek, Majok-kuol, Jalle and Kuei. The inhabitants of Jalle are over 40,000 people mainly from Alian, Abuodit and Juet together with their aliens and it is geographically located on the upstream northern part of Bor County. Jalle is bordering Twic East County, Maar to the North, Pibor to the East and Lakes State to the west. Jalle has cordial relationship with her neighbors except Pibor where activities of cattle raiding, and abductions strained good relationship.

Jalle was flooded in the past and continuing to be flooding annually. Floods are natural calamities and traditionally believed to be act of God whenever it happens. Floods in Jalle and in many other places within Greater Bor are experienced during the high peak of heavy rainfalls and when rains continue to rain for long time. Also, floods are experienced in Jalle when rivers and streams are full to the extent of not holding volume of water and the banks overflow pouring water to the surroundings. Rains usually begin in May and end in December, which is locally called a rainy season when farming takes place, however on many occasions, it is a season when rivers overflows leading to serious flooding.

The recent floods of **2020** did not spare Jalle from its impacts, instead it was gravely and had negative impacts on over 40,000 people in whole area of Jalle. Both swampy land (Toch) and the dryland of Jalle were totally submerged by the floodwaters when the area began to experience floodings in early August 2020 and the water levels continued to rise. As the phenomenal became disastrous leading to the full declaration of the situation as emergency, the news of people being uprooted from their areas started to pour in. The affected population according to the report appealed for relocation to the high grounds because the whole population from Jalle and surrounding villages of Akot, Papeer, Maker, Achook and Wunyach was displaced to in high grounds in Jalle Town, Panyach Center and along the dykes. Although the needs were many, they all prioritized on evacuation to the high grounds within Bor. Houses and tukuls

were already submerged in the water and the livelihoods including livestock and farms were destroyed.

On a positive move, Juet Association after receiving the news of flooding, convinced urgent meeting under the chairmanship of Majak Deng Kuany and deliberated on the way forward. The meeting finally resolved to evacuate people from the floods affected areas to Bor Town and especially to Malual-agorbaar where they would be temporary accommodated until a permanent solution is found. The meeting also discussed financial gaps and agreed that the team would mobilize financial assistance from donors and well-wishers. The meeting resolved to form committees to run the project and later constituted resources/funds mobilization and operation/logistic and entrusted to manage the project until the end. The resources mobilization wrote appeal letter, signed, and sent to the then defunct government of Jonglei State led by SG Mr Mabior Atem Mabior and to the sons and daughters of Juet in the diaspora for funding. The appeal within the 12 hours was responded positively by the sons & daughters in the diaspora. They argently contributed money to hire boats for transporting people from Jalle to Malual-agorbar. Hon Kuol Bol, the member of parliament in the state legislative assembly of Jonglei joined the team in mobilizing resources for evacuating the people from Jalle. One day later the evacuation of people from Jalle started and was successfully completed in two weeks times.

The Floods of 1988 (*aboor a luony*) was another flooding that surfaced the whole of Jalle area and some areas of Baidit Payam. The floods started when heavy rains poured down throughout the days for about one week. The water levels kept raising until the whole area was submerged with floodwaters leaving huge and severely damages on livelihoods, farmlands, and houses. The floods also displaced thousands of people displaced to Baidit and parts of Makuach in Bor County. The livestock, mostly goats & sheep were drowned but the surviving domestic animals, mostly cows were taken along with the displaced persons to the high grounds. Moreover, the floodwaters threatened the business and led to the closure of infrastructures such as roads and dykes in Jalle and its suburbs. The floods lasted for more ten years in the area and led to the degrading of environment as trees died, soil type changed, wild animals migrated etc.

Advantages of floodwaters in Jalle Areas

- I. **Provide fish as means of livelihoods** - The floods were not of disadvantages to the people of Jalle and Baidit but was also beneficial to the population in the areas as fish was plenty and readily available to all households to boost people nutrition and to fight hunger. The flood created jobs for youth when GTZ and the White Oil Exploration Company constructed the dyke to claim the area from the water in 2006/2007. The floodwaters had also brought plenty of grass for cows, goats, and sheep in the area for grazing domestic animals. The same grass was used by the wild animals for grazing, hence encouraged youth to hunter.



Fish in Bor for sale to the consumers

- II. **Provide Protection** – Our swamps are always known for providing protection to the vulnerable during and after the conflicts. It has been obvious that the local population are displaced from their homes and normally sought protection in the island during any conflict. This was witnessed during various conflicts which took place in the past. In 1991 during the Bor Massacre, good number of people were displaced to Bongke, Biool, Kuei and deeply to Panlueth, Malual and Aliik. The swampy areas did not only host

those who could not make it to the displaced camps in Equatoia, Uganda and Kenya but were also places where they found fish and other water plants for their feeding. In 2013 and 2014 during the crisis, majority of the people from Jalle areas were displaced to the swampy areas of Jalle and Maar for their protections before they were further displaced to the camps in Minkaman(Gulyar), Kenya and Uganda. While in the islands for protection, people enhance nutrient levels through feeding on fish. Also fish became a source of food and usually use to fight food insecurity

III. **Enhance Investment** - Although flood was seen as bad and disastrous but was seen as advantageous due to its benefits that came along. One and the most advantage was the improvement of fishing industry in the areas. The local government in collaboration with development partners were able to provide fishing gears toward improving and modernizing the industry. The modern canons, boats were distributed to the fishermen and were used to transport fish and the fishermen from the fishing areas to Juba and onward to abroad where the fish is needed most.



Fish & people being transported by a canon and a boat

IV. **Increased Export** – The locals who produced surplus fish were able to preserve thier fish through salting and exported to the neighboring countries. The export of both dried and fresh fish to Uganda, Kenya and DRC increased in 2021 and 2022.



A woman standing near dried for export at bor port

V. **Floods Creates Employment** – The flood has created job opportunities. Youth have camped along the dyke in Jalle for fishing and they are preserving fish in the same camps. The government in partners with WFP Floods have also created jobs for youth through the repair and maintenance of the dykes between Baidt, Jalle in Bor and Maar Twic East counties respectively. Good number of youths was recruited to repair the broken parts of the dyke between Baidit, Jalle and Maar.



Youth Repairing broken parts of dykes between kolmarek and jalle