

## Gender equality: vital to development in Southern Sudan

Earlier this month, people around the world participated in thousands of events to help celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women. International Women's Day, which is observed every year on 8 March, provides an opportunity to reflect on the fact that, globally, more women are learning to read and write than ever before. What is more, they are living longer and healthier lives, and realizing a new level of economic independence that would have been inconceivable just decades ago.

However, though excellent progress has been made in many places around the world, more needs to be done to empower women in Southern Sudan. As Mr. Peter Sukule Buni, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, explained in a statement on the day, "women in this region experience one of the poorest qualities of life on the planet. Not only have they suffered disproportionately from the effects of the war...they continue to suffer disproportionately in peace time."

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UNDP understands gender equality to be a key condition for inclusive, democratic, peaceful and sustainable development.

He went on to say that although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan both provide "massive scope for change", almost five years have passed since these documents came into being, and concrete policies to promote gender equality and empower women have yet to surface. "We must recognize that the level of inequality in Southern Sudan counterproductive. For if half of our population lacks the opportunity and the right to make the most of their potential, how can we expect to build a prosperous Southern Sudan?"

Staff at the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs are currently working with other GoSS minis-

tries, as well as key development partners like UNDP, to try to tackle this problem by mainstream gender across all government institutions. To complement this, specific national policies are being created to reverse the gender imbalance that currently exists in Southern Sudan. Micro-finance programmes are also being implemented to empower women, especially in rural areas.

The World Bank administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund is also providing grants to the Ministry to help push these activities forward, and to fund a comprehensive gender analysis. The latter is particularly important because sex-disaggregated and gender-relevant data is vital to mak-

ing informed decisions and designing effective policies. This kind of information is really lacking in the region and must be strengthened.

### UNDP's new Gender Equality Strategy

UNDP understands gender equality to be an irreducible condition for inclusive, democratic, violence-free and sustainable development. For this reason, it published a new *Gender Equality Strategy* for Southern Sudan this month.

The document provides a roadmap for programming, measuring and reporting gender equality results. It covers standalone gender programmes for women's empowerment, as well as broader gender mainstreaming.

## Shifting the balance: Sudanese women in positions of power

There is unequal participation and representation of men and women in almost all political and socio-economic spheres in Southern Sudan, with women remaining a minority. Though some progress has been made since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, more must be done to encourage women to compete for high-level positions so that they are properly represented in key institutions. Enabling women to pursue careers in government and law will help create a new generation of leaders who can address and defend equal rights in parliament, in the courtroom, and in the community.

The CPA and the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (ICSS) both state that human rights and fundamental freedoms should be available to all citizens. They also call for affirmative action to re-dress the historical imbalances and inequalities by stating a mandatory 25% women representation at all levels of the public sphere. These provisions are very progressive, but operationalizing them has been difficult and inequality remains a big issue in Southern Sudan.

Recognizing that the upcoming election offers hope that women's partici-

pation in public office might increase, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in collaboration with UNDP, has been helping to empower female candidates by offering training in all of Southern Sudan's ten states. They have also been involved in education and mobilizing female voters to participate in the polls. UNIFEM's main objective is to create the political space for all – not just half – of Sudan's diverse peoples to have a say in the decisions and policies that affect their lives.

To complement this work, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development (MoLACD) has been working with UNDP to look at the status of women in law in Southern Sudan. In a workshop earlier this month, female lawyers from MoLACD, the courts and private practice came together for the first time to share their experiences and work together to look at practical ways to ensure a legal environment which protects everyone equally. Participants heard experiences from female lawyers



Women across Southern Sudan are still largely limited in their ability to participate in politics and government.

from other countries and discussed capacity building needs for Southern Sudan.

The workshop contributed to the establishment of the Southern Sudan Women Lawyers Association – a body to empower female lawyers to improve their professional skills and enhance their contribution towards key developmental issues. This Association will become legally operational after registration with the government. It is hoped that the initiative will help raise awareness of gender issues, and improve the protection of women by lobbying for legal reform.

## Supporting 'Women Associated with Armed Forces'

Although armed conflict affects entire communities, the silent and often forgotten victims of war are women. Their recruitment takes many forms – combatant, wife, cook – and demobilisation is just the beginning of their struggle. Often marginalized by their communities, Women Associated with Armed Forces (WAAFs) find it hard to earn income to support themselves and their children. Even after they have left the army, these women are left with limited prospects.

As the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process gains momentum in Southern Sudan, the Southern Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC) has been working with Pact Sudan and the Integrated UN DDR Unit to provide more opportunities for newly demobilized women.

As part of this, the SSDDRC organized a workshop on 4 March which brought together community-based organizations from across Central Equatoria in support of the social reintegration of

WAAFs. Information was shared about the challenges being faced by these women, and how communities can support their reintegration, with support from the SSDDRC.

The workshop also provided a platform for expanding WAAF reintegration projects through literacy training and income generating activities, such as farming and the establishment of small businesses. Empowerment through arts and crafts was also put forward as an option.

## UNDP helps reduce women's vulnerability to malaria

Pregnancy reduces women's immunity to malaria making them particularly vulnerable to severe anaemia, spontaneous abortion, stillbirth and even death.

For the unborn child, maternal malaria increases the risk of premature delivery and low birth weight – a leading cause of child mortality. The problem has long been neglected, but new approaches offer hope for reducing the burden of malaria in pregnancy and improving the health of mothers and newborns.

In Southern Sudan, malaria is hyper-endemic – affecting up to 36% of the population – and the severe lack of health infrastructure, coupled with extreme climatic factors and poor public health education, has had pro-

found implications on the wellbeing of communities.

The Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was created to dramatically increase resources to fight three of the world's most devastating diseases, and to direct those resources to areas of greatest need. UNDP has been the Principle Recipient of Global Fund resources since 2004 and currently manages five projects on behalf of the Government of Southern Sudan. Its *Malaria Control Programme* focuses on scaling up malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment as well as on producing up-to-date statis-

### Martha's story

Last year, UNDP's *Malaria Control Programme* helped establish a Primary Health Care Unit in Wouwou, Lakes State. Working with the community-based organization Arkangelo Ali Association, UNDP made the centre operational while at the same time distributing intermittent preventive treatment (IPT) to community members – particularly pregnant women.

Martha, a mother of five, is one of the women benefiting from this Programme. "I no longer have to walk long distances to access treatment at Mapuordit," she explained in an interview. Martha also reported a marked reduction in malaria in her family.

tical information on the disease for use by the Ministry of Health and other organizations.

## CSAC county consultations give women a voice

Violent conflict and tribal disputes threaten the stability and security of many states in Southern Sudan. To help combat this, UNDP's *Community Security and Arms Control Programme* (CSAC) has been working with state officials and community groups to conduct comprehensive county consultations in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, and Lakes State – some of the most volatile places in the region. The goal of these discussions is to identify conflict triggers and lay out priorities to guide the design and implementation of stabilization programmes.

The consultation process is driven by community leaders and County Commissioners who help distil key issues. However, consultations are also undertaken separately with community groups – such as elders and traditional leaders, youth associations, and women's groups. By understanding the specific threats facing community members, UNDP and government partners can create targeted

community security interventions to address the range of problems affecting a particular area.

Interestingly, while men are mainly concerned with external security threats – such as cattle raiding and tribal conflict – women are primarily concerned with internal security threats. This is because there is an extremely high prevalence of violence against women in some of these areas, which often originates from within the community. These insights have helped UNDP devise projects which tackle the concerns of all groups.

According to those who participated in the process, insecurity is primarily caused by cattle rustling, armed conflict and disputes over water, fishing areas and grazing land with neighboring communities. The presence of heavily armed civilians and the absence of a well equipped and well trained police force compound these problems. This sustained cycle of violence has eroded



Women's groups help map out the conflict triggers and priorities that affect community security in their areas.

traditional social structures, which puts the internal security of people – particularly women and children – at risk. What is more, existing security bodies are simply not able to provide or guarantee security in many areas. This is why so many of those consulted identified police stations and equipment as a top stabilization priority.

## Knowledge Corner

# Engaging women in peace-building: pushing the agenda

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – the first resolution ever passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

Other resolutions have strengthened the normative architecture for protection of women's rights during and after conflict, and for addressing their needs in the recovery and peace building period. Resolutions 1820 (passed in 2008) and 1888 (passed in 2009) address the issue of widespread and systematic sexual violence as a tactic of warfare. A further resolution (SCR 1889), passed last year, seeks to strengthen the UN's commitment to engaging women in peace negotiations, in the governance and financing of post-conflict recovery, and in peace-building initiatives.

While these thematic resolutions represent a shift in how the UN (and re-

gional and international security institutions) approaches the issue of peace and security from gender perspectives, the implementation of SCR 1325 has remained slow.

This is why most recent SRC directly requests the Secretary General to submit a set of indicators for use at the global level to track implementation of SCR 1325. This could serve as a common basis for reporting by relevant UN entities, other international and regional organizations, and Member States. Indicators are signposts of change along the path to development. They help us to understand where we are, where we are going and how far we are from the goal. They indicate trends and allow us to track progress towards intended results or targets (at output, outcome and impact level), as well as risk factors, which might prevent attainment of results. Good performance indicators are critical for effective monitoring and evaluation.

### Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325

SCR 1325 calls on UN agencies and member states to undertake a range of actions to increase the representation and participation of women in preventing, managing and resolving conflict, to ensure respect for and protection of women's rights, and to ensure women's security and wider needs are met in conflict-affected contexts.

Between December 2009 and January 2010, a Technical Working Group compiled and analyzed over 2,500 indicators. These were then categorized by pillar, sector and level of the results chain (activity, output, outcome, impact). The list of indicators was then mapped onto the results framework which included the following set of impacts: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. Each of these has an associated set of outcomes (see example below). Further consultations are due to take place this month, leading to a final report later this year.

The empowerment of women is one of UNDP's key cross-cutting themes so it has been actively engaged in the abovementioned process since it started. In 2007, UNDP also endorsed the Eight Point Agenda in order to empower and protect women in crisis situations. UNDP is pursuing the agenda in scores of developing countries, including Sudan.

Impact	Outcomes
<b>PARTICIPATION</b> Inclusion of women and women's interests in decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increased representation and meaningful participation of women in UN and other international missions related to peace and security</li><li>2. Increased representation and meaningful participation of women in formal and informal peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes</li><li>3. Increased representation and meaningful participation of women in national and local governance, as citizens, elected officials and decision-makers.</li></ol>



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