



UNCT NEWSLETTER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION TURNS 75

By *Jemila E. Mohammed WHO*

HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ World Health Organization turns 75
- ◆ South Sudan celebrates International Women Day
- ◆ Special Advisor on solutions to internal displacement visits South Sudan to discuss the action agenda on displacement
- ◆ Baking a better future
- ◆ Meet Nancy, the first woman to operate heavy machineries for mine detonation in South Sudan
- ◆ Mother to Mother support group help to prevent malnutrition in South Sudan



On 7th April 2023, World Health Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrates its 75th anniversary. In 1948, countries of the world came together and founded WHO to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health and well-being.

Working with 194 Member States across six regions and on the ground in more than 150 offices, WHO envisions a world where Health for All is realized. The right to health is a basic human right that promotes health and wellbeing, dignity and a good quality of life for everyone, despite who they are, where they live or what they do.

As part of the commemoration, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO and the South Sudan Athletics Federation hosted 'Walk the Talk' to promote health and prevent noncommunicable diseases.

"Physical health is free and contributes to the mitigation of diseases. Physical activity nourishes your physical and mental health and contributes to the peace and stability of the country", said Hon. Yolanda Awel Deng, Minister of Health of South Sudan. "Physical activity prevents diseases. By going outside and running you will lead an active lifestyle which prolongs your life", said Hon. Deng.





On behalf of the Government of South Sudan, I appreciate WHO, partners and everybody that came out this morning to take part in this important event. Hon. Deng urged everybody to get out and exercise, said Hon. Deng.

With WHO's support, South Sudan eradicated wild poliovirus. The country scaled up the delivery of maternal and child health services, and improved access to quality essential health services and essential medicines and diagnostics. Inpatient management of severe acute malnutrition with medical complications improved. National Blood Transfusion Services expanded, voluntary non-remunerated blood donations increased, health workforce improved.

In his remarks, Peter Van der Auweraert, the Acting Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator said, "A lot of progress has been made to strengthen the health system in South Sudan. We will continue advocating for more domestic investment and resource allocation to the health sector".

He reiterated the UN's support to rebuild the country's health systems and to accelerate efforts towards the attainment of Universal Health Coverage.

The emergency preparedness investment supported the health system strengthening. The health emergencies preparedness and response activities became very important to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and combatting infectious diseases.

"WHO's 75th anniversary is an opportunity for us to stop and reflect on the remarkable achievements in advancing the health and wellbeing of the people of South Sudan," says Dr Fabian Ndenzako, WHO Representative a.i. for South Sudan. "It is also the chance for us to come together around our common goal and renew our commitment to harmonized and contextualized health service delivery without financial barriers for greater health impact to the people of South Sudan."

At the heart of #healthforall is the attainment of Universal Health Coverage, where people can have access to affordable, equitable, good quality and sustainable health care. National health strategies should therefore position primary health care as the entry point into a health system which not only treats ill health, but also prevents illness and promotes good health.

To advance Universal Health Coverage, WHO and partners supported the Ministry of Health to validate and launch the Pharmacy Policy and Strategy; developed Health Sector Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and the Minimum Standards for Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) and HIV/AIDS integration which will contribute to the delivery of integrated RMNCAH and HIV services at the facility level as well as Maternal Perinatal Death Surveillance Implementation Guidelines to guide MPDSR implementation and institutionalization.

The country is also facing unprecedented health emergencies, driven by conflict, displacement, and the effects of climate change. The country has been experiencing devastating floods for four consecutive years. Half of the country's counties are affected. The floods have been so severe that the water did not fully recede in the intervening dry season in places, leaving parts of the country continuously submerged.

The floods have also destroyed precious health and nutrition centers. Forty-five health facilities – reaching 675 000 people – have been damaged by the floods in 2022. Those that are functioning, are facing a shortage of essential medicines and supplies.

Over 110 nutrition facilities have been submerged, cut-off from the world, or have sustained significant structural damage. This has meant that reaching those in need is now harder than ever.

In 2022, over 1 million people have been affected by severe floods and over 180 000 people have been forced to leave their homes. These climate events are driving outbreaks of measles, cholera and malaria.

The COVID-19 pandemic has rolled back the hard-won gains made in routine immunization against vaccine-preventable childhood diseases.

In the past three years it is estimated that 21 million children have not received a single vaccine dose. In 2021, the world saw the worst continued decline in routine immunization in 30 years, and WHO estimates that immunization coverage will not return to 2019 levels until 2027 without immediate action to catch up and get back to normal.

The country's routine immunization and annualized coverage of Penta 3 remained at 85% in 2022. This indicator has improved in the last two years, with at least seven out of ten states meeting the Penta 3 target of 80% in 2022. In 2022/23 WHO and partners had supported reactive campaigns in response to the Measles campaign with over 937,123 persons immunized.

"7th April is celebrated annually and each year draws attention to a specific health topic of concern to people all over the world. The date of 7 April marks the anniversary of the founding of WHO in 1948"





SOUTH SUDAN CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN WAU

By Sarah Chaat UN WOMEN



Participants at the International Women day celebration in Wau.
Photo: RCO /Jale Richard

Women from diverse backgrounds gathered at Wau Stadium on March 8, 2023, to celebrate International Women's Day. The event attracted nearly 300 people including heads of ministries and agencies, National Transitional Legislative Assembly, women-led organizations, United Nations agencies, faith-based organizations and officials from embassies accredited to South Sudan.

South Sudan's theme for the 2023 International Women's Day was "Promoting Gender Equality Through Innovative Technology Towards a Better South Sudan." which was in line with the global theme: "DigitAll: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality."

The Day was marked by traditional dances, poems, and speeches.

Rukaya Mohammed, UN Women Deputy Country Representative, said it is imperative that women and girls have access to technology in a safe and enabling environment.

"Our vision of equality, of what our world could be, for all of us, can and will include the equal enjoyment of the fruits of technology and innovation without fear of violence or abuse of any sort," she said. "Women and girls must be able to engage, create, learn, and work, safely and productively either online or offline, making the most of all the opportunities in every sphere of life and at every stage of it, in education, in the economy, in society and in politics."

Governor Sarah Cleto of Western Bahr El Ghazal said that International Women's Day celebrates the strides women have made in society and also the challenges they face. Women, she said, continue to face discrimination, gender-based violence and early marriage.

"Today in our state we have witnessed women, girls and boys who march to show everyone that we need to continue marching until gender equality is realized," she added.

Gov. Cleto said the goal is to use technology to promote gender equality, women's economic empowerment and promote civic education. Girls and women, she said, must be included in deciding South Sudan's future.

"We have to improve the access to digital tools, the whole world has become like a small village because of the technological innovations," she said. "We must engage our girls and women into the world of information, communication and technology."

In her keynote address, Minister Nadia Arop Dudi, of the Ministry of Culture Museum and National Heritage, said women should strive for equal representation in all sectors, technology, can play a critical role in the advancement of women. Women, she said, should not only focus on being in politics, but get more involved in agriculture and business.

"We want the next generation to be the technology generation," she said. "We want them to have good education to move South Sudan forward."

In her remarks, Netherlands Ambassador Marjan Schippers said International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate women's accomplishments and recognize the challenges that they face. She said women leadership is key to lasting peace in South Sudan.

"I am here today to honor women's leadership in South Sudan," she said. "I honor the women leaders in South Sudan. They carry great responsibility for the nation. Women leadership at all levels is important to create a better life for all South Sudanese."



Representatives of people living with disability in Wau participated in the march to celebrate International Women's Day. Photo: UN Women/Sarah Chaat





SPECIAL ADVISER ON SOLUTIONS TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT VISITS SOUTHSUDAN TO DISCUSS THE ACTION AGENDA ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT



ASG Robert Piper in a meeting with IDPS
 Photo: OCHA/Krasimira Anitimova

The United Nations Special Advisor of the Secretary General on Solutions to Internal Displacement Mr. Robert Piper concluded his first visit to South Sudan.

The objective of the mission was to examine the IDP situation in South Sudan and to advocate for the operationalization of the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

The Action Agenda is the UN Secretary-General’s vision to better resolve, prevent and address internal displacement crises. South Sudan is one of the sixteen UN Member States selected to pilot the Action Agenda.

During the three days mission, ASG Piper interacted with members of communities who have been displaced in Juba and in Wau. Both men and women’s groups expressed need for peace as a foundation for long term solutions to the protracted displacement.

“No one should have to live in a camp for so long. No children should live years with the uncertainty of not knowing where home is and not feeling safe,” ASG Piper said.

He met with senior government officials including the Vice President in charge of the Youth and Gender cluster, Minister of Finance and Planning, acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Humanitarian and Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner.

“We need to work differently and do better to make it possible to move on quickly from displacement to finding and implementing durable solutions,” added ASG Piper.

Decades of conflict, subnational violence and climate change are the main drivers of internal displacement in South Sudan. Currently, there are estimated 2.2 internally displaced people in South Sudan, many of whom have displaced multiple times for years.

Launched in 2022, the UN Secretary -General’s Agenda on Internal Displacement sets out a common vision for stepped-up action to promote solutions to internal displacement, prevent future displacement crises from emerging, and ensure that individuals have access to protection and assistance.

The Action Agenda has three overarching goals: helping IDPs find a durable solution to their displacement, better prevention of new displacement crises from emerging, and ensuring that those facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance





African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-9)

The Ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-9) was convened in Niamey from 28 February to 2 March 2023. The Forum was organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of Niger, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other entities in the United Nations system.

The theme of the ninth session of the Regional Forum was **“Accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.”**

During the session, an in-depth review was undertaken of progress made in the implementation of five selected Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation); 7 (affordable and clean energy); 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure); 11 (sustainable cities and communities); and 17 (partnerships for the Goals) and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063.

The DSRSG/RC/HC Sara Beysolow Nyanti participated in the forum and provided an update on South Sudan's increase in cereal production from 800MT to over 900MT between 2021 and 2022. She highlighted the need for increased investments in resilient agriculture, fisheries, and livestock but also UN's work around social safety nets and evidence generation amongst others.



UN Resident Coordinators at the African Regional Forum on Sustainable development. Photo: DCO/Marline

Doha Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries 2022-2031

LDC5: FROM POTENTIAL TO PROSPERITY



The Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), a once-in-a-decade opportunity to accelerate sustainable development in the places where international assistance is needed the most - and to tap the full potential of the Least Developed Countries helping them make progress on the road to prosperity was held on the 5-9 March in Doha.

The conference was opened by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres and attended by over 46 countries with several of them being represented by Presidents and Prime Ministers. South Sudan was represented by the Minister of Presidential Affairs.

Discussions at the meeting focused on six priority areas of: Leaving no one behind on the journey to sustainable development, the role of science, technology, and innovation in creating a bright future for LDCs, supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity, enhancing international trade of least developed countries and regional integration, evolving countries' defenses against future crises, and the LDC's as key players in the international community.

In her closing remarks, the Deputy Secretary General Ms. Amina J Mohammad, called on governments to work closely with UN Resident Coordinators as the Secretary General's representative in each of their countries to coordinate the collective UN contributions to development. She stressed key deliverables from the DPoA – Advancing technology/online learning and universities, an LDC graduation support package, a food stock holding solution, an investment support center, crisis mitigation and resilience building mechanisms.





Awan Thiep preparing the dough to bake khabis made of wheat flour, sugar, oil and vanilla in Torit. Photo: WFP/Eulalia Berlanga

In Aweil it isn't uncommon to see Awan Thiep selling khabis, bread and other baked goods to her loyal customers. She is one of 40 women who have been able to start their own businesses with support from WFP's Urban Safety Nets Programme.

Through the programme she received training, cash transfers, an oven, and a bakery starter kit to get her business off the ground. Since then, business has boomed, and it has been lifechanging for herself and her seven children.

With the income she receives, Awan Thiep has been able to build two grass touch houses, buy 11 goats, and provide for her family.

"My situation now and that of the past are not the same, now my children are well nourished, and they eat good food because of the work I do," she explains.

Most of the participants in the WFP Urban Safety Nets programme are returnees from Sudan who were receiving food assistance.

In 2021, WFP enrolled Awan Thiep and other community members in the resilience programme to provide a basis from which they could earn a living. Earning an income has had a ripple effect on the family and now all her children are looking at a brighter future.

"After joining WFP's project, I was also able to send my four oldest children to school and I hope I can expand my business in the future," she explains.

Under WFP's Urban Safety Nets programme, vulnerable households in urban parts of the country are engaged in different income generating activities including baking, tailoring, and dry season vegetable gardening.

The primary goal of this program is to address immediate food security and improve resilience to shocks by transferring knowledge and skills that improve the livelihoods of vulnerable families, ultimately leading to self-reliance.

The Urban Safety Net program is also complemented by training modules that cover different topics to help participants strengthen their wellbeing and livelihood strategies. The modules, include hygiene promotion, vocational training, and financial literacy.



MEET NANCY, THE FIRST WOMAN TO OPERATE HEAVY MACHINERIES FOR MINE DETONATION IN SOUTHSUDAN

By *Krasimira Antimova, OCHA*



Nancy standing next to one of the machines she operates.

Photo: Krasimira/OCHA

Nancy was only 20 years old when she attended a vocational training college in her hometown Yei, South Sudan, and graduated in 2009 with a professional qualification and a driving license. This allowed her to take up a job as a driver with an international NGO - Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) - in Yei. At the time, she was one of the first female drivers at NPA.

"In the beginning, it was very difficult", says Nancy "because this is a role that many see as reserved to men. But I loved the job and that kept me going. And I wanted to show other women that we can do it, because I was doing it!"

When she first started, Nancy was often asked to justify her career choice. "I chose this job because I love driving but also because I wanted to show people that women can do anything if they want. So, I wanted to learn, and I learned. Your life choices are only yours, and nobody should criticize or judge you".

Soon after becoming a professional driver, Nancy became the best among her colleagues. This is why she was recommended for a training to operate Mine wolf, a heavy machine used to detonate landmines. Nancy confidently took on this next challenge, completed the training with flying colors and became the first female operator of Mine wolf in South Sudan!

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZIGn1gzVE0>

After working with NPA, Nancy continued her professional path with other NGOs, then with UNWOMEN, being the only female driver on the team. And in January 2020 she finally joined OCHA. In the end of 2019, she came across an online advertisement for a professional driver position with OCHA in Juba and she decided to apply.

After a rigorous selection process competing with many very experienced male drivers and another female applicant, Nancy received the job offer. "I was immediately drawn to this position because of OCHA's mandate. Helping humanitarians coordinate lifesaving support to help the most vulnerable was so important to me," she tells us.

I truly enjoy working with my colleagues, taking them on field missions, and supporting high-level visits. I love my team and the management is amazing". And she recognizes that things are finally shifting. "There was a lot of prejudice towards me. I have heard so many comments – women are not supposed to drive, women are meant to stay at home," she recalls. "But now it even happens that a male driver would congratulate me for my skills," she proudly says.

A strong support system

Nancy admits that the support of her family made a world of difference. "When I first started working, I had one child. My family helped me a lot and in turn, my work allows me to support them. Something I am very proud of", she tells us.

She now has four children – one boy and three girls aged fifteen, eleven, eight, and one year and six months.

"My children love the fact that I am a driver and enjoy looking at photos of me in my UN vehicle," she says. And while balancing work and life/personal life can be difficult at times, Nancy and her husband work as a team and support each other in the household.

Nancy has found her balance at OCHA - fearless, confident, and eager to drive any kind of vehicle. "If you bring a truck, I will jump in," she says. "Driving comes naturally to me, and I love it so much at times it doesn't even feel like work."

Her advice to other women: "Believe in yourselves. If I did it, you can do it too! Pursue your dreams, regardless of whether you could go to school. Take courses, learn the skills you need to become what you want to be. And remember - working is important because it allows us to be independent, to support ourselves and to help our family."



MOTHER TO MOTHER SUPPORT GROUPS HELP TO PREVENT MALNUTRITION IN SOUTH SUDAN

By Richard Ruati , UNICEF

It's a clear morning at the Bieh IDP site in South Sudan's Bentiu town, Unity state. The bright sun is not yet high in the sky, and it's a regular day for many, so the roads to the IDP site is busier than usual and the Bieh Nutrition Center is a buzz with many voices. Amongst the group is a mother-to-mother support group for nutrition ready to step in and assist the many mothers and their malnourished children.

UNICEF and its partners support the formation of mother-to-mother support groups in response to high malnutrition rates in South Sudan. The groups of women are of varying ages, and all mothers themselves and have important experiences appropriate feeding, breastfeeding and cooking practices.

Due to recurring floods, most crops and gardens have been washed away, but they establish demonstration gardens using a different approach. They plant small vegetables in old sacks, buckets, jerricans, and other containers. These vegetables complement their children's diets, particularly that of children 6-23 Months.

Tabitha Nyakhan Gatwech, a mother of four children, heads the Bieh IDP site mother-to-mother support groups. At water points, schools and nutrition centres, she counsels other mothers with the skills to grow and cook assorted vegetables with the much-needed nutritional elements to prevent malnutrition in babies and mothers.

Nyakhan is driving the resilience of local communities through small-scale kitchen gardens and information for other mothers. "I work with mothers; I instruct them what UNICEF and partners have taught us on how mothers should care for their babies to prevent malnutrition," she said

"I teach them how to prepare fresh vegetables for their children. When the women tasted the vegetables, they learned the importance of preparing appropriate complementary foods for children 6-23 months. The health status of my own children has improved greatly as a result."

Understanding mother-to-mother support groups comes with a sense of trust, acceptance, self-worth, value, and respect. When mothers are supported, they can share information better, learn new skills, talk about their thoughts and feelings, and feel connected to others.

"I started sensitizing mothers on how this home-grown food is good for their children. I know this because I have tested it," said Nyakhan.

Many mothers in the Bieh IDP site have started planting and tending to vegetable gardens since they learnt the value of nutritious foods for their children and families. They take advantage of any open area around the IDP site to cultivate and grow vegetables.

I am overwhelmingly happy about this support. When someone helps you to raise your children, there is nothing to compare it with. Even now, if the aid workers who support us come here, I would run to welcome them with happiness," Nyakhan said at the sidelines of the cooking lessons.

This kitchen garden initiative has empowered mothers to prepare nutritious local recipes from assorted vegetables. "We are so happy about all these new diets; they greatly help our children to grow healthy", she concluded.

"I feel transformed over these last few months," said Anna Nyatuai Manyan, a mother and beneficiary of the initiative. "In South Sudan, we, the mothers, used to suffer a lot before our training. However, those of us who have undergone training are now doing better with our children; we can even laugh," she added.

Training on preparing more nutritious foods for young children has helped many mothers at the Bieh IDP site. "Before, we did not know how it was done, but now we know, which is good for us. As a result, our children are now stronger and healthier than before," said Nyatuai. "When babies and mothers eat less nutritious food, they can develop stomachaches, sickness and other diseases; good food improves a child's and mother's health," Nyatuai emphasized.

An estimated 2.2 million people will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2023. Out of the 1.4 million children under five in this number, 350,000 will suffer from severe acute malnutrition across South Sudan. This places even higher importance on prevention strategies such as those implemented by mother-to-mother support groups.

Across the country there are approximately 4,700 members of the mother-to-mother support groups. Read more: [Mother-to-mother support groups help to prevent malnutrition in South Sudan |](#)



Anna Nyatuai Manyang, a member of a UNICEF-supported mother to mother support group, walks with her two children in Bieh IDP camp in Bentiu, Unity State, South Sudan. Photo: Naftalin/UNICEF



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