



## Help Wanted



Julia Duany and Malcolm Abrams in the *Bloom* office, along with Contributing Editor Elisabeth Andrews, who wrote the Duany cover story.  
Photo by Ron Eid

I never know who is going to walk through the *Bloom* front door ever since we moved a year ago to our high visibility location on West 6th Street. But Julia Duany, matriarch of the Duany family (featured in our October/November 2011 issue), was a real surprise.

Julia is the undersecretary for parliamentary affairs in the Republic of South Sudan, the world's newest nation, founded on July 9 of last year. I felt honored that during a brief stay in Bloomington to be with her family she took the time to drop by.

We had a very nice visit. I mentioned that the previous day *The New York Times* had run a story about *The Citizen*, the main daily English-language newspaper in South Sudan. About a dozen journalists put out the paper, working in a thatched hut in Juba, the capital. Despite power losses, a scarcity of paved roads, haphazard Internet access, tribal violence, censorship threats, and, on occasion, arrests by the military, *The Citizen*, founded in 2005, has never missed a day.

Still, the paper needs help, Julia says. A lot of help. We agreed that this would be an incredible opportunity for the IU School of Journalism to get involved. *Bloom* would also gladly pitch in.

Truth be told, the whole country needs a lot of help if it is to survive as a democracy. Nearly 80 percent of the population is illiterate and that includes many of the 354 members of the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament. (I often wonder how many in our Congress can't read.)

Indiana University, with its emphasis on internationalism, could provide some of that help. IU already has an impressive record of

assisting struggling nations, including Liberia, Burma, and Vietnam, through the Center for Constitutional Democracy at the Maurer School of Law. The center's mission is to promote constitutional democracy in countries marked by ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other divisions.

Legal help, in particular, is needed, says Julia. But assistance with economics, education, and health care is also pressing.

IU and South Sudan have a special connection. Both Julia and husband Wal, former chairman of the South Sudan Liberation Movement, earned doctorates here, and both worked with Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis. As one of the highest-ranking officials in the South Sudanese government, and one of the most popular, it is not inconceivable that Julia could one day become president. Imagine, the first female IU alum to head a nation.

But to get to that point there are many daunting obstacles to overcome. Progress is slow and setbacks are many. And not surprisingly there are rivalries within the government. (Think of our own founding fathers.) In our talk, Julia stressed the need for calm and patience as each new crisis unfolds. This mother of five is quietly confident that she and her fellow citizens will eventually be able to sort everything out. Still, a little expert help would go a long way.

**Malcolm Abrams**  
editor and publisher

The thatched hut that serves as the newsroom for *The Citizen* newspaper in Juba, South Sudan.  
Photo by Benno Muechler

