

South Sudan: Rebuilt bridge in Upper Nile helping local communities, improving aid delivery

12 January 2018 – For Samuel James Ayot, a villager from Akoka in rural north South Sudan, accessing basic services and earning a livelihood does not mean having to make a perilous neck-deep wade across a river, thanks to the tireless efforts of Indian peacekeepers from the United Nations mission there, who rebuilt a bridge and connected his village to a major provincial town.

In addition to Akoka locals, the bridge – [built](#) by the ‘blue helmets’ from the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)), in record time – has greatly benefited humanitarians, enabling faster aid delivery as well as security patrol and outreach activities by the Mission.

According to UNMISS’ Lt. Colonel Nishkam Puri, in-charge of the Indian engineering company that rebuilt the bridge, the project was vital to allow other critical road repairs in the region.

It was also not without problems.

“The major challenge was reconstructing the bridge through a submerged area with a depth of up to 4 metres in some places,” said Lt. Colonel Puri.

The UN peacekeepers, working in collaboration with the Government, took just 10 days to make the route passable. The bridge had been inoperable since last June when heavy rains washed away a 300-metre-long road segment.

The Akoka Bridge lies between Malakal (the provincial capital) and Melut on a major service road that also reaches Bunj and Renk.

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“The road now provides access for life-saving food and supplies to reach the people who need them,” said Ratomir Petrovic, a spokesperson for UNMISS.

“Providing for the basic needs of the most vulnerable is essential to empowering them. Initiatives such as this one demonstrate the power of peacekeepers to make a real difference in the lives of South Sudanese families,” he added.

According to the Mission, the next phase is installing appropriate structures and marram to bolster the bridge’s strength to withstand the next rainy season.