



Today with UN colleagues, we bid farewell to our outgoing DSRSG/RC/HC

Thank you
[@AlainNoudehou](#) for your great work.

After 14 months, schools in South Sudan reopened on 3 May

Monday 3 May was a special day for millions of children in South Sudan. Schools finally reopened their doors after more than 14 months of closures because of COVID-19. On that day the Vice-President of South Sudan, and the Minister of General Education and Instruction rang the bell in Juba Boys Primary School. Several UN agencies, Embassies as well as education actors were represented at the event.

With the closure of schools, from one day to another, the number of out of school children in South Sudan had almost doubled. Before the pandemic, 2.8 million children were out of school due to poverty, inequalities, cultural beliefs and nomadic lifestyles. With the closures of schools an additional 2 million children were out of school. The closure ended up being a huge blow for education, but more than anything it turned into a child rights crisis.

There are reports of children having been engaged in child labour, children roaming the markets looking for work and opportunities, children joining gangs and engaged in crime and substance abuse. Moreover, girls have been hit the hardest. Numerous reports speak about child marriages and early pregnancies due to girls being out of school and increased gender-based violence.

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction, UN and other education partners launched a distance learning programme through radio providing lessons twice a day as a way for children to continue learning and to stay engaged

while home to prevent some of the adverse effects we saw. However, nothing can replace face-to-face education. The remote learning programme remained a temporary solution and the need for the reopening of schools became imminent.

Ensuring children resume schooling has important benefits beyond academic learning. Schools are safe places for children where they are protected from exploitation, abuse and from harmful cultural practises such as child marriage and early pregnancies. Schools allow children to access basic services including clean water, health and in many cases also food.

As schools have now resumed, it is important to monitor how many children effectively returned to the education facilities. The longer children are out of school, the harder it is to get them back. This is especially true for girls. A lot of the girls who got pregnant or were married off will most likely never return. A special emphasis should go to support their return to schools.

As we move ahead it is important to remember how the closure of schools has severely impacted on the wellbeing of children and on the country, and to avoid any new school closures in the future.



HOW SCHOOL MEALS ARE EMPOWERING GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN

According to the Gender Based Violence Information Girls in South Sudan are more likely than boys to be excluded from education. Conflict, poverty, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and cultural and religious views are among factors driving educational inequality that hinders the prospects of girls.

In fact, [UNICEF estimates](#) that a girl in South Sudan is more likely to die during childbirth than complete secondary school education.

The [World Food Programmes \(WFP\) school feeding programme](#) provides daily hot meals to 500,000 children in 1,100 schools across South Sudan, an essential safeguard contributing to increased enrolment and encouraging parents to keep children in school.

Critically, [school feeding](#) helps put a stop to early marriage which can trap young mothers in particular in poverty, posing huge risks to their health.

Despite the challenges faced by girls in South Sudan, some are determined to stay in education, obtain professional qualifications and reverse the grim statistics.

'I want to be a doctor'

Merlin is a shy and reserved 16-year-old student at an orphanage and primary school in Juba. In a country where cultural conservatism often steers girls away from education, let alone studying medicine, her shyness masks a steely resolve to become a doctor.

“When my aunt fell sick, she was taken to a clinic where she later died because of poor medical care,” says Merlin. “It was then that I decided to study to become a doctor and save people’s lives.”

Keeping girls in school

As an additional incentive to encourage school attendance, WFP provides 8,000 girls in 64 schools with monthly take-home food rations consisting of 10kg of cereals and 3.5 liters of vegetable oil. To qualify, girls must be enrolled in school and attending grades 3 to 8, the stage when evidence shows they are at most risk of dropping out of school. They must also attend at least 80 percent of classes to receive the food.

“Since pupils started receiving school meals, we have seen improved performance in national examinations,” says Mary Santo Lado, headteacher at Mayo girls’ primary school in Juba.

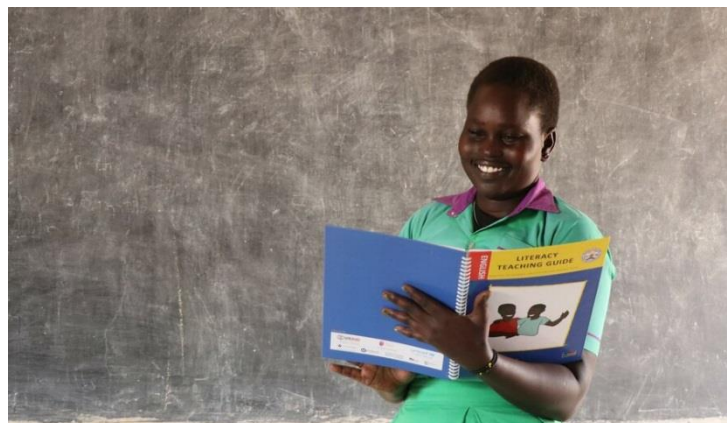
“Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, we are still hoping for excellent results.”

In March 2020, WFP’s school feeding programme was put on hold when schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As children in South Sudan await the re-opening of schools, WFP is mitigating against the impact of the pandemic on children’s health and nutrition by providing take-home rations for 23,000 children in the most food-insecure counties.



Girls at the WFP-backed Mayo school in Juba are expected to attend 80 percent of classes. **Photo Credit: WFP**



WFP provides 8,000 girls in 64 schools with monthly take-home food rations in South Sudan. **Photo Credit: WFP**

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.



NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

WOMEN IN LAKES LEARN HOW TO TIE-DYE FABRICS TO GENERATE INCOME FOR THEIR FAMILIES



women display some of the tie -dye fabrics they have made.
Photo credit: UNMISS

A group of 60 women in Lakes State have embarked on a creative endeavor aimed at giving them a life-changing and income-generating skill: they are learning how to tie-dye fabrics. Demand for these colorful products is as high as the enthusiasm and optimism of the practicing women.

“I am very happy to have been given the opportunity to acquire this useful skill. I will join hands with a few of my colleagues to set up a business in Rumbek. People really like this stuff, so there is definitely a market,” says Priscilla Nyanyuon Kooc, who believes the proceeds of her future sales will enable her to provide for her family.

That is exactly the idea behind the six-day capacity building workshop, organized by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and Veterinaires Sans Frontiers Germany: giving women know-how capable of generating an income at a time when economic conditions are harsh and made worse by intercommunal violence and the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tie-dyeing is a manual method of producing patterns in textiles. It is done by tying portions of the fabric or yarn in such a way that it does not absorb the dye. The process involves folding, twisting, pleating, or crumpling fabrics, binding them with string or rubber bands, and subsequently applying the dye.

To become a successful artist – make no mistake, tie-dyeing is an artform – a creative streak is required. With the right vision, a practitioner can produce unique designs and colour combinations. Rebecca Aban Malok is confident that she has what it takes, at least in terms of skills. “With this knowledge, I hope I will be able to mobilize resources to meet the immediate needs of my children, including their school fees,” she says.

SOUTH SUDAN COMMEMORATES WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2021

South Sudan joined the rest of the world to commemorate the World Press Freedom Day (WPF) on 3rd May 2021 under the theme “Information as a Public Good”.

The national celebrations brought together stakeholders from government, media associations, journalists, CSOs, law fraternity and academicians that tackled issues on Understanding Information as Public Good, media Independence and sustainability and discussed the legal and policy environment in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek declaration on promotion of media pluralism and Independence.

This year’s WPF celebrations aimed at reminding duty bearers of their responsibility to preserve freedom of expression, access to information and create an enabling environment for the journalists and public to express their views responsibly without interference.

Mr. Tap Raj Pant, speaking on behalf of UNESCO’s country representative called on the government and other stakeholders to renew their commitment to the fundamental right to freedom of expression, to defend media workers as well as join efforts in ensuring information remains a public good.

“In the same spirit, I encourage the notion of leaving no one behind. Let us produce information in languages and in formats that can be accessed by everyone,” said Mr. Tap Raj Pant, UNESCO Education Specialist.

The national event was jointly organized by the Association for Media Development in South Sudan, the Female Journalists Network, National Press Club of South Sudan, local media houses and civil society organizations with support from UNESCO’s Multi-Donor Programme on freedom of expression and safety of journalists.



NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES



Journalists at the World Press Freedom Day event.

Photo Credit: UNESCO

UNICEF CHILD REPORTERS ARE RAISING THEIR VOICES

To ensure children can have their voices heard on matters affecting their lives, UNICEF South Sudan piloted in 2020 the UNICEF Child Reporters programme. Until now UNICEF trained more than 50 children aged 10 to 18 years in Bor, Juba and Yambio on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In collaboration with Advanced Youth Radio and Eye Radio children are also trained on journalism and radio techniques empowering them to run interviews and speak on radio.

UNICEF Child Reporters have been campaigning on various issues including child marriage, closure of schools, COVID-19, climate change and the situation of children and women in South Sudan.

UNICEF Child Reporters are now focusing on children to go back to school now that the education facilities have reopened. UNICEF plans to further expand the programme to include children from other States as well as more vulnerable children.



Child Reporters in Yambio preparing to campaign for the reopening of schools. Photo Credit UNICEF

70,000 CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION TREATED

In response to the 1.4 million children expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in South Sudan in 2021 and as the country is going through one of its worst humanitarian crises, UNICEF and its partners have scaled up as of early 2021 their humanitarian interventions for communities in the areas most affected by multiple shocks.

This has resulted in more than 70,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition treated (with a recovery rate of more than 95%) between January and April 2021 and more than 100,000 people in need reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene services between January and March 2021.

These timely interventions are crucial as the country is now getting into a new season of floods, which last year impacted 1 million people and is expected to be as bad or even worse this year. As 4.4 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance.

UNICEF calls the donors community not to turn back on the children of South Sudan and ensure urgent, flexible humanitarian funding is continued.



A malnourished child is assisted with Ready-to-Use-Therapeutic Food photo Credit: UNICEF



NEWS FROM UN AGENCIES, FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

800,000 SOUTH SUDANESE MAY FACE REDUCED ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE BY JUNE, IOM WARNS

Juba – The International Organization for Migration (IOM) warns that more than 800,000 people in South Sudan who rely on IOM for their health care may face reduced access to life-saving services by June if urgent calls for humanitarian funding are not met.

Women and children, the elderly and people living with disabilities are at risk of losing access to primary health-care services. These services include maternal and child health, including the screening of children under five to detect malnutrition; sexual and reproductive health services and testing and treatment for HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

“In the past year, we have learned the hard way that when some people don’t have access to health services, everyone can be at risk,” said JacClick here to read the [Urgent Appeal for Funds for Health Activities in South Sudan](#).

Also read the [Press Release online](#)



A baby is being immunized at a hospital support by IOM

Photo Credit: IOM

UNMAS SUPPORTS UNHCR TO FACILITATE VOLUNTARY RETURNS IN BALIET, UPPER NILE

In April, approximately 5,600 South Sudanese, who were previously displaced, voluntarily returned to their places of origin in Baliyet, Upper Nile.

To facilitate this process and to protect civilians from being harmed by explosive threats, UNMAS supported UNHCR by surveying the proposed sites for three transit camps respectively in Adong, Baliyet, and Rhiang Nom in the first week of April.

Concurrently, UNMAS began delivering explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), which incorporates COVID-19 messaging, to the returnees in these three locations, so that they will be able to recognize explosive



An UNMAS team delivered explosive ordnance risk education to returnees in the Adong transit camp in Baliyet, Upper Nile.

Photo Credit: UNMAS

threats, adopt safe practices, and understand the meaning of marked signage of dangerous areas during and after their return home.

Since commencing EORE, over 1,300 returnees have received risk education in April alone.

ALLOWING COMMUNITIES IN RUMBEK TO DREAM BIG THROUGH NEW KNOWLEDGE AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The goats started swarming Khana Akuang Malual before she had even put the plastic tub of salt on the ground in front of her tidy mud-brick home in rural South Sudan, in January. There were 20 of them – her most valuable possessions – jostling one another to get a lick.

Just three years ago, she had none.

Amidst delays implementing South Sudan’s 2018 peace agreement, civilian-on-civilian violence, driven by access to resources, intensified in Lakes State, where Khana lives.

Her husband, along with many of the region’s men, had to limit his movements to keep safe, so the burden of running the family farm fell to her.

She was struggling to produce enough to feed her seven children, even one meal a day. Meals were grain heavy and light in vitamins.

But, with training from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ (FAO) Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency (SAFER) project, between 2018 and 2020, Khana increased her farm’s production by 150 percent.

ALLOWING COMMUNITIES IN RUMBEK TO DREAM BIG THROUGH NEW KNOWLEDGE AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION CONTINUES

It enabled her not only to meet to her family’s immediate needs, but also to expand into goat rearing.

“My children, my husband and I are the healthiest we’ve ever been,” she says, taking a seat in a blue plastic chair one Monday in January while the goats furiously pull the tub of salt back and forth. She is a sturdy woman with a quiet demeanor and calloused hands.

Khana boosted her production, she explains, by diversifying her produce and applying good agronomic practices.

She used to plant only groundnuts and sorghum during the wet season, which generally runs from April to October. Now, she has added cowpeas to her wet season line up and started growing vegetables during the dry season – a practice SAFER has popularized in the area. In addition to kudra, a vitamin-rich leafy green vegetable that is popular in Lakes, she also produces harder-to-find vegetables, like cabbage, eggplant, kale, onion and tomato.

The SAFER project, which FAO implemented thanks to funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provided her with seeds, tools, and – most importantly, she says – new knowledge.

She learned about intercropping, the practice of planting both a cereal and a legume in the same field to reduce fertilizer application, suppress weeds, and reduce her crops’ susceptibility to insects and disease. By planting in rows, rather than scattering the seeds pell-mell, she learned that she could reduce seed waste. The space between plants makes it easier to move through the field to weed and address pests so her plants are healthier.

The SAFER project’s method of bringing farmers together for training, she explains, fostered peer-to-peer learning and collaboration that also contributed to her increased production. For example, in her group of seven men and 23 women, farmers exchange the use of higher-value assets. Group members who have plows and no oxen share with group members who have oxen and no plows. Those who have neither can offer labour.

“We grew more than we needed and sold the rest,” she says.

Business management and finance courses, which FAO delivered along with basic literacy and numeracy support, inspired her to invest the money she earned selling her surplus grains and vegetables to launch a goat rearing venture.

She bought 16 goats that quickly multiplied to 30. The goats provide milk – enough for her children plus extra to sell – and meat for special occasions. Their manure is excellent fertilizer for her farming. One day, when her children are older, Khana says she plans to use the goats to fund their marriages.



Khana feeds her goats. Photo Credit: FAO

Her circumstances remain challenging. Insecurity still limits movement – particularly for her husband. Armed civilians stole eight of her goats while they were out grazing, and two more died from disease.

But the family now eats twice per day instead of once and their meals are full of fresh vegetables.

“We don’t get sick nearly as often as we did when we ate only grains and milk,” she proclaims.

And Khana has big dreams.

“Within the next five to ten years, I want to be farming for business – not consumption,” she says.



Khana carrying one of her goats, her newly discovered source of livelihood. Photo Credit: FAO