University of Guelph
Leaders for a Sustainable World

Robert Boyer
University of Guelph MBA Graduate

Alumni Perspective

University of Guelph MBA graduate Robert Boyer puts his love of agriculture together with a shrewd business sense to bring a much-needed harvest to struggling communities in Southern Sudan. As Chairman of the Jebel Lado Project, an initiative of the Canadian Economic Development Assistance for Southern Sudan (CEDASS), Boyer leads a team of dedicated Canadians working to develop the first mechanized farm in the region.

The CEDASS is working in cooperation with the government of Southern Sudan and local tribes to cultivate 1,000 acres of aerated land. The first 50 acres were harvested in early 2010. Boyer, who owns London, Ontario-based ON Communication Inc. made his fourth trip to the region this past September for a very successful second harvest of 120 acres. Future plans include an expansion to 250 acres next season.

"There is so much potential for growth here," he says. "As a business owner, I'm here to get things done. I think approaching foreign aid with that kind of strategic mindset enables us to work more efficiently and to create something that will continue to develop with the local economy."

Each year, the Jebel Lado Project hires dozens of local villagers to work with the Canadian volunteers. The plan is eventually to leave the people of the region with a productive and sustainable source of food, lessening their dependence on imports from Uganda and Kenya. Though the work is hard and progress has been threatened by tribal violence, Boyer and his team are committed to reaching their goals.

"This past summer, the Sudanese Director of Agriculture visited Canada and we had the privilege of showing him around some local farms and farm businesses," Boyer says. "He was so impressed by the sophistication of Canadian agribusiness, and he made it clear that he sees the same level of efficiency and productivity in his country's future. It's an amazing feeling to be helping them get there."