



WORLD RADIO DAY: A CENTURY, INFORMING, ENTERTAINING AND EDUCATING

By Doreen Loboka Gune/UNESCO

Communication is one of the key ingredients that fuel national development. Through critical thinking, and exchange of information, societies are built and living standards are improved. It is an absolute fact that radio plays a critical role in society and forms part of the critical communication channels that communities rely on to disseminate information that targets various audiences and purposes.

Radio acts as a reasoning platform, daily, people make hundreds of calls to radio stations, to share ideas and contribute to nation-wide discussions. A lot of people listen to radio, primarily because it is affordable, hence making it the perfect platform to discuss pressing issues. It brings everyone together, both the young, old, poor, and rich. Everyone can share their opinion.

For a Country like South Sudan, where 70% of the population cannot read or write, radio becomes an indispensable tool for advocacy, information sharing, and entertainment.

The UN Country Team in South Sudan is a key partner in radio development in South Sudan, for instance UNESCO and UNDP have helped set up community radios in Amadi and Duk Padiet counties of Western Equatoria and Jonglei. FAO uses radio to share information on the weather and best agricultural practices. UNCT also uses radio as a medium of communication to share key messages on sustainable peace, and development.

This year's world radio day was celebrated under the theme: "Radio: A Century Informing, Entertaining, and Educating," this theme profoundly resonates with the global community, acknowledging radio's remarkable contributions throughout the years.

To commemorate this year's world radio day in South Sudan, UNESCO and partners held a 3-day workshop for police officers and journalists on freedom of expression and access to information.

This workshop was attended by over 60 people including journalists, police officers and other stakeholders. Workshop participants deliberated on key issues including freedom of expression, access to information and highlights from the constitution-making process.

HIGHLIGHTS



South Sudan prepares to conduct VNR in partnership with the UN



DSRSG/RC/HC engages with stakeholders in Upper Nile on the returnees and refugees' response and durable solutions



UN staff trained on UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard



The Peace Building Fund launches Joint Field monitoring missions



Sustaining the fight against neglected tropical disease in South Sudan



From Restoring hope to the integrated returnees in Renk to income generation activities with UNFPA's Support





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The workshop provided a forum for some radio personalities in the country to share their experiences with fellow journalists and police officers. They explored how radio can promote peaceful co-existence amongst various communities in South Sudan. Participants also discussed the role of the police in promoting freedom of expression and access to information and building synergies between the law enforcement agencies and the journalists ahead of the constitution-making process and the general elections.

Representing UNESCO at the workshop, Ms. Doreen Loboka, the Communication and Information National Specialist, urged public authorities to support freedom of expression and guarantee the right of access to information to enable journalists work freely.

On his part, Maj. Gen. Elia Kosta Faustino, Police Commissioner for Jonglei State, said that Radio plays an important role by ensuring that people are informed about what is happening around the world. He noted that the role of the police is to keep order and the rule of law, urging officers to create cordial relations with the media.

In his keynote speech, Hon. Muhamad Peter Chol, Director-General in Jonglei State Ministry of Information and Communication, stressed that his ministry is committed to making sure that the public have access to information. "We look forward to cooperating with each other: the media, the police, and the government" said Chol.



Police Officers in Bor pose for group photo during the training. Photo: Paul Night/UNESCO

This workshop was made possible with support from the UNESCO Multi-Donor Program on Freedom of Expression and the UN Peace Building Fund project "Support to a people-driven and gender responsive permanent constitution-making process in South Sudan" being implemented by UNESCO, UNDP, and UN Women.

World Radio Day (WRD) was proclaimed by the UNESCO General Conference at its 36th session in 2011 and adopted by the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2012. The date set aside was 13 February, which is the anniversary of the creation of United Nations Radio in 1946.

World Radio Day is the result of an extensive consultation process involving all the stakeholders: radio broadcasting associations; public, commercial, community and international radio stations; institutions, the United Nations agencies, programs and funds; NGOs; universities; bilateral development foundations and agencies, as well as National Commissions for UNESCO and Permanent Delegations representing its Member States regarding a proposal put forward by the Spanish Radio Academy.

World Radio Day is an opportunity to celebrate radio as a medium. It is a chance to promote international cooperation between radio broadcasters, to encourage major networks and local radio stations to foster access to information and freedom of expression.





SOUTH SUDAN PREPARES TO CONDUCT VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW OF SDGs IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UN

By Allen Poni Ladu/UNRCO



Staff of UN Agencies, Funds and Programs and representatives of government line ministries at the VNR planning meeting.
Photo Credit: Allen Poni/RCO

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of its follow-up and review mechanism, encourages member states to conduct country-led and country-driven regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels.

The Government of the Republic of South Sudan being represented by the Ministry of Finance and Planning has partnered with the UN through the Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) to conduct the first Voluntary National Review (VNR). To start this process, RCO organized a planning meeting on 7th February to orient participants on the VNR process, road map and key follow up actions. This meeting was attended by participants from line ministries and staff from UN agencies, Funds and Programs. It was Co-chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the RCO.

Participants discussed the role of data for SDGs reporting, the available versus missing statistical indicators, existing data gaps and ways to address those, including through use of alternative sources of data.

The VNR exercise will enable South Sudan to share its achievements as well as difficulties, challenges, and experience while implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

South Sudan has selected SDGs:- 2– Zero Hunger, 3– Good Health and well –being, 4,- Equality Education, 8-Decent work and economic growth, 9– Industry Innovation and Infrastructure , 13-Climate Action, and 16–Peace, Justice and strong institutions to

demonstrate progress towards SDG 1- No Poverty.

The five selected SDGs collectively touch on the five dimensions of the SDGs: people, Prosperity, planet, Peace, Partnership.

The VNR exercise will involve a review of data related to the selected SDGs. And the review process will entail consultations' with various stakeholders including youth, academia, civil society, women groups, among others.

Regular preparation of VNRs facilitates sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

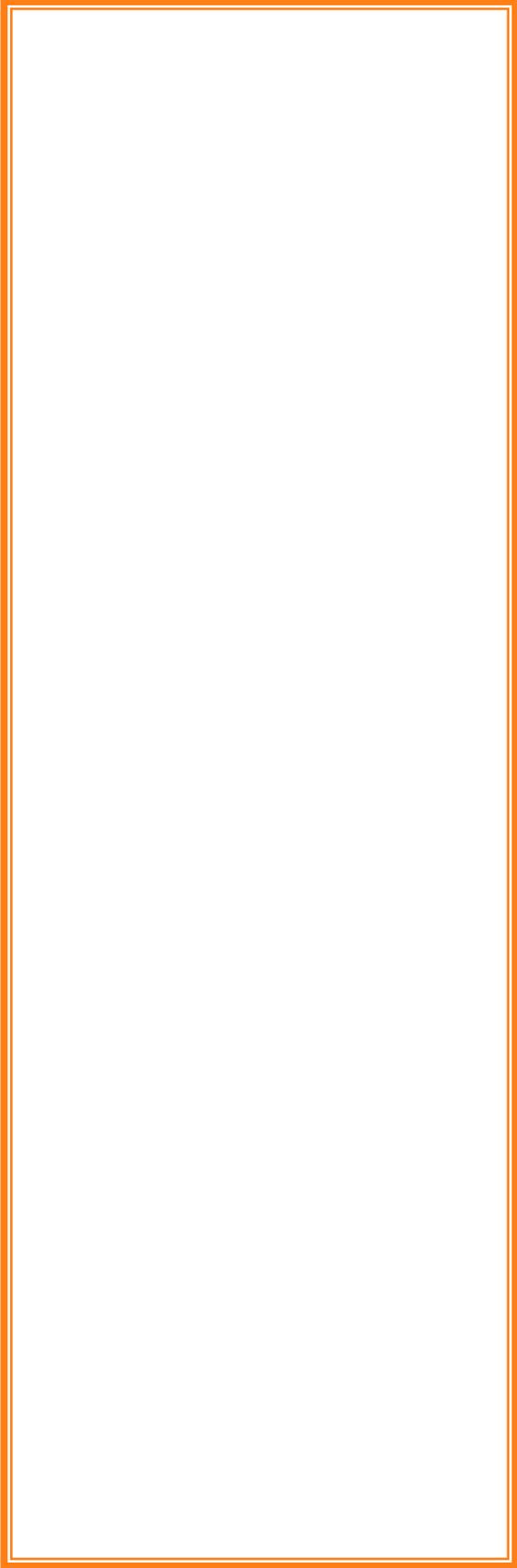
South Sudan will present its first VNR review at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) to be held in New York in July this year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In the coming months, UN Agencies, Funds and Programs under the leadership of the UNRCO and the Ministry of Finance and Planning will continue to coordinate diverse stakeholders to collaboratively produce the 2024 VNR for South Sudan.



.DSRSG/RC/HC ENGAGES WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN UPPERNILE ON RETURNEES' AND REFUGEEES RESPONSE, AND DURABLE SOLUTION.

ARTICLE STILL UNDER CLEARANCE





UN STAFF TRAINED ON UNCT-SWAP GENDER EQUALITY SCORECARD

By Poni Allen Ladu/RCO



Juba, South Sudan – UN Women in collaboration with the Office of the Resident Coordinator organized a training on UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. The 5-day training was attended by staff of UN Agencies, Funds and Programs in South Sudan.

The UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard is an accountability framework that promotes improved planning, coordination, programming and results for gender equality and women’s empowerment at the country level, tied to support to member states to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The training content was informed by the UNCT-SWAP scorecard tool and addressed

Band performances to welcome the guest of honor. Photo: Poni Allen/ RCO

wide and varied skills gaps for the staff. It was specifically aimed at developing staff skills and increased their alertness to Gender considerations across various organizational aspects. The content addressed issues of : principles and approaches underlying gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, managing for gender equality results, monitoring and evaluation for gender equality results, communications, and advocacy for gender equality.

Speaking at the opening of the training, the Head of the Resident Coordinator’s Office Mr. George Otoo underscored the importance of the training, noting that the Scorecard implementation encourages a constructive dialogue within the UNCT about the status of support for gender equality and women’s empowerment, and how it can be improved.

He urged participants to actively participate as training will equip them with skills to carry out the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard exercise and mainstream gender across all the work of UN Agencies, Funds and Programs both at policy and implementation level.

In her keynote speech, H.E. Linken Nymann Berryman, the Ambassador of Norway to South Sudan, reiterated her governments commitment to Gender Equality.

The last UNCT -SWAP Scorecard exercise for UNCT South Sudan was conducted in 2022, the next action is for the team to prepare a report based on the recommendations from the exercise.



The Head of RCO Mr. George Otoo speaking at the opening of the 3 days UNCT SWAP Scorecard training for UN Agencies, Funds and Program staff. Photo: Poni Allen/ RCO





THE PEACEBUILDING FUND (PBF) LAUNCHES JOINT FIELD MONITORING

MISSIONS

By Ravikash Prasad /RCO



JFM team comprising MoPB staff and IOM actively listen to the pleas and gratitude of a beneficiary in Lokoloko, Wau.
Photo: Ravikash Prasad/RCO

“I believe the PBF Secretariat is an important actor to bring the partners together in South Sudan. Projects should be able to synchronize with PBF for collaboration and joint impact and support the UN’s Integrated Approach in South Sudan.” Seeta Giri, Area based leader, UN RCO in Wau.

Seeta participated in the inaugural PBF Joint Field Mission (JFM) to Warrap and Western Bahr El Ghazal States from 13-18 December 2023. Led by the PBF Secretariat and the MoPB, the JFM also included the participation of UNDP, UN Women, IOM, FAO and Safer World PBF project teams. The JFM showcased PBF’s continued commitment to fostering partnership and national ownership, including through strategic engagement and capacity support to national partners. Prior to the JFM, the PBF trained the MoPB on monitoring and evaluation, and supported co-development of a JFM checklist. The checklist keeps the PBF, MoPB, UN Agencies and CSO partners actively engaged in all stages of JFMs. Experiences and reflections from the inaugural JFM will contribute to improving the check list, strengthening the MoPB’s reporting capacity and grounding an iterative learning process that will maximize the overall impact of JFMs.

“The field mission was fun and a great learning process where everyone participated by sharing roles and responsibilities together. Through the visit I had learned how the projects reflect the knowledge of the risk factors and protective factors associated with the violence against women and girls. I am looking forward to periodically monitoring the progress of implementation, further analyze and use information from the field missions to actively manage performance, maximize positive impacts and minimize the risk of adverse impacts” Isaac Kuon, Director for Planning, Research, Peace, Monitoring and Evaluation at the MoPB.

The MoPB is now better able to engage and coordinate with the PBF Secretariat and PBF project teams on JFMs. In 2024, the PBF Secretariat will continue its strategic monitoring partnership with the MoPB through quarterly JFMs to PBF projects.



SUSTAINING THE FIGHT AGAINST NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES IN

SOUTH SUDAN

By Jamila/WHO



In South Sudan, 19 of the 20 neglected tropical diseases are endemic, posing a huge health threat. More than 12 million people are at risk of infection from these diseases that can cause severe pain, disabilities, and deformities among other devastating impacts.

The country, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners, has made efforts over the recent years to tackle the threat of neglected tropical diseases by providing drugs and bolstering preventive measures in a bid to accelerate progress towards ending these diseases.

Since 2021, nearly 17 million people in South Sudan have received treatment for river blindness, elephantiasis, bilharzia, trachoma, and soil-transmitted worms. In a treatment drive in June 2023, health workers carried out a house-to-house mass drug administration against bilharzia, ensuring that eligible children received treatment regardless of whether they are infected or not.

Neglected tropical diseases are a set of 20 diseases or disease groups that occur predominantly in tropical and subtropical areas. They include lymphatic filariasis, more commonly known as elephantiasis, onchocerciasis or river blindness, schistosomiasis, or bilharzia, as well as human African trypanosomiasis, often called sleeping sickness, chronic ulcers and other skin infections.

“We are working hand in hand with our partners to reach communities across the country and ensure that populations at risk receive treatment and protection from these diseases,” said Hon Ader Macar Aciek, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Health. “The journey to eliminating neglected tropical diseases is a long one and we’re determined to finish the job by protecting everyone at risk so that they can live healthier lives.”

WHO has supported the Ministry of Health to develop and implement a Neglected Tropical Disease Master Plan 2023–2027. WHO has also supported the Ministry of Health to train health workers across the country in

various aspects of neglected tropical diseases management, including treatment, diagnosis, mapping, mass drug administration, active case search and contact tracing.

The country’s Master Plan aligns with the 2030 Neglected Tropical Diseases Global Roadmap for elimination. The roadmap aims, among other goals, to eliminate targeted diseases such as bilharzia, river blindness, elephantiasis, intestinal worms and trachoma by 2030.

South Sudan’s master plan focuses on ensuring three fundamental shifts in the approach to tackling neglected tropical diseases, including increasing accountability for impact by using impact indicators, moving away from singular, disease-specific programs and changing operating models and culture to facilitate greater ownership of the country.

“The medicine has helped us a lot. I no longer experience frequent sickness,” said Ernesto Tombe Swaka, a resident of Gondokoro in Juba County, who is benefited from a recent mass drug administration campaign in his community. “The health workers educated us on the importance of taking the medicine, so I didn’t hesitate to take the drug on the first day of the mass drug administration.”

Several of South Sudan’s counties have more than one endemic neglected tropical diseases. Elephantiasis and river blindness are endemic in 34 counties, while bilharzia and intestinal worms are endemic in 46 counties. Thirty-five counties have endemicity of elephantiasis and intestinal worms, and 36 counties have Loa Loa Filariasis co-endemicity. The recent mapping of leprosy endemicity status indicates that all regions in the country are endemic for leprosy.

“We’re committed to supporting the Ministry of Health in the efforts to address the threat of neglected tropical diseases in the country,” said Dr Fabian Ndenzako, Acting WHO Representative in South Sudan. “Together, we’re working to ensure that the national plan is fully implemented to help end the threat of this disease and the suffering they cause.”





FROM RESTORING HOPE TO THE INTERGRATED RETURNEES IN RENK, TO INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITIES WITH UNFPA SUPPORT

By Juma Delu/UNFPA



“ we have Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk, but we do view each other at tribal Lense, we all share the same trials and tribulations, when we gather here at the center, we discuss issues affecting us, talk about violence and family planning, and look for a common solution, thanks to Hope Restoration for providing us with this space, when we return to our respective homes, we are at ease” she narrated.

Abwol says she doesn't think about Khartoum anymore, she breaks down every time any of the group members reminds her of life in Khartoum, she goes on to say that since she was told about the center, she embraced it and now makes beads, bedsheets, and baking.

The exodus of Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees to neighboring countries is increasing dramatically. Renk, which is a transit site has seen a sharp increase in refugee arrivals most of whom are Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese girls.

Renk-Upper Nile-Nine months since the war in Sudan broke out, the guns have never fallen silent, and the impact of the war continues to bite, 55-year-old Angelina Yowin Abwol Deng is one of those affected by the conflict, she is yet to come to terms with her plight after she left her home in Fiti-Hab-Khartoum and escaped empty handed.

Her perilous journey to South Sudan, through Kordofan, was a life-changing one, as she narrates, through the jungles, and losing direction is what characterized the entire trip,

“I was exhausted the entire trip, I left everything in my house in Khartoum, I came in April, I was traumatized, a mere mention of Khartoum sends shivers in my spine, but I am healing, thanks to the group members here at the GBV response center, we laugh and joke counsel ourselves “

At the GBV response center, in Renk, the women and girls are empowered with income-generating activities such as knitting of table clothes, bead making, and bedsheet weaving, which items they sell and share profits, with support from the United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA with funding from CERF, Hope Restoration facilitates the purchase of the materials and provides to the returnee women and host communities.

Angelina went to Khartoum in 1968 and only returned to South Sudan in 2011 during the cessation of South from North Sudan.

Tereza John and returnee who shares the same plight as Angelina says, life was not easy either when she returned, she says the women in the group live as a family despite their different ethnic backgrounds,

It is worth noting that in times of disasters, women, girls, and children are the most affected and their needs are normally not catered for, Gender-based violence remains a threat to crisis-affected populations; especially for women and girls exposed to risks when conducting their routine activities.

Nyuo Biel Chuiny Kor, the GBV response site manager in Renk says the cash assistance has helped improve the lives of women and girls, he adds that the money is given to GBV survivors and other vulnerable persons like those living with disabilities as well as the sick, from the inception of the site, so far seven women who are GBV survivors have had their lives transformed,

“We had Anger, who had turbulent times in her marriage, the husband abandoned her, but when she came to the center, she enrolled for cash assistance, as I speak now, she is doing well, and even has reconciled with her husband, meaning there is harmony at home because she has now financial independence, just like Armeniya who bakes mandazi, says Chuiny

A total of 250 women and girls have so far benefited from the program, a gesture the Renk County Commissioner, Hon. Kak Padiet Kak, said, is making a difference in their lives.

From the onset of this Sudan crisis, UNFPA through its partners like Hope Restoration South Sudan, and IMC has been supporting with response to the refugees and returnees, thanks to funding from CERF and European Union Humanitarian Aid.





CASH TRANSFERS IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS FOR CHILDREN AND MOTHERS IN AWEIL

By Richard Ruati/UNICEF



A young mother Akiir receives the second cash transfer at Madhol.
Photo: Richard Ruati/UNICEF

UNICEF piloted a social protection program reaching over 1600 mothers with young children to improve livelihoods and encourage nutrition and health services access.

A mother and restaurant owner

Young mother, Akiir Lual, is a recent recipient of a cash transfer pilot project in Aweil, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State in Northwestern South Sudan. As a breastfeeding mother, her two-year-old girl was suffering from malnutrition for almost a year and referred for treatment at a nearby Nutrition Site. When Akiir received her first cash transfer, she invested it into buying nutritious foods that provided a variety of foods for her daughter and five other children.

UNICEF, with generous funding from Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by Action Against Hunger (ACF) is piloting the cash program in 17 villages in Aweil aligned with existing nutrition program in the areas.

With the help of Community Nutrition Volunteers (CNVs), they screened children or mothers with malnutrition in nearby villages and registered them for the cash transfer project. In addition to receiving cash transfer, they also benefited from other services including antenatal care services, screening and treatment for malnutrition, nutrition counselling and immunization for their children.

The cash transfer allowed each of the 1,626 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to receive 261,500 South Sudanese Pounds (approx. US\$246) in two payments over the six-month pilot.

This may not sound like a lot of money, but for women and children living in an area with extreme food insecurity and critical malnutrition severity, it is a lifeline.

After receiving the second cash transfer, Akiir improved her household food diversity to combat malnutrition. Before this pilot, Akiir relied on fetching and selling firewood to provide very basic and less diverse foods for herself and her children.

“Life was tough for me as a mother. I struggled to provide three meals for my children; however, with this cash, I can buy enough and more diverse food items, including vegetables, meat and fish, medicines for my children and save some money for their schooling,” she said.

Poverty is widely acknowledged to be the major precursor of malnutrition in many parts of South Sudan and social protection and safety-net interventions are crucial to prevent maternal and child malnutrition and other health problems.

The pilot cash transfer project, which delivers direct unconditional cash to eligible mothers, is part of the development of UNICEF’s social protection program. Many other countries use such programs as an important poverty reduction and social security measure.

Read more: [Cash transfers improve livelihoods for children and mothers in Aweil East | UNICEF South Sudan](#)





LIVELIHOODS OF OVER A MILLION PEOPLE IMPROVED THROUGH THE EU TRUST FUND PROJECT IN SOUTHSUDAN

FEBRUARY 2024

By Aidah Khamis/UNOPS

Decades of armed conflict has largely destroyed the road network in South Sudan. The existing roads, which provide some refuge, are being cut off by floods and insecurity. Accessing these remote and conflict-affected areas has been a constant challenge, due to the dilapidated road network which has worsened the humanitarian situation in the world's youngest nation. Insecurity resulting from recurring conflicts coupled with the inaccessible road network has jeopardized the food security of the South Sudanese people.

The high costs in the transportation of goods and services in terms of both time and money have hampered the economic growth and social development of the people. Today, they can breathe a sigh of relief with the completion of a new feeder road construction project worth 15 million USD, which has scaled up livelihoods and small-scale resilience projects for over 1.2 million people majority of whom are female and youths.

Recognizing the dire need of the people and to lessen this humanitarian challenge and improve road accessibility, the European Union through its implementing agency, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in South Sudan started a feeder road construction project in 2020 in the Greater Bahr El Ghazal region covering Northern and Western Bahr El Ghazal states.

This project was started at a time when the communities in the identified locations were stuck within their localities amidst thick low-lying savannah, bushes, and black cotton soil swamps and rivers which made it entirely impossible to access particularly during the rainy season. Covering 44 kilometers, the new stretch of road runs through the villages of Kayango to Basilia, in Western Bahr-El Ghazal states and has completed the long-awaited Nyamlel bridge measuring 163 meters long and Gok Machar to Nyamlel road which connects the counties of Aweil North and West counties in Northern Bahr-El-ghazal state and is a key connector to Sudan.

According to the World Bank, more than three-quarters of the country's population live outside urban centers hence the lack of roads poses significant challenges.

With no clear roads out of or around towns, children struggled to go to school, women risked death during childbirth, farmers could not easily sell their agricultural produce, and the rural communities had difficulties accessing the urban center.

All possible trade and business could not meet the purchasing power and the economic situation remained stagnant which resulted in the bulk of the farm produce going to waste. If there was an emergency, it was difficult for people to flee and for help to arrive.

The entire project is part of a broader EU infrastructure initiative that supports communities in constructing or rehabilitating existing feeder roads, strategic connecting bridges, and WASH systems in the



country. The project focused on the construction of priority feeder roads to remote agricultural areas, the construction of a strategic bridge that connects South Sudan and its northern neighbor Sudan, and the installation of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) systems aimed at addressing the road drainage systems, making the newly constructed feeder roads climate resilient, and providing communities living at the project sites with safe and easily accessible water through drilling boreholes. This initiative has improved the stabilization and livelihood resilience of the rural vulnerable communities in the Northern and Western Bahr El Ghazal states and has further empowered them by increasing connectivity, improving food security, and developing rural economies.

When the construction works came to completion by the end of 2023, it had fulfilled its objective in all the designated areas in South Sudan and has increased the socio-economic activities in the area and has facilitated IDPs (internally displaced people) resettlement.





By Loyce Nabie /IOM

Decades of civil war have devastated South Sudan's infrastructure and social systems, displaced over 5 million people, and resulted in generations of children and youth who have never had the opportunity to attend school, making South Sudan a country with the highest illiteracy rates in the world. By equipping youth with literacy, critical thinking, and peacebuilding skills, this program offers hope for a more stable and prosperous future in South Sudan. It demonstrates the power of collaboration between government, NGOs, and communities to build lasting peace in conflict-prone areas.

To address this, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners are empowering at-risk youth in Jonglei and Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) through informal learning opportunities, that are aimed at addressing the economic and developmental marginalization and exclusion of the targeted areas and livelihood development activities to open up paths for longer-term and broader investments in human capital development and socio-economic integration.

Building on a successful first phase, IOM's second phase of the Peace and Life-skills Development Program targets "hotspots" where young people are often drawn into violence. The program offers basic literacy and numeracy training, while also tackling crucial themes like civic participation, decision-making, and peacebuilding.

"In my village, almost everyone is illiterate," says Pricilla Achoot, a trained facilitator from Jonglei State.

"With this FAL curriculum, I am confident that people in my community will acquire some writing and reading skills that will enable them to participate fully in ongoing efforts in the communities."

Pricilla and 15 other facilitators will lead Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) classes in border communities. This is especially critical as renewed insecurity plagues Jonglei and GPAA.

"The training of trainers brought together young men and women motivated to deliver a holistic program on literacy and livelihood development within their communities," says Benjamin Moore, IOM South Sudan Transition and Recovery Coordinator. "By committing to plant seeds of peace, the facilitators are delivering a strong message on the role of youth in harnessing the potential of peace education in South Sudan."



Participants engage in active sessions during the training of trainers. Photo: Nabie Loyce/IOM

Hon. Aler Goi, a government representative, emphasized the importance of such programs noting: "These kinds of community-based programs equip populations with techniques to lead positive coping skills as well as ways of managing and avoiding conflicts hence promoting peaceful co-existence among community members."

This initiative is supported by the Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund, Shejeh Selam, Caritas Germany, the Swiss Cooperation Office, and the Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund.



SOUTH SUDAN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE FIND HOPE IN VOLUNTARY RETURN WITH SUPPORT FROM IOM.

By Loyce Nabie/ IOM



IDPs in line for the returns registration process. Photo Widdershoven Imme/IOM

Hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Western Bahr El Ghazal are finding a path back to normalcy thanks to a joint effort by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the government of South Sudan, and other partners. The initiative is helping IDPs who wish to voluntarily return to their home communities after years spent living in camps due to conflict.

While displacement remains a major challenge in South Sudan, IOM's Durable Solutions Project, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, offers hope for a different future. The project empowers IDPs in Naivasha and Hai Masna camps to choose their own path, including returning home, integrating locally, or relocating elsewhere.

"This project helps IDPs make informed decisions about their future," explains Gregoire Goodstein, IOM South Sudan Acting Chief of Mission. "It was designed to aid the implementation of a road map prepared by the Governor of Western Bahr El Ghazal State to support the populations to end their displacement situation."

IOM has thus far assisted over 2,000 individuals to return to their chosen locations in Wau, Jur River, and Raja Counties. Returning IDPs go through an eight-step process that includes verifying identity, receiving multi-purpose cash assistance, and deactivating their IDP registration. Some even choose to disassemble their shelters to bring materials to their new homes.

Damiano Peter, an IDP who opted to return home after years in Naivasha camp, expressed his gratitude: "I have been staying here since 2016 when war broke out in Wau. Now time has come for me to leave the camp, I am excited to start my life anew. The support IOM has given me will enable me to start a small-scale business to continue providing for my family", he said.

For those choosing not to return, the government of Western Bahr El Ghazal state is facilitating their permanent integration within the areas of Naivasha and Hai Masna.

IOM remains committed to supporting all displacement-affected communities, including host communities, by promoting self-reliance and economic integration through land rights housing, access to social services, and livelihood opportunities.

"We hope this project becomes a model for other regions across South Sudan, showcasing how to transition from humanitarian aid to long-term sustainable development," concludes Mr. Goodstein.

IOM works alongside various partners in this initiative, including UN agencies, humanitarian groups, and state and community leaders.



By Richard Ruati/UNICEF

Given the limited access many mothers have to health and nutrition services in South Sudan, community nutrition volunteers (CNVs) have become a critical community level conduits to prevent and treat malnutrition among children and mothers.

With years of experience working for humanitarian organizations, Amou Madhieu Malek is one of these vital volunteers. Equipped with knowledge and enthusiasm, the 28-year-old mother conducts house-to-house screening of children for malnutrition and nutrition counselling sessions in communities around the nutrition centers in her village of Riang Thiang, in Aweil East.

Aweil East is one of the County's in South Sudan facing critical levels (IPC 5) of acute malnutrition as well as emergency levels of food insecurity.

"These awareness sessions are very beneficial for the children and all mothers in the community," says Amou, with the confidence that most mothers who attend these sessions return home and practice what they have learned.

She regularly mobilizes the pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in her village. Sitting together in a circle, Amou encourages wide-ranging discussions, answering women's questions about breastfeeding, child feeding, hygiene, and health. Also, she shares helpful information on locally available nutritious foods and tips for mothers to eat a diverse diet for themselves and their children.

These meetings also serve as safe spaces for mothers and caregivers. As a result, women exchange ideas, share experiences, and support each other. "Particularly for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, hearing how others are coping with breastfeeding challenges and how to overcome them – this has encouraged them to practice exclusive breastfeeding. Additionally, introducing varied and age-appropriate foods from 6 months can change the children's entire development," UNICEF's Nutrition Specialist, Jesca Wude.

"It can prevent children from getting malnourished and further improve their health and nutritional status".

Volunteers like Amou are important in promoting adequate nutritious meals and increasing knowledge on diverse nutritional food items to help prevent malnutrition.

In addition, in Aweil East, the CNVs mobilized over 1,600 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to receive financial support as part of the pilot cash transfer project UNICEF recently implemented.

"I am thrilled that I and other CNVs can serve our communities and feel proud that our small efforts enhance the government and UNICEF's overall goal to prevent and treat malnutrition at the community level so that all children are healthy and well-nourished," says Amou, smiling with the confidence that CNVs are respected members in their various villages.

Amou and 24 other CNVs in the surrounding villages have been trained on community mobilization, malnutrition screening, and tracing support to prior cases in the management of acute malnutrition through partner Action Against Hunger, with support from UNICEF and funding from UK Aid, European Commission/ECHO, USAID, France, Canada and Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

These volunteers have been empowered and trained to use the Mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) tape to assess the child's malnutrition status and refer acutely malnour-



A CNV explains to mothers how to prepare nutritious meals in Aweil East. Photo Richard Ruati/UNICEF

ished children and mothers to nutrition sites for treatment.

Also, they have been trained on various topics, including advising mothers on how to prepare healthy, nutritious foods using locally available food items.



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

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