



UNCT NEWSLETTER

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS IN PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT: NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Dominic Anyanga, UNDP

HIGHLIGHTS

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- ◆ A step towards sustainability: Rambai village's Norwegian Embassy-funded multi-purpose borehole
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The Traditional authorities under the umbrella of the Council of Traditional Authority Leaders (COTAL) are known to resolve local disputes to maintain peace and security at the grassroots level in South Sudan; a role that the stakeholders acknowledged the national COTAL conference held in Juba from 1-3 September 2023.

This conference was a follow-up to the resolutions and recommendations of the 2022-2023 regional traditional leaders' conferences supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with United Nations Missions in South Sudan (UNMISS), the National Ministry of Peacebuilding, the Local Government Board and other partners. It brought together 122 stakeholders (10 women), mainly paramount chiefs and Directors General of State Ministries of Local Government and Law Enforcement Agencies from the ten states and Greater Pibor Administrative Area, as well as national level representatives of governance cluster institutions of South Sudan.





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Themed **'Empowering Traditional Authorities to Consolidate Peace and Reconciliation'**, the national conference enhanced understanding of the role of traditional authority in conflict management and resolution of community disputes to contribute to peace and stability in South Sudan.

The key to Peace in South Sudan

During opening remarks, most UNDP partners stressed the important role of traditional leaders in realizing sustainable peace in South Sudan. Johanna Tervo, Fin Church Aid representative, said: *"COTAL is essential to create peace in South Sudan because they are linked with different stakeholders in the communities. Thus, formalizing their role in conflict management is key for peace in South Sudan."*

"Peace is the cornerstone of progress, and the traditional leaders hold the key," said Michael Ouko, Representative of Norwegian Church Aid, NCA,

"The past role of traditional leaders was important for peace and security. This conference should enable the traditional leaders to have a common understanding of their role and strengthen it to promote peace and security," said Ms. Margaret Wendels, GiZ Representative of the German Embassy in South Sudan.

Speaking on behalf of UNMISS and UN agencies, Mr. Guang Cong, the DSRSG-Political, said: *"The role of traditional leaders is important in national building exercises including elections, addressing communal conflicts, and justice which contribute to the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement"*.

Mr. Cong recommended that the national COTAL conference will harmonize resolutions of the 2022-23 traditional leaders' regional conferences and, more importantly, include more women and youth in traditional leadership structures".

"Peace in South Sudan is incumbent upon the traditional leaders' work," said Hon. Pia Philip, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Peacebuilding.

This conference created an avenue for traditional leaders to share best practices, including the traditional justice approach (South Sudan people-to-people approach), to enhance reconciliation and healing amongst communities. It also improved the understanding of the key provisions of the Revitalized Agreements amongst traditional leaders.

Conflict Resolution

In his opening remarks, Hon. Lasuba Wongo, **Minister of Federal Affairs**, said: *"This conference should be an impetus of conflict mitigation. It creates awareness that traditional leaders have an important role in peace and security as we embark on the constitution-making process."*



On his part, the Chief Guest, **H.E. Riek Machar, the First Vice President of South Sudan**, noted that government system could be wiped out but the chiefs would remain and serve communities which we saw in Anya nya one and two rebellions. H.E. Machar added: *"Traditional leaders are important in dispensing justice, building peace and development including production activities like agriculture and establishment of schools"*.

To promote social cohesion, H.E. Machar advised traditional leaders to reduce bride price to encourage intermarriages between communities across South Sudan. Acknowledging the important role of traditional leaders, H.E. Machar said that conventional leaders address over 80% of disputes in South Sudan. Thus, H. E. Machar recommended a national legislation for the establishment of COTAL at all levels of government in South Sudan.

Powers of Traditional Leaders

While commenting on resolutions of previous regional conferences for traditional leaders, Hon. Stephen Par Kuol, Minister of Peacebuilding, emphasized the importance of the judicial powers of chiefs. Hon. Kuol said: *"Without restoration of the powers of traditional leaders, it would be hard to implement government policies and South Sudan laws"*.

This was echoed by paramount chief Leone of Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State, who said. *"armed youth and absence of police to enforce law and order continue to challenge the work of traditional leaders especially in Payams and Bomas"*. **Chief Leone** added, *"the power of guns has eroded our powers and so there is no security for chiefs"*.

Read more: [Role of Traditional Leaders in Peace, Security and Development: National Conference | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](https://www.undp.org/role-of-traditional-leaders-in-peace-security-and-development-national-conference)





SOUTH SUDAN RENEWS COMMITMENT TO ACCELERATE SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ON UN DAY

By Poni Allen Ladu



October 24, 1945, marked the coming into force of the UN Charter. Since then, UN Day has been celebrated annually to highlight the achievements, efforts, and challenges of the Organisation established to safeguard peace, save humanity from the scourge of war, protect human rights, establish the framework for international justice and promote economic and social progress.

This year, South Sudan marks UN Day with a localized theme: **“Towards Sustainable Peace and Development in South Sudan.”** This theme underscores the urgent need to accelerate action towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their complementarity to achieving targets set under the National Revised Development Strategy to create a better world for all South Sudanese.

UN personnel in South Sudan, government partners, donors and communities gathered today at the Nyakuron Cultural Centre in Juba to celebrate UN Day. The occasion provided an opportunity to highlight the Organization’s ongoing efforts to protect civilians, build durable peace, and promote stability and development, including the provision of access to vital services across the country such as food, clean water, sanitation, education, health care, infrastructural development, demining, human rights, and other forms of advocacy. At today’s celebrations, entities in the UN family showcased their activities in South Sudan through exhibitions at various pavilions at the Cultural Centre.

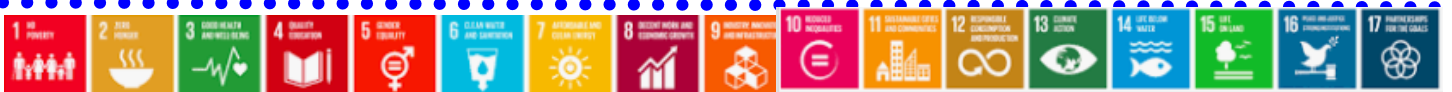
The UN Resident Coordinator a.i., in South Sudan, Marie-Helene Verney opened an engaging one-hour panel discussion at today’s celebrations and underscored the relevance of the triple nexus programming modality. “As partners continue to work together to address the multiple challenges that the country faces, humanitarian support, peace and development must move hand in hand,” she noted.

For his part, Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, and Head of UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), highlighted the urgent need to galvanise momentum towards the completion of the nation’s peace process, while stressing the UN family’s continued support to the Government and people of this young nation.

“As South Sudan prepares for its first post-independence elections, it is only through strong partnerships that a peaceful democratic transition can be achieved. In the spirit of UN Day, therefore, I call on all stakeholders to demonstrate shared purpose and political will to usher in a prosperous future for all South Sudanese,” stated.

Representing the government, Honorable Mary Nawai, South Sudan’s Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, acknowledged that the UN has been a steadfast strategic partner for South Sudan. “Throughout these years, we have collaborated with the United Nations in various ways to advance peace, development, and humanitarian efforts in our country” she averred.

On United Nations Day, the UN’s commitment to advancing peace, protecting human rights, and promoting togetherness between nations and among the broader international community is celebrated. Since its founding, the United Nations has shown that countries with different histories can focus on shared purposes and join forces to bend the arc of history towards a freer and more just world.





SOUTH SUDANESE HEAD HOME FROM WAR TORN SUDAN

By Eulalia Berlanga, WFP

For many South Sudanese, Sudan was a refuge during their country's civil war. Now WFP is assisting returnees, as they confront fresh hardship in their homeland.



Aker Monychol and her family at Malaka's transit center. Photo: WFP/ Eulalia Berlanga

When Aker Monychol Biar's husband was killed in the latter years of South Sudan's civil war, she headed north to Sudan, seeking safety and a job to pay for her children's education.

"There was nothing to eat and I needed to work for my children," says Aker, a mother of five, who hails from South Sudan's northern county of Malakal. "I'd heard there was manual work (in Sudan) that I could do."

Now, she is back in Malakal after fleeing another war – this time in Sudan. Aker recounts her odyssey sitting outside a temporary shelter that she shares with other displaced people, as she feeds her youngest child, an 18-month-old boy, a special food supplement to fight malnutrition.

So far, nearly 300,000 people have crossed into South Sudan from Sudan, since conflict erupted in that neighboring country in April. The vast majority of new arrivals are South Sudanese.

Since the beginning of Sudan's crisis, WFP has reached a quarter-million people crossing into South Sudan with food and cash, along with high-energy biscuits and support to treat and prevent malnutrition. But it is not enough.

Many of the newcomers are hungry, sick and exhausted. One in five children and more than a quarter of pregnant and breastfeeding women screened at the border are malnourished.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is providing life-saving support to families at the border and at their final destination, but more resources are critical to ensure these families are not left behind. Across all of South Sudan, WFP has a US\$536 million funding gap for the next six months.





A STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: RAMBAI VILLAGE 'S NORWEGIAN EMBASSY –FUNDED MULT-PURPOSE BOREHOLE

By Mary Mading, FAO



Ayor, a resident of Rambai village. Photo: FAO /Mayak Akuot

The timely intervention of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations(FAO), through the funding from the Norwegian Embassy, under the Building Resilient Livelihoods to Threats and Crises in South Sudan (BRLTC) project, has transformed the lives of residents of Rambai Village.

This comes as [FAO sank a multi-purpose borehole in the village](#), which is situated west of Yirol county, Lakes state, in July, 2023.

Before the intervention, Ramabi Village is deserted during the dry season as residents migrate to other villages that have easier access to water getting water for animal and human consumption in Rambai becomes very difficult.

The borehole consists of main tank and irrigation plot tank tower, tap stand constructed with five taps sufficient for many people to fetch water without queueing, 4 cattle troughs installed (Two for cattle and two for goats and sheep) and an irrigation plot fencing has been added to help women irrigate vegetables during the dry season.

The borehole has come as a game-changer for the residents of Rambai, especially the women who hitherto used to walked long distances looking for water, leaving not time to prepare food for their children.

For those that stay in the village during the dry season, the women used to spent most of their time looking for water in distant villages, leaving no time for them to prepare food for their children.

"If you stay in Rambai after the rainy season, your children would suffer from malnutrition

Rambai residents used to return to their homes during the rainy season when the nearby swamps fill up, providing easy sources of water for human and animal consumption.

"We all get worried and move to different places during dry season because there is no any source of water in Rambai," says Ayor Agok.

However, the women would get worried again for their children as they have to relocate when the swamps have dried up.

Since the sinking of the multi-purpose borehole in Rambai Village, residents have been able to get access to clean water and take care of their cattle. They have also stopped fetching drinking water from the swamps, which was at times unfiltered and not safe for human consumption.

"As women, the responsibility of providing food and water for the family falls on us, and we are very happy since the sinking of the borehole. We will no longer move to neighboring villages to get water for ourselves and the cattle. This borehole caters for both," says Ayor.

"Even if it's during the dry season, we will be able prepare meals for our children on time, instead of spending the whole day looking for water in distant villages," added Ayor.

In addition to having access to clean water, Ayor says



A multi-purpose borehole sunk by FAO to benefit the Rambai villagers. Photo: FAO/Mary Mayak Akuot



KAMISA AND YUMJIMA'S JOURNEY OF STRUGGLE AND RESILIENCE

UNICEF continues to provide emergency support to returnees and refugees in transit sites at the border with Sudan

By Abraham Daljang Maker



Amidst the continuing devastating violence raging across Sudan, waves of South Sudanese return across the borders to their home country. This is the story of Kamisa, a 1-year-old baby and her mother who faced unimaginable challenges as they joined the almost 200,000 others who have fled the war into South Sudan since mid-April. Her story is one of the resilience, strength in the face of deprivation.

Kamisa, with her mother Yumjima and 3-year old brother embarked on the treacherous journey to find safety and a better future. They fled Khartoum, making their way to the South Sudan border. Along the way, they encountered countless obstacles, desperate conditions, and the constant fear of uncertainty with fighting flaring up all around them. They sought refuge in the Halagia border camp still in Sudan, where they remained stranded for two long harrowing months.

During their time in the border camp, Kamisa's fragile health deteriorated rapidly. She became severely malnourished, her weight dropped and she wasted to an alarming level. Her Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) malnutrition measurement was just 8 centimeters, showing the severity of her condition. Yumjima, a loving and determined mother, almost lost all hope.

"We stayed in Halagia for two months, I thought the situation would improve but it was getting worse every day. My baby's situation was deteriorating daily, and I decided to come home (to South Sudan) so that I can at least bury my baby in my home country," said Yumjima, holding back tears. She reached the border point and was immediately referred to UNICEF-supported nutrition site in Renk Hospital where she was admitted.

Here, Kamisa received urgent medical attention and specialized healthcare she desperately needed. She was provided with ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF), regular health check-ups, and supportive care.

But Yumjima felt she had to leave the hospital to care for her 3 year-old son who was under the care of a neighbor at the congested and overcrowded Renk transit center.

After two days out of the hospital, Kamisa's situation deteriorated again, but was able to be screened and treated at another UNICEF-supported mobile Nutrition/Health facility within the transit center and quickly referred back to the hospital.

"Although my baby's situation is still dire, I am happy that she is able to receive the support and she can now eat," she said.

UNICEF and partner GOAL are running the mobile nutrition center at the Renk transit site where hundreds of children are being screened, treated or referred to the hospital's stabilization center for the most severe cases like Kamisa.

Ottot Stephen, a nutrition worker in the Hospital explained to Yumjima the importance of remaining at the Hospital's stabilization center (SC) so that her baby can recover well. "Cases of mothers leaving the stabilization center have been happening, but the child has appetite and she would have improved if she had remained here," he said.

After such challenging journeys and traumatic experiences, mothers such as Yumjima had to make life and death decisions to care for all her children, despite Kamisa's deteriorating health.

The nutrition sites at the Transit site and in the Hospital have become a safe haven for mothers and children like Kamisa. They receive not only physical nourishment but also emotional support through counselling and to recover and try and rebuild their lives.

Kamisa's health deteriorates further

Yumjima was met by UNICEF and partners after she discharged herself and Kamisa for a second time, a few days after the initial ordeal. "I am haunted by the guilt of leaving my three-year-old son behind, alone and uncared for, in the transit centre," she said.

Kamisa's health further deteriorated after being away from appropriate care.

Dr Deng Juac, from Renk Hospital said that many mothers, like Yumjima, find themselves torn between the bedside of one child and the uncertain fate of others they have to leave elsewhere. "The burden is immense, the choices unbearable, but we strive to do our best to ensure that mothers complete the treatment of their children. Until today, I have witnessed the struggles of countless mothers, parking their things and leaving the hospital despite our plee's to let them remain in the hospital," he said.

Ultimately, Yumjima needs to return to Juba, where she has family. "In the depths of desperation, I yearn to reunite in Juba and meet with my parents and husband so that my child gets better treatment in Juba. But as the days pass, my hope battles against despair, wondering if I'll ever hold them both in my arms again." She added. Read more: [Kamisa and Yumjima's journey of struggle and resilience](#)

[UNICEF South Sudan](#)





UNOPS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IOM HANDS OVER 333 PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURES TO AUTHORITIES IN SOUTH SUDAN

By Aidah Khamis, UNOPS



The UN Office for the Project Service (UNOPS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have constructed and handed over a total of 333 Physical infrastructure to the authorities in 20 counties across the 10 states of South Sudan. The projects were handed out at different time intervals upon completion of each project in every location across the country.

The Physical infrastructure was constructed and some renovated under a three-year - **“Enhancing Community Resilience & Local Governance Project” (ECRP)**. The ECRP started on 3 September 2020 and is expected to end on 31 July 2024.

The World Bank funds the project and aims at addressing the immediate needs for basic services and strengthening local institutions’ capacity across the country.

The ECRP is an initiative that supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by responding to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises facing the communities across South Sudan. The completion and handing over of these projects have left impactful traces of transformation and development in many communities nationwide.

According to the ECRP Senior Project Manager Mr. John Nyirenda, the two implementing partners, UNOPS and IOM, have handed over 33 primary school blocks, 30 health facilities, 14 water yards, 229 boreholes, 8 feeder roads (40 km), 11 market sheds, 4 community centers, and 4 haffirs to various authorities across South Sudan.

In addition to the construction work, the project has built the capacity of 369 Bomas and 20 county coordination committees.





EUROPEAN UNION, UN AGENCIES LAUNCH PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COHENSION IN AREAS AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT AND RETURNS

By Loyce Nabie, IOM



More than 120,000 people will benefit from a new project aimed at strengthening education, resilience, and social cohesion in areas where there are high numbers of displaced people or returnees.

The European Union (EU), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the project on 10 October. The EU funds this project, which the IOM, the WFP and UNICEF are jointly implementing.

EU representatives, partner UN agencies and project beneficiaries attended the launch. In a symbolic gesture representing hope and peace, a dove was released to conclude the launch.

"Education is a fundamental right of every child. No child should be left behind. Children living in a context of fragility, internally displaced, returnee and refugee children should therefore equally benefit from an enabling learning environment and be supported to acquire knowledge and skills," says Gabriel Leonte, EU Delegation's Head of Cooperation Section.

tion.

"Education is an investment in the future of South Sudan; a future that should bring peace and socio-economic opportunities for the people of South Sudan. To achieve these valuable objectives, we call for a renewed partnership and strong government ownership, leadership, and accountability at all levels so that every child can exercise their fundamental right to education."

There are more than two million displaced people in South Sudan. Those who return to their homes often face new challenges such as ongoing conflict, climate-related shocks, prolonged food insecurity, hyperinflation, and unemployment that all converge to erode livelihoods and coping strategies.

"This initiative is more than just a one-off – it is part of a larger developmental vision. By embracing an integrated multi-sectoral approach focusing on displaced populations and host communities, we are laying down roots for self-sufficiency and resilient communities. To ensure South Sudan reaches its full potential and its people lead dignified lives, our focus must shift from mere humanitarian assistance efforts to tangible development across the country," says John McCue, IOM South Sudan Chief of Mission a.i.

One of the significant challenges facing South Sudan is the 2.8 million children who are out of school, which increases their psychological distress and vulnerability to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

"Education is the key to building a more peaceful, prosperous, and resilient South Sudan, especially for displaced persons and returnees. This project will provide the much-needed support for an inclusive and gender-responsive quality education, helping children access quality learning and contribute to more resilient communities across the country," says Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF South Sudan Representative.

This project aims to support returnees in rebuilding their lives and creating a better future for their children, particularly focusing on inclusive and gender responsive quality education, sustainable livelihoods, school feeding, climate resilience, and activities to promote social cohesion. The project also seeks to enhance adult literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills. It is a shining example of the international community's commitment to helping South Sudan achieve peace, stability, and sustainable development.

"Support for families as they return to their homes and rebuild their lives is critical, particularly for children who remain at risk of being kept from the classroom in a context of growing food insecurity. For the future of South Sudan, we need these investments in programs such as School Meals, Nutrition treatment and prevention, and improving livelihoods which is why this funding from the European Union has been so important," said Makena Walker, Acting Country Director for WFP in South Sudan.





THE UN SEEN BATTLES: MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES AMIDST DISPLACEMENT IN SOUTH SUDAN

By Loyce Nabie, IOM

In December 2013, a mere two and a half years after South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, the nation plunged into a harrowing armed conflict. The aftermath witnessed over 4.5 million people displaced, both within and outside the borders.

Among them, Maria*, originally from Malakal, became one of the 2.2 million people seeking refuge within South Sudan.

"I was in the market when the fighting erupted. I rushed home, only to find my husband and children missing. No one knew where they had gone. I was left stranded, and my only option was to seek refuge at the UNMISS compound," recounts Maria, who has been living at the United Nations Protection of Civilian site (PoC site) in Malakal for the last ten years.

"For months I could not sleep, tormented by the thoughts of my missing family."

The repercussions of trauma, challenging living conditions and limited livelihood opportunities have had a profound effect on the mental health of 40,300 people, who continue to live in the Malakal PoC. Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and grief became pervasive issues, exacerbated by the limited access to mental health services.

"Life in the PoC is not the same as the one outside. Here you completely depend on other people for support". Maria, once a small-scale businesswoman, lost everything during the war.

The organization facilitated individual counseling, support groups, cultural and sport activities, creative endeavors, non-formal learning, and integrated livelihood support in the Malakal PoC.

"For months I could not sleep, tormented by the thoughts of my missing family," Maria shares. "If not for the counselling and the peer-to-peer discussions that are so relieving, I don't know how I would cope."

Amidst the chaos, Maria found solace in one of IOM's Women's Support Groups, a sanctuary for women facing similar struggles. These groups serve as a platform for peer-to-peer learning, encompassing various activities such as embroidery, bead making, hand sewing, fish net weaving, local soap making, production of clay pots, and bread baking.

"Hearing the stories of women who were going through similar situations made me realize I was not alone", - Maria explains how the support group rekindled her sense of hope. A year later, fortune smiled upon her as she was reunited with her family. Driven by a desire to pay it forward, Maria hasn't stopped attending the Women's Support Group sessions. Throughout the decade she has been an active member, Maria has learned essential life skills that will carry along her journey.

*Name has been changed to maintain confidentiality.





UN DAY CELEBRATIONS IN PICTURES

