



MISSING PIECE; MISSING PEACE

Women are the key to peace, so why are they being excluded?

If you ask any given person what the missing piece is to long-term, sustainable peace in South Sudan, you will likely receive just as many answers as people you ask: democratic institution building, power sharing, long term and sustainable development, capacity building, addressing and resolving protracted humanitarian crises, infrastructure investment, and many more.

All these answers are right, because there is no quick fix to building peace after decades of conflict and in the midst of an ongoing humanitarian crisis. But to be successful, what do all these efforts need to have in common?

The answer is very simple: women.

It is an undeniable fact that when women have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives, and their human rights are taken seriously, societies are more likely to be peaceful and resilient to conflict and crises. Whole-of-society challenges, like the ones that are facing South Sudan, require whole-of-society solutions.

Women and girls make up 49.9% of the population in South Sudan, and yet their needs and their opinions tend to be ignored, and they continue to be systematically excluded. How can South Sudan ever move forward, if half of South Sudanese are being left behind?

March 8th marked International Women's Day, with this year's national theme being "Women Stand for Peace and Security:

Challenge Conflict and Violence for Equality", which went hand in hand with the global theme of "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world".

All across South Sudan women and allies came together to celebrate the immense accomplishments of women, reflect on how much work remains, and to make commitments to deepen and accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality.

In Juba, government representatives, UN agencies, the diplomatic community, and civil society came together for a virtual International Women's Day celebration on March 8th. Together, they prioritized achieving the 35% affirmative action quota, and recognizing that since women have been on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that we achieve an equal future in a COVID-19 world.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✚ All -female UNMISS engagement teams win hearts and minds across South Sudan
- ✚ 22 March: World Water Day
- ✚ Children need to be back in school.
- ✚ UNMAS supports voluntary return and resettlement in Pageri, Eastern Equatoria
- ✚ IOM supporting communities to promote hygiene in displacement Sites



These same priorities were echoed in communities across South Sudan for International Women's Day, with celebrations being held in Maridi, Awerial, Bentiu, Malakal, and Panyijar Counties.

At one celebration, Nyakume Machar Diew, a woman leader, asked us to "Give women a chance to be leaders too and not over burden them with domestic responsibilities so they can have time to attend community meetings that involve decision making. Men should also allow women to speak in front of them as it is usually not allowed but things are changing".

All across South Sudan, the message for International Women's Day was overwhelmingly clear: without women there is no peace.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day implores us to challenge conflict and violence for equality.

All around the world, women face every day, insidious gendered violence that continues to prevent their full participation and equality. To remove these barriers for South Sudanese women, we must challenge conflict and violence at every level: national, community, and individual. It is only through doing so that we can build peace.

International Women's Day is just one day, but this work needs to happen year-round. The UN in South Sudan is committed to standing alongside the women of South Sudan, and to put their priorities and experiences at the center of our work. Anything less, and women will continue to remain the missing piece to peace.



The inter-generational dialogue should be used as a tool for nurturing young women for effective engagement in public life.

Photo Credit: UN WOMEN

ALL-FEMALE UNMISS ENGAGEMENT TEAMS WIN HEARTS AND MINDS ACROSS SOUTH SUDAN

As peacekeepers, when we're patrolling, we meet everybody—women, men, children, the elderly, the disabled," says Sub Lieutenant Agnes Arthur from Ghana.

"Conflict affects men and women differently. In South Sudan, which is still recovering from the devastating effects of civil war, women and girls are more comfortable speaking about their problems, their hopes, their ambitions to other women."



UNMISS engagement team training community members on handwashing. Photo Credit: UNMISS

As the commander of the UNMISS Female Engagement Team stationed in Bentiu, Agnes speaks from experience. Agnes and the 85 Ghanaian peacekeepers under her command have a busy schedule: They protect women collecting firewood from nearby villages, conduct free medical camps and even provide life-saving medical assistance to host communities, when the need arises.

"When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold across South Sudan, we knew we had to help keep the people we serve safe, healthy and informed of preventive measures," she states. This led the dynamic all-female team peacekeepers to organize a sanitation drive at the Bentiu State Hospital.

Emergency medical expertise is also demonstrated by the Female Engagement Team from Rwanda who are deployed to Durupi. "Every day is unpredictable," says Lieutenant Winny Batamuriza, speaking of her team's everyday routine.

"We do myriad tasks in support of the UNMISS mandate—last year, for example, we helped people in Yapa village rebuild their homes following intercommunal violence and gave medical aid to two young women who were injured badly while attempting to cross a river during the rainy season."

United Nations peace operations have increasingly started using the capabilities of women peacekeepers, especially among its military component, to engage entire populations.

"It's simple," states Lieutenant-General Shailesh Tinaikar, UNMISS Force Commander. "Women constitute 50 per cent of any society and we as peacekeeping missions need to reflect the societies we serve."

Engaging populations is key if we are to build durable peace across South Sudan and our Female Engagement Teams help us reach a segment of the local population and obtain situational awareness that men may not be able to as effectively."

NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

22 MARCH: WORLD WATER DAY

Access to clean water, improved sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is a basic and fundamental human and child right. When denied this right, it affects the right to life, health and protection.

UNICEF is leading on provision of WASH services in South Sudan, including being the cluster lead.

However, lack of funding has seriously hampered UNICEF's ability to deliver WASH to children and their families.

New funding is needed to avoid losing gains made.. UNICEF campaigned around World Water Day on 22 March for access to water for all and for WASH in schools. See

www.unicef.org/southsudan/water-your-right

CHILDREN NEED TO BE BACK IN SCHOOL



Education Smiles. Photo Credit: UNICEF

Most children in South Sudan have been out of school for more than a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overwhelming evidence suggests children and schools are not the main drivers of the pandemic.

Children are the least directly affected by COVID-19, are less prone to fall ill from it and are much less likely to spread the disease.

At the same time evidence confirms the negative impact of school closures on children's physical and mental health, nutrition, safety and learning. UNICEF is advocating for children to return to schools to reopen soon and is supporting the Ministry of General Education and Instruction to organize the reopening of school. Read [more](#)



A pupil in Torit washes his hands after visiting the latrine, Water is key to maintaining personal hygiene at school and at home.

Photo Credit: UNICEF

UNMAS SUPPORTS VOLUNTARY RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT IN PAGERI, EASTERN EQUATORIA

Earlier this year, the Commissioner in Pageri, Eastern Equatoria, attempted to mobilize communities, encouraging their return back to villages, and to reclaim their land. However, the targeted community members voiced their concern about the potential for explosive hazards left behind in the areas occupied during conflict

"People are ready to go and re-occupy their lands and their houses, but we are in need of some assessment from a demining team whether it is safe for our community; so, we are waiting for a report, if it's safe, [then] everybody can actually go back," said Mogga James Oryem, Secretary of Pageri Boma Chief.

Starting on 15 February, UNMAS has worked hand-in-hand with the village Chief to visit abandoned villages, confirm safe areas, and remove and destroy explosive remnants of war (ERW).

The team has gone from house to house, conducting non-technical survey to evaluate the extent of the potential contamination and immediate threats; concurrently, explosive ordnance risk education was delivered to community members.

To-date, seven explosive items (four grenades, two mortars, and one projectile) have been removed and destroyed. The ongoing clearance operation has increased confidence in the communities who have begun to return, which UNMAS will continue to support.

NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES



An explosive item that was found, removed and destroyed in one of the residential compounds in Pageri, Eastern Equatoria.

Photo Credit: UNMAS

IOM SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO PROMOTE HYGIENE IN DISPLACEMENT SITES

Isaiah Charles, 23, is one of the thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Malakal, South Sudan. He has been living here since 2018 when he was forced to flee his home in Fashoda County when fighting broke out.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with other humanitarian partners are constantly working with displaced communities to promote good hygiene as part of efforts to stem the spread of diseases within these displacement sites, many of which are overcrowded and lack adequate sanitation facilities.

IOM trains and employs youth from the PoC site as Hygiene Promoters, responsible for carrying out awareness on proper usage of facilities like water points, latrines, home hygiene, monthly soap distribution to beneficiaries and overall cleanliness of the site. This way, the communities feel involved.

“When I saw that there were increased number of diseases like diarrhoea, even malaria in the PoC site, I decided to join the hygiene promotion team. I knew I had a role to play in keeping my community safe and IOM offered me the opportunity which I gladly took advantage of”, says Isaiah.

“These hygiene promotion activities are essential for the welfare of these populations. Without proper sanitation, water supplies can become contaminated, and diseases can spread rapidly within the PoC site”, says Kiden Loice, IOM South Sudan’s WASH Community Mobilizer.



Isaiah moves around the camp with his speaker, disseminating key messages on good hygiene. Photo Credit: IOM

FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES' DOUBLE BENEFIT IN NORTHERN SOUTH SUDAN: BOOSTING FOOD SECURITY WHILE PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

“It’s so small. Will it even cook a whole pot of food?”

That was 27-year-old Awien Mawien’s first thought when the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided her with a fuel-efficient cook stove in November.

But one month later, the pregnant mother of four is enthusiastically listing its benefits as she stirs up a pot of bubbling beef stew in front of her thatched hut in Aweil in South Sudan’s Northern Bahr El Ghazal State.

“I can cook two meals using the same amount of charcoal I used to use for one,” she says in her native Dinka. “It’s easy to use and it heats up so fast.”

So far in 2020, FAO has distributed 1 495 such stoves in Northern Bahr El Ghazal as part of the Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency (SAFER) project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Meanwhile, to increase the adoption of clean cooking practices, FAO trained 30 women to produce the stoves using local materials, taught them basic business management principles, and constructed a small building for them to use as a store.

NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

The stove, which stands just under a foot tall, is made from stainless steel and shaped like a cylinder.

It works by trapping the smoke produced by burning charcoal and forcing it back into the combustion chamber where it is then converted to energy. As a result, it requires between 20 and 50 percent less fuel than a well-tended fire, depending on the conditions of use. It reduces carbon monoxide emissions by 26 percent and particulate emissions by 60 percent.

In addition to its obvious environmental benefits, research indicates that using a fuel-efficient stove in contexts like South Sudan is also correlated with improved food security and decreased exposure to violence. Families who purchase fuel save money. Families who forage for their own fuel – a task generally relegated to women – spend less time hiking through remote areas.

As she cooks, Mawien chats with her mother, who recently broke her leg and is lounging on a woven grass mat in the shade. She stands and stirs with one hand on her hip, swollen belly popped, pausing occasionally to wave her wooden spoon to punctuate the conversation. Her youngest, a chubby-cheeked three-year-old, toddles back and forth between the two women.

Mawien grew up on the front line of the Second Sudanese Civil war, which culminated in South Sudan's independence in 2011, so her childhood memories are marred by frequent air raids and loss. She was married at just 14, because her parents, whose own agro-pastoral livelihoods had been destroyed over decades of conflict needed the cattle they'd earn from her traditional dowry. She gave birth to her first child at 16.

Throughout South Sudan's own civil war (2013-2018), Northern Bahr El Ghazal managed to escape the worst of the violence. But it was not spared from the socio-economic impact of the conflict, which drove country-wide poverty rates from 51 percent in 2009 to 82 percent in 2016. Even now, two years after a peace agreement was signed, close to 61 percent of households in Mawien's county of Aweil Centre are estimated to be facing emergency or crisis levels of acute food insecurity.

Food remains Mawien's main worry as a mother. Her husband, the family provider, is a day labourer. If he doesn't find work for a day, she says, they don't eat.

"It is hardest for my youngest," she says. "She cries and cries until I give her food." The stove has helped – if only in a small way.

Previously, Mawien could only afford to feed her children one meal per day, she says. Now, because she's able to stretch each bag of charcoal further, she can serve two meals when her husband's work is steady. In case it's not, she's started storing away some of the money she's saving on charcoal.

Meanwhile, Mawien's husband is participating in a dry-season vegetable growing programme offered under SAFER. In the long term, she hopes the skills he learns will translate into steadier work.

"I want my children to have an easier life than I have had," she says.



In 2020, FAO has distributed 1 495 such stoves in Northern Bahr El Ghazal as part of the Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency (SAFER) project funded by USAID. Photo Credit: FAO

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ANNIVERSARY: SOUTH SUDAN AND WHY VACCINES ARE NEEDED FAST

One year after the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic, the WFP is working around the clock to respond in a country where more than 6 million people are on the brink.

It's 10:00 when Brian Langdon, deputy Logistics Cluster coordinator in charge of the COVID-19 response plan in South Sudan, gets his first call of the day. A newly arrived World Food Programme (WFP) humanitarian kicking off two weeks quarantine in Juba is checking in. So far so good.

WFP leads the Logistics Cluster in the country, providing logistics support to the humanitarian community and coordinating joint COVID-19 operations of the Government of South Sudan, UN agencies and NGOs.

An hour later Langdon receives another call. A WFP colleague working in remote Jonglei state has tested positive for COVID-19 and is struggling to breathe. Langdon wastes no time in arranging an emergency evacuation.

NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES, FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES



Health workers ready for lift-off at a location in Bor, the capital of Jonglei state. Photo Credit: WFP

At the airport in Bor, Jonglei's capital, three men in full protective gear see the sick colleague onto a medically equipped aircraft. This year, WFP has carried out nearly 30 evacuations in South Sudan.

'No one can predict the course of the pandemic's journey. Vigilance is now more important than ever'

A year after the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, COVID-19 continues to compound difficulties already faced by humanitarian agencies in delivering vital assistance to vulnerable people affected by conflict, floods, and food insecurity.

South Sudan is witnessing its highest levels of hunger and malnutrition since it gained independence ten years ago, with 60 percent of its 11 million people experiencing severe acute food insecurity and 1.4 million children aged under-5 suffering from acute malnutrition.

Running a cell of the UN's MEDEVAC System, Langdon is part of a 130-strong staff of COVID-19 responders around the world, transferring personnel showing symptoms of the virus to designated hospitals across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East.

"We are moving into a very critical phase of the pandemic in South Sudan," says Langdon who, with the Logistics Cluster team, set up the preparedness plan for COVID-19 in 2019, before the first wave hit Africa. "No one can predict the course of the pandemic's journey. Vigilance is now more important than ever."

UNOPS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION CONSTRUCT FEEDER ROADS TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY AND INCREASE INCOME FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is one of the most food-insecure countries in the world and it is estimated that half of the population lives below the poverty line. The country suffers from a critical lack of infrastructure which prevents farmers from getting their produce to the markets. However, the country's potential for agriculture is enormous with approximately 75% of its land area considered suitable for farming.

In December 2014, the European Union and UNOPS signed an agreement for the construction and rehabilitation of 171 kilometers of feeder roads and construction of four markets in Warrap, Lakes, Northern and Western Bahr-el-Ghazal states.

The project is part of a larger EU programme, Zonal Effort for Agricultural Transformation: Bahr el Ghazal Effort for Agricultural Development (ZEAT BEAD), which aims to improve food security and income of the rural populace. The objective of the feeder roads construction is to provide all weather access to agricultural markets through improved infrastructure; improve delivery of basic services and thereby improve rural livelihoods.

The main beneficiaries of the programme are rural smallholder farmers, small-scale agro-dealers, farmers' groups, community-based organizations and cooperatives. UNOPS utilised a community participatory approach that saw hundreds of community leaders and members take part in road alignment negotiations, focus group discussions on construction activities, sensitization on expected benefits and capacity building of youth and women and state ministry officials, who are expected to provide maintenance guidance and supervision over the next few years.

For many female farmers and traders, the roads have significantly reduced the transportation costs to the market and subsequently reduced the cost of provision of services and production that has enhanced market price, competition for goods and services. Good access has enabled availability of alternative goods and services and has therefore diversified income sources for the community.

According to several traders, there has been increased income from direct and indirect engagements as well as business spurred by the improved road access.

"Many people are coming to Ayien Amoul market every day and especially on Monday (market day) to buy local agricultural products such as groundnuts and fish. My small local restaurant is now expanding because I'm getting new customers every market day". Angong Deng Tor, female, Local Restaurant Owner.

Notably, the Bar-Urad market sprouted as a result of the road construction; a commendable outcome envisaged in the project plan. The roads opened up limitless possibilities for the local communities and provided easier access to security operatives who are able to subdue tensions before they escalate.

"Building roads and ending the isolation of rural communities is important for peacebuilding". Christian Bader, EU Ambassador to South Sudan.



Women actively taking part in road alignment negotiations in Kayango Basilia feeder Road. Photo Credit: UNOPS

WITH THREAT OF SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY, WHO SUPPORTS WORST CASES OF MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN IN PIBOR ADMINISTRATIVE AREA OF SOUTH SUDAN



Kanyet and his child at the Primary Health Care and stabilisation centre.
Photo Credit: WHO

A visibly anxious and exhausted 25-year-old Kanyet Modi from Gumuruk payam a few kilometers from Pibor, walks into Pibor primary health care and stabilization center in the morning hours. He appears to be losing hope holding her seven-month son Nyapriem Baal who has fever, diarrhea and vomiting. Nyapriem is malnourished.

Urgent provision of care was the fine line between life and potential death after he was screened and found to have severe acute malnutrition with medical complication at the outpatient therapeutic programme.

“I brought my son to the health care center because he lost appetite and extremely lost weight,” said Kanyet.

“I was going to lose my son if he was not brought to the health facility for treatment”. Nyapriem was having fever, diarrhea and vomiting with no improvement. He was weak, and I was worried about him.”

Severe acute malnutrition is the most extreme and visible form of undernutrition. It requires urgent treatment to survive. Malnutrition can make a child more susceptible to infection. But infections can also contribute to malnutrition.

Pibor county was highly affected with floods that has resulted into displacement and destruction of the livelihood which led to food insecurity and increase in acute malnutrition cases among children.

Malnutrition on the rise

The Greater Pibor Administrative Area has been experiencing food insecurity with over 111 000 people projected to face emergency during the period December 2020 to March 2021 and high-level acute malnutrition. Since 2020 heavy floods caused massive population displacement and loss of livelihood, which limited access to food, health, clean water, protection and security to thousands of people. “The effects of high-intensity rainfall that led to massive floods and food insecurity in the flood-prone areas of South Sudan has

a negative impact on people’s health,” said Dr Olushayo Olu, the World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in South Sudan.

“We are working with the ministry of health and partners to provide the much-needed healthcare to the affected population and prepare more so that South Sudan does not fall further.”

Acute malnutrition continues to be a major public health concern and a top cause of death in children under five in South Sudan. Nearly 1.4 million children are anticipated to be suffering from acute malnutrition. Of the 1.4 million children, around 313 000 suffer from severe acute malnutrition, and 1.1 million moderate acute malnutrition.

Since beginning of 2021, WHO provided six SAM kits to support treatment of 300 severely malnourished children with medical complications in stabilization centers in counties classified under severe food insecurity.

In 2020, over 1 500 severely malnourished children with medical complications have received treatment with support from WHO through provision of SAM kits. WHO also provided support in counselling of 611 mothers/caregiver on Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition in the facilities.

Treating severe acute malnutrition with medical complication

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO and its partners continue to work on improving access to treatment despite challenging conditions to deliver health and nutrition services due to flooding.

WHO trained 52 health care workers, including, medical doctors, clinical officers, nurses, nutrition assistants and officers and data clerks on inpatient management of severe acute malnutrition and stabilization Centre reporting tools. In addition, WHO prepositioned two boxes of psychosocial stimulation tools, child playing materials for physical, social and emotional stimulation of the children during recovery phase in the stabilization centers.

“Thanks to the generous contribution of the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), WHO is taking every opportunity to ensure that children suffering from severe acute malnutrition with medical complications are reached on time with lifesaving health care services”, said Dr Olu. Read [more](#):