addressing immediate needs and restoring community trust and order to get people back to livelihoods and income-generating activities so they can provide for themselves and their families,” said Mr. Noudéhou, underscoring the importance of complementing humanitarian actions with multi-sectoral recovery and resilience building interventions.

The Governor of Gbudue State commended the partnership and expressed appreciation for the support by the UN and the development partners.

Director of USAID Jeff Bakken said: “We commend the community for its positive steps towards ensuring relative peace in Yambio and Gbudue State. Our visit showed ways we can further support the efforts of the people to move on from conflict, restore their communities, and improve security and trust in Yambio.”

New UN peacekeeping base offers Yei community a path to peace and prosperity

They clapped. They danced. They sang. They celebrated in their hundreds at the opening of a new permanent United Nations peacekeeping base in the town of Yei.

The community had asked for troops to be sent to the area to help protect them from the impact of ongoing violence and the UN Mission in South Sudan has responded.

“I cannot promise that we are going to protect everybody,” said the Head of UNMISS and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer.

“What I think we are able to do though is to provide confidence in the area, be a witness to what is happening here, and to provide a better, secure environment for people to come back.”

One hundred and fifty Rwandan and Nepalese peacekeepers will initially be based in the town with that number gradually rising to 300. They will provide regular patrols, particularly to rural areas, to improve security so humanitarian agencies can reach people in need and to encourage people who fled the violence to return to their homes and farms.

“UNMISS has come so that we can start peace. We have to forget the past,” said Yei Women’s Association Vice-Chair, Mama Hawa Adam. “UNMISS has come at the right time so we can start cultivating seeds because all of our food has been taken away. We don't have that culture of begging for food, we produce our food using our hands.”

The lush and fertile land of Yei was once the breadbasket of South Sudan but crops were destroyed and farms abandoned. With the
gradual improvement in security though, life and industry is beginning to return.

“It is not like last year. Last year, life was very risky in Yei,” said local market stall-holder, Mary Deng. “People were not moving, they found somebody killed in a house or attacked at the roadside. There was no movement. But, right now, people are moving well and people are coming back, there are now many people in Yei.”

Humanitarian agencies are also welcoming the arrival of the peacekeeping troops, saying it will enable them to safely reach distant communities in need.

**Aid agencies assisted 5.4 million people in South Sudan in 2017**

Aid agencies provided humanitarian assistance and protection to over 5.4 million people in need, of a total of 6.2 million people initially targeted under 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. Over 5 million people were reached with life-saving food assistance and emergency livelihoods support, in a year when South Sudan faced the worst food crisis in since the country’s independence in 2011.

In the first half of 2017, hunger and malnutrition reached unprecedented levels after famine was declared in Mayendit and Leer in February, with some 100,000 people facing starvation there and a further one million people classified as being on the brink of famine.

Due to early warning and robust action, humanitarians stopped localized famine by June 2017. Yet, country-wide, 5.1 million people (48 per cent of the total population) are currently classified as severely food insecure in January-March 2018, with 20,000 in Humanitarian Catastrophe status, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projections.

Malnutrition also worsened compared to the same period 2016, with surveys showing malnutrition rates in most communities well above the World Health Organization’s emergency threshold of 15 per cent, and more than 30 per cent of the population malnourished malnourished in several counties. More than 1.1 million children under the age of five are forecast to be malnourished in 2018, including nearly 300,000 severely malnourished and at a heightened risk of death.

In other forms of response during 2017, more than 2 million were provided with access to improved water sources. Almost 2 million people benefited from child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services as well as mine awareness education. Nearly 900,000 people were assisted with emergency shelter and vital non-food items, including blankets, hygiene kits and mosquito nets.

In addition, around 900,000 children under the age of five, pregnant and lactating women with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) were assisted with emergency nutritional assistance, and around 400,000 children were supported with access to education in emergencies through established, rehabilitated or constructed learning spaces.

Over 2.5 million were provided with health assistance and more than 600,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) were assisted with camp coordination and camp management services. Ultimately, more than 200 humanitarian partners were supported with logistics services, including transportation of aid workers and cargo.

In 2017, a total of US$1.19 billion was received by humanitarian partners out of US$1.64 billion originally requested by the HRP. The three best-funded sectors were the Food Security and Livelihoods (US$467 million), Nutrition (US$101 million) and WASH (US$50 million).

**South Sudan media advocates for freedom of expression**

The South Sudan National Dialogue Secretariat and the Association of Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS) held a forum on 18 January 2017 to assess the state of freedom of expression and media role in peacebuilding and to discuss the importance of Access to Information and Safety for all stakeholders during the National Dialogue process.

The forum, which was organised with support from UNESCO, UNDP, the Government of Japan and The UN Peacebuilding Fund, brought together more than 100 delegates drawn from media practitioners, human rights organisations, CSOs, youth organisations, representatives of media associations, parliamentarians, government representatives, UN agencies, diplomatic missions and various actors and media development stakeholders.

“Creating plurality and allowing diversity of voices through media help publicize the efforts of positive engagement of mass media in peace processes” says Mary Ajith, Acting chairperson of (AMDISS).

During the conference, the Co-Chair of the National Dialogue, Angelo Beda called on CSOs and media to support all peace initiatives and appreciated local media houses for working hard in covering the National Dialogue. He also urged the authorities to provide and facilitate access for international media houses to cover the national dialogue process for the international community
including South Sudanese in the diaspora to get the right information on the ground.

The UNESCO Representative to South Sudan, Sardar Umar Alam said that communication and media are central to promoting sustainable peace, development and democracy.

“The right to freedom of expression underpins a free, pluralistic, inclusive and independent media environment which is very critical for any peace process”.

On this basis, UNESCO and partners would continue to support a series of platforms for dialogue in order to improve issues related to freedom of expression, safety of media practitioners and access to information in the country.

Justine Alier De Mayen, Under Secretary at the Ministry of ICT and Postal Services applauded the organisers and assured the delegates that Freedom of Expression is guaranteed to all citizens and it is enshrined in the South Sudan Constitution and it should be exercised responsibly to reconcile and unite the nation.

The delegates to the conference urged the Media Authority to remain independent and resist political pressures from the government and other power structures and to collaborate with media self-regulatory institutions in development of guidelines that regulate media content, prohibit incitement, and hate speech and encourage the environment that protect journalists in their work.

A market to thrive in Aweil

“I’m doing business [in Hai Salaam market] to be able to feed myself and my children, and to be able to support my children to attend school”, says Magdalene Ajok, a vegetable vendor.

Magdalene has been selling vegetables in Aweil for eight years. She is one of 96 vendors benefiting from the town’s new women’s vegetable market, called Hai Salaam market.

The Hai Salaam market is part of the joint UN resilience and recovery programme in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. UNDP’s focus in the joint programme is on reinvigorating the local economy through the establishment of the Aweil Vocational and Livelihoods Training Centre to equip vulnerable women and youth with market-aligned skills, and to boost economic activities through improvements to community-level market structures. Both projects are supported through funding by the Government of Japan.

In addition to constructing market stalls and storage, improved water and sanitation facilities are turning the previously vacant area into a business hub.

“Before, we were selling on the street and thieves would often come for bags. Now, this market is protected by police and there is less crime. We are able to keep our goods here overnight in the storage cages, instead of carrying everything back and forth. We are now able to do more business and we’re happy,” says Magdalene.

The multi-sectoral recovery and stabilization programme harnesses the technical and operational expertise of UNICEF, WFP, FAO, and UNDP, and seeks to step up on life-saving humanitarian assistance while complimenting those interventions with community building initiatives towards resilience.

“It is not only the 96 of us women here who are benefiting from the market, you can see there are over 300 women now doing business [in and around] the market, and even more families benefiting from the income,” says Yirol Deng, another vendor at the Hai Salaam market.

“We will make this our own market and we have no intention of leaving, but we want to build it up even more, through expansion, through more goods, through better goods, and through more trainings,” she says.

Media forum on food security conducted in Juba

The UNCG conducted a media forum on food security on 19 January 2018 at OCHA office. The media forum was aimed to support media houses report accurately on UN work in the area of food security and to enhance better relationships between the UN and members of the press in South Sudan.

Presentations and discussions were led by FAO, WFP and the
Employ a variety of coping strategies to ensure access to food, including selling household items and pulling children out of school to help with household tasks.

In Yei, a garrison town southwest of the country, close to South Sudan’s borders with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, fighting and insecurity disrupted farming resulting in a spike in food insecurity levels, grinding business to a halt and forcing essential services such as schools to close doors. Half the population fled into neighbouring Uganda in search of refuge but for those who either remained or have returned home, a daily school meal has brought hope.

Nyanluak recalls vividly the day her dream to graduate as a teacher was re-ignited. Peace had returned to her village in Yei, a medium-sized town in South Sudan’s southwest, and the promise of a daily school meal was enough motivation for her parents to re-enrol her in school.

WFP’s school meals programme is giving children a chance to continue their education. Under the programme implemented jointly by WFP and Plan International, in 2017, 27 schools have reopened in Yei and more than 10,000 children receive either cooked meals or take-home rations to encourage them, especially girls, to attend classes.

And the benefits have been immense.

“School meals go way beyond the classroom.” Says Adnan Khan, WFP’s Country Director in South Sudan. “School meals help ensure every child has access to education, health and nutrition.”

“The daily school meal is often the only meal children have,” explains Lona Sadia, Minister of Education in Yei River. “The aim of the programme is to encourage parents struggling to feed their children to send them to school and reduce the rate of school dropouts.”

A daily school meal provides a strong incentive to send children to school and keep them there, it helps to increase school enrollment and attendance, decrease drop-out rates, and improve cognitive abilities.
A long journey home - UNHCR helps an internally displaced man to re-unite with the family after 30 years

Sitting in front of his paternal house in a wheelchair, Zaki, a 43-year-old man displaced during the conflict in South Sudan, nervously lights up a cigarette to tame his excitement. After 30 years he is finally home, reunited with his family in Wau town which is in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal state, South Sudan.

His journey back home was long and filled with tragic episodes where he was hiding for fear of being killed by armed people, starving because there was not enough food to eat, abandoned by everyone because he has a disability and even for friendly neighbours, who like him were struggling to survive, was a burden they could not afford.

“I am 43 but I feel like I am a 90-year-old man, because it feels like I have seen everything in life and nothing surprises or moves me anymore,” Zaki confesses as he is heading to the airport to fly to Wau, where he will finally meet his aunt after 30 years.

Zaki left his family home in Wau when he was 12 to try his luck as an assistant truck driver in Al Obaid city of Sudan. Following the conflict between the North and South Sudan and independence of South Sudan in 2011, Zaki returned to Melut town in South Sudan.

He worked here as a shoemaker until the civil war broke out in the world’s youngest nation in 2013, drastically changing his and his family’s life and pushing everyone to different corners of the county. Separated from his family, Zaki who by that time had already developed a disability due to rheumatism, was a witness of atrocities perpetrated by armed men.

Zaki’s meeting with his father and aunt after 30 years made him and others who were present at the scene burst into tears.

“I thought my son was dead! Last time I saw him he was a teenager,” a 64-year old Sebit, Zaki’s father and a local policeman said, tears running down his cheeks. “Don’t cry my son, you are home now and we will not let you go anywhere,” his aunt Leyla Benoro said, patting crying Zaki on his shoulder in an attempt to calm him down.

In December 2017, UN Refugee Agency and UNMISS along with other humanitarian partners reinvigorated efforts to find solutions for the internally displaced persons living in POC sites and as a result over 700 people like Zaki to were supported to return home or places of their choice.

Displaced student looks forward to serving own community

Nyomon Lilian will never forget the day she decided to become a midwife.

“Watching my neighbor die during childbirth emboldened me to make the decision to enroll in midwifery,” says the 25-year-old. “The woman assisting her had no knowledge of what to do.”

A few years ago, in her hometown of Kajo Keji, in South Sudan’s Equatoria region, Lilian watched as her neighbor bled out after giving birth. The mother was rushed to the hospital but it was too late. She died, leaving behind five small children.

Although Lilian says it was a life-changing moment, she admits it wasn’t the first time she had seen a woman die during childbirth. “I’ve seen it with my own eyes,” she says. “Women dying because of bleeding.”

When Lilian heard on the local radio station about the midwifery scholarship programme being offered by the Strengthening Midwifery Services Project (SMS Project) of UNFPA in South Sudan, she applied that same day.

The eager student and her 58 classmates haven’t had it easy. Studying in a war zone is complicated at best and fatal at worst.

When fighting broke out in Lilian’s hometown in Kajo Keji early in 2017, she and the rest of the students in the school were forced to flee. The kids actually did not want to leave the school. They were the last people there. When clashes broke out, most of the people in town fled to the bush. Lilian and her classmates had no patients left to treat and began to fear for their lives.

“We heard gunshots in the school. I took my uniform and left behind...
my books and everything else,” she narrates. What worried her more than the bullets was the possibility of not being able to go back to school.

“I was really sad,” she says. Lilian and her classmates sought refuge in Uganda until the SMS Project relocated the class to South Sudan’s capital of Juba.

“I feel a lot better now that we’re back in school,” says Lilian. Although it’s not the same as being at home, the young student says she just wants to absorb all she can in order to help those back in her community.

Now in her second year of the course, she is not yet able to do practical training. However, she was able to do her first delivery through the programme’s “open days.” Lilian says she loves babies and can’t wait to do more.

WHO prioritizes WASH services in health care facilities to achieve health goals

The lack of safe water, functional toilets, hand washing facilities and waste management system in healthcare settings poses significant health risks to patients, healthcare workers and nearby communities.

To ensure all health care facilities in all settings have adequate WASH services, WHO assessed eight county hospitals and seven Primary Health Care Centres to obtain a complete overview with the essential details for water and sanitation needs of health facilities.

The walkthrough assessments of the facilities focused on main priority areas such as water quality control and quantity, hygiene and sanitation, technical water and sanitation staff management, infection control and vector control, and health care waste management to strengthen the preparedness and response capacity and address the WASH needs in an emergency.

The findings of the assessment revealed that many health care facilities in South Sudan lack basic WASH services, compromising the ability to provide safe care and presenting serious health risks to those seeking treatment, says Mr Alex Freeman, WASH Focal Person.

To decrease the risks of site-related or preventable infections among health care facility staff, patients, and the wider community, access to adequate WASH services in health care facilities is essential to provide quality care.

As part of its efforts to address some of the key gaps in line with the WHO African Region water and sanitation or health facility improvement tool, WHO conducted baseline WASH evaluation assessment in health facilities; training of national public health officers on water quality control testing and monitoring including infection control management in health facilities, CTCs, CTUs and ORPs; procurement and dissemination of chlorination kits to support the cholera response; build the capacity of WASH cluster partners, City Council and Ministry of Health on water quality control, testing, treating and monitoring.

WHO also developed and disseminated disinfection charts to guide WASH and health partners on proper disinfection of CTCs, CTUs and ORPs including health facilities and provided mobile water quality and safety testing kits to the NPHL to establish water quality control testing hub within the laboratory in Juba.

“Access to adequate WASH services in healthcare facilities are fundamental to the provision of quality care,” says Mr Evans Liyosi, WHO Representative a.i. to South Sudan. “This assessment will help decision makers to determine and implement appropriate emergency response measures.”

IOM appeals for USD 103.7 million to provide lifesaving and recovery assistance in South Sudan

As humanitarian needs continue to deepen in South Sudan, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is appealing for USD 103.7 million in 2018 to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance, as well as to support transition, recovery and migration management initiatives.

Today, an estimated 7 million people in South Sudan need relief aid, including 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). As conditions worsen each day that the crisis persists, sustained levels of lifesaving assistance are crucial.

“As civilians continue to bear the brunt of the crisis, experiencing violence and displacement, timely and effective humanitarian assistance is critical,” says IOM South Sudan Chief of Mission William Barriga. “IOM remains committed to responding to these needs and reaching the most vulnerable, wherever they are.”

The Appeal seeks to support approximately 1 million displaced people, their host communities, communities of potential returnees and migrants in South Sudan. In line with the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, IOM will continue multi-sector humanitarian
responses in camp coordination and camp management, displacement tracking and monitoring, health, shelter and non-food items, mental and psychosocial support and water, sanitation and hygiene.

In view of diverse displacement and crisis dynamics across the country, IOM has adopted an integrated approach, whereby responses in camp coordination and camp management, displacement tracking immigration management, recovery and stabilization efforts complement humanitarian interventions to build community resilience and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid.

How a road gets built with Geocells – UNOPS live demonstration

UNOPS Engineer, Nyerere Simon, waves to direct his team of ten workers to split on the sides of the roadbed before him. Down the middle lies a long light-brown strip of folded geocells. Grabbing them from both sides, the team stretches them across the road, and starts attaching them to pegs placed at even intervals along the sides.

They are watched by an audience, including the Minister of Roads and Bridges, National Assembly members, private sector and civil society, who’ve all come to see a demonstration of how geocells can be applied in road construction, outside a warehouse in Tomping.

For a couple of minutes the workers perform a calculated tug-of-war, unfolding a honeycomb pattern across the prepared 100-metre stretch of road. The geocells’ distinctive pattern, though eye-catching, has a strictly physical function and when construction is finished it won’t be seen.

Geocells stabilize soil and provide rigidity to base layers in construction, allowing them to withstand higher loads, for example heavier and more frequent traffic on roads.

Nyerere Simon demonstrates this by filling a single geocell with soil and standing on top of it. The soil is compacted and does not seep out through the holes in the side – whereas if you stand on a pile of sand it will collapse.

In use since the eighties, geocells are still relatively new in South Sudan. As they reinforce the soil’s strength by holding it in place, they are especially beneficial in areas with weaker soil, and can provide durable solutions during rainy seasons. They are also labour intensive, but easy to install, meaning work teams can be trained and employed locally for construction.

After all geocells have been stretched out, a truck starts loading soil on top of them. They will be filled and the soil compacted, before a final road layer is applied on top.

The road built during the demonstration will give improved access to an UNMISS warehouse in Tomping. UNOPS is currently using geocells for road construction on two of its projects in South Sudan.

A displaced young girl at the PoC site in Wau. © IOM / Peter Bauza

UNOPS Engineer, Nyerere Simon, demonstrates how geocells can be applied in road construction. © UNOPS

UN in South Sudan

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