

QUATERLY NEWSLETTER

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DIGNITY KIT

NOT FOR SALE

ISSUE 12

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Message from UNFPA Officer in Charge



Ms. Suzanne Mandong

Esteemed readers and partners, UNFPA South Sudan brings you the first quarter (January – March) Newsletter for the year 2025. This is a collection of stories highlighting UNFPA South Sudan Country Office’s response as it works around the Development, Humanitarian, and Peace Nexus.

In this edition, you will read stories of rebuilding lives of women refugees and returnees affected by crisis, climate change and how it deepens gender inequality, raising the voices of women at national and global platforms as well as efforts to enhance the dignity of vulnerable women and girls. The newsletter also reflects on engagement of young people through debates to make informed choices on their reproductive health, and training of health professionals especially midwives and nurses as a critical strategy for improving health for the people of South Sudan.

The month of March was important for UNFPA with the commemoration of International Women’s Day and a statement by East and Southern Africa Regional Director (ESARO) that call on investments in

the health and rights of women and girls, unleashing the potential of half of humanity, leading to safer and more prosperous societies for everyone.

In addition, high-level engagements held include the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York. South Sudan took the opportunity to highlight to the global community the challenges that confront women in South Sudan, as well as their resilience and agency, including the strides the Government and partners have made in supporting their empowerment.

South Sudan is faced with multiple crises such as climate shocks, the influx of refugees and returnees affected by the war in Sudan and heightened internal conflict. With this, many women and girls are falling victim to conflict-related sexual and Gender-Based Violence, putting them at constant threat to lose lives, in addition to loss of health services and other basic needs. UNFPA is on the ground to deliver lifesaving services and uphold dignity.

With changing global financing landscape and the devastating funding cuts the organization has received, UNFPA recommits its efforts to our core mission of supporting the delivering a South Sudan where every pregnancy is intended, every childbirth is safe, and every young person’s potential is fulfilled. I reaffirm commitment to collective efforts for the prosperity and wellbeing of the people of South Sudan.

Peace must be our promise to women and girls: As conflict rises and funds fall, we must protect lives and dignity of the people in South Sudan



The people of South Sudan deserve peace — not fear.

Yet in recent weeks, we have seen the fragile calm unravel. Armed clashes, aerial bombings, and intercommunal violence especially in Upper Nile State are escalating dangerously. Political tensions have deepened, threatening not only the country's hard-won stability but the very survival of its most vulnerable: women and girls.

This is alarming. Our teams are on the ground, witnessing the devastating impact firsthand. We are especially concerned by the sharp rise in gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and the collapse of essential health services. As in any crisis, it is women and girls who

suffer disproportionately.

Over 9.3 million people in South Sudan are in need of humanitarian assistance. Among them are 2.4 million women of reproductive age, including over 200,000 currently pregnant. These women are navigating childbirth in insecurity, displacement, and without reliable access to health care. The risks are unimaginable.

“No survivor of sexual violence should be denied care because a clinic was shut down due to insecurity”.

No woman should have to give birth on the floor of an overcrowded shelter with no midwife in sight. No girl should be forced into early marriage as a coping mechanism. No survivor of sexual violence

should be denied care because a clinic was shut down due to insecurity.

In Bentiu, we met young women who walked for hours through flooded plains just to reach a midwife. In Malakal, our mobile teams are providing care to displaced women in makeshift camps. In Nasir, a current flashpoint, we have prepositioned 3,000 dignity kits and 12 reproductive health kits, pending security clearance. These are not just supplies, they are a statement — we see you, we are here, and we will not stop trying.

UNFPA is delivering wherever and however we can. Five mobile health teams are serving remote communities with vital maternal and reproductive care. Seven Women and Girls' Friendly Spaces offer survivors of violence not just support, but safety, healing, and solidarity. And across Akobo, Mingkaman, Wau, Juba, and Malakal, our supported health facilities continue to provide the Minimum Initial Service Package — the gold standard in emergency reproductive health care.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently said, "All the dark clouds of a perfect storm have descended upon the people of the world's newest nation. South Sudan may have fallen off the world's radar, but we cannot let the situation fall over the abyss." His words reflect what we see every day: a country teetering on the edge, where action cannot wait.

But even as needs grow, funding is vanishing. The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan is

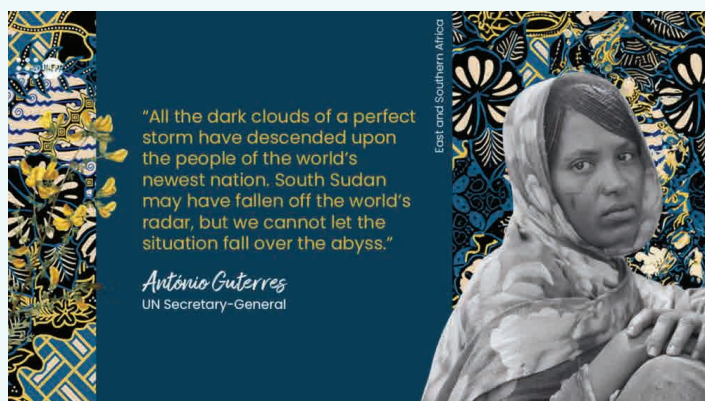
only 10 per cent funded. Of the \$8.8 million UNFPA requires for the next six months to meet urgent needs, we have received just \$1.2 million. This gap is not abstract, it means fewer health workers, closed clinics, and missed chances to save lives.

To the international community, we cannot look away. Now is the time to lean in, to support those who are holding the line under impossible conditions. Every contribution counts. Every dollar brings us closer to the woman giving birth safely, the girl going back to school, the survivor finally receiving care.

We also call on all stakeholders and leaders to recommit to the peace agreement and uphold their responsibility to protect civilians. Dialogue must replace violence. Access for humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. And services for women and girls must never be negotiable.

Peace is possible. But it must be more than a political goal — it must be a promise kept to every woman who is tired of fleeing, every girl who dreams of more, and every health worker who refuses to give up.

South Sudan's future depends on it.



Climate change deepens gender inequality and violence in South Sudan: UNFPA study highlights urgent need for action



A mother with her baby crossing flooded road in Maluakon

South Sudan faces multiple climate change crises including floods, droughts, and extreme heatwaves which exacerbate sexual exploitation and gender-based vulnerabilities affecting the quality of life, putting women and girls at constant threat to lose lives especially in poor resourced or absence of infrastructures.

In South Sudan, climate change is not just an environmental crisis; it is a gender crisis which worsens the health and wellbeing of women and girls.

A newly released Vulnerability Study conducted by UNFPA, in partnership with the Sudd Institute and the National Bureau of Statistics, has revealed the devastating impact of climate change on women and girls in South Sudan, particularly in Malakal, Kapoeta South, and Rubkona. The three study locations were prioritized due to their high exposure to climate-induced disasters, large, displaced populations, and pre-existing vulnerabilities that make women and girls particularly at risk. The findings were validated in a high-level workshop

attended by government officials, humanitarian actors, and development partners.

The study underscores that flooding (98% in Malakal, 92% in Rubkona) and drought (affecting 68% in Kapoeta South) are driving displacement, food insecurity, and livelihood losses. Heatwaves are also an emerging threat, with school closures and severe health risks reported in early 2025. These climate stressors disproportionately affect women and girls, increasing gender-based violence (GBV), restricting access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, and deepening gender inequalities.

The study also revealed that climate-induced disruptions are worsening maternal mortality (1,223 deaths per 100,000 live births), limiting contraceptive access (below 5%), and increasing child marriages. Flooded health facilities and extreme heat events have further strained healthcare access.

“Climate change is a profound humanitarian and development challenge particularly in this youngest nation. Women and girls are bearing the brunt, facing increased GBV risks, restricted healthcare access, and heightened economic insecurity. We must act urgently.” said Suzanne Mandong, UNFPA South Sudan Country Officer in Charge.

Women and girls at risk: A Climate-Induced Crisis

The study finds that 49.9% of respondents reported an increase in GBV in climate-affected areas. Drought and economic hardships are intensifying intimate partner violence (IPV), early marriages associated with high bride price considered as a source of income to families, and survival-driven

exploitation. Displacement due to floods has left many women and girls in unsafe shelters, exposing them to heightened risks such as rape

“We cannot separate climate resilience from gender justice,” stated Honourable James Hoth Mai, the National Minister of Labour. “Women must be empowered to lead climate adaptation efforts, and we must integrate GBV prevention into climate policies.”

In Rubkona, Tutchar aged 39, is a widow and mother of five children are among displaced people who have had to live a nomadic life due to natural disasters – floods. More than half of the displaced population are women and girls who continue to be subjected to violence especially during firewood collection, including sexual abuse, rape, and forced and child marriage. *“Most often, girls not attending school are expected and forced to marry. Child or Forced Marriage is seen as the solution to alleviate the family’s poverty, especially during flooding,”* says Tutchar.

Beyond floods, extreme heat waves in South Sudan exacerbates existing educational inequalities for girls in South Sudan significantly impacting girls’ education by forcing school closures, which disrupts their learning and lead to increased vulnerability to issues like early marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse and child labor, as girls are already disproportionately affected by lack of education in the country due to existing societal factors. Call to Action: Gender-Responsive Climate Adaptation

The report highlights urgent recommendations, including expanding GBV response services in displacement settings, strengthening women’s

economic empowerment through financial inclusion, integrating gender-responsive climate policies into national development plans and investing in climate-resilient healthcare systems to safeguard SRH services.

“Without targeted interventions such as climate-resilient health infrastructure like mobile clinics and heat adaptive policies, climate change will continue to exacerbate gender inequalities and violence,” concluded Ms. Mandong.

“This report provides the evidence we need to advocate for policies that empower societies and protect women and girls in the face of climate change.”

As South Sudan grapples with climate change, this study serves as a wake-up call for urgent, gender-sensitive action and improved SRH services that are crucial. UNFPA remains committed to working with partners to ensure that no one is left behind.



Participants during the validation workshop

Beating all odds to become a healthcare profession, Tabitha Nyigang's story of resilience



Ms. Nyigang after the graduation ceremony.

Rumbek-Lakes State- On a Friday, under the scorching sun, gathered graduands soon to be pronounced graduates at Rumbek Health Science Institute (RHSI) in Lakes State. The Convocation at RHSI was the third one since its inception in 2015, where 141 students graduated in various disciplines such as nursing, midwifery, clinical officers as well as laboratory technicians. Tabitha Nyigang, was one of the 141 graduates, she graduated with a diploma in Clinical Medicine and Public Health, she could not hide her excitement, *“It's been three years of a committed journey to achieve this dream in public health despite the challenges, and I am incredibly grateful to God for helping me overcome all the obstacles and successfully complete my studies. I remain committed to serve the people for a healthier future,”* Ms. Nyigang said.

Nyigang's journey has been that of perseverance and dedication to attain her diploma, having come from a humble background, she had to cultivate crops on small scale to raise her tuition. The 28-year old mother of three said she was forced to sacrifice time spent with her children in order to pursue her studies, *“Thanks to my husband who was very supportive, him and the entire family are happy that I graduated”*, Nyigang added

In South Sudan, the UN (2020) estimates that each year about 1,223 women die per 100,000 live births due to pregnancy-related complications. While the estimates show a decrease in the maternal mortality ratio from 1,687 in 2000 to 1,223 in 2020, this still remains one of the highest in the world. With UNFPA's support through partners like

Doctors with Africa –CUAAM and with funding from Global Affairs –Canada, the trajectory is changing by strengthening health systems including quality human resources.

Rumbek Health Science Institute has since inception now graduated 319 students across three batches, according to Deng Makur Mabeny, the Principal of Rumbek Health Science Institute; He tasked the graduates to provide quality healthcare services to their communities. *“I want to tell everyone here that we are not politicians, but healthcare providers in the community, our motto is to alleviate suffering and promote the health and well-being of the community.”* Mabeny emphasized to the graduates.

Dr. Dante Carraro, Director of CUAMM, underscored the need for skilled healthcare personnel in South Sudan stressing that the health system cannot function effectively without dedicated and competent human resources. *“We recognize the significant shortage of nurses, midwives, laboratory technicians, and clinical officers in South Sudan; therefore, today’s graduation is a remarkable*

milestone to additional of much needed health-care professionals in the health sector” Dr. Dante Carraro, reaffirmed the commitment of partners to supporting the Rumbek Health Science Institute.

Tabitha has encouraged parents in South Sudan to empower their children especially the girl-child with education rather than prioritizing early and forced marriages in the name of dowry, stressing that education is a powerful tool to poverty eradication. She boasts of her two sisters who are both healthcare professionals.

“Dowry will be paid now and in the following months, poverty will follow, but if you educate a girl, she will remain empowered through-out her life and live a decent life, let parents send girls to school,” she said.

Through UNFPA, Canada has been supporting the strengthening of human resources for health including midwives and supporting healthier communities in South Sudan for more than ten years enabling students like Tabitha Nyigang among others realize their dreams.



Graduates holding their certificates after the graduation

A march forward to gender equality, for everyone



Photos taken at Wau Women and Girls Friendly Space

Investments in the health and rights of women and girls have changed the world, bringing us closer to equal voices and expanded choices than ever before. Women have taken giant strides forward – and are not going back.

The march forward for equal rights is unstoppable. It will continue until gender equality reaches all women and girls, everywhere.

Commitments made to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women ignited 30 years of progress – particularly on sexual and reproductive health. Activists and allies in every part of the world have mobilized to make motherhood safer and empower women with

more choices about their fertility. Their advocacy has led an overwhelming majority of countries to pass laws against domestic violence.

These and other gains are historic achievements that have transformed women's lives. Every aspect of women's empowerment, from education to workforce participation to political leadership, depends on the foundation of well-being and autonomy provided by sexual and reproductive health. And when women and girls thrive, so do their families, communities and our world.

By unleashing the potential of half of humanity, gender equality leads to safer and more prosperous societies for everyone. This is affirmed in longstanding and binding international law agreements

that most countries have signed, and is proven by rigorous evidence. Yet millions of women and girls are still left behind – every three seconds an adolescent girl is married somewhere in the world. There is not a single country in the world that has yet reached full gender equality. Investment in gender equality is a fraction of what it needs to be – even though we know it would yield trillions of dollars in economic gains and immeasurable social benefits.

Unjust laws and regulations still constrain rights, and healthcare services fail to match needs. Every 10 minutes a woman or girl dies at the hands of an intimate partner or family member. That single statistic tells us everything about how little progress has been made in stopping violence driven by misogyny and discrimination, and what society chooses to prioritize.

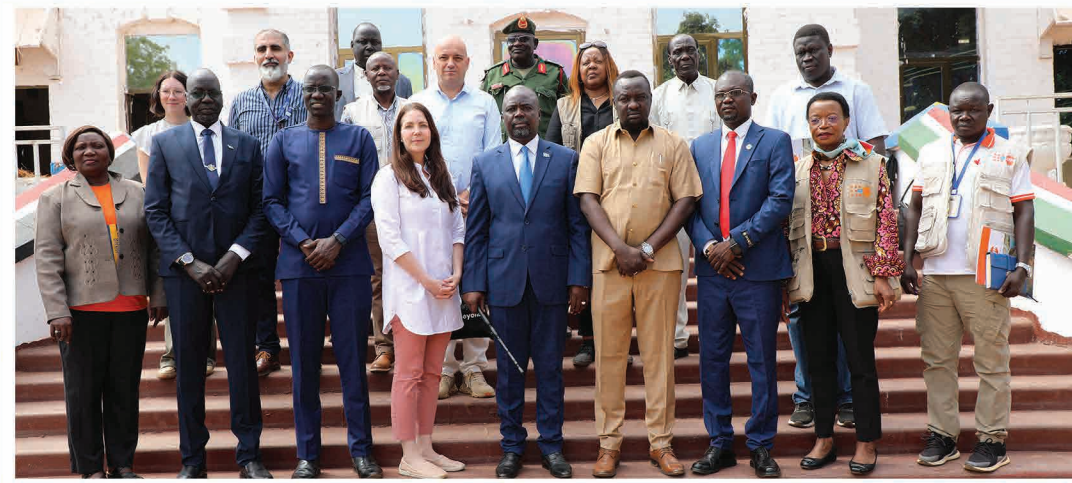
Increasing armed conflict and climate disasters amplify risks and inequalities, as women and girls

face higher rates of unintended pregnancy and maternal mortality, and violence and child marriage soar.

This International Women's Day is a call to march forward, with urgency and in solidarity, for all women and girls in all their diversity. Despite the many challenges, we have seen in our own lifetimes how much change is possible, and we have international law and fundamental human rights on our side. We have examples of change, and evidence of the benefits. These are powerful tools to achieve equality. Let's use them.

UNFPA will continue to work with partners and allies, with governments and civil society, to uphold women's rights. We will not rest until everyone can make their own choices about whether and when to have children. Until no woman dies while pregnant or giving birth. Gender equality will transform our world, for people today and tomorrow, for the benefit of all.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SRHR



Western Bahr El Ghazal state governor H.E Emmanuel Ukello with visiting deligation of Gov't officials, Donors and UNFPA at the state secretariat Wau.



UNFPA OIC Suzanne Mandong exchanging copies of the work plan with the former MoH Undersecretary Hon. Dr. Harriet Pasuale



UNFPA team led by OIC Suzanne Mandong and the Ministry, Youth & Sports under the leadership of the Undersecretary



Courtesy call on Hon. Ayaa Benjamin Warille Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare by UNFPA OIC Suzanne Mandong

Rebuilding life as a Returnee, story of Mary Kak



Mary Kak, who recently returned from Sudan, smiling at Renk Women and Girls Friendly Space

Renk – Upper Nile, Close to two years since the outbreak of Sudan crisis, Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees continue to flock in South Sudan through Renk and other border points of South Sudan.

Mary Kak is mother of 7, she fled the Sudan crisis mid last year following heightened fighting there, her journey to Renk was that of perseverance as she had to endure many days of travel by foot for safety. The mother of 7 who first fled South Sudan in 2013 crisis to Khartoum said she and her family encountered numerous roadblocks manned by armed men enroute to South Sudan.

Mary 55 originally from Kodok, Fashoda County in Upper Nile said upon return from Khar-

toum, life was not easy as she was traumatized but through information from her peers and also through awareness, she was convinced to visit the Women and Girls Friendly Space (WGFS). While at the WGFS she received psychosocial counseling, awareness sessions on how to report cases of gender-based Violence and enrolled for skills training where she was taught how to make beads, weaving and baking. *“We are in a safe place all together as one family; we sing, dance, laugh and cry together. No tribal differences – no Dinka, no Shiluk and no Nuer”* Mary says. *“The beads we make from here are sold and we make money out of it, but the most important thing is information and knowledge sharing on GBV and other ailments”* Mary added.

Refugees and returnees rebuilding their lives and



Osman Ibrahim baking Zalabia (doughnuts) at Renk transit center

restoring hope at the WGFS just like Mary, Salma Osman Ibrahim, a 28 –year old mother of three is another returnee that fled to South Sudan towards the end of last year. Salma bakes Zalabia (doughnuts) at the Renk Transit Center and is able to make a living by selling in the small market of the transit center.

With thanks to UNFPA funding to the WGFS in Renk, Salma was trained and provided with start-up package to aid her baking business. Salama can now breath as her financial woes are easing and beyond baking, she has been psychologically supported and aware of services available for survivors of rape that she shares with fellow women and girls. Thanks to the empowerment and awareness sessions she received from UNFPA.

“Since I fled my home in Jebel Aulia in Khartoum due to the war, establishing myself with nothing at hand has not been easy, but with the baking skills

and support, all I can say is Alhamdulillah. I can now smile, I make 50,000 - 60,000 SSP (10\$) in a day. This is really contributing to my life, and I can now support my family”, Said Salma

About four thousand (4,000) women and girls receive services at the WGFS ranging from psycho-social support, skills training and financial empowerment to overcome daily challenges. UNFPA has also supported distribution of 1,500 Dignity Kits women and girls fleeing the crisis including those from the host community in Chemedi, Bobonis and the Transit centers.

Crisis after crisis on the bodies of women and girls In addition to the effect of the war, climate shocks also contribute to take a heavy toll on the lives of these women and girls exacerbating sexual exploitation and gender-based vulnerabilities affecting the quality of life, putting women and girls at constant threat to lose lives especially in poor re-₁₅

sourced or absence of infrastructure. Renk which is the major transit site has borne the brunt of this all as in times of dry spell and rainy season. The situation of women and girls in the transit center becomes so harsh with poor hygiene which makes one wonder management of menstrual hygiene, protection of women and girls against sexual violence, and access to critical life saving health services during complications.

It is worth noting that in times of disasters, women, girls, and children are the most affected and their needs are normally not catered for. Gender-based

and sexual violence remain a threat to crisis-affected populations; especially for women and girls exposed to risks when conducting their routine activities for a living like firewood collection to feed the family.

As women and girls pay an unacceptable price in crises and live in fear for losing their life, the dire situation in South Sudan in a wake-up call for urgent action to provide protection and life saving services that are crucial. UNFPA remains committed to working with partners to ensure that their sexual and reproductive health needs are not overlooked which leads to devastating consequences.



Refugee mothers nursing their babies while attending GBV awareness session

UNFPA and the Ministry of Health ink 490,000 –dollar work plan to deliver on sexual and reproductive health



UNFPA OIC Suzanne Mandong and former U/Sec Hon. Harriet Pasquale Akello Signing the work plan.

Juba-South Sudan-In a continued strategic partnership towards attainment of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights in South Sudan, The United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA and the Ministry of Health signed a work plan to strengthen national systems for closing unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal deaths and eliminating all forms of GBV and harmful traditional practices like Child marriage.

The one-year work plan costed at \$490,526 will be implemented by the Ministry of Health with support from UNFPA.

“As a ministry, we are happy with the great and long-standing partnership we have with UNFPA. This partnership dates back to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement –CPA era, this work plan is well aligned with the Health Sector Strategic Plan and actualizes the implementation of the plan” said,

Hon. Harriet Pasquale Akello, the former Undersecretary, Ministry of Health,

On her part, UNFPA Officer in Charge (OIC), Suzanne Mandong re-echoed that the partnership between UNFPA and the Ministry of Health is key because South Sudan is a priority country to UNFPA,

“We applaud the Ministry of Health for upholding the ICPD agenda, we look forward to addressing the #3Zeros” (i.e., zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths and zero harmful practices), she said.

Hon. Akello recognized the huge investment UNFPA through other partners have sunk in South Sudan, especially in training healthcare cadres, “UNFPA is so engaged with training nurses and midwives, we have moved away from our old

song of having only 8 midwives at independence, now the tune has shifted, thanks to UNFPA”, She added.

South Sudan remains a key priority country to UNFPA, according to Ms. Mandong, stressing that it has one of the highest maternal deaths, and she pledged a continued collaboration between UNFPA and the ministry of Health to address the three

transformative results,

“At UNFPA, we will not rest as long as we continue to lose women while giving birth, a loss of one mother is one too many, because it is a human capital loss. We continuously say NO woman should die while giving birth.” Suzanne emphasized.

The work plan signing ceremony also doubled as a courtesy call to the Ministry.



UNFPA and the ministry of health staff pause for a photo after the signing

Youth Ignite Movement, Schools debate competition break barriers and inequalities towards societal progress



Debate participants pause for a picture during the Launch

In a powerful display of defiance and ambition, Juba Day Secondary School became the epicenter of a transformative event, as students from four local secondary schools gathered for the much-anticipated Inter-Schools debate competition.

The debate focused on gender and social norms. The global theme of the event—‘Rights. Equality. Empowerment’—resonated deeply in South Sudan, where only 37% of girls progress to secondary school according to UNESCO statistics. Barriers such as poverty, early marriage, and a deeply entrenched culture of gender inequality often stifle dreams. Compounding the crisis, UN reports indicate that over half of women in the country experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes. For the participants, these challenges are not mere statistics; they are personal stories that fuel their passion and resolve.

The debate was electrifying as a 16-year-old student from Martyrs Memorial passionately argued that education is not a privilege but a powerful tool for dismantling inequality, speaker after speaker. Jane Kide, from Bright Boma School challenged her peers by articulating the negative impact of stereotypes on societal progress.

“This isn’t just a debate; it’s a battle cry—for empowering women and girls with opportunities such as education, for tearing down negative social barriers that hinder girls access to opportunities, for building a healthier and equal tomorrow.” said UNFPA program Analyst, Emmanuel Changun drawing applause from the crowd

The debate set the tone for meaningful youth engagement, as South Sudan is healing from the scars of war, scarce resources, and deep-rooted

traditions, as one student said, “The youth of Juba are no longer waiting for permission or assistance, they are debating, dreaming, and taking action”

Initially postponed due to scorching heat waves that led to closure of schools, the debate ultimately proved to be a good platform for youth advocacy and empowerment. The atmosphere was fan-packed, educative and full of enthusiasm from

students, officials from the Ministry of Health and alliance partners.

With support from UNFPA, the Shabab Le Shabab Health Alliance, a local initiative advocating for youth-led health and equity, meticulously organized the event, transforming it into a vibrant movement.



Progress in Action – shared commitment to bring hope for the resilient Women and Girls



Women at the IDP Camp express their concerns for safety and services with the joint delegation

Wau – Western Bahr el Ghazal State. Amidst the bustling lanes of Wau town stands a displacement camp, behind this Internally Displaced People’s camp lies a powerful story that was unwrapped during a recent high-level joint field visit.

A team comprising representatives from UNFPA, the governments of South Sudan (both national and state), and donors from Canada and Switzerland traveled to Wau—not only to inspect from a far, but to listen, learn, and walk alongside the communities shaping their own future.

This camp came into existence as a result of the 2013 and 2016 conflicts that punctuated South Sudan’s recent –past history following independence.

Despite all odds at the IDP camp, a vibrant group of women and girls from the Women and Girls Friendly Space (WGFS) put up a spirited welcome, singing, dancing and ululations defined the day leaving the visiting delegation at loss of words, that despite their condition, the stakes were high.

The women and girls’ infectious singing and dancing skills swept the visitors into action and despite a dusty courtyard, the vibrant colors of beaded crafts, framed the stories of the women and girls who gather at the camp—not only to heal, but to rebuild, as shared by Aluel Ajok*. (not real name). Aluel shared her journey *“When I was violated, I thought my life was over. But here at the women and girls friendly space, I learned to sew. I found sisters. I found purpose for life and lived again.”*

Despite limited funding, the centre continues to offer psychosocial support, livelihood skills, and a sense of community.



Joanne Minns, Ambassador of Canada shaking hands with H.E Emmanuel Primo Ukello

The State Governor, H.E. Emmanuel Primo Ukello, welcomed the delegation with open arms. Saying that, *“Wau is not just a place of survival, but a space of possibilities because of the investments made for peace and stability in the state.”*

This sentiment was echoed across every site visited, from the maternity ward at Wau Teaching Hospital to the Women and Girls Friendly Space in the IDP settlement.

The joint team also visited the Wau Health Sciences Institute—an unsung success story. With a record 559 students enrolled in 2025 and near gender parity, it represents a growing pipeline of skilled health workers. As the Principal proudly noted, *“When we train a midwife, we save many lives and eventually will contribute to the healthy people.”*

Reflecting on the importance of the visit, Suzanne Mandong, UNFPA Officer in Charge, noted: “This joint mission reflects the spirit of solidarity

and shared responsibility. *We are deeply grateful to the state leadership for opening its doors and to all our partners for their tireless work in improving the lives of women, girls, and young people in Wau. These efforts demonstrate that through collaboration, we can overcome barriers and deliver hope.”*



Nurses and midwives at Wau Teaching Hospital

nurses and midwives recounted their challenges and triumphs but with the support from donors, a motivated work force and revitalized training support. The Director General of the Hospital proudly stated that the lives of mothers and newborns are continuously improving. *“We feel supported. We are achieving results,”* he said. The team revealed that plans to establish an Obsteric Fistula treatment centre a long overdue plan are underway, offering hope to women who have suffered in silence.

At the GBV One Stop Centre, the atmosphere was heartening but strong, staff quietly discussed cases, many involving girls aged just 14 to 17. Despite deeply entrenched norms and the reluctance to report violence, the Centre has offered

refuge, rendering medical, psychosocial, legal, and security services under one roof. “It is not just about healing bodies,” said the project officer. *“It is about restoring hope and dignity.”*

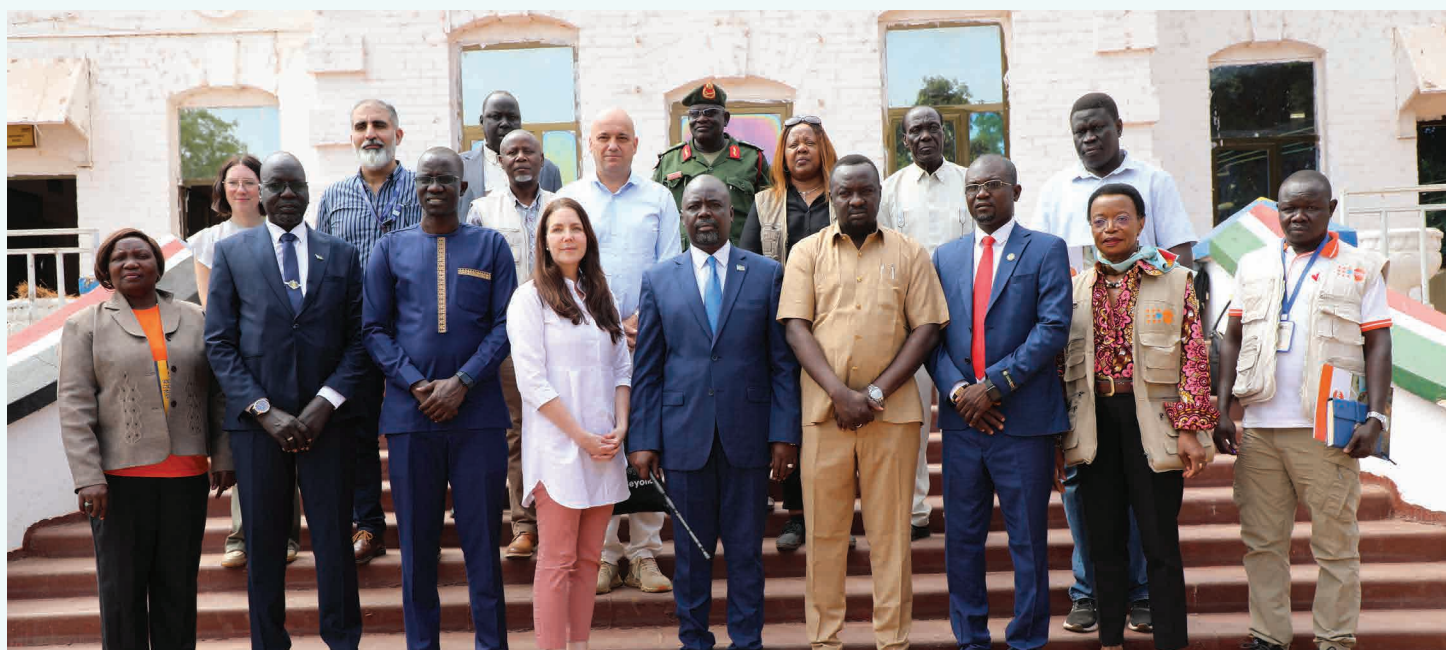
Dr. Anin Ngot Mou, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Health, expressed deep appreciation to UNFPA and the donors, *“We commend UNFPA and our donor for their unwavering support. What we have seen here in Wau—from improved maternal health outcomes to stronger health and education systems which would not be possible without your commitment. Thank you for standing with us.”* he said.

Throughout the visit, one theme emerged with striking clarity: partnership matters. From the Governor’s office to the grassroots, collaboration among government, UN agencies, donors, and civil society is changing lives. Donors were visibly moved—offering hope and strategies to mobilize further support such as tapping into the private sector. They shared heartfelt affirmations of solidarity.

“We are not just investing in programs,” said HE Joanne Minns, Ambassador of Canada to South Sudan. *“We are investing in people—especially women and girls.”* Johan Gely, Head of International Cooperation at the Swiss Embassy, underscored the need for broader engagement. *“Sustainable development cannot rest solely on public and donor investment. We must actively engage the private sector in these efforts—creating shared value and unlocking local solutions to the challenges communities face.”* He stated

As the delegation departed Wau, there was no question that challenges remain—stockouts of Reproductive Health commodities, understaffed clinics, and the looming threat of funding shortfalls. But there was also no doubt that progress is possible, and indeed visible, when commitment is collective.

UNFPA’s work in Wau is more than service delivery. It is about restoring choice, safety, and voice. In the words of one stakeholder who addressed the mission. *“We are not just survivors. We are builders of a new South Sudan.”*



Western Bahr El Ghazal state governor H.E Emmanuel Ukello with visiting delegation of Gov’t officials, Donors and UNFPA at the state secretariat Wau.



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