



QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024

#Musharaka4Tanmiya

[SOUTHSUDAN.UNFPA.ORG](https://southsudan.unfpa.org)

Table of contents

Message from the UNFPA Officer in Charge.....	3
Victoria’s Journey: From a curious clerk to a dedicated midwife committed to Safe Motherhood.....	4
Restoring Hope and Healing Amidst the Floodwaters: Maria’s Journey as a Community Hero.....	6
Movies Empower Youth in Torit with Vital Sexual and Reproductive Health Information.....	8
UNFPA South Sudan Conducts Midyear Review of Progress Amid Funding Challenges.....	10
The language of compassion —the sign language for nurses and midwives	12
Survivors finding Hope and Reclaiming Lives at One-Stop Centre in Wau.....	14
Bringing Hope to Survivors: Tackling Gender-Based Violence in Crisis Areas.....	17
Leaving No One Behind: UNFPA supports visually impaired students at the Rajaf School for the Blind.....	19
Tune in to YouthZone72: Empowering South Sudanese Youth for a Brighter Future.....	21
Saving lives through locally trained Health care workers.....	23

Message from UNFPA Officer in Charge



Ms. Sarah Morati Masale

Dear esteemed readers,

It is a pleasure to bring to you our Newsletter for quarter three of 2024, highlighting what we have delivered with our partners in the months of July, August and September.

In this edition, we put on the spotlight interventions that are: transforming the lives of women and girls; empowering young people; and providing much needed assistance to those affected by humanitarian crises.

While the country continues to grapple with multiple and protracted humanitarian crises, climate change has become a major factor in increased flooding. This year's floods are expected to reach unprecedented levels, causing massive displacements and service disruptions. Women and girls bare the full blunt of these calamities and their vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful coping mechanisms such as forced and child marriage, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) concerns will likely increase.

UNFPA is on ground responding to the multiple crises with its frontline partners offering SRHR and GBV services, including critical supplies such as dignity and reproductive health kits to assist young girls and women fleeing conflict and those displaced by natural disasters.

The need to continue improving the capacity of the Nurses and Midwives and the support to One Stop Centers remains key for the Government of South Sudan and UNFPA as the country works towards improving the SRHR and GBV indicators. In this regard, critical interventions were undertaken in this quarter.

South Sudan joined the rest of the world to commemorate the International Youth Day and World Contraception Day, underpinning the country's commitment to advancing global and national commitments on youth development and towards improving access to family planning services.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government of South Sudan for its leadership and commitment to the ICPD agenda.

I thank our donors for supporting our efforts in South Sudan.

Much appreciation to our partners for the fruitful collaboration and partnership towards delivering our Country Programme targets. It has not been an easy period with the introduction of a new global system, but you have walked the journey with us with commitment and dedication.

I want to thank in a special way, the UNFPA South Sudan team, each one of them, for the role they play in ensuring that we mobilize partnerships and resources, and that we remain accountable for the resources and results. I always tell my friends that, "WE ARE ORANGE BY CHOICE".

As we strive to deliver a world and a South Sudan where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is

fulfilled, we count on the leadership of the Government of South Sudan and the collaboration with all our stakeholders to accelerate actions as we move closer to the end of the year.

We look forward to continued collaboration to deliver better for the women and girls, and young people in South Sudan, reaching the farthest to ensure no one is left behind.

Enjoy reading!

Victoria's Journey: From a curious clerk to a dedicated midwife committed to Safe Motherhood

In Yambio, South Sudan, where maternal health challenges are constant and resources are scarce, one woman shines as a beacon of hope—Mongoye Victoria, a midwife and supervisor of the maternity unit at Yambio Hospital. Her dedication to ensuring safe motherhood has transformed the lives of countless women in her community. But her path to becoming a midwife was anything but conventional.

Victoria's journey began in a place she never expected—working as a clerk at the hospital. Fresh out of school, she found herself fascinated by the midwives, drawn to their professionalism and life-saving work. *“I admired how they carried themselves, their uniforms, and most importantly, the difference they made in people's lives,”* Victoria recalls. But it wasn't until a personal crisis struck that her admiration turned into a calling.

One day, Victoria rushed her sister to the hospital in a critical condition. Watching the doctors and midwives work tirelessly to save her sister's life left a deep impression. *“I was so moved by their dedication. That was when I knew—I wanted to save lives too,”* she says, her voice thick with emotion. From that moment, her course was set..



Mongoye Victoria in her duty station

Soon after, Victoria seized an opportunity when a training program came to the hospital, securing a position as a midwife assistant. For two years, from 2011 to 2013, she trained on the job, assisting with deliveries even before formally entering school. In 2016, when the Yambio Health Science Institute opened its doors, she enrolled and earned her diploma in midwifery, finally formalizing the skills she had honed through years of hands-on experience. *“I've been at this hospital since 2010, but getting my diploma was a proud moment—it felt like everything finally came together,”* she says with a smile.

Today, Victoria is not only a midwife but a leader. She oversees all the midwives at Yambio Hospital, manages supplies, mentors new midwives, and handles the most complex delivery cases. Her work is a blend of challenges and fulfillment. *“Every complicated case I manage feels like a journey of growth,”* she says, reflecting on her role.

Continuous learning is also crucial to Victoria's work. With the support of UNFPA and Amref Health Africa, Victoria and her team participate in weekly Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions, which help them stay up to date with best practices. *"The CPD programs have been key to improving our skills. We identify the areas we need to learn more about, and this has made us better health workers,"* Victoria shares.

But the path to providing safe motherhood in Yam-bio is not easy. The hospital heavily relies on donor support, and when projects phase out, challenges arise—especially the shortage of essential drugs and supplies. *"When we don't have the resources we need, fewer mothers come to the hospital, and that's heartbreaking,"* she explains. Despite these obstacles, Victoria remains optimistic, crediting organizations like UNFPA and Amref for their ongoing support. *"Their help with incentives, capacity building, and supplies has kept us going,"* she acknowledges gratefully.

Looking ahead, Victoria is determined to expand the services offered at the hospital. *"We have started holding weekend sessions for young, first-time mothers to teach them how to care for themselves and their babies,"* she says with passion. Her vision also includes integrating youth-friendly services into the maternity ward, ensuring that young mothers receive the care and support they need.

Victoria at the maternity ward store, which acts as her office Victoria's journey—from a curious clerk to a dedicated midwife—embodies hope, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to safe motherhood. In a region where so many women face life-threatening risks during pregnancy and childbirth, Victoria stands as a symbol of strength, continually working to make a difference, one mother at a time.



Restoring Hope and Healing Amidst the Floodwaters: Maria's Journey as a Community Hero



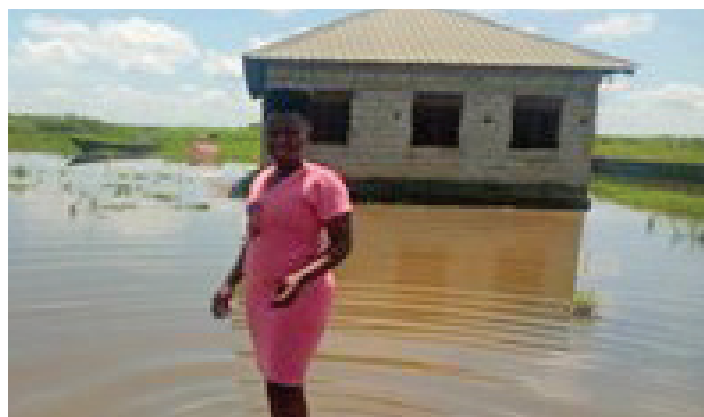
The level of the floodwaters in Minkaman-Lake state.

In the heart of Minkaman, a small village nestled along the banks of the River Nile in South Sudan's Lakes State, hope often seems elusive. For the past two months, devastating floods have engulfed the region, leaving thousands of families in peril. But amidst the floodwaters, Maria, a 28-year-old peer counsellor, has become a community hero, standing resilient in her mission to restore healing and hope. Maria's mission is simple but essential - to educate, support, advocate for change and empower her community during challenging times.

Maria's life has always been intertwined with her community, but now, as floodwaters rise and the village is submerged in crisis, her role has taken on profound importance. Her work goes far beyond sharing knowledge. She has become a bridge between the community and humanitarian partners

educating, advocating, and empowering those who have been stripped of nearly everything.

"We lost our homes, our crops, but not our will to fight," Maria says, her voice filled with quiet determination. "I can't stand by and watch my people struggle without doing something. I'm part of this community. Their challenges are my challenges too." She further explains.



Ms. Maria Nazziwa Nyombi during field visit in Minkaman-Lake state.

As a trained peer counsellor working with the National Empowerment of Positive Women United (NEPWU), Maria works closely with other local health workers and community leaders. She reaches out to the most vulnerable—the Key Populations (KPs) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)—in areas often overlooked by traditional aid. She travels tirelessly through the muddy, water-logged paths to deliver HIV prevention messages and provide psychosocial support. These journeys, while physically gruelling, are also deeply personal for Maria, whose heart is anchored in her community's well-being. Her impact is also not lost on those around her.

“Peer educators like Maria are invaluable in disaster-stricken areas, they are trusted by the KPs, they understand the local dynamics, and they can communicate essential health information in ways that outsiders often can’t.” said Mr. Paul, a health official working alongside her in Minkaman.

Despite the challenges—floods, disease outbreaks, and the harsh realities of life in a remote, neglected village, Maria's work as a peer educator has made an indelible mark on her community. Her tireless efforts have not only helped reduce the spread of HIV by providing critical information on prevention; she is also fostering a sense of unity, resilience, and hope in a place where despair has become all too common..

As floodwaters slowly recede and the village begins the long process of rebuilding, Maria's work shines brighter. She is a reminder that in times of disaster, it is often the people from within—the ones who know the pain and the land—who bring about the deepest change. Her story embodies the power of grassroots action in the face of overwhelming adversity. *“Being a peer educator isn't just a job,” Maria reflects. “It's a responsibility to the specific community I serve, to ensure that we can survive and rebuild, no matter what challenges come our way.”* She adds.

With the support of the Global fund through UNFPA, NEPWU continues to reach out to sex workers and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with HIV prevention services in Minkaman County, ensuring that no one is left behind in the fight for survival and recovery. Maria's journey is just one story in a community of quiet heroes, but it is one that best demonstrates the strength that can emerge from the most unexpected places.

Movies Empower Youth in Torit with Vital Sexual and Reproductive Health Information



Photos taken at Torit youth Centre during a movie session.

In a small room filled with laughter and chatter, young faces light up as the screen comes to life. But this isn't just any movie night. In Torit, South Sudan, a unique initiative is making waves by using films as a tool to educate adolescents and youth on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). In a country where many young people lack access to accurate information, these movie shows offer a creative and engaging way to reach them. Movie-based interventions have been embraced worldwide by adolescents as educational tool but their use in South Sudan remains under explored

For 19-year-old Pascal Iyom, the experience has been life-changing. *"I feel more confident discussing my questions about relationships with my friends. It's important for us to know what's right*

and make better choices about our bodies," she shared after watching one of the films. Such feedback underscores the positive impact that accessible information can have on youth empowerment.

The initiative, led by the Torit Youth-Friendly Health Centre, combines entertainment with education. These films—carefully chosen to reflect issues relevant to youth—tackle complex topics like consent, safe sex, and mental health, presenting them in a way that resonates with young people. By telling stories through characters they can relate to, the films create a safe space for discussing sensitive subjects that are often hard to talk about openly.

For Philip Ohure, an 18-year-old from Torit, the

impact was immediate. *“I didn’t know we had good programs and services at this youth-friendly centre before this movie show. Now, I feel like I have options of where to get help when I need it.”*

These movie sessions go beyond entertainment; they foster a sense of community and support, encouraging young people to engage in open conversations about their health. After each film, discussions are led by a reproductive health officer who answers questions and provides guidance. This interactive element has made the sessions even more impactful, breaking down barriers that often prevent youth from accessing SRH services.

“I never thought talking about sex could be so easy!” remarked one viewer during a post-movie discussion. “The characters feel like my friends. They make me want to learn more, and I feel free to ask questions.”

Since the initiative began, over 4,000 young people have attended the movie shows in just eight months. The programme, supported by the Impact Health Organization (IHO) and UNFPA, has not only provided critical information but has also empowered adolescents to take control of their sexual health with confidence. The result? A growing community of informed youth who feel heard, understood, and capable of making informed decisions about their well-being.

For many in Torit, these movie shows are more than just a fun night out—they are a lifeline, providing knowledge that could change the course of their lives. Through this simple yet powerful approach, a new generation is being empowered to make healthy choices, paving the way for a brighter future in South Sudan.



UNFPA South Sudan Conducts Midyear Review of Progress Amid Funding Challenges



A photo of key stakeholders and participants during the midyear review meeting

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in partnership with key stakeholders, recently held a mid-year review of its country programme to assess progress in implementing the 2024 work plans in South Sudan. The mid-year review was chaired by the Ministry of Finance.

During the review, Sarah Masale, the Officer-in-Charge of UNFPA South Sudan, highlighted ongoing funding challenges that continue to impact the execution of some of the country programme activities. However, she also celebrated a significant achievement: *“UNFPA South Sudan has been recognized as one of the top-performing office in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, a success attributed to the dedication and hard work of our team and partners,”* she said.

Mario Velvour Gunda, Director General for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, commended the

support provided by UNFPA towards empowering youth over the years, adding that partners need to ensure that resources are directed towards addressing critical issues affecting the population, especially young people.



Sarah Masale, the Officer-in-Charge of UNFPA speaking during the review meeting

Janet Michael, Director General for Nursing and Midwifery at the National Ministry of Health, shared

insights into the funding shortfalls that are affecting UNFPA's ability to deliver on its programmes. She also urged partners to continue their collaboration in addressing the country's pressing health challenges. "The healthcare sector faces numerous challenges that require sustained commitment and resource allocation. Continued partnership is vital to improve healthcare services across the

nation," she emphasized.

The semi-annual review of the second year of implementation of the fourth country programme between the Government of South and UNFPA was attended by government officials and partners. It served as a platform for reflection, collaboration and strategic planning to advance development goals in South Sudan..



The language of compassion —the sign language for nurses and midwives



photo taken during training of nurses and midwives on language of compassion

In the heart of Juba, where challenges often outweigh opportunities, a quiet revolution is taking place—a revolution of compassion, understanding, and inclusion of sign language in delivery health services. A group of sixteen (16) dedicated nurses and midwives gathered for a five-day training that would forever change how they interact with their patients and, indeed, the world around them.

This was no ordinary training. Organized by the South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association (SSNAMA), in partnership with UNFPA, this five-day sign language training for nurses and midwives was aimed at bridging the gap that too often leaves people in silence. It was about learning to speak a language that is not spoken with the voice but with the heart—the language of sign. The main objective was to promote disability inclusion and improve communication with patients with hearing impairments. The training was facilitated by

experts from Humanity and Inclusion.

The experts from Humanity and Inclusion did more than just teach basic sign language skills; they opened a window into the lives of those who navigate the world without sound. Participants learned not just how to communicate through sign but also about the rich history of sign language, the barriers faced by people with disabilities, and the urgent need for inclusion in healthcare.

The training delved into common terminologies, greetings, grammar, alphabets, and action words, but its true impact went beyond these basics. The sessions fostered an understanding that communication is more than words; it is about connection, empathy, and ensuring that no one is left behind. The participants learned to see their patients not as problems to be solved but as individuals with unique needs and strengths.

One of the most powerful moments came when the group discussed the importance of using positive terminologies to reduce stigmatization. They realized that language—whether spoken or signed—has the power to either alienate or embrace. From that moment, these healthcare professionals committed themselves to being agents of change, ensuring that their practice would be inclusive, respectful, and empowering.

Among the participants was Amina, a midwife who has spent years bringing life into the world. For her, this training was transformative. “I always believed I was doing my best for my patients,” she reflected, “but now I see how many voices I couldn’t hear. This training has given me new ears—ears that listen to the silence and understand the unspoken needs of those who have been voiceless for too long.”

As the training concluded, the participants left not just with new skills but with a renewed sense of

purpose. They had become advocates for a more inclusive healthcare system in South Sudan, where every patient, regardless of their abilities, is treated with dignity and respect.

The journey doesn’t end here. A follow-up programme is already in the works to ensure that these new skills are practiced and that the spirit of inclusion continues to grow. The ripple effect of this training is expected to reach far beyond the walls, touching lives and transforming healthcare practices across the region.

In a country where the challenges are many, this training represents a beacon of hope. It is a reminder that change is possible when people come together with a shared vision of a better, more inclusive world. For the nurses and midwives who took part, it was not just a training session—it was the beginning of a journey towards creating a future where no one is left behind.



Survivors finding Hope and Reclaiming Lives at One-Stop Centre in Wau



In the heart of Western Bahr El Ghazal's Wau, where the trauma of gender-based violence once silenced many voices, a refuge of hope has emerged—the One-Stop Centre. For survivors like Mary, a 17-year-old girl who came to the centre seeking help after enduring months of abuse, it became a place where fear gave way to strength. This centre, run by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) and supported by UNFPA through the Swiss Agency for Development, has transformed lives by offering vital, life-saving services all in one place.

At the One-Stop Centre, survivors find more than just a helping hand—they discover a community of people ready to help them reclaim their future. Women and girls, some as young as five, arrive at the centre seeking not just medical care, but emotional and legal support. For Mary, the first step was receiving urgent medical attention. The next was speaking to a social counsellor who listened as she poured out her story of suffering.

Survivors like Mary also meet with people like Linda Michael, a legal advisor who helps guide them through the complex and intimidating legal system. *"Many women are afraid to speak out, afraid to go to court. But I walk with them every step of the way,"* Linda shares. Between January and August this year alone, 477 survivors sought legal counselling at the centre. Of those, 63 decided to take their cases to court—seeking justice for the wrongs they endured. Although the process is not easy—23 cases resulted in convictions, while others faced challenges—survivors who continue to push forward are showing that silence is no longer the only option.

The centre's impact ripples far beyond the walls of the building. Workshops and seminars, led by dedicated staff, are changing attitudes in Wau and neighbouring states. By educating communities about the long-term effects of gender-based violence and breaking down harmful cultural norms, the centre is fostering change at every level. *"We¹⁵*

are seeing more people speak out, seeking help, and understanding that violence is not acceptable,” says one of the centre’s staff members. Their efforts are already making a difference, with reports of gender-based violence declining as more survivors find the courage to seek help and fight for justice.

For many survivors, the journey to recovery is long, but the One-Stop Centre provides a lifeline. By offering holistic care, from medical treatment to social support and legal advocacy, it empowers women to rebuild their lives on their terms.

The centres’ work goes beyond healing physical wounds—it is about helping survivors rediscover their strength, reclaim their voices, and create brighter futures.

The One-Stop Centre stands as a beacon of hope, not only for Wau but for communities across South Sudan. It shows the transformative power of comprehensive support in tackling gender-based violence and proves that change is possible when survivors are given the tools they need to rise again..



Chief Malok Dhuol Akek, among the panelists during the dialogue on bride price, the burden, pressure and pride it comes with



Canada officials and UNFPA in a visit at One Stop Center in Juba



South Sudan hosted the first Intercontinental Youth Summit in Juba.



New Canada Ambassador in South Sudan H.E Joanne Minns welcomed by UNFPA OIC Ms Sarah Masale. Canada is a longstanding partner in SRH/GBV



UNFPA joins Ministry of Health in commamoration of world contraception day

Bringing Hope to Survivors: Tackling Gender-Based Violence in Crisis Areas



A survivor being attended to by a case manager at women and girls friendly space

In South Sudan, the scars of gender-based violence (GBV) run deep, worsened by years of communal conflict, harmful cultural norms, and the recent influx of returnees fleeing conflict in neighbouring Sudan. For women and girls, the threat of violence is ever-present, especially as they cross borders in search of safety. The situation is particularly dire in regions facing severe humanitarian crises, where access to life-saving services is limited.

For men and boys, the barriers to accessing support are even higher. Stigma and disbelief surround male survivors of violence, making it difficult for them to seek help. Yet, gender-based violence does not discriminate, and both men and women suffer in silence.

“I was brutalized while fleeing the conflict in Sudan by brutal rapists. My health was in danger and hardly walked to cross the border like others. For days, I finally arrived in Malakal town where a fellow woman directed me to a friendly space for women and girls that provide psychosocial

support and access to economic empowerment opportunities I was then referred to a one-stop centre where I accesses medical, psychosocial, and legal support. The service providers never abandoned me until I recovered and became stronger to live in the community.” Nyajok (not real name), a South Sudanese returnee from Sudan.

With support from Canada, UNFPA through partner – Hope Restoration runs an integrated programme for prevention and response to GBV including knowledge, availability, and accessibility of GBV services and support groups and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. These integrated programmes elevate the voices of women and girls who are GBV survivors, advocates, and leaders of GBV services by addressing social norms and fully engaging with men and boys in their roles as community leaders, support partners, caregivers, perpetrators, and/or survivors. This engagement includes trauma-informed restorative justice responses to reduce recidivism and break cycles of violence.

“Despite the threats GBV poses to the protection of women and girls, in most cases, it is rarely discussed within communities. Many survivors therefore prefer not to report incidents of GBV out of fear or taboo. With continuous community sensitization and awareness of services, those affected including survivors have reported cases and taken prevention initiatives within communities” says Ms. Norin Nyanjang, Project officer – Mayom.

UNFPA works with all stakeholders to change attitudes and behaviours that make GBV acceptable in the community by supporting women and girls’ friendly spaces and one-stop centres across the

country that provide GBV prevention and response services.

The programme reaches remote areas such as Bentiu, Leer, Akobo West, Mayendit, and Malakal—places where humanitarian needs are critical. By strengthening the capacity of service providers, UNFPA ensures that even the most isolated communities can access essential GBV prevention and response services. In these challenging environments, the project brings not only services but hope, helping survivors reclaim their lives and communities work towards a future free from violence.



Leaving No One Behind: UNFPA supports visually impaired students at the Rajaf School for the Blind



Photo of the donated education materials

In a heartwarming step towards fostering inclusive education, the Resilience Organization, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has brought hope to visually impaired students through a donation of much-needed educational materials to assist visually impaired students at Rajaf Education Centre. This donation wasn't just an act of charity; it was a testament to the belief that every child, regardless of their circumstances, deserves the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Kevin Abalo, the passionate Executive Director of Resilience Organization, highlighted that the donation ensures inclusive education for all learners, particularly those with disabilities.

“We aim to ensure no student is left behind due to disability,” Abalo stated during the handover ceremony at the school in Juba.

Since 2022, Resilience Organization and UNFPA have been dedicated partners to Rajaf School for the Blind, a beacon of hope for young people living with visual impairment. Together, they've ensured that students not only receive an education but also equal access to vital sexual and reproductive health information and services—rights that should be available to all, regardless of disability.



Kevin Abalo the executive director of resilience organization speaking during the handover ceremony

Gillian Butts-Garnett, UNFPA Programme Specialist, emphasized the importance of collective community efforts in raising children, expressing UNFPA's commitment to supporting the country's youth.

“Disability is not inability. We, at UNFPA ensure our programs are inclusive. We have seen people with disabilities graduate as nurses, midwives, doctors and other professionals that contribute to their well-being and that of this country” said Gillian, representing UNFPA at handover ceremony.

For many at the Rajaf School for the Blind, this donation is more than just books and materials—it's a lifeline to inclusion, dignity, and opportunity. Ben Lou Boggo, Director of Inclusive Education at the Ministry of General Education and Instruction stressed that education should be inclusive to prevent the isolation and discrimination of students with disabilities.

The Rajaf School for the Blind, established in 1982 as a rehabilitation centre on the Nile, was created to support visually impaired individuals, including those who are blind or partially sighted.



The school focused on training students in handicrafts and was the only institution of its kind for the blind in the entire South Sudan. Now, thanks to ongoing support from partners like Resilience Organization and UNFPA, Rajaf School continues to grow as a place where students can dream beyond their disabilities and aspire to a future filled with possibilities.

This act of generosity is a reminder to us all: when we work together to uplift those who are often left behind, we unlock the potential of every individual, ensuring no one is left out of the journey toward a better tomorrow.



Tune in to YouthZone72: Empowering South Sudanese Youth for a Brighter Future



Baria Jonhson the Host

It's a busy Saturday for Gak Malek, the Program Co-ordinator at YouthZone72. The weekly radio show is about to air, and one of the featured guests has fallen ill. With just hours to go, Gak makes a flurry of phone calls and finds a replacement. *"Our audience expects the best, and it's important that we have the most informed guests on the show,"* he says with relief. This week's topic? Dowries — what are the rules, and what do dowries mean for young people today?

YouthZone72 is no ordinary radio show – this groundbreaking radio show provides a “safe space” for young people to discuss aspects of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) including gender-based violence, what is consent, adolescent health, mental health, financial literacy and much more. Airing every Saturday at 4:00 p.m. on EYE Radio and streamed live on Facebook, the

program reaches an average of one million listeners weekly, with an additional 5,000 tuning in via Facebook Live.

In four years, YouthZone72 has become one of the most informative, inspirational and inclusive youth radio programs in South Sudan. To make it inclusive, the radio program offers sign language interpretation for the persons with hearing impairment and the deaf community during its Facebook broadcasts—something no other radio show in South Sudan does.

The name YouthZone72 isn't just catchy—it reflects a powerful truth. Approximately, seventy-two percent of South Sudan's population is under 35 years old, making it the not only the youngest country, but one of them with the youngest populations globally. After years of conflict, young people face tremendous challenges. YouthZone72

steps in by offering them a safe, judgement-free space to talk about their health, relationships, and futures, no matter their ability, HIV status, gender or background.

At the heart of every episode is a young expert, who tackles pressing SRHR-related questions, along with a guest, sharing personal stories of survival —whether from gender-based violence or addiction. These discussions are essential, especially for young women, who often feel excluded from these spaces.

“SRHR isn’t just about condoms. It’s about who you are as a person, your rights, your relationships with family and friends, and your role in the community. Our decisions impact more than just ourselves.” Gak explains.

Behind the scenes is a passionate and committed team with Gak, including Alex Wysocki-Najar (Communications Lead Canadian Association of Midwives), from the Canadian Association of Midwives; Kezia Kayanga (Commercial Program Manager -EYE Radio); Baria Johnson, the show’s dynamic host; and Grace Anviiko, the sign language interpreter, ensuring the program’s reach extends to all corners of the community. But the impact doesn’t stop at the radio. YouthZone72 also produces magazines and comic books, providing youth centres across the country with resources that address critical issues like consent and adolescent health, reinforcing the show’s message.

One memorable moment for Gak was when the show featured a young man who had lost both parents, was abused, and grew up homeless. Against all odds, he found support, went to school, and is now studying medicine at the University of Juba. *“His story reflects the experiences of so many young people facing incredible challenges in their daily lives, yet rarely do they hear stories of others who have overcome similar struggles. That’s where YouthZone72 comes in—giving young people the chance to be inspired by their peers.”*

explains Gak. *“This story is just one example of how YouthZone72 inspires young people by showing them that overcoming adversity is possible.”*

With plans to expand, Gak and his team are committed to empowering even more youth across the nation. *“The challenges are big, but so is the potential,”* says Gak. *“We’re investing in the next generation, and that’s the key to a brighter future.”* Tune in to YouthZone72 every Saturday at 4 p.m. on EYE Radio and Facebook Live. With your support, we can create a brighter future together.

YouthZone72 is part of the UNFPA-led HR4 project, funded by Global Affairs Canada. The show is produced by the Canadian Association of Midwives in collaboration with Shabab le Shabab and the South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association.

Saving lives through locally trained Health care workers



Adeng Dot Deng measuring blood pressure of a pregnant women at Kuajok Hospital

The maternal deaths of 1,223 per 100,000 live-births in South Sudan indicates that the situation is the worst globally. In Kuajok State Hospital six (6) maternal deaths occurred in 2023 alone and this could be attributed to multifaceted factors including severest shortages of qualified skilled health care workers which is far less than the WHO recommendation of 2.3 per 1,000 population.

The Health Science Institutes are therefore considered critical in reducing the gap in health Work force but are faced with technical and operational challenges.

Adeng Dot Deng, a 28-year Registered Midwife, from Mayom Boma, Gogrial East County, Warrap State who joined Kuajok Health Science Institute in 2021 and was among the 15 Midwives who graduated in 2023. Like many students, Adeng faced challenges of paying tuition fees and during the final year of study, her parents could not pay part of Tuition fees nevertheless the Institute allowed her to sit for her final examination.

“I want to thank Kuajok Health Institute for allowing me to sit for my final examination even with dues. They valued the services of midwives in saving lives of mothers, newborns including other health services needed to improve lives of our people” said Adeng.

In the same year of support, a total of 72 students graduated from various courses much higher than in the previous years.

Upon completion of the Midwifery Course, Adeng chose to volunteer in Kuajok State Hospital and fortunately with the coming of Health Sector Transformation Project (HSTP), She has been included for incentives payment.

Graduates from KHSI are mostly deployed across the health facilities in the State.

“90% of the health care workers in Warrap State are our products, we are proud of them and the life-saving services they offer” said the Deputy Principal Tutor.

Since Adeng Dot Deng joined Kuajok State Hospital, she has been providing antenatal services to pregnant mothers, delivered over 20 mothers, and managed two labor complications (excessive bleeding after labor and those with high blood pressure).

Its undoubtedly the life of Adeng has changed and the services she provides are commendable by the patients and the hospital itself. HLSS will continue to lobby for more funding from Donors to support training of health care workers in the local Health Institution like Kuajok Health Science Institute, which is cost effective, responsive to the need of the community and critical in saving the lives of mothers and newborn in the Warrap State and South Sudan at large.



Health Link South Sudan received funding from UNFPA to support health care workers training at Kuajok Health Science Institute specifically supporting tutors' in-service training, support clinical practice, and tutors' incentive.





southsudan.unfpa.org



UNFPA South Sudan



UNFPASouthsudan



SOUTH SUDAN