Leadership dialogue on combating gender based violence and conflict related sexual violence in South Sudan held with key stakeholders in Juba

Gender based violence has been perpetuated in South Sudan for decades by gender inequality, discriminatory practices, poverty, and the ongoing conflict. The Leadership Dialogue has been designed to convene and empower stakeholders to address the GBV crisis in the country and identify leadership actions to scale up efforts for prevention and response.

The event was attended by the Special Representative of the Secretary General, David Shearer, representatives from UN agencies, the donor community, government, national and international organizations.

The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita, said: “For peacebuilding to take root, justice must be served, and be seen to be done for sexual violence survivors.” She added that the UN has put measures in place to address gender based violence, including conflict related sexual violence.

“Since 2008 there are four Security Council resolutions that frame conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a threat to international peace and security. These resolutions call on parties to conflicts to take immediate measures to prevent and stop CRSV: end rape in war; provide timely assistance to survivors and end impunity.”

Mr. Alain Noudéhou, who serves as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative said: “To end GBV, four leadership actions must be taken: 1) End child marriage and educate the girl child, 2) Engage community including cultural and religious leaders to end GBV/child marriage, 3) End impunity, and 4) Invest in collecting evidence and valid data to plan GBV interventions.”

Hon. Awut Deng Acuil, Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, said that gender related issues should be addressed collectively with partners and members of the community, including the perpetrators.

“Combating GBV is the collective responsibility of our society, because it does not affect women alone but the whole society. All men and women alike have a mother, a sister, a wife or a child-son or-daughter who is exposed to GBV” she said.

Initiatives being undertaken by the UN in South Sudan to address GBV include advocating for adoption and strict implementation of policies related to GBV, and supporting institutions to prevent and respond to GBV, including improving access to survivor-centered health, legal and protection services.

“The causes and drivers of GBV are known. With combined and concerted actions, we can collectively end GBV in South Sudan,” Mr. Noudéhou stressed. “It is an aspiration and it is possible.”

Hundreds of children released from armed groups in South Sudan

More than 200 children were released by armed groups in South Sudan on Tuesday. This was the second release of children in a series, supported by UNICEF, that will see almost 1,000 children released from the ranks of armed groups in the coming months.

The first release of children took place in Yambio Town in early February, where more than 300 children were released to return to their families, or to UNICEF-supported care centres. This latest release of a further 207 children continues that effort and took place in a rural community called Bakiwiri, about an hour’s drive from Yambio, in Western Equatoria State.

“No child should ever have to pick up a weapon and fight” said Mahimbo Mdoe, UNICEF’s Representative in South Sudan. “For every child released, today marks the start of a new life. UNICEF is proud to support these children as they return to their families and start to build a brighter future.”

During the ceremony, the children were formally disarmed and provided with civilian clothes. Medical screenings will now be carried out, and children will receive counselling and psychosocial support as part of the reintegration programme, which is implemented by UNICEF and partners.

When the children return to their homes, their families will be provided with three months’ worth of food assistance to support their initial reintegration. The children will also be provided with vocational training aimed at improving household income and food security. Being unable to support themselves economically can be a key factor in children becoming associated with armed groups.
In addition to services related to livelihoods, UNICEF and partners will ensure the released children have access to age-specific education services in schools and accelerated learning centres.

“UNICEF, UNMISS and government partners have negotiated tirelessly with parties to the conflict so as to enable this release of children” said Mr. Mdoe. “But the work does not stop here. The reintegration process is a delicate one and we must now ensure the children have all the support they need to make a success of their lives.”

The 207 children released (112 boys, 95 girls), were from the ranks of the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) – which in 2016 signed a peace agreement with the Government and is now integrating its ranks into the national army – and from the Sudan People’s Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO). An upsurge of fighting in July 2016 stalled the original plans to release children, but momentum is now building for further releases in the future.

Despite this progress, there are still around 19,000 children serving in the ranks of armed forces and groups in South Sudan. So long as the recruitment and use of children by armed groups continues, these groups fail on their commitment to uphold the rights of children under international law. As peace talks resume and the future of the transitional government is debated, UNICEF urges all parties to the conflict to end the recruitment of children and to release all children in their ranks.

Adequate funding for UNICEF’s release programme is also essential. UNICEF South Sudan requires US$45 million to support release, demobilization and reintegration of 19,000 children over the next three years.

Pushing the boundaries of humanitarian assistance - How rapid response teams are saving lives in some of the hardest-to-reach places in South Sudan.

Even at the best of times, delivering aid in South Sudan is nothing short of a true feat. The current conflict, the result of a political rift between leaders and rival groups in 2013, has produced one of the worst humanitarian crisis of the modern era.

Limited or no infrastructure, banditry, checkpoints set up by warring parties, general insecurity and a six-month rainy season are just some of the factors that make South Sudan one of the toughest places to deliver humanitarian aid.

In 2014, the World Food Programme (WFP) along with partners, pioneered an innovative initiative in which emergency mobile teams are able to reach people affected by conflict in remote, often isolated, areas with life-saving assistance.

Known as the Integrated Rapid Response Mechanism (IRRM), the initiative plugs critical gaps in life-saving humanitarian assistance in South Sudan by enabling humanitarians to meet the needs of people who would otherwise be inaccessible.

The “integrated” teams consist of staff from the United Nations World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and partner NGOs whose work is vital in seeing that food, nutrition and other critical supplies reach people in need — in time.

The teams usually travel by WFP-chartered helicopters and sleep in tents in camps in the middle of the bush. They register people in need and clear drop zones so that WFP can air-drop critical food, nutrition supplies and other urgently-needed items, from a fleet of Illyushin-76 aircraft. In some places, they are supported by WFP logisticians moving supplies in by river or land.

On average, a team works in one location for one week. But teams carry enough supplies to last them up to two weeks in case of emergencies.

In 2017, IRRM teams faced their biggest test when famine was declared in Leer and Mayendit counties with a million people at risk. In response, WFP, FAO and UNICEF scaled-up operations, deploying 36 missions, adapting distribution cycles to provide more frequent relief and nutrition assistance and drawing on each other’s strength in the ensuing five-month response.

The structure of the IRRM, which allows for an extremely fast and effective response, and its agility, probably its most potent weapon, contributed to defeating the emergency. By May, Leer and Mayendit were clear of famine, and an expected deterioration in Koch and Panyijar counties was prevented.

“IRRM teams have contributed greatly to averting further starvation and loss of life. The teams have overseen the delivery of life-saving assistance to those without any other means to either receive, produce or buy their own food.” says Adnan Khan, WFP’s Country Director in South Sudan. “They have saved countless lives sometimes under conditions of insecurity.”

But the benefits are many. The IRRM allows people to receive more services simultaneously. WFP food distributions, which attract large
numbers, act as triggers for wider life-saving interventions. FAO distributes rapid response kits so families weakened by conflict can start growing food and catching fish while UNICEF nutrition treatment and vaccination campaigns reach more people than before.

In 2017, IRRM teams conducted 230 missions across South Sudan, reaching 800,000 people with 81,000 metric tons of food and nutritious products.

In 2018, as hunger peaks between May and July just as the main rainy season descends on South Sudan, the IRRM, with sufficient donor support, will once again make a big difference for millions of the most vulnerable in the remotest places.

**Women bloc in partnership with UN Women and JMEC sensitize women ahead of the next phase of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the Peace Agreement**

About hundred and eighty (180) women from different women’s organizations gathered in South Sudan’s capital, Juba for a three-day Conference to sensitize women at all levels about the Phase one and two of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan.

The Conference also brought together representatives of key institutions, including JMEC, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) and officials of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU). Under the theme “Women together for Sustainable Peace”, the Conference was organized by Women Bloc of South Sudan in partnership with UN Women, JMEC and UNMISS, with the objectives of ensuring that a broad range of women are fully conversant with the High-Level Revitalization Forum, understand and are supportive of the demands made on behalf of women and how they will be implemented, understanding the roles of the different stakeholders to the Peace Agreement and processes, and collectively discuss strategies on how to further engender the process.

In his welcome remarks, the deputy Country Representative of UN Women South Sudan, Lansana Wonneh, encouraged the women to try some new strategies that result to positive impact to the peace talks. He said, “South Sudanese women should unify with one agenda, get in touch with the warring parties and develop messages for both opposition and government leaders, give chance to women who can influence the two sides do it. Women should also work hand in hand with men and influence them to speak up for women, women should look up to men who can be advocates and fight for rights of women not just in the Peace Agreement but in Post Conflict South Sudan”.

The participants expressed their appreciation to the organizers, and an acknowledgement of how the Conference has been able to bring together women from all the different states and across tribes to discuss pertinent issues concerning women and peace in the country, and were particularly happy to be part of the Addis Ababa Peace Talks and to feel part of the overall process.

The conflict in South Sudan has affected the citizens, with over 2 million refugees and over 2 million displaced persons, majority of whom are women and children. The High-Level Revitalization Forum presents the last opportunity to find lasting peace that involves strong participation of women in the country.

**Ensuring Access to Information and Freedom of Expression for Successful National Dialogue**

The South Sudan National Dialogue Steering Committee, Communication Unit in collaboration with the Communication and Information Committee in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) with support from UNESCO carried out a two-day workshop aimed at ensuring access to information and freedom of expression for a successful national dialogue process.

The workshop under the theme “Free Speech is Your Constitutional Right” was conducted from 12-13 April 2018 at Juba Grand Hotel. Over fifty participants including members of the National Dialogue Steering Committee, parliamentarians, members of civil society organizations, faith-based groups and media practitioners attended.

During the workshop, many important topics were discussed including citizens’ rights to access information and the role of civil society in ensuring freedom of expression.

Honourable Gabriel Yoal Dok, Deputy Co-Chair of the National Dialogue, delivered the keynote speech stating “As MPs and senior government officials, let’s assure our people that they are free to speak out, we want this peace to come to our people if there is freedom of expression.”

Honourable Paul Yoane Bonju, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Communication and Information in the TNLA, appealed to the leadership of the National Dialogue “to ensure that media is appropriately used during the process for people to express their concerns.”

Mr. Sardar Umar Alam, UNESCO’s Representative to South Sudan,
particularly the vulnerable sectors such as environment and forestry, water, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, wildlife, finance and economic planning, transport, land housing and urban development, health, gender child and social welfare, humanitarian affairs and disaster management as well as academia.

At the end of the workshop, the participants came up with 19 recommendations on how to improve access to information and freedom of expression during the National Dialogue process.

The workshop was organised under UNESCO’s project “Strengthening Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation in South Sudan” which is supported by United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

UN Peacebuilding Fund

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was launched in 2006 to support activities, actions, programmes and organizations that seek to build a lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. It supports peacebuilding activities that strengthen the capacity of governments, national/local institutions and transitional or other relevant authorities.

Training workshop on building understanding and capacities in climate change adaptation and resilience

Building on its commitment to addressing Climate Change and Environmental issues in South Sudan, UNEP Programme office conducted a three days training workshop at Juba, Landmark Hotel between April 24th through 26th, 2018.

The training covered adaptation and resilience, climate information and its use, sectoral adaptation planning, basic adaptation monitoring and evaluation, and how to develop an adaptation capacity building Action Plan. Participants of the workshop gained basic skills and approaches to increase the resilience of the poorest communities to the impacts of climate change and assisting the people to plan necessary intervention to address impacts of climate change.

The chairperson of the Specialized Committee of Environment, Forestry, Wildlife Conservation and Tourism of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly attended the training along with over fifty (50) participants nominated by the different line ministries.

WHO strengthens emergency health kits supply chain management system in South Sudan

With the protracted crises in South Sudan, the scale and severity of humanitarian situations continues to rise, hence efficient forecasting, procurement, distribution and rational use of WHO emergency health kits is critical to ensure timely delivery of essential emergency health services.

With the aim to optimize the availability of required supplies in the right quantity, WHO trained 29 participants from 24 Health Cluster partners (both International and National NGOs) on the basics of WHO emergency kits to improve the capacity of Health Cluster partners on requisition, distribution and rational use of life-saving medicines so that patients receive care without interruption.

The objective of the training was to familiarize Health Cluster partners on the types and contents of WHO emergency health kits.
including Interagency Emergency Heath Kits (IEHK), revised cholera kits, severe acute malnutrition with medical complication kits, trauma kits, surgical supply kits and pneumonia kits and ensure accountability to beneficiaries, Health Cluster, WHO, Ministry of Health and donors.

During emergencies timely and appropriate response in terms of technical and administrative support is vital to save lives, says Dr Guracha Guyo, Emergency Coordinator for WHO South Sudan. With the fragmentation of the supply system, optimizing the distribution and rational use of life-saving medicines will help minimize costs and improve patient care, says Dr Guyo.

In accordance with the guidelines, focused group discussions, brainstorming and interactive discussions as well as practical guidance to assist partners on WHO emergency health kits are also applied.

An emergency health kit is a reliable, standardized, affordable and quickly available complete set of drugs, supplies and equipment that are needed either to provide basic health care for a stated population size or to manage a certain set of health conditions in situations such as population displacement, epidemics and mass casualty events.

New hope for South Sudan’s beekeepers
Away from smoke and stings, FAO introducing new beekeeping techniques

Pasqualle Abdallah left Yei in 2017, being forced to abandon his beekeeping business which he said had enabled him to feed his family of two wives and eight children, and fled to the country’s capital, Juba. Upon arrival, he had to start over again, but now without the forest and trees in which to place his beehives and, more significantly, no job. He had to re-build his livelihood.

“The traditional beehives are difficult to place on tree branches high in the treetops, in the middle of the forest, and I used to harvest at night when the bees are sleeping,” Abdallah, 63, said.

With the support of FAO, Abdallah was taught how to build and use modern beehives, which can be placed in the field around his homestead in urban Juba, rather than in forests of Yei, apply methods to increase quality yields of honey, safe harvesting and hygienic processing techniques for honey and wax. To support the learning process, Abdallah was assigned to a group of 50 other fellow beekeepers to work with the assigned modern hives distributed by FAO.

“We were taught how to handle the bees, for example, how to attract them to the beehive and they gave us this protective clothing to protect us from bee stings,” adds Oliver Andrea, a 68-year-old who has been in the beekeeping business since 2009, to the testimony of Abdallah.

The group members receiving the training and equipment including honey strainers, smokers, protective clothing and modern hives will be able to re-establish their livelihoods and support their families in an area deemed safe for the time being. Through this project, FAO will train 125 other beekeepers of which 30 will go on to become trainers themselves, like Abdallah.

Abdallah adds, “Without this equipment, we can’t do our jobs. The surroundings here are very different, but we are here now, ready to work.”

Through this project, over 2,000 households in Juba have been supported with various income-generating trainings like beekeeping but also value chain addition trainings like fish and milk handling, processing and preservation. FAO has also set up farming groups that have received training on agronomic practices and assisted through the provision of agriculture inputs such as seeds, tools and irrigation equipment.

The activity is part of a FAO project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), to improve food security, nutritional status and incomes among vulnerable households in various localities in and around Juba.

UN in South Sudan
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