South Sudan commits to move towards attainment of universal health coverage

South Sudan is making headway towards attainment of Universal Health Coverage and addressing the inequity amid instability in some parts of the country. This was echoed during the high-level advocacy meeting with women parliamentarians one of the events to mark the World Health Day under the theme ‘Universal Health Coverage: everyone everywhere’.

Although access to health services countrywide is very low with only 44% of the population living within 5 kilometer radius of a health facility, efforts are in place to address this gap. The Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from WHO and partners is rolling out the Boma Health initiative (BHI) to reach and deliver quality health package of care which is free to the community especially in the hard to reach areas who have no access to health services. The government of South Sudan has also expressed its commitment to the provision of the necessary leadership to significantly decrease maternal and child mortalities.

The Ministry of Health Under Secretary, Dr Makur Matur Kariom representing the Hon Minister of Health during the high-level advocacy meeting said, “South Sudan has made progress to improve new-born, child and maternal health’. He however, noted that ‘there still remains a huge task to be completed as we enter into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) era’. Dr Makur appealed to the parliamentarians, the women’s groups, other line Ministries, Donors and partners to join hands to support the Ministry of Health in promoting the health of women and children which is central to development.

The WHO Representative a.i. for South Sudan, Mr Evans Liyosi, read the Regional Director’s message for the World Health Day and noted that as South Sudan is making progress towards achieving Universal Health Coverage, there is need to walk the talk by increasing funding to address the gap in health care financing. Nothing will help women and girls more than ensuring that everyone, everywhere, can benefit from quality health services when and where they need them, without fear of falling into poverty when using them. He also underscored the importance of the Ministry of Health BHI flagship program which involves community engagement as a key strategy for improving maternal and child health.

Others including the Canadian Ambassador, representatives from DFID, USAID, H6 partners, the women groups, the Chair of the Women caucus in parliament and others who support the Universal health coverage especially for women children and adolescents, participated in the World Health Day advocacy event and made good will remarks. The women’s caucus reiterated that they would carry out their function of representation of the people, to advocate for increased budget allocation and to support the Ministry of health to ensure that the programmes are being implemented.

During the same event, to demonstrate WHO’s commitment to leave no one behind, over 70 street children were mobilised, bathed, their hair shaved to ward off lice infestations, clothed, fed, given toys and immunized against cholera, meningitis, and tetanus. Water filters, soap to improve hygiene and other food items were given to one of the orphanage home. The parliamentarians had time to interact with the street children as they contemplated on how to help this neglected group of children.

A pledge statement was endorsed by all who attended the advocacy event, committing themselves to play their different roles and responsibilities to improve Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health in South Sudan as the country moves towards attaining Universal Health Coverage by 2030.

**UNESCO Reveals 2.2 Million Children are Out of School in South Sudan**

At least 2.2 million children in South Sudan are not receiving an education - the highest proportion of out of school children in the world according to a report launched by UNESCO on 3 July 2018. Years of conflict, displacement and economic collapse continue to deprive children of education, harming the future of the country.

The Global Initiative on Out of School Children South Sudan Country Study, authored by UNESCO jointly with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, is a first for the country, and warns that in just two years the number of children out of school will increase by another 200,000, to 2.4 million, if conditions in the country remain unchanged.

“We cannot leave children behind. They are the future of South Sudan,” said Sardar Umar Alam, UNESCO’s Representative to South Sudan. “This is a call to action. We must work together – everyone including the government, civil society and development partners – to urgently support and invest in teachers and getting children into schools.”
The study also found that in addition to the large number of out of school children in South Sudan, up to 86% of learners are at least five years over age for their grade level – meaning that a learner in primary level 1 (entry age: 5 years-old) may be 10 years old or older. This proves to be a significant challenge especially for older learners where their needs are to obtain as quickly as possible the skills to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families.

The countrywide study calls for greater investments in improved education data to allow for evidence-based education activities and further profiling of out of school children, while stressing the importance of functional schools with clean water, books, trained teachers and a safe learning environment free from conflict.

“Investing in education is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do,” said Mahimbo Mdoe, UNICEF’s Representative in South Sudan. “Educated children are able to build a better future for themselves, and the country.”

Along with the Minister of General Education and Instruction, USAID, DFID, UNICEF, and the Ambassadors of Norway and Egypt to South Sudan strongly support the report and urge stakeholders to work together to get children back into school. The report was also made possible with support from the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF.

UN Women works to ensure voices of women in the grassroots are heard in the upcoming regional and national dialogue conferences

With support from UN Women, the women leaders in the National Dialogue Steering Committee conducted a consultation with women at the grassroots in all the former ten states of South Sudan. The aim was to create awareness to women about the political processes of the country and prepare them to effectively participate in the upcoming regional and national dialogue Conference that is scheduled to take place later this year.

The regional and national dialogue conference is a national dialogue initiative that aims to engage women from all the three regions of South Sudan, enable them to voice out their issues and come up with recommendations for bettering the country’s situation.

About 600 women from different backgrounds in all the former ten states attended the consultation, they said the meeting was very informative and they encouraged such visits to continue to enable connecting South Sudanese women in every part of the country towards a strong unified women’s voice.

“The workshop was very good. We understood the ongoing Peace talks in Addis Ababa and we raised recommendations for women to participate in the Peace talks and to soften the attitudes of the warring parties”.

The consultation was to identify challenges, find solutions and make recommendations in areas of Security and Security Sector, Governance and Rule of Law, Economy, Political, Institutional Building, Social Fabrics and Basic Services as well as Gender Based Violence.

Among the issues raised by the women were forced and child marriage, sexual harassment, lack of basic services, displacement and disintegration of family members due to the conflict. The women asked the government and all concerned authorities to consider these issues. What women will like to see are the full implementation of all laws that protect women and girls from sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women, provision of basic services and most importantly, peace in the country.

Fuel-efficient fire helps feeding school children as UN peacekeepers rebuild kitchen in Malakal

“Bring us cooking oil!”

The group of girls breaks out into giggles as the tall 12-year-old Nyanluak Nyok shouts out boldly.

Nyanluak and her classmates are pupils at the John Garang Primary School in Malakal. They have gathered to give us a tour of their newly renovated kitchen and its blossoming garden.

Rwandan peacekeepers have rebuilt the kitchen, installing their trademark fuel-efficient Rondereza stoves and adding a vegetable
garden that will boost an already existing school-feeding program.

“It used to be very demanding for us, cooking for all the children. We needed a lot of time, a lot of firewood and a lot of effort,” says Munybich Peter, a teacher at the school.

It turns out that this, challenging as it was, would have been on a lucky day.

“There was no roof and the walls were falling apart, so when the weather was bad we would sometimes not be able to provide lunch at all,” Munybich adds.

John Garang Primary school currently has more than 800 pupils, up from 450 when it reopened in late 2016. That is when a semblance of peace returned to Malakal, some 600 kilometers north of the capital Juba.

It is one of a handful of functional schools in a region that relies heavily on the support of UN agencies, and now the UN mission in South Sudan. The school-feeding program aims to encourage enrolment and to retain students who otherwise may have replacing learning with income-generating activities.

“Sometimes we get food at home, other times we don’t, but at least we know that in school we will eat food every day,” says 11-year old Achuei Monyluak.

Rondereza, which means “to economize” in Kinyarwanda, is the name given to the fuel-efficient stoves that are molded using readily available materials such as clay, grass and water. The stoves help reduce the environmental degradation resulting from cutting down trees for firewood or using charcoal.

Rwandan peacekeepers have previously taught local women how to build their own stoves for domestic use, a move aimed at reducing incidents of violence sometimes suffered by those collecting firewood.

“It is gratifying to see initiatives related to human security. It is a sign of the real difference we are making in people’s lives,” says the UN mission’s Force Commander Frank Mushyo Kamanzi.

He believes that the Rwandan simple, replicable and durable solution will have a long-lasting impact.

“It is no coincidence that this initiative has started in a school. This way the children will carry this experience with them to their homes.”

Pastoralists in Maban sign agreement regulating seasonal cross border migration at two-day post migration conference

Local community representatives, refugees living in Maban’s four camps and the nomadic Fallata met for a two-day post migration conference in Bunj town to support peaceful coexistence, as part of efforts to address long standing tensions stemming largely from disputes over grazing land, access to water and cattle damaging farms.

During the two-day conference from 28 to 29 June supported by UN Agencies – FAO, UNHCR, WFP, UNMISS, and partners HDC, DRC and ACTED, funded by the European Union, the participants reviewed challenges faced since the last migration conference in August 2017, formulated resolutions and recommendations and signed an agreement to govern annual livestock cross border migration to sustain peace.

“It pleases me to note that the conference participants have agreed to map the livestock cross border migration routes within Maban. I believe this will resolve most of the conflicts between cattle keepers. However, let me encourage the agencies to stand with us in implementing this urgent need to ensure peaceful co-existence between cattle-keepers and crop farmers,” said Mr Butrus Yiano, County Commissioner for Maban North East.

Leaders acknowledged that the traditional joint court and Joint Peace Committees previously established in Maban were working well in mitigating disputes and the administration of justice between Mabanese and refugees. To encourage cohesion, the resolution was passed to include representatives from the nomadic Fallata and other Arab pastoralists previously excluded into the courts, especially during migration time.

Participants of the conference during a group discussion. © FAO
“We spend about half of the year in South Sudan, and in the course of our stay we face many challenges. This post-migration conference has given us an opportunity to feel that we are valued and indeed we will honor our commitment to these agreements,” expressed Ahmed Sulieman Hassan, Fallata community leader.

Participants of the conference also highlighted that peace would bring economic gain to their area, and that their livestock need to be protected against diseases. The parties agreed that animal health services needed to be scaled up, benefiting all participating groups, and in the case of vaccines offered to the community, a cost-recovery mechanism would be set up by the Government to facilitate payment of community animal health workers.

New Fish Storage Facility Launched in Greater Jonglei

A new facility to improve fish processing and storage was commissioned on 29 June 2018 in Bor along a critical supply chain benefiting both Fangak Nuer and Jonglei Dinka communities. The facility is funded by DFID and UNDP.

“The launch of this plant is a historic moment for the development of Greater Jonglei. The success of this facility lies with those who will be in charge of maintaining and properly utilizing this place. (...) We look forward to building on the success here and to welcoming more development projects like this in the future,” said Jonglei State Governor Hon. Phillip Aguer Panyang, at the commissioning ceremony on Friday.

In addition to the state governor, the handover was attended by the Chair of the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission Hon. Chuol Rambang, Jonglei State Minister of Youth and Sports Hon. Abraham Dut Bol, Chair of the Jonglei State Peace Commission Mr. David Ayang, Mayor of Bor Town Hon. Gai Makor Leek, UNMISS Head of Bor Field Office Ms. Deborah Schein and representatives of youth organizations and UNDP.

As a result of earlier consultations, the presence of a cold fish storage processing facility was prioritized by the local youth representatives as a way to solidify interdependency between neighboring communities. These communities have historically remained linked economically despite conflict.

The facility will allow fish product originating in the Toich swamps to be stored at the optimum low temperature, in turn enabling the sale and purchase by suppliers on the local market, before being sorted and transported to consumers in Juba. The facility will improve the pre-existing “relay” model of economic cooperation that benefits both Fangak Nuer and Jonglei Dinka fishermen in the area.

Additionally, expansion of the fish trade among local youth can improve the livelihood and economic conditions of fishermen and fish sellers from both communities and, thereby, strengthen their interdependence.

“This facility will stand as an opportunity for youth to build a foundation for their economic futures and develop lasting and productive livelihoods to benefit not only themselves but their communities at large. The money that will be generated by this facility can grow from a just a seed into a tree with many branches of prosperity.

With a vision and unwavering tenacity, the potential of wealth can accumulate into a home-grown Jongei big business, if well managed and well maintained. We hope that youth across Jonglei and beyond will have equal access and shares within this facility,” said UNDP Country Director Dr. Kamil Kamaluddeen, at the commissioning of the compound.

UN Environment conducts field visit to Terekeka and a workshop in Juba on social and economic safeguards

As one of the last remaining activities in preparation GEF funded project proposal being developed by the MoEF and UNEP on “Strengthening Capacity of Communities and government to adapt to climate change challenges”, UN Environment team in Juba including Senior Programme Officer from Policy and Programme Division based in Nairobi and a representative from the national Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) conducted a two-day Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards consultation field mission to Terekeka.

The purpose of the field mission was to meet the local government officials and community representatives to discuss future direct or indirect unintended negative effects that implementation of the adaptation project will bring to the areas and their livelihoods. Various key stakeholders including government, pastoralists, farmers, youth and women groups interacted and provided useful information to the team.

One key outcome of the discussions was a demand for a participatory approach that involves the local communities as primary stakeholders in all stages of the project. The team emphasised use of available resources and traditional/indigenous knowledge for the mitigation of potential risks and post-project
The field visit was followed by a one-day workshop held in Juba on Wednesday 14th June 2018 to further discuss Environmental, Social, and Economic Safeguards/Sustainability. The workshop was attended by 45 participants drawn from government officials from relevant line ministries, academia, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, etc.

The workshop was organised to present and review the proposed activities for the project and then identify and discuss potential direct or indirect harm that might result from implementation of this project to the environment and communities of the target areas.

UNEP South Sudan in collaboration with the National Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) is currently developing this project proposal on “Strengthening Capacity of Communities and Government to adapt to climate change challenges”. This proposal shall be submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) fund for Least Developed Countries before end of the year 2018. Terekeka is one of the potential sites earmarked for implementation of this climate change adaptation project.

The key issues discussed during the field visit include:

1. Biodiversity, natural habitat and sustainable management of other living resources;
2. Resource efficiency, pollution prevention and management of chemicals and wastes;
3. Displacement and forced resettlement;
4. Labour and working conditions;
5. Gender equity;
6. Economic sustainability;
7. Cultural heritage.