Hope, Recovery and Resilience

STORIES FROM SOUTH SUDAN
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STORIES FROM SOUTH SUDAN
Under the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) 2016-2017, the United Nations is focusing on

5 key areas

> Enhancing the resilience of communities

> Strengthening social services for the most vulnerable

> Strengthening peace and governance

> Reinvigorating the local economy

> Improving the status of women and youth

Preface

“The peace that the people of South Sudan seek goes beyond the cessation of hostilities, and indeed it goes beyond the Transitional Government of National Unity. The peace that the people of South Sudan want and need includes the freedom to live a life of dignity, the freedom from fear, the freedom from want and the right to pursue happiness.”

The youngest country in the world, South Sudan has faced decades of instability that continues to this day. Generations of South Sudanese have been born, raised and grown to adulthood in war. Years of violent conflict have left millions displaced and hungry. Vast areas of land are contaminated with landmines and essential infrastructure has been left in ruins. Volatile climatic conditions have eroded the livelihoods and earning potential of so many.

Yet even in the face of such devastating circumstances, the people of South Sudan remain hopeful. The 18 agencies that comprise the United Nations Country Team in South Sudan are working hand in hand with the Government and communities to foster resilience and support transformational development so that the people of South Sudan can take back control of their destinies, unleash their potential and create a more peaceful and prosperous tomorrow.

The following stories are a testimony to the strength, resilience and tenacity of the good people of South Sudan. At the United Nations, we believe that by working in partnership, we can heal the wounds of the past few years, and foster a stronger and safer future for all South Sudanese.

Eugene Owusu
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative
Juba, November 2016
For millions of agro-pastoralists in South Sudan, livestock is their most important asset. Cattle provides everything, from income to investment capital to a nutritious source of meat and milk.

Today, pastoralist livelihoods are under severe threat. Massive displacement of humans and their cattle herds and widespread insecurity in rural areas have disrupted cattle markets and given rise to disease outbreaks that have decimated cattle populations. In December 2014, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warned that the livestock situation in South Sudan represented a silent emergency of crisis proportions.

> Saving pastoralist livelihoods, one cattle vaccination at a time

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This has been particularly hard on agro-pastoralist communities, who represent 65% of the population of South Sudan.¹ In the short-term, loss of livestock has led to rising food insecurity among these communities, who rely on their herds for food and income. In the long-term it will take years for pastoralists living in poverty to rebuild and strengthen their herds.

As part of its contribution to the humanitarian emergency response, the United Nations is working to help communities absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses such as the livestock crisis, by establishing systems to strengthen resilience and supporting communities to reduce disaster risk. This includes building local capacities, providing livelihood assistance, and protecting crisis-affected populations against malnutrition, hunger and destitution.

¹ FAO, South Sudan Livestock Crisis, August 2015.
As part of this effort, FAO has remained at the front lines of the livestock crisis, working to keep animals alive and productive in hard-to-reach and insecure areas. FAO works side-by-side with community-based animal health workers to provide basic veterinary services to pastoralists. In 2016, FAO vaccinated and treated more than 8 million livestock and controlled disease outbreaks in target areas.

A key aspect of this work has been strengthening the livestock vaccine cold chain system – an essential temperature controlled supply chain – particularly in remote areas. The central cold chain in Juba has tripled in storage capacity since 2013. FAO has also strengthened cold chain hubs in Wau, Rumbek and Torit, and provided 15 locations in seven states with equipment, installations, repairs and maintenance. With these improvements, cattle herders are gaining more consistent and reliable access to livestock vaccines, even in times of crisis.

Dr. Paul and Dr. Mohammad Adam are the only two South Sudanese veterinarians working in Wau. With United Nations support and a functioning cold chain system at their disposal, both doctors are now able to take their knowledge and vaccines on the road – to areas where their resources and information are needed most.

“Farmers lack the fundamental knowledge about cattle care,” said Dr. Adam. “They need to learn the basics of animal health – how to know the signs of health problems and how to fix them. This is exactly what we do today thanks to the support of FAO.”
“Our cattle are our livelihood,” explains Dr. Paul, one of two veterinarians working in the rural areas surrounding the city of Wau. “Without our cattle, we don’t survive.”
Every day, 11-year old Akol Aken stands outside his house in Kuajok and watches a crew of local construction workers transform a narrow footpath into a paved road. Once completed, this road will serve as an essential access route between Kuajok and Aweil – two neighbouring towns.

In the past, the journey from Kuajok to Aweil took travellers on a circuitous 100km route around the forest and through Wau, the nearest city. The new 41.3km access road, which is being built on a footpath that traverses the forest, will cut this journey by more than half. It is expected to save travellers time and money and facilitate trade and access to education and health for both towns.

The United Nations is building the Kuajok-Kangi road as part of its effort to enhance the resilience of local communities through sustainable infrastructure projects. Years of violent conflict, combined with already harsh environmental conditions, have left roads impassable or destroyed, cutting off access to services and assistance for the most vulnerable. The new road was designed to increase access for residents of both villages, while generating economic opportunities.

Led by the World Food Programme (WFP) and funded by the European Union, the road project has already created jobs and facilitated the expansion of local business. Labour for the road project is contracted through a national construction company. Eighty of the 95 total workers are South Sudanese. Among these are seven South Sudanese women working as flags people on the road and cooks at the camp.
Roadside resident Santino Bol Agok sees both personal and commercial benefits to the project. “I am so happy with this road!” he said. “We can now quickly take our sick relatives to the hospital for treatment. The road will also help us to transport our goods to the market.”

Mary Akol, a local resident who opened a tea and food stand along the original footpath in 2006, plans to open a second stand once the new road is finished. She is convinced that greater traffic will bring more business and help her increase her household income.

Once construction is complete, the United Nations will focus on ensuring the long-term sustainability of the new infrastructure. Community members will be contracted to maintain the road for one year and WFP will provide training, funds, tools and salaries for short-term repair.
More than two years after conflict broke out in South Sudan, nearly 1.7 million people remain displaced. Between June and September 2016, an estimated 4.8 million people, or more than one third of the population, were facing acute food and nutrition insecurity. In some parts of the country, the threat of famine looms over populations cut off from humanitarian assistance.

As part of its contribution to the humanitarian effort, in 2014, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WFP designed the Integrated Rapid Response Mechanism to bring food and other urgent assistance to desperate families in remote areas by air and river. Since then, Rapid Response Mechanism teams have flown to hard-to-reach areas throughout South Sudan and established temporary bases from which to distribute aid and emergency services. The teams have also established and reopened humanitarian access to remote communities.

“It’s a huge logistical challenge to deliver food in South Sudan,” explains Eugene Owusu, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in South Sudan. “There is a very limited window for delivery during the dry season, parts of the country have no roads, and the costs are tremendous. Yet we are managing to feed millions every day.”

> The Rapid Response Mechanism: Bringing life-saving aid to remote populations

In South Sudan, protracted conflicts and slow development progress have weakened social service systems and limited delivery capacity in the social service sector. While it continues to support increasing humanitarian needs, the United Nations is also working to strengthen the coverage and quality of essential services provided by local actors and improve access to essential programmes in health, education, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, child protection and social protection, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.

Outcome 2

Strengthening social services for the most vulnerable

2 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, May-July 2016.
More than 1 million people – 20 per cent of them children under the age of 5 – have received life-saving assistance from the United Nations and partners through 82 joint emergency missions to conflict-affected communities. The assistance has included food distributions, blanket supplementary feeding, curative nutrition services, immunization and access to water, education and child protection. Experts say that the missions have been instrumental to averting widespread famine.

In addition to food assistance, the Rapid Response Mechanism missions have led to the identification of one third of all children registered as separated or missing in the remotest parts of South Sudan. Rapid Response Mission teams have performed one quarter of the child immunizations carried out in the three most conflict-affected states. Since the mechanism was established, more than 180,000 children have been screened for malnutrition.

“The rapid response missions have been standing between people and starvation in several parts of the country,” said Joyce Luma, the WFP Representative and Country Director in South Sudan. “This is a lifeline that must be maintained where access remains a challenge. We also hope to see more organizations re-establish a permanent field presence so that the support can become continuous.”
“The rapid response missions are reaching the most desperate communities in the least accessible parts of the country, using whatever means necessary, whether by air, by boat or by foot,” explains Shaya Ibrahim Asindua, UNICEF Deputy Representative in South Sudan. “This assistance, along with the incredible resilience of women and children, has helped keep people alive over the past two years.”
The United Nations is working to strengthen the quality of and access to education in South Sudan, particularly for girls and marginalized youth. As part of this effort, UNICEF is creating learning opportunities for children not currently attending school either due to conflict or obstacles such as distance or family finances.

In February 2016, as part of its humanitarian response, the United Nations and the Government of South Sudan launched the Back-to-Learning 2 initiative, targeting nearly 600,000 children with learning opportunities. By the end of September, 2016, more than 290,000 school-aged children received access to education in emergencies; nearly 7,000 teachers, other education personnel and parent-teacher association members were trained to support education in emergencies; and 214 classrooms had been established and rehabilitated.
> **Getting conflict-affected children back to learning**

Although Vivian Flabienne, 11, was born in South Sudan, she doesn’t remember much of her childhood there. When she was just a baby, her single mother bundled her up and fled the war to Uganda.

When Vivian and her mother returned to South Sudan in 2012, she found the people and places strange and struggled to adjust. Her education became her solace. At the Usratuna Sacred Heart School in Juba, Vivian discovered her passion for social studies. Now she dreams of turning this passion into a career in law and finding ways to give back to her country.

So many displaced children like Vivian have struggled to regain access to schooling since the war broke out. Even before the conflict, the education system in South Sudan was fledgling, having only just begun to develop in the few years following independence. Enrolment rates and girls’ participation already ranked particularly low. Three years into the conflict, nearly one in every three schools in affected areas has been destroyed, damaged, occupied or closed. Currently, 53 schools are serving as shelters for internally displaced persons and 74 schools are occupied by armed groups or are in military use. More than half of all children are out of school – the highest proportion in the world.

The disruption of education places adolescent girls, in particular, at heightened risk of gender-based violence, harassment, abuse and early and forced marriage.

The United Nations will continue to support these efforts throughout the country so that children like Vivian have a place to learn and nurture their dreams. The United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is implementing various functional literacy interventions to improve the national literacy rate and UNICEF is working through non-governmental organizations to set up temporary learning spaces and provide books and stationery supplies, as well as psychosocial support to affected children. UNICEF is also working to rehabilitate and reopen schools to bring conflict-affected children back into the formal education system and provide vulnerable communities with education services that include peacebuilding, conflict-sensitive education and life skills.

“I want to study law and help people,” said Vivian. “It is my desire to make the things that aren’t clear, clear. People’s lives here have been destroyed and I want to help them.”
Angel Ngarwa, 16, expects to deliver her first child any day. She is alone – the father of her baby left her and her parents died when she was a small child. As her stomach grew, she realized she would need support during the delivery. After hearing a local radio announcement about the new services offered at the Maternal Health Hospital in Wau, she decided to travel there and seek help.

“It is good here,” said Angel, who is resting in comfort in the Hospital’s new waiting mothers home. “I am fed and taken care of.”

Despite modest improvements over the past five years, South Sudan has among the worst health outcome indicators in the world. While neonatal and maternal mortality rates have declined over the past decade, they remain comparatively high: an estimated 789 mothers die for every 100,000 live births and 39 neonates die for every 1,000 newborns.3 This is compared with an average 547 mothers and 27 neonates in low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa.4

In response, the United Nations is working to strengthen comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care to increase access and utilization of quality maternal and child health services for remote populations and displaced women throughout South Sudan, by deploying highly qualified obstetricians, anaesthetists and midwives, improving human resources, modernizing equipment and facilitating the provision of essential drugs.

As part of this effort, the World Health Organization (WHO), with funding from the Government of Canada, has supported the construction and equipping of six modern maternity complexes with theatres and waiting homes in South Sudan, including the maternity complex in Wau, where mothers like Angel are benefitting from the new maternal operating theatre and waiting home. The facility, which now has 18 beds and hosts expectant mothers from all over the state, has become an essential asset for women living in Wau and the surrounding areas.

3 The World Bank, 2015. 4 Ibid.
United Nations agencies are also working together to make sure that displaced mothers have access to maternal health services. At the Protection of Civilians site in Juba, a health clinic run by the International Medical Corps with support from WHO, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provides medical care to the entire camp population of 28,000. Meroni Abraham, the single doctor on staff, and his small team carry out a range of procedures in makeshift conditions. Patients receive all services free of charge, including nutrition support, trauma services, clinical management of rape, counselling, vaccination, pre-natal follow up and deliveries. Caesarean sections are performed in a sterile operating theatre made of plastic sheeting that runs on a fuel generator.

At the nearby College of Midwifery and Nursing in Juba Teaching Hospital, UNFPA and UNDP are also investing in the future of South Sudan’s human resources for maternal and newborn health. Midwifery and nursing students practice a number of key skills, including how to guide women through the birthing process, assist deliveries and show new mothers the basics of breastfeeding. As of July 2016, UNFPA has supported more than 300 nurses and midwives.
Living a positive life in South Sudan

When Angelina Dwoki Terso Loku was only 20, she contracted HIV from her husband. In the early days of his illness, she cared for him without knowing what he was suffering from. In 2003, Angelina’s husband died of AIDS-related causes, leaving her to raise their two children alone.

Now 40 years old, Angelina is an outspoken AIDS activist in South Sudan. She is the chairperson of the National Empowerment of Positive Women United, a national organization for people living with HIV, and travels the country, speaking in front of large audiences and counselling individuals to accept their condition and embrace their treatment.

Health officials in South Sudan say knowledge of HIV is generally low throughout the country, where 2.2% of all adults are living with the virus. Only 45% of women between 15 and 48 years old have heard about HIV, according to a 2014 analysis of the national epidemic. The shortage of community outreach and quality health care services also hampers the national HIV response.

Angelina says that the situation of people living with HIV grew worse following the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, which exacerbated existing gaps in the country’s health system. Donors who had supported HIV outreach left the country. Funding dried up and the number of paid HIV counsellors dwindled. Now there are only a few counsellors left. Angelina believes that the rise in AIDS-related deaths in recent years can be attributed in part to the decline in resources and services for HIV/AIDS in the wake of civil war.

“The biggest problem for women living with HIV in this country is stigma,” said Angelina. “People live silently in their homes because they are ashamed. They are afraid of picking up their drugs from the hospital. We lose people every day because of lack of information. My family accepts me the way I am because we were all properly counselled.”

“Now that we have peace again, we need support to tell our story,” said Angelina. “We need to educate leaders so they can share information with their communities about prevention, positive living, nutrition, hygiene and how to get tested. We need representation in the Legislative Assembly to push forward on HIV issues. Everyone needs to hear us and get the message.”

According to Moses Mutebi, WHO’s HIV programme manager for South Sudan, higher risk populations must be reached with key messages about HIV testing. “The vast majority of people don’t know their HIV status,” said Dr. Mutebi. “That’s why we can’t identify who is living with HIV and link them to care and treatment.” Only 10% of the estimated number of people living with HIV are receiving treatment in South Sudan.

As part of the United Nations effort to strengthen the coverage of essential services and the quality of service delivery, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is working with United Nations agencies to scale up HIV prevention and treatment throughout South Sudan and support leaders like Angelina to continue to raise HIV awareness.
Strengthening peace and governance

Conflict and insecurity have undermined the governance and institutions of South Sudan and weakened state-society relations, as well as the national identity of the South Sudanese people. The United Nations is working to improve governance, peace and security, protect human rights and foster stronger, more resilient state-society relations by strengthening public administration, civil society, the media, security and national institutions, including the judiciary.

> Women leaders in South Sudan: Using dialogue to pave the road to peace

The Honourable Jasmine Samuel Adakayi’s career as a Minister of Parliament began just as her country was being born. She remembers the early years well: the hope with which the South Sudanese people welcomed the birth of their new nation and the delicate process of state-building that followed. She also laments how the insecurity and conflict of the intervening years eroded that progress and chipped away at the fledgling national identity that had only just begun to take shape.

The current Minister of Parliament for her home state and the former Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Adakayi is certain that peace and reconciliation are finally at hand. She has come to believe that the women of South Sudan will be essential voices in the peacebuilding process and that their input will be invaluable as her battered nation embarks on the road to recovery.

“As mothers and as wives, we have a voice,” said Hon. Adakayi. “When a mother talks, everyone in the house, often everyone in the community, listens. That is why women must be involved in the peace process.”
The United Nations is supporting the work of Hon. Adakayi and members of the Women’s Caucus to strengthen governance, peace and security in South Sudan and foster stronger and more resilient state-society relations. As part of this effort, UNDP is helping to rebuild the nation with greater legitimacy, inclusion and transparency, including by encouraging the political participation and civic engagement of women and youth. The UNDP Community Security and Arms Control initiative is supporting Hon. Adakayi and her colleagues in the Women’s Caucus to host dialogues and trainings aimed at involving women leaders in peace and conflict discussions.

In February 2016, men and women representing different sectors of South Sudan, including the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Parliament, Ministry of Defence, Council of Churches and civil society organizations, met for the second Collaborative Leadership Dialogue to share diverse opinions on how to approach the peace and reconciliation process.

After the meeting, participants formed action groups to take concrete steps in their various capacities in government, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and youth and community groups. Groups met with displaced women in IDP camps to discuss issues of peace and travelled to rural areas to observe different ethnic groups living together conflict-free.

“We need dialogue for our people,” said Hon. Adakayi. “We need to bring communities together. That is our task now, as the Transitional Government. We must come together.”
“I think the dialogues will be successful in part because of the participation of women,” said Hon. Adakayi. “Women in society are not the ones initiating the conflict. In South Sudan, women are for peace.”

“We have to move away from tribal identity and identify ourselves as South Sudanese,” said a civil society representative at the dialogue. “We have to think about what we are here for and not where we come from.”
When Moses was first incarcerated at Juba Central Prison, he was deeply distraught. The prison walls were a constant reminder that he had been careless with his life. Moses struggled with overwhelming feelings of shame and regret. He felt his future prospects were bleak and wondered if he might end up back in prison after being released.

A few years into his sentence, Moses heard that the prison planned to offer a carpentry course to inmates. As a younger man, he had always envied those who could earn a living by working with their hands and wondered if the class was his chance to make a change. Moses didn’t hesitate and signed up for the class right away.

Moses is one of more than 200 prisoners, both male and female, receiving training through the UNDP-supported Vocational Training Workshop at Juba Central Prison – the first of its kind in South Sudan. After years of conflict severely weakened law and order institutions, the workshop is designed to strengthen the prison system, provide prisoners with life-sustaining skills and promote indigenous experience in South Sudan. The aim is to help inmates acquire knowledge and abilities that will enable them to earn an income once released, reintegrate into their communities and become less likely to return to prison.

Launched in January 2016, the workshop offers inmates training in eight disciplines: carpentry, masonry, electrical, welding, vehicle mechanics, agriculture, hair dressing and tailoring. Courses are six months long and involve three hours of instruction and hands-on practice per day. Participants are selected based on personal interest in one of the trades, and criteria such as duration of sentence and lower-risk convictions. Instructors are all South Sudanese. After graduation, the inmates will shift to production; their earnings will be used to fund the programme and ensure its sustainability.

“I knew that the training would teach me skills that I would be able to use in the future,” said Moses. “I knew that it would help me support myself when I am released.” Today, Moses looks forward to finishing his sentence and returning to his community. He feels he has the tools he needs to turn his life around forever.

> Promoting indigenous experience in South Sudan’s prisons
“By teaching inmates actual skills and giving them the tools they need to build a business when they are released, we’re securing their integration process,” said Brigadier General Anthony Oliver Legge, Director of Production and Vocational Rehabilitation. “Now when these inmates are discharged, they have acquired a strong knowledge and they have something tangible to offer their communities.”

For Peter, who had long been interested in auto mechanics, the UNDP programme has offered an opportunity to gain those coveted skills and earn money after his release. In just the first few months, he has already learned all about engine components and how to fix tires.

“Before coming to training, I did not have any skills,” said Peter. “This has changed my mind about myself and what I can do in life. It taught me things, and as a result, it changed who I was. This training has given me the opportunity to build a good and strong life when I go back home and also help my family. I am really grateful for all that I have learned here.”
Reinvigorating local economies

Macroeconomic instability, uncertainty and conflict have undermined conditions for productive investment and sustainable private sector-led growth at a national scale. To address this, the United Nations is laying the foundations for resilient, inclusive and balanced growth to reduce poverty. This includes supporting economic diversification and recovery efforts, restoring livelihoods and generating sustainable employment and enabling the sustainable management of natural resources.

Empowering youth through community-based investment

Before the Community Peace Resource Centre opened in Warrap town, life for the young people was quiet and often idle. The two-hour drive to Wau, the nearest big town, meant that options for both work and education were limited.

When Angelina Amiok completed secondary school in 2015 at the age of 21, she knew she needed to be proactive in order to find a job. She decided to apply for admission to Juba University but also wanted to build her skillset in the meantime. A local youth leader encouraged her to enrol in computer classes at the Community Peace Resource Centre in Warrap town.

“Most jobs require that you have computer skills,” said Angelina, who began attending classes at the Centre in April 2016. “I decided to take these courses so that I can compete with other job seekers. Now my dream is to become a doctor.”
Angelina is one of only a few women attending classes at the Centre. She says this is because most families do not consider it important to support their daughters to pursue education past secondary school. She considers herself lucky: both her father and her husband supported her wish to pursue an education.

World Vision International built the Centre in 2005, and in 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported its renovation. Throughout South Sudan, the United Nations is working to reinvigorate local economies by laying the long-term foundations of resilient, inclusive and balanced growth to reduce poverty, enable economic diversification and generate employment.

The Centre is a key project under the IOM Transition and Recovery programme, which aims to address the root causes of instability in conflict in South Sudan by boosting local economies and facilitating community-based peace building.

In 2015, the Centre began offering computer classes to help local youth qualify for jobs throughout the country. The Centre also offers opportunities for peaceful exchanges among youth, including sports tournaments and structured dialogues covering a range of issues, such as inter-communal conflicts, cattle rustling, revenge attacks and early marriage.
Improving the status of women and youth

The crisis that erupted in 2013 exacerbated gender inequality due to women’s heightened vulnerability during the conflict. The United Nations is therefore working to mainstream gender and youth issues in all its work to empower women and youth to enhance their well-being, socioeconomic status and capacity to engage in the peacebuilding process.

> Refugee women: Combatting insecurity with craftwork

Since 2010, Gorom Refugee Camp has been home to over 2,000 members of the Anyuak Tribe, many of whom fled insecurity in Gambella, Ethiopia. Some of the refugees are eager to return home to Ethiopia after so many years away; while others feel safer at the refugee camp and wish to stay.

The residents of Gorom Camp are among the more than 265,000 refugees living in South Sudan who have fled instability in neighbouring countries, including Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. While all refugees are in need of international protection, the needs are more acute among women, children and youth, who face greater protection risks and livelihood insecurity.

Recognizing that women refugees at the Gorom Camp were struggling to earn income, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) partnered with the Roots Project, a national non-governmental organization, to implement the Women’s Livelihood Project in Gorom. The Roots Project provides refugee women ranging in age from 19 to 60 with training in beadwork finishing techniques – bead-making has always been a part of Anyuak culture and tradition – as well as basic literacy skills and the professional connections they need to sell their creations at market in Juba.
The Women's Livelihoods Project is part of the United Nations effort to empower women and youth in South Sudan to enhance their well-being, socioeconomic status and capacity to engage in the peacebuilding process. By empowering refugee women at Gorom Camp, UNHCR is giving beneficiaries the tools to improve their earning potential and economic security.

In addition to livelihood opportunities, UNHCR is also providing refugee women at Gorom Camp with basic literacy skills, child care support and free health services, including maternity care, health education and treatment for a range of common ailments. The Camp health centre handles, on average, 200 patients and six deliveries per week. Throughout South Sudan, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is helping communities ease the burden of hosting refugees by building shelters, latrines and water points and facilitating sustainable livelihood projects.

“The success of the peace process in South Sudan is tied to the fate of all women and girls,” explains Eugene Owusu, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in South Sudan. “How can we have peace when women have little to no access to livelihood opportunities and experience high unemployment? When women take control of their destinies and run successful businesses, their children, families and communities benefit.”
The women have used their new skills to apply colourful beadwork to cups, balls, bags and other crafts. UNHCR has supplemented the beadwork training with guidance on generating income, improving production and sustaining livelihoods through craftwork.
When Sarah Stephen, 18, learned that her best friend planned to drop out of school and marry, she was devastated. When the friend asked her to be maid of honour at the wedding, Sarah declined.

Though she was distraught at her friend’s choices, Sarah refused to give up on her own dreams. At a teacher’s suggestion, she enrolled in a United Nations-supported training for young women in Juba on leadership, communication, business and life skills. The training, which targeted talented young women seeking to start their careers, was designed to provide participants with the skills, confidence and connections they need to succeed as professionals.

“This training has transformed my life,” said Sarah. “Now I have one goal: to stop early marriage.”

The training is part of the United Nations effort to empower women and youth to enhance their well-being, socioeconomic status and capacity to engage in the peacebuilding process. The training, offered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), was designed to groom young women to become professional and national leaders. Participants had the opportunity to learn from other women leaders, exchange experiences with each other and create lifetime bonds.

“All of our dreams and hopes together have been splashed like water,” said Sarah, of her friend’s decision to marry early and end her education. “Since my friend is now engaged, her fiancé has isolated her from her friends, including me.”
If women work for themselves, they became independent,” she said. They don’t have to ask for money from anyone else.”

The experience motivated Poni Wani, a 24-year-old information technology student at the University of Juba, to return to her community in Jebel Lado and encourage girls to prioritize school and avoid early marriage. “I want to use myself as an example to inspire them,” she said.

Senya Agnes, 18, a secondary school student, was selected by her school to attend the training. The trip to Juba was her first journey outside of her home town, Kajo Keji. The training has inspired her to become a scientist, a subject that she says most of her classmates shied away from in school. “With this training, I can now speak and raise my voice and be heard,” she said. “We need to encourage others to stay in school.”
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