

UNCT NEWSLETTER



INSIDE

- **Rooted in Hope: one man's vision for a greener ground in South Sudan**
- **Scaling solar irrigation for Climate Resilient Agriculture**
- **South Sudan's climate hit farmers find lifeline in healthier livestock**
- **UNOPS sign landmark Agreement with MGCSW for the construction of Ministry Headquarters, Women's economic empowerment centers and safe house.**
- **Rebuilding Malakal with Youth & Women at the Heart of Recovery**
- **World Refugee Day unites communities in South Sudan**
- **My Girls: a teacher's mission to empower children**
- **From Hunting for work to entrepreneurship: UNICEF's cash plus transforms lives**
- **Saving lives & safeguarding mothers during childbirth in South Sudan: a midwife's poignant collection**

About UNCT in South Sudan

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in South Sudan, led by Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho, is working under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) to support the country's development priorities.

Amid economic crisis, subnational violence, and climate shocks, the UN has identified 5 focus areas in 2025: food security, essential social services (health, education, nutrition), durable solutions, rapid response and protection, governance, and peace. By 2026, the UN aims to help communities strengthen resilience and self-reliance while ensuring greater access to safety and protection



Rooted in Hope: one man's vision for greener ground in South Sudan

Written By: Loyce Nabie/ IOM

When the floodwaters arrived in Bentiu, South Sudan, Wuor Gatnyai lost everything he had worked so hard to build.

"I had planted 50,000 seedlings," he said, standing between rows of new growth in his tree nursery. "But the water took all of them. I lost the money I invested and starting again felt almost impossible."

Wuor is no stranger to rebuilding. Like many in Unity State, he was displaced during the 2013 conflict and spent years living in a protection site. When the signing of the peace agreement in 2018 brought a sense of stability, he made the decision to return home and start anew. In 2020, he began his nursery with just a few fruit trees – mango, guava, and orange – hoping it might support his family and community. However, repeated flooding swept through the region, destroying homes, farmland, and businesses. For Wuor, the loss of his livelihood and sole source of income was devastating. Yet, like many across South Sudan, he refused to give up. With seeds from a single mango tree that had survived the flooding, he began again.

Years of conflict, political uncertainty, and increasingly severe climate shocks have made South Sudan one of the world's most displacement-affected countries. Millions have been forced from their homes, either by violence or by recurrent floods that have rendered entire areas uninhabitable.



In South Sudan, one in four people is affected by drought or flooding, often leading to tensions over land and resources between farming and herding communities. In Unity State's Bentiu area, the crisis is especially severe. Seasonal flooding, worsened by environmental degradation, regularly submerges homes and farmland. For communities already displaced by conflict, these floods make recovery even harder – disrupting agriculture, cutting off access to markets and schools, and increasing the risk of future displacement.

For many families displaced by flooding in South Sudan, returning home isn't always possible. Land access, damaged infrastructure, and ongoing insecurity often stand in the way. At the same time, widespread tree cutting for firewood or farming leaves the land without its natural defences, making it even more vulnerable to future floods. This creates a cycle of environmental fragility, food insecurity, and repeated displacement. In Rubkona County alone, over 250,000 internally displaced people and 37,000 returnees are facing these growing pressures.

Reforestation as a path to Resilience

Continued from page 2

In the face of these challenges, communities are taking action to help rehabilitate the land and mitigate the impact of future flooding – including through reforestation efforts. Planting trees helps rebuild natural ecosystems, improves soil stability, and reduces water runoff – all critical in flood-prone areas like Bentiu.

As part of a broader, European Union-funded response to the Sudan crisis, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) piloted a business support initiative to advance recovery in Greater Bentiu. Targeting returnees, internally displaced persons, and host communities, the initiative aimed to create jobs and foster development while also addressing challenges related to reconciliation and resilience. Businesses were selected based on their use of climate-conscious practices, promoting recovery approaches that are both sustainable and responsive to local climate risks.



Young tree seedlings, nurtured in Wuor's nursery, are destined for public spaces and farmland across Unity State. Photo by Loyce/IOM

Within this initiative, IOM provided Wuor's nursery with a USD 5,000 grant to enhance and expand its operations. With this support, he increased production to 70,000 seedlings and added over twenty new varieties of trees.



Wuor tends to thousands of seedlings that will soon take root across Bentiu – part of a broader effort to reduce flood risks and restore the land. Photo: Nabie Loyce/IOM

His nursery now plays a key role in a five-year reforestation campaign led by the Unity State Ministry of Agriculture, supported by IOM and the EU, which aims to plant more than one million trees across the region. In addition to restoring the environment, the initiative is creating vital livelihood opportunities – particularly for young people – who earn income by planting and maintaining trees.

The trees are planted in public spaces, around schools, and along dykes designed to protect flood-prone communities. They stabilize the soil, reduce runoff, and help prepare currently submerged farmland for future planting. But for Wuor, the impact goes beyond reforestation. “These trees are a source of income and food,” he said. “They also protect us from future floods. I can pay for my children’s school fees, provide food, and even employ others.”

IOM's support allowed Wuor to hire additional workers from the community. These team members now help care for the seedlings and prepare them for planting.

“This nursery is helping more than just my family,” Wuor said. “It’s helping others provide for their own.”

Read more: <https://southsudan.un.org/en/299839-rooted-hope-one-man%E2%80%99s-vision-greener-ground-south-sudan>

Scaling Solar Irrigation for Climate –Resilient Agriculture in South Sudan

Written By: Maureen Omwanda/UNDP

In a major step toward climate-resilient agriculture, smallholder farmers in South Sudan are gaining access to clean, affordable energy for irrigation, thanks to a South-South cooperation initiative scaling up the use of solar-powered water pumps. Supported by the IBSA facility for poverty and hunger alleviation (IBSA Fund) and implemented by UNDP in collaboration with the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the project is transforming lives by replacing costly, fuel-based irrigation systems with sustainable solar technologies.

“With this new project, we finally have hope for affordable, sustainable energy that will reduce our costs and help us earn more from our hard work,” says Selina Juan, a small-scale farmer from Luri, South Sudan. “We’ve already started training on how to use the new pumps, many thanks to UNDP and IBSA for this support.”

The initiative emerged in response to overwhelming demand for solar water pumps expressed through a call for Expressions-of-Interest by ISA to its Member States. In South Sudan, UNDP joined forces with India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation to design a project tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers.

The project focuses on reducing farmers’ dependence on diesel-powered pumps, which are expensive to maintain and fuel, and prone to breakdowns.

So far, twenty farmers in the areas of Luri, Rajav, and Torit have been shortlisted for the initial rollout. A local contractor has been selected to design, procure, and install the solar-powered irrigation systems.

Each system uses a submersible pump powered by photovoltaic panels to draw water from a nearby source into an elevated storage tank, which then distributes water through gravity-fed piping across the farm.



Selina Juan a small-scale farmer at her farm Luri, South Sudan. Photo: Maureen Omwanda/ UNDP South Sudan

Beyond installation, the project emphasizes long-term sustainability through capacity building. Training is being provided to farmers, local technicians, and government staff, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to operate and maintain the systems effectively. Financial training is also helping to establish a supportive ecosystem for the continued adoption of clean energy solutions in agriculture.

This innovative approach comes at a time when South Sudan’s smallholder farmers face increasing challenges due to unpredictable rainfall and climate variability. By enabling solar-powered irrigation, the project not only boosts agricultural productivity but also strengthens livelihoods, reduces operational costs, and supports the country’s environmental goals. While focused on immediate community impact, the project aligns with South Sudan’s broader climate priorities.

These include mitigation in energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, green technologies, and waste management, as well as adaptation in agriculture, environment, policy and institutional frameworks, and water resource management. The solar irrigation initiative contributes directly to these national strategies, demonstrating how targeted, locally grounded efforts can help meet global climate and development goals. Although South Sudan continues to face one of the most severe energy access challenges globally, with just 6.7% of the population connected to electricity, this project offers a scalable model for progress.

South Sudan's Climate-hit farmers find lifeline in healthier livestock

Written By: Maureen Omwanda & Kate
Jean Smith/UNDP

For Abuk Zuber Andal, 54, livestock are more than animals – they are her family's lifeline. A farmer from Aweil and mother of four, Abuk owns 43 cows that provide milk for sale and sustenance, helping her send her children to school. Like many in South Sudan, she relies on her livestock to survive. But rising prices, floods and inflation forced her to leave town for a rural village where life is more affordable, and where her cows are now thriving.

"These animals are the source of my family's livelihood. They give us milk, which I sell to send my children to school. Every day, I see my cows healthy and stronger. This gives me the courage to continue doing my best for my children," says Abuk.



Abuk Zuber Andal with her livestock at her homestead in Aweil, South Sudan. Photo by Maureen Omwanda /UNDP

That wasn't always the case. In November last year, an unknown disease outbreak swept through Aweil, sickening many cattle, including Abuk's. "I lost five cows before from illness. At first, I was so scared when my cows got sick," she recalls.

Quick action from Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), supported by the the State Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries and partners, helped avert a major loss and, thanks to the vaccinations and medicines provided, Abuk's cows now produce up to 12 litres of milk per day – enough to support her household and rebuild her resilience. "After the treatment, they became stronger and healthier," she says.

Climate change, disease and declining resilience

Across South Sudan, climate change is driving up the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts and heatwaves – worsening the spread of pests and diseases and increasing the likelihood of outbreaks such as the one that struck Abuk's herd. Livestock, a cornerstone of rural life and a critical source of food and income are especially vulnerable. Without robust veterinary systems and climate-informed responses, such shocks can quickly spiral into crises, undermining food security and pushing families further into poverty.

South Sudan already faces multiple, overlapping climate-related challenges. Years of conflict have eroded infrastructure and weakened agricultural support systems. Now, the compounding effects of climate change – erratic weather, shifting seasons, and environmental degradation – are threatening to reverse development gains. Inappropriate farming practices, deforestation, and the loss of arable land are straining natural resources and limiting options for recovery.

Faced with repeated climate shocks and few alternatives, communities are often resorting to maladaptive coping strategies, such as cutting down trees for firewood or charcoal, farming unsustainably in fragile areas, and reducing food intake – responses that provide short-term relief but undermine long-term resilience and environmental health.

To tackle the challenges, the Government of South Sudan, in partnership with [UNDP](#) and [World Vision](#), launched the project [Watershed Approaches for Climate Resilience in Agro-pastoral Landscapes \(WACRESS\)](#) in May 2024. Funded by the [Global Environment Facility](#) — including US\$7.5 million from the GEF-managed Least Developed Countries Fund and more than triple that amount from the Government — the five-year initiative aims to build long-term resilience to climate change among agricultural and pastoral communities by working with them to plan and manage land, water, and natural resources more sustainably.

UNOPS Signs Landmark Agreement with MGCSW for the Construction of Ministry Headquarters, Women's Economic Empowerment Centres, and Safe House in South Sudan

Written By: Aidah Khamis/UNOPS



In a significant step towards advancing gender equality and fostering economic empowerment for women, the United Nations Office for Project Service (UNOPS) signed an output agreement worth more than \$13 million with the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare (MGCSW) to commence the construction of key infrastructure under the South Sudan Women's Social and Economic Empowerment Project (SSWSEEP). The agreement, formalized at the end of April, paves the way for the development of the MGCSW headquarters and a safe house in Juba, along with two Women's Economic Community Centres (WECCs) in Wau and Torit.

These facilities will strengthen institutional capacity, improve service delivery, and provide inclusive spaces where women and girls can access essential social and economic empowerment programs. The SSWSEEP, initially signed between the Government of South Sudan and the World Bank on June 21, 2022, embodies a strong commitment to advancing gender equity and ensuring sustainable support for women's economic and social empowerment.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Timothy Yobuta, SSWSEEP Project Manager, underscored the transformative impact of this agreement: "So, this Output Agreement between the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare and UNOPS signifies the commencement of the construction of vital facilities in selected areas.

It shows that we are moving towards implementation. There will be a strengthened ministry headquarters, a safe house constructed in Juba, and two Women's Economic Community Centers built in Wau and Torit. These centers will serve as a cornerstone for women's social entrepreneurial advancement, providing inclusive spaces and resources to foster growth for women and girls in this country." Highlighting the importance of the initiative, Hon. Esther Ikere Eluzai, Undersecretary, MGCSW, emphasised:

This Output Agreement is a historic milestone in the implementation of this project, particularly for the civil works component managed by UNOPS. As a ministry, we recognise this as a crucial step in fulfilling our mandate to serve the women and girls of South Sudan. The safe house and WECCs will provide essential gender-based violence services and safe spaces, benefiting not just women and girls, but men and boys who are survivors as well."

UNOPS' Head of Support Service Manager in South Sudan Mrs Buruktawit Metiku Woldegiorgis, re-affirmed UNOPS commitment to working closely with the Ministry to ensure the successful implementation of the project and delivery of the infrastructure required under this agreement, helping to establish safe and empowering spaces for women and girls nationwide.

UNOPS expresses its profound gratitude to the World Bank for funding the project, the government, all stakeholders and partners who continue to support the SSWSEEP project. This agreement marks a shared commitment to fostering economic inclusion, strengthening institutional capacity, and ensuring a brighter future for women and girls in South Sudan.

Rebuilding Malakal: Youth & Women at the Heart of recovery

Written By: Maureen Omwanda &
Mahmood Godo/UNDP

At only 20 years old, Bakhita Akuei Ochany represents the resilience and optimism of a community rebuilding its future. Once displaced by violence and living in the Malakal Protection of Civilian (PoC) Site with her family, today Bakhita is one of many internally displaced persons (IDPs) to have begun a new chapter in Malakal Town. The return was made possible by increased peace and stability, and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential community and government buildings.

Bakhita and her family moved to the Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in 2014, when she was 9 years old, due to the outbreak of the 2013 conflict in South Sudan that heavily affected Malakal and the Upper Nile. She grew up amidst the turmoil, seeing the intense suffering of her community and family. Life at the PoC was very tough for the internally displaced population as they lived in make-shift houses with limited or no access to basic services like education, health, and livelihoods. Consequently, she had to miss the opportunity to get a formal education. Instead, at a very young age, she assisted her mother at the market to help her family make ends meet in such a difficult situation.



Bakhita Akuei Ochany, during a building and construction class at the Malakal Vocational Training Center

In 2024, Bakhita joined a free skill training course at the Malakal Vocational Training Centre, a center refurbished and upgraded by the Government of Japan and UNDP. She got a certificate issued by the National Ministry of Labour upon completing her training in Building and Construction course.

She was lucky to be one of the 2,000 beneficiaries chosen to participate in the rehabilitation and development of public and community infrastructures. She worked as a semi-skilled worker where she not only exercised her newfound skill but also trained and guided other young women and young men in construction and building under a cash-for-work modality.

"I have been at the forefront of the rehabilitation and establishment of the Malakal community's productive infrastructure. Together with 2000 other youth, we rehabilitated Malakal Main market stalls, Malakal Slaughterhouse, Malakia Fish Market Stalls, and Ajugo women farming storage facilities using cash for work modality. I used this opportunity not only to earn money but also to enhance the skills of other vulnerable female youth. I used some of the money I received from the cash for work to buy construction materials, to rehabilitate our family house in Malakal Town, and as well start up a business in Malakal Town," says Bakhita Akuei

The beneficiaries were organized into groups and trained on Entrepreneurship, VSLA management, business planning, and financial literacy. As a result of training, she started a fish enterprise business, coupled with her earnings from construction, which is giving her enough income to fend for my family. Her family now lives in a decent house and has enough income to cater for food and other basic needs.

"I thank UNDP for all the support provided to rebuilding Malakal and empowering Women and Youth giving us hope for a brighter future. I also thank the Government of Japan for their generosity and financial support," adds Bakhita Akuei

World Refugee Day unites communities in South Sudan

Written By: Moses Reason/UNHCR

On June 20, 2025, South Sudan showed solidarity to refugees and displaced populations. From Juba to refugee sites and settlements, communities came together to celebrate World Refugee Day under the theme "Solidarity with Refugees."

The celebrations showcased moments of unity across the country. In Malakal, two young Sudanese refugee girls stood before 200 people and shared poems about hope and courage. Their words touched reminded everyone that behind every refugee story is a person with dreams and talents.

Similar scenes of solidarity unfolded elsewhere.



Photo by Moses Reason/UNHCR



In Maban, refugees and local communities joined hands for art competitions that brought laughter and joy.

Meanwhile, in Jamjang, refugees took the lead in organizing their own celebrations, hosting a 5-kilometer solidarity march followed by spirited football matches.

This self-led initiative reflects the UN's strategic priority of strengthening inclusive governance, showing how displaced communities become active participants in their own recovery.

From Aweil's school children singing together to vibrant parades in Yambio, each celebration reinforced a fundamental truth: when communities embrace solidarity, hope flourishes.

In Juba, the day held special significance. DAFI Scholars and Refugee-led Organizations joined donors and UNHCR supporters to celebrate. Their presence demonstrated that education truly is "the way out" and the path to a better future.

These celebrations coincided with significant developments in humanitarian support. UNHCR and IOM signed a major new partnership with the European Union during this period.

The program, called "Strengthening Community Adaptability and Resilience," will help 40,000 people across Upper Nile State and Juba, including Sudanese refugees, South Sudanese returnees, and host communities.

In a country hosting over 500,000 refugees and that has received more than 1.1 million people fleeing the conflict in Sudan, these moments of joy remind us that behind every statistic lies a human story of resilience, dignity, and shared humanity.

“My Girls”: A Teacher’s Mission to Empower Children

Written By: Tushabe Stella & Marline Bos /RCO

At a secondary school in Juba, South Sudan, a small club is rewriting the future for young women. In a society where girls are often told to stay quiet, the Girls’ Leadership Club is doing the opposite: equipping girls with the tools, skills, and confidence to know their voices belong in every room.

“Joining the club has really changed our understanding of the position of women in society”, explains Amuor. Participating in the club validated her voice and gave her confidence.

Amon Tor Atem shares a similar experience. “I was so timid and couldn’t speak up,” she recalls. “But through the program, we received mentorship that has changed me. I’ve since been able to hold two prefect roles.”

Behind it all is a teacher with an extraordinary mission: to make sure girls are no longer forgotten.

The power of role models

They call her Madam Nancy. To the girls of St. Lawrence Secondary School, she’s more than an educator, she’s a mentor and a motivator. Madam Nancy, in return, calls them “my girls.” The words come naturally, spoken with affection and pride.

“I am working hard to ensure that girls are not forgotten in this school, as might be the norm elsewhere,” she explains. “I encourage them to take up leadership roles, which will pave the way for their leadership even outside the school.”

Building confidence, one girl at a time

Since its launch, the club has directly impacted 30 girls aged 13–17, helping them build leadership skills, confidence, and ambition. It was established as part of the project “Women’s Leadership and Political Participation during South Sudan’s Transitional Period”, implemented in Pibor, Malakal, and Juba.

Backed by UN Women, in partnership with the National Press Club (NPC) and funded by the UN Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Girls’ Leadership Clubs are grassroots initiatives that promote girls’ empowerment in fragile and post-conflict settings.

While each club reflects the realities of its local context, they follow a shared framework: helping girls recognize their value, develop communication and decision-making skills, and take on leadership roles within and beyond school.

To support this, the clubs run workshops, group projects, networking events, leadership retreats, and mentoring sessions. NPC also works with school administrations to embed the clubs into co-curricular programs, ensuring sustainability and long-term ownership.

Results that speak for themselves

The results are already visible. Girls now make up 60% of the school’s leadership body, up from just 20% before the club began. Student leaders credit the program with boosting both their academic performance and leadership capacity.

One standout example is Abuk Anna, the club chairperson. During a recent PBF visit, it was announced she had been selected to represent South Sudan at a regional debating tournament in Uganda, a first for her school and a source of immense pride for Madam Nancy.

“They often lack self-esteem because of the stereotypes they’ve grown up with,” she says. “That’s why we must support them and nurture their abilities.”

Persistent barriers

According to Madam Nancy and the students, the gap in women’s empowerment stems from long-standing cultural barriers. In many South Sudanese communities, tradition dictates that women should not speak before men or participate in important decision-making processes. In some cultures, sending girls to school is still seen as a waste of resources.

Madam Nancy says the project has helped shift that thinking. “We are working to ensure that every girl here learns her worth.”

Patricia Akwang, NPC Coordinator, understands this struggle intimately. When her father tried to arrange her marriage while she was still a child, it was her mother who pushed back, defying custom and ensuring Patricia could stay in school. Today, she is a strong advocate for girls’ rights, education, and leadership.

A platform to dream bigger

The girls understand that achieving real change means bringing everyone along. They see the importance of involving men, educating and empowering them to become allies in challenging harmful norms and advancing gender equality.

This inclusive mindset is not just about addressing barriers, but also about expanding possibilities. As Abuk Anna explains, “this club gives us the platform to dream bigger. We now have space to talk about leadership, politics, and the role of women in shaping South Sudan’s future.”

From Hunting for work to entrepreneurship: UNICEF's Cash PLUS transforms lives

Written By: Abraham
Garang/UNICEF

UNICEF's Nutrition Programme Not Only Treats Malnutrition but Also Empowers Mothers to Provide for Their Families According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, nearly 2.3 million children in South Sudan are at risk of acute malnutrition in 2025 — an increase from 2.1 million at risk at the beginning of this year.

The report highlights that illness is a major contributor to malnutrition and these challenges stem from economic instability, repeated climate shocks particularly widespread flooding and ongoing conflict and insecurity.



Angelina Atak, a leader in one of the VSLA Photo by Abraham Garang /UNICEF

With this in mind, UNICEF with the support of the British Government (UKAID) and implementing partner Action Against Hunger (ACF) continue to implement integrated nutrition interventions including promotion of optimal infant and child feeding, counselling services to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, cooking demonstrations, hygiene promotion and vitamin A supplementation. And what is new in the approach is a 'cash plus' intervention.

This integrated approach, in Aweil East County, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State, works through a network of community- based Mother to Mother support groups as well as a Village Loan and Savings Association (VSLA) which provides an opportunity to engage in income generating activities.

One standout success story comes from one of the VSLA groups that started in late 2023 with an initial capital of 220,000 SSP. Today, the group has 30 women members and has grown its capital to an impressive 8,000,000 SSP, enabling members to launch small businesses which in turn has enabled them to improve their household food security, through kitchen gardens and improved local food items for cooking demonstrations.

Women Speak on the Program's Life-Changing Impact

Angelina Atak, the leader of one of the VSLA Groups, shared how the initiative has transformed lives.

"This program has truly empowered women in our community. We used to struggle, but now we are seeing real change. From the savings, our children now have access to diverse foods, we have capacity to take our children for treatment when they are sick, and women have become financially independent instead of relying on others," said Angelina.

"In the past, many women were occupied with household duties, but now they are also actively engaged in income generating activities that benefit their families. We are so happy and hopeful that this program will continue to expand and reach more women in need," she added.

Elizabeth Aheer Dut, a 31-year-old mother of seven from Mathiang Residential Area in Aweil, expressed how the program has transformed her mindset and improved her family's well-being.

"The savings group lent me 100,000 SSP, and it changed my life in ways I never imagined. I invested this money in buying ground nuts, making peanut paste, and earned 50,000 SSP as profit.

"I was able to repay my loan and still had enough left to buy food for my family. Beyond financial benefits, the group has connected me with other women, building strong relationships among us," said Elizabeth.

From hunting for work to Entrepreneurship: UNICEF's cash plus transforms lives

Continuation from page 10

A Game-Changing Initiative

Wol Wol Malek, a Nutrition Officer working for Action Against Hunger with eight years of experience, described the initiative as transformative.

"This program is not just about income; it is empowering women to become financially independent and stable. Many are now engaged in small-scale businesses such as bedsheet making, vegetable farming, and fish selling. They have also formed more savings groups and are sending their children to school. I feel deeply motivated and encouraged because I have seen women who were once at their lowest point in life now thriving and able to support their families. It reassures me that we are making a real difference," said Wol.

Commenting on the program's achievement, Pa Ousman Manneh, the UNICEF Chief of office for the Greater Barh-El-Ghazel Zone said, "this initiative goes just beyond making money, it restores dignity and empowers mothers to become financially independent. Integrating cash transfers with nutrition support, we are not only saving lives but also creating lasting change. The stories by these women are a testimony to the power of sustainable solutions in tackling malnutrition and poverty simultaneously," said Pa.

The impressive, sustainable results of this innovative, integrated program would not be possible without the close collaboration of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, Action Against Hunger, and our development partners, FCDO/UKAID and KFW (Germany)

Ruth Situma
UNICEF South Sudan's chief
of nutrition



Elizabeth Aheer Dut, a 31-year-old mother of seven and beneficiary of the Cash Transfer Programme, from Mathiang Residential Area in Aweil, South Sudan. Photo by Abraham Garang/UNICEF

Saving Lives & safeguarding mothers during child birth in South Sudan: a midwife's poignant collection

Written By: Atem John/WHO

The agony experienced by mothers during childbirth evokes sorrowful memories for Mrs. Atto Christine Lino, a midwife in South Sudan.

Mrs. Lino, a 28-year-old midwife, working at Gurei Primary Health Care Centre in Juba, highlights the severe challenges mothers go through while delivering babies in South Sudan. "It is always a very painful experience, working with mothers and witnessing the immense pain they endure during childbirth, said Lino. "Some manage to deliver safely despite the pain, others can lose their lives in the process." she explains, adding that death is high among women who do not adhere to antenatal care.

Despite progress in recent decades, maternal and newborn deaths remain a critical challenge. Nearly 300 000 women die globally each year due to pregnancy or childbirth-related causes. In addition, 2.3 million babies die within their first month of life, and 1.9 million are stillborn – losses that are concentrated in low-income countries and fragile settings including South Sudan.

South Sudan has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios globally, with 1,223 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births. For newborns, the burden is equally severe, with 40 deaths per 1,000 live births and a stillbirth rate of 26 per 1,000. These outcomes are driven by well-documented barriers such as limited access to skilled care, low rates of facility-based deliveries, insufficient emergency obstetric services, and underutilization of reproductive health interventions.

Dr Anin Ngot Mou, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health, stated. "Despite facing numerous health challenges, the country has made progress in addressing maternal mortality by improving maternal health services across the country, offering a hopeful outlook towards achieving better health outcome for mothers".

Dr Humphrey Karamagi, WHO Representative to South Sudan commended the Ministry of Health's efforts while reaffirming WHO's commitment to collaborate with the government and health partners in South Sudan to improve provision of essential healthcare services.



Photo by Atem John/WHO

"As we mark 2025 World Health Day, It is imperative to consider both the challenges and achievements in enhancing healthcare system In South Sudan", Said Dr Karamagi, "access to maternal care remains a pressing issue, and WHO remains steadfast in supporting the Ministry of Health to upgrade facilities, training skilled personnel, and investing in the social determinants of health to alleviate the suffering of women".

WHO is partnering with organization like UNFPA, Momentum, WISH and STBF to strengthen health systems, through training of healthcare providers.

Acting WHO Regional Director for Africa visits South Sudan to strengthen health support

Written By: Atem John WHO

Acting WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu, arrived in South Sudan for an official one-day-visit to meet key stakeholders in an effort to ramp up support for health assistance amid the ongoing emergencies.

Dr Ihekweazu met with the Acting Minister of Health, Honorable James Hoth Mai, humanitarian partners represented by Marie Helene Verney, Acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as Timo Olkkonen, European Union Ambassador to South Sudan.

Since independence, South Sudan has grappled with a complex, protracted humanitarian crisis that is currently characterized by food insecurity, malnutrition, displacement, and the erosion of livelihoods.



WHO Country Representative Dr. Humfrey and acting RD for WHO Africa Dr. Ihekweazu shake hands in Juba, South Sudan. Photo by Atem John/ WHO

The heightened political tension in the country this year has deepened this problem. Since March 2025, tensions escalated in Upper Nile State, with clashes between government forces and armed groups. This has led to worsening suffering and deaths with forced displacement including attack on healthcare.

There have been eight separate incidents of attacks on health facilities since January 2025, with health workers killed, and hospitals looted. These events have directly impacted on the access to health services for thousands of civilians.

“I congratulate the healthcare workers for their commitment, compassion and courage in the delivery of health service during these difficult times of crisis,” said Dr Ihekweazu. “I thank the Government of South Sudan for their commitment to the health and wellbeing of the people and our partners who have provided much needed support to health sector, Together, our unified front is the last line of defense against a preventable escalation of disease and instability. Continued, timely support will preserve hard-won gains and safeguard regional health security.”

WHO is supporting the Ministry of Health to deliver health services at all levels including with provision of direct operational support: deploying rapid response teams, prepositioning medical supplies, coordinating outbreak response, and working side by side with national and humanitarian partners. WHO also train health workers and the community to deliver health services in hard-to-reach areas.

Dr Ihekweazu stressed that health challenges continue to increase and collaborative efforts including increased funding are required both locally and from partners to ensure continued provision of Health Services.

The pain and agony of dealing with Obstetric Fistula could not dampen Emmanuela's quest to pursue her studies, a story of a Fistula survivor

Written By: Juma Delu /UNFPA

Juba- Emmanuela Samuel*, is a 17-year-old mother of one, who underwent fistula repair in Juba recently. She became pregnant at a tender age and endured labour pains at home for three days, and by the time she was finally taken to the hospital to give birth, she had developed complications.

"When the doctors realized my worsening condition I was rushed to the theatre for a Caesarean section. Unfortunately, after the operation, I started experiencing an uncontrolled flow of urine and feces from my private body parts." Emmanuela recounts. Emmanuela went through a lot of stigma as a result of the urine and faeces leaks, feeling that the world had crumbled on her. She was traumatized and isolated by friends and family, except for her only mother.

"Obstetric fistula survivors deserve the same respect as anyone suffering from other illnesses, we are subjected to severe stigmatization within their communities and respective families, because this condition befalls anyone in a process of giving life. A condition one should never leave for her lifetime"

Through community mobilizers, Emmanuela was tipped of Fistula repairs in Juba, the good news she embraced with two arms. "I thought I was the only one suffering from obstetric fistula, however, I was taken for fistula repair hospital where I saw many other women with similar condition, waiting for the repairs. Pain and shame were gone. Hope was restored" she narrates.

"All those who underwent fistula repair that day at the Hai Referendum area had successful operations," Emmanuela said while carrying a child. I thank my mother who stood with me despite all the difficulties I went through then."

She appealed to young girls to prioritize education over early marriage, stating that although her future was affected by obstetric fistula, she is happy to have resumed her education after successfully undergoing repairs.

This devastating childbirth injury, caused by prolonged and obstructed labour, has become synonymous with South Sudan's fragile healthcare system and a major contributor to South Sudan's high maternal mortality rate.

Dr. Anthony Lupai, a gynecologist at Juba Teaching Hospital and also the Director General, attributed the high numbers of obstetric Fistula to early/forced/child marriages, lack of access to antenatal care services, and an insufficient number of qualified healthcare workers to manage obstetric fistula cases nationwide.

South Sudan has a case backlog of 60,000 Obstetric Fistula. Emmanuela is just one among sixty-seven (67) successful repairs out of the 60,000 cases to have had lease of life following a successful fistula camp. With support from the Government and people of Norway, UNFPA has started routine repairs at Juba Teaching Hospital and similar services will be rolled out to other parts of the country.



Photo by Juma Delu/ UNFPA

Not just another national day: Why women in uniform matter in South Sudan

Written By: Tushabe Stella & Marline Bos/RCO

At first glance, Women in Uniform Day might seem symbolic, another calendar event. But in South Sudan, where decades of conflict have left peace fragile and security forces stretched thin, the sight of women in uniform is a powerful sign of change. Yet despite their growing presence and undeniable impact, women in South Sudan's security sector still face resistance, institutional barriers, and cultural pushback that threaten progress. On a warm July morning at Buluk police headquarters, over 500 women from South Sudan's security institutions came together: their uniforms ranging from army fatigues to police blues, firefighters' whites, and the unmistakable blue berets of UN peacekeepers. Young girls lined the streets, admiring the strong women marching by, and imagining a future where they too could wear these badges of service.



Women in uniform march to commemorate the international day of women in uniform. photo by Tushabe Stella /RCO

This year's celebration spotlighted the fast-growing South Sudan Security Sector Women's Network, founded in 2022. Now engaging over 500 women across police, military, prisons, wildlife, and civil defense services, the network has become a source of empowerment and education. In cities like Juba, Aweil, and Malakal, 504 women have enrolled in literacy classes, addressing educational gaps created by years of conflict, a crucial step in overcoming the institutional barriers that have historically marginalized women within security structures.

Among the uniformed women, Lieutenant Colonel Harriette Fouzia's words echoed through the crowd: "We believe in teach one, teach a nation. When we empower one woman, the impact ripples throughout the entire community. Our main goal is ensuring that women aren't left behind when it comes to leadership and decision-making in South Sudan."



Lieutenant Colonel Harriette Fouzia during the occasion to mark the day of Women in Uniform. Photo by Tushabe Stella/RCO

More than representation: A strategic necessity

The path has not been easy. Women remain underrepresented in national, state, and community peace efforts across South Sudan. True progress means dismantling entrenched resistance, not only in policy, but in practice, infrastructure, and mindset. Inadequate accommodation, poor maternity support, and limited career paths continue to restrict women's full participation in the security sector.

Yet women's inclusion is more than a matter of equity; it's about operational necessity. Women bring unique skills, perspectives, and legitimacy to the security sector that men alone cannot provide. Their inclusion not only advances SDG 5 on gender equality but also strengthens SDG 16, by promoting transparency, accountability, and more inclusive security approaches that build lasting peace.

Enhancing justice and dignity: UNDP renovates police holding rooms at the GBV and Juvenile

Written By: Amos Agiro/UNDP

In a significant step towards promoting a gender-sensitive, justice-focused and humane legal environment, UNDP South Sudan, with funding from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has completed the renovation of police holding rooms at the GBV and Juvenile Court. This initiative is part of the Access to Justice, Security, and Human Rights Strengthening Program.

The primary goal was to divide the existing single police holding area into separate spaces for male and female accused persons. This change aligns with international human rights standards and promotes gender-sensitive court operations. The upgraded interiors now meet safety, dignity, and rights-based standards, ensuring that accused persons are held in conditions that respect their rights.



Catherine Waliaula, Quirine Timmerman and Justice Stephen Simon symbolically opening the police holding rooms at the handover ceremony. Photo by Amos Agiro/UNDP

Previously, there was no separation between accused persons, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and juveniles. This meant female accused persons were held near GBV survivors, exposing them to security risks and secondary victimization—an approach that conflicted with the court's focus on justice and safety for all.



The recent renovations have addressed this issue by creating gender-specific holding areas, ensuring safe and fair treatment for all accused, survivors, and juveniles, and improving overall access to justice.

At the handover ceremony, Quirine Timmerman, the First Secretary of Political Affairs/Security and Rule of Law, from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, stated that “...the dignity and protection of survivors, witnesses, as well as the accused, and the alleged perpetrators, is key in ensuring fairness in judgment.” She encouraged the community not to blame the survivors and victims of GBV but rather to educate and sensitize all to play their part in preventing and lawfully responding to the vice.

In her remarks, Catherine Waliaula, the Chief Technical Advisor and Program Manager for the Access to Justice, Security, and Human Rights Strengthening Program (UNDP), applauded the sustained partnership between UNDP, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Judiciary of the Government of South Sudan that enabled the successful renovation of the safe holding room. “The handover of the holding rooms creates a key gender-sensitive and trauma-free space for those who come into contact with the law, as they will be treated more humanely,” she stated. She expressed that UNDP remains committed to working with the Judiciary, especially supporting the government in implementing the recommendations of the recently adopted Judicial Reform Committee Report.

Read more: <https://www.undp.org/south-sudan/press-releases/enhancing-justice-and-dignity-undp-renovates-police-holding-rooms-gbv-and-juvenile-court>

From youth pioneer to climate champion: The Story of a South Sudanese change maker

Written By: Sarah Chaat/UN WOMEN



James Omod waters his nursery bed. Photo by Sarah Chaat/UN Women Africa

In the heart of Greater Pibor Administrative Area in South Sudan, a former Youth Peace Ambassador (YPA) has charted a remarkable course from grassroots activism to high-level governance now serving as the State Minister of Agriculture & Animal Resources and standing at the forefront of climate security at the sub-national level. The journey began with a passion for peace and community engagement. As a YPA, under the Gender and Climate Security project titled “Local Solutions to Build Resilience and Peacebuilding in Bor, Pibor and Malakal” funded by the UN Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), James Omod Okech mobilized youth across Pibor to advocate for dialogue, environmental stewardship, and sustainable livelihoods. The youth initiatives ranging from tree planting campaigns to community outreach on climate resilience earned widespread recognition and planted the seeds for a deeper public impact. In 2025, James Omod Okech was appointed as State Minister of Agriculture & Animal Resources, marking a transformative moment in local governance.

Armed with community trust and firsthand insights from youths & rural farmers courtesy of the roadmap developed under the project, the new minister embarked on an ambitious reform strategy to modernize agricultural systems through establishing large Government Demonstration Farms, promote eco-friendly farming, and scale inclusive climate-smart policies.

Today, James Omod Okech is not only steering agricultural reform but also redefining climate security as a development priority. Working in collaboration with local governments, humanitarian partners, and traditional leaders, they’ve launched:

- **Climate-Resilient Agro-Hubs:** Piloting sustainable farming zones with integrated irrigation and crop diversification.
- **Community Climate Councils:** Elevating citizen voices in disaster preparedness, water management, and policy shaping.

These interventions have turned vulnerable regions into models of resilience where food systems and local governance now work hand in hand to withstand climate shocks.



James Omod sensitizing male community members on the gendered impact of climate change. Photo by Sarah Chaat/UN Women



United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator

Email: unctcommunications-southsudan@un.org

X: https://x.com/UN_SouthSudan

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UnitedNationsSouthSudan>