



South Sudan

Quarterly Newsletter
April - June 2022

#Musharaka4Tanmiya

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Message from the Representative

“You cannot clap with one hand” is a popular African proverb that stresses the importance of collaboration and coordination to address myriad challenges to deliver to the last mile.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) South Sudan Country office is working with international and national implementing partners to address the needs of women and girls towards achieving the 3 Zeros; zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage by 2030. Millions of young women and girls in South Sudan have been able to be reached with services by UNFPA and partners amidst numerous challenges ranging from man-made to natural catastrophes.

Despite the successes and achievements scored so far, many issues keep the country office on its toes and solutions need to be arrived at through synergies to realize tangible benefits.

This newsletter covers a wide range of stories ranging from Humanitarian, Gender and Social inclusion, Integrated Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Youth and HIV as well as Population and Development.

UNFPA would like to thank its implementing partners, both national and international, donors, and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan for the immense collaboration to serve women, girls and the young people of the Republic of South Sudan.

Dr. Ademola Olajide
UNFPA Representative



#EndChildMarriages



Kulang Foundation Girls Football Tournament towards ending child marriage



Photo: Action shots from the final match of the Kulang Girls Football Tournament between Crown FC and Gudelele at Munuki Stadium.

Sport has the power to change the world. It is a powerful tool to strengthen social ties, promote sustainable development and peace. Sports foster solidarity and respect for all and plays a very important role as a tool to promote gender equality and empower women and girls to achieve their full potential by breaking gender norms. UNFPA South Sudan is taking steps towards using sports as a tool for advocacy in promoting its mandate and to achieve, zero gender based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage.

“Through sports I have been able to stay in school and get educated about harmful practices such as child marriage and unintended pregnancy” says Victoria Joy, a midfielder who plays for Gudele Central Womens football team.

UNFPA South Sudan in collaboration with the Kulang Foundation, Afriyan, World Vision, Shabab Le Shabab and Zain organized a football tournament dubbed ‘unleashing girls’ potential to end child marriage’. Through the 3-week tournament that saw Crown FC win the trophy, girls were able



Photo: Minister of Health Hon. Yolanda Awel Deng hands over a trophy to the most valuable player of the tournament, Suzy Micheals of Crown Football Club.

to access menstrual hygiene products such as re-usable pads and get awareness on ending child marriage, curbing unintended pregnancies and ending gender-based violence.

“As the Ministry for Gender, Child and Social Welfare, women and girls are central to everything we do, because we are fully aware that when you educate a girl you educate a nation. As the tournament theme clearly states we must put an end to child marriage” said Honorable Aya Benjamin Warille, Minister for Gender, Child and Social Welfare.

Hon Aya Benjamin Warille lauded the efforts of partners to curb the menace of child marriage and reaffirmed the government’s support to ensuring girls achieve their full potential by staying in school and not undergoing child marriages. According to the 2022 UNFPA State of the World Population Report, 52%% of girls are married before 18 and around a third of all girls in South Sudan are pregnant before the age of 15. Child marriage is further fuelled by food insecurity, as in times of crisis, families resort to arranging marriages for their daughters. UNFPA is working with the government of South Sudan and other partners using innovative ways to end child marriage in South Sudan by engaging women and

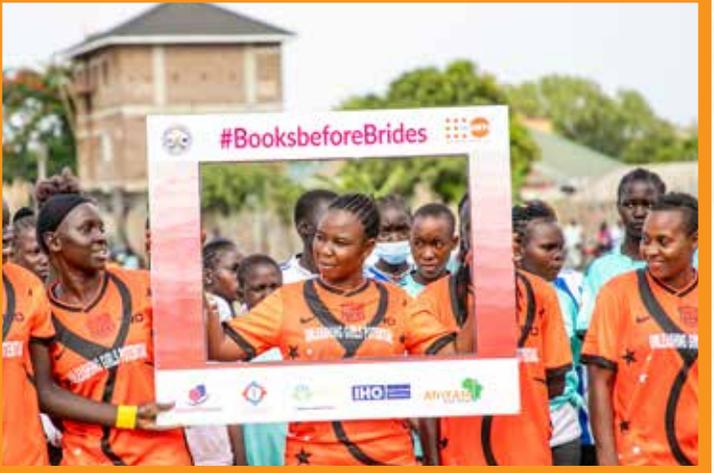
girls at the community level through various activities such as sports.

The Girls’ football tournament reached thousands of girls throughout Juba, advocating for the end of child marriages, ending period poverty and ending unintended pregnancies through awareness campaigns at the Buluk ground. Through the #Musharaka-4Tanmiya (Partnership for development) campaign partners came together to educate girls on family planning methods as well as menstrual hygiene to ensure each and every girl in South Sudan maintains her dignity during her menses.

Among initiatives to support menstrual health and hygiene, UNFPA reaches women and girls with education, safe sanitation facilities, including in camps for internally displaced persons, and with dignity kits containing essentials like soap, menstrual hygiene supplies and underwear. During the tournament, UNFPA supported 336 girls from 16 football clubs with dignity kits.



Photo: Crown Women's Football Club crowned champions of the Kulang girls tournament dubbed unleashing girls potential to end child marriage in South Sudan.



Sports as a vehicle for gender equality in South Sudan



Photo: Bright Starlets, South Sudan Womens National Team display dignity kits provided by UNFPA South Sudan ahead of their Africa cup qualifiers tour in Uganda.

In recent years, sport has demonstrated its enormous capacity to propel women and girls' empowerment. It mobilizes the global community and speaks to youth. It unites across national barriers and cultural differences. Sports is a powerful tool to convey important messages in a positive and celebratory environment – often to mass audiences. In addition, it teaches women and girls the values of teamwork, self-reliance and resilience; has a multiplier effect on their health, education and leadership development; contributes to self-esteem, builds social connections, and challenges harmful gender norms.

Many actors in the sport ecosystem are making significant strides to advance gender equality and women's rights to achieve the Beijing call for generation equality. UNFPA South Sudan not being left behind, is using sports as a vehicle to advance its mandate in ensuring female athletes get access to their reproductive rights, as well as getting access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services.

Through sports UNFPA is working with various

stakeholders, such as South Sudan Football Federation, Kulang Sports Academy and the South Sudan Boxing Federation to ensure female athletes maintain their dignity and have access to their comprehensive sexuality education. UNFPA has been instrumental in the provision of dignity kits to various sports federations giving women access to reusable pads, hygiene products and items to ensure they are able to manage their menstrual hygiene

“For some girls, menstrual products are easily accessible, while some others barely have access to pads and are forced to use mattress foam or cloth to hide their periods. The provision of kits by UNFPA to the women's team is a blessing. We can continue with our training and not have to miss sessions due to our periods. We are truly grateful for this support.” Chiang Thomas Manyol, Bright Starlets Midfielder.

The provision of dignity kits and playing kits for the female athletes not only offers them hope of a brighter tomorrow, but enables them continue

with their training towards achieving their full potential as athletes. Through the partnerships formed, UNFPA is able to integrate comprehensive sexuality education awareness to the athletes and surrounding communities by working with partners, such as Shabab Le Shabab and Afriyan South Sudan who mentor the community. For instance, during the Kulang sports tournament Afriyan played a key role in educating spectators and teams that took part over the 3 week tournament on menstrual hygiene management through a series of training and practical demonstrations on how to use the various products.

“For UNFPA South Sudan, it is important for us to reaffirm the message that girls can participate in sports and attain their full potential just like boys. We continue to work with a range of partners to provide platforms for women to challenge gender norms and be champions of gender equality.” Dr. Ademola Olajide UNFPA South Sudan Representative

UNFPA aims to further support various stake-

holders by creating youth friendly centers as a platform to encourage more female athletes to get involved and attain their full potential through sports, challenge gender norms and become champions in



Photo: Bright Starlets, Coach, Shilene Booysen hands over a dignity kit to one of the players of the national womens team.



Photo: UNFPA representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide and President of the Boxing Federation, Mama Tereza Athian, with the female boxers at Markaz shabab(youth club) in Nimra -Talata at the sports grounds in Juba.



Empowering people with disabilities with skills in sanitary towel production



Photo: Participants of the Afriyaan South Sudan, training on empowering people with disabilities on sanitary towel production.

The UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy puts persons with disabilities at the center of everything the organization does. Disability inclusion means making the work of UNFPA stronger by ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. South Sudan like any other country also has a sizable population of persons living with disabilities. It is against this background that AfriYAN South Sudan with support from UNFPA South Sudan conducted a one-day training in Juba for persons with disabilities as a means of the strengthening and empowering vulnerable girls and young mothers through economic empowerment while contributing to meeting the reproductive health needs of women and girls in a sustainable way.

The training focused on imparting skills on the production of reusable sanitary pads as well as knowledge building on menstruation to the group of women with disabilities, to end period poverty. The participants were also empowered with knowledge on the proper use of hygiene products during menstruation and reducing stigma as well as stereotypes toward young people living with disabilities.

Speaking at the training, the Executive Director of South Sudan Child and Women Deaf Organization, who is also Miss Deaf Africa Josephine Kiden said that the training was very important for the people living with disabilities as it broadened their knowledge on how to make reusable menstrual pads by themselves and use them to generate income by selling them at cheaper prices. "It has also given me a chance of becoming a Trainer Of Trainers on Menstrual Hygiene Management for other young people living with disabilities in different communities. I am happy and I request UNFPA and AFriYAN South Sudan to establish a local-made sanitary pads production line at the Buluk School of the Persons with Hearing Impairment because the primary school already trained them in sewing" she adds.



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The Role of Midwives in Humanitarian Setting.



Photo: Midwife, Kenyi Friday, attending to a patient at Juba teaching hospital.

In South Sudan, several women and children bear the substantial burden and impact of conflict and instability across the country. There is a significant increase in the number of people living in humanitarian and fragile settings. Access to essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent healthcare is limited in these settings.

The role of midwives and nurses in provision of these services is crucial for improved health and sustainable development. Midwives in particular save lives and care for pregnant women, mothers, and newborns. However, Inadequate midwifery staff, lack of necessary support including limited in-service training opportunities, stock out of essential medicines all hinder their efforts to provide quality services.

Muja Stella Simon, is a 36-year-old compassionate registered midwife from International Medical Corps (IMC) in Juba – Internally displaced persons camp 3. Muja has been working with IMC since 2013 in Maban, Upper Nile State. She drew her inspiration from a midwife who helped deliver her baby. “I conceived at a tender age, and I was amazed by the care given to me by the midwife when I gave birth to my first child. Since then, I vowed to help extend the same services to others because I admired the midwife’s passion and love in caring for pregnant women, mothers and newborn.”

After the conflict that broke out in 2013, Muja was relocated to work in IMC’s health facility supported by UNFPA in POC 3 in Juba. This is one of the two health facilities run by IMC in the Internally displaced persons camp, both supported by UNFPA with funding from Norway, Sweden, and Japan. These facilities provide maternity services, antenatal, postnatal care, family planning, CMR, HIV and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) services and health education to over 30,000 women and girls in the Internally displaced persons camp and host community. Her compassion and role in the health facility contributed significantly to reduced morbidity and mortality rates among women and children in the POC. Through the health education and awareness raising sessions, a lot of women are now encouraged to seek antenatal care at the facility as well as access to family planning services.

Community Based Distribution leading the drive for increased CPR in South Sudan



Photo: Community volunteers at customs market taking the community through a sensitization on use of family planning.

Torit, South Sudan - “We have learnt that when you bring family planning services closer to people, in their communities there are high chances of increasing service uptake,” says Jolem Mwanje of Impact Health Organization (IHO).

IHO is one of the NGOs supported by UNFPA and currently working on community-based advocacy and demand generation for family planning as well as engaging in community-based distribution of family planning (FP) commodities.

In a country where uptake for family planning is very low with an mCPR of 1.7% owing to heavily entrenched cultural and social values that are averse to family planning; UNFPA has been working with implementing partners to break the barriers around access to modern family planning methods.

The approach taken by the NGOs has seen them engage in community dialogues that bring together community leaders, religious leaders, security agents and ordinary community members including young people to talk about the benefits of family planning. The community based distributors then follow-up these dialogues with demand generation activities

which has seen them score significant success in increasing uptake for family planning services.

According to Mwanje, the community health initiatives should be sustained as they have far reaching benefits including providing access to young people who ordinarily will shy away from going to health facilities. “The number of young people including school going girls we have reached is higher, we need to sustain this especially here in Torit where the number of teenage pregnancies has risen significantly,” he added.

Torit County reported a high of 400 teenage pregnancies among school-going girls between March and August 2020 mainly attributed to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Mary Janet (not her real name) who dropped out of school after falling pregnant and is now a mother at a young age shared her experience with community-based distributors.

“Just like many other young people in my community, I am not comfortable accessing contraceptives from the main hospital because I fear meeting older

people who I know. I am now glad that I can access the contraceptives and information I need on them in the community at my own convenience and at a convenient place through the community-based distribution programme.” - Mary Janet

In the second quarter of 2022, UNFPA embarked on an innovative approach to work with national NGOs to support community-based advocacy and demand generation as well as the distribution of FP commodities. The results have been phenomenal with uptake for contraceptives rising three-fold between April and June 2022. The average monthly uptake for Combined Oral Contraceptives rose from 40,000 Cycles per month to 120,000 Cycles per month in the period.



Photo: UNFPA branded condoms.



Photo: Community volunteers at customs market during the campaign to raise awareness on family planning

Strengthening data management for development



Photo: National Bureau of Statistics staff during a training session

Availability of up-to-date data is fundamental in providing evidence for decision making including for provision of reproductive health and gender-based response services, focusing on the needs and vulnerabilities of women and young people. UNFPA in South Sudan works to improving national systems for generation and dissemination of population data and demographic intelligence including in humanitarian settings. Over the years, UNFPA South Sudan has provided technical and financial support to build the capacity of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to generate, analyse, prepare, and disseminate statistical data and population dynamics.

Key results from this support include: A pool of skilled NBS staff in contemporary statistical data management methodologies; draft population estimates from the National Population Estimation Survey, a revised Road Map for the National Population and Housing Census, Reproductive Health Commodity Security/Service Delivery Survey etc.

In collaboration with other UN agencies under the auspices of the UN M&E Working Group mechanisms for robust monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals indicators are being established. A data land scaping exercise was conducted, and highlighted gaps in availability of data, capacities in different sectors to generate data, low levels of understanding and appreciation of the SDG framework etc. UNFPA will continue to support efforts to implement the arising recommendations.

With support from UNFPA, a robust mentorship program for national data producers and users was developed by NBS. The mentees, mostly statisticians from frontline Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) have gained skills in collection, analysis, reporting, dissemination, and use of data for effective planning and program delivery for results. The MDAs have started producing respective data reports. The coordination and mentorship program expanded knowledge and collaboration within the broader National Statistical System (NSS).

“Evidence, backed up by reliable data management systems, is a critical driver of development planning and implementation.” said Dr. Olajide Ademola

Despite all the tremendous work, there remain some challenges that hamper the routine data collection, analysis, and dissemination in South Sudan including nonexistent national/government financing for statistical production in the country resulting in over reliance on donors, limited interaction between data producers and data users, inadequately integrated and inconsistent data systems; poor accessibility to data due dissemination bottlenecks.

Tackling gender-based violence (GBV) with safe houses



Protracted conflicts and other emergencies such as famine and floods have continued to weaken the socio-economic foundation of South Sudan for years. These continued human-made and natural disasters have affected the populations to a point of no return, with women and children most affected, and the Government of South Sudan unable to provide basic protection services.

Despite the existence of gender equality legislation and increased women's engagement in public and private spaces, men continue to lead the decision-making processes due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. The widespread acceptance of violence against women is indicative of the acceptance of gender-based violence. Intimate partner violence regularly comprises at least half of all the GBV incidents reported at the One Stop Centers managed by UNFPA.

To mitigate the high rates of gender-based violence within the country, through the support from UNFPA and funding support from Swiss Development Cooperation, Nile Hope established a safe house in Wau. What started off as a pilot program has to date supported 210 women and girls

through safety and security since June 2020. The safe home has managed to assist survivors by providing safety, security, and psychosocial support in dealing with the traumatic experience while relevant actors in law enforcement work for apprehending the perpetrators or planning the next steps regarding the survivor's needs and rights.

"No one was at home when my uncle attacked me, this is not the first time he made such advances towards me," cried Naya (not real name) inside the Director General of the State Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare's office.

Naya is a minor who was raped by her thirty-three-year-old uncle in Raja County of Northern Bahr El Ghazal in late 2021. On that day, Nile Hope Project Manager received an urgent call from the Director General asking the minor to be transferred to Raja County. Naya was immediately taken to the One Stop Centre for medical assistance. Given the threat to her life, Naya was taken to a safe house for shelter. The safe house operates through a survivor-centered approach, keeping the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivors at the center, including quality services of health care, psychosocial support, security, and

legal services. Naya was offered face-to-face counseling and was explained her choices if she was to take any legal action.

“I really do not know what to do, I just need my mother around,” stated Naya. The Social Workers tracked down Naya’s parents, who both were filled with fury and with their consent a legal case was registered.

The safe house legal officer filed the case against the perpetrator and through a rigorous follow-up, the perpetrator was sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment. Naya stayed in the safe house for a month during the trial. The staff worked with her and her parents closely to identify whether she was ready to be re-integrated back into her community. “I am very happy with the help that was accorded to me. I felt safe in the safe house, and everyone was very friendly and understanding to me. I do not want to see my uncle ever again,” said Naya. She suggested that more girls should be helped to rebuild their lives.



Photo: Community engagement on ending gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage

Women Resilience and Empowerment, a story of Angelina Nyatuak, Nyagok Koang and Diang Jiok Founders of “Combination of Ideas Women Group” Bentiu IDP Camp.



Photo:-Dr. Ademola Olajide, UNFPA Representative and Angelina Nyajima, Hope Restoration Chief Executive Director, sample milaya garments made by women

As war intensified in 2014, many families and communities were affected, including loss of lives, properties, livelihood, and displacement. Angelina recalls how the fighting led to the death of her husband leaving her as a widow and with children to raise. Together with her children, they sought refuge at the Bentiu protection of the civilian site, under the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). “As we entered the site, we camped in one of the compounds owned by UN where we were registered as IDPs”, stated Angelina. They were provided with some basic support such as food, water, and shelter which provided some relief, though that was not enough to address all their needs.

Life in the IDP camp became challenging. Angelina and other women looked for alternative forms of livelihood, which included going out of the camp to collect firewood in the nearby forest. The women were faced with numerous threats and risks on daily basis especially risks of GBV such as rape, physical assault, looting, and intimidation among others from unknow gunmen . However, the women had

to endure because that was their only source of survival, and it is during the firewood collection missions that Angelina, Nyagok, and Diang, met and became friends.

The three women came to know of IRC Women and Girls’ Friendly Space where they began participating in the activities. “We continuously visited the center to participate in activities which helped us a lot, especially the tea talk sessions which always relieved my stress” Nyagok Koang emphasised .

However, the three women continued with the firewood collection and vegetable business from the nearby forest despite the risks associated.

In July 2021, the three women got an opportunity to be enrolled in liquid soap-making skill training which was piloted by IRC. They were among a group of women selected from the four different women centers supported by IRC, with funding from Sweden, Norway, and ECHO through UN-

FPA in the different sectors across IDP Camp.

“At first it was challenging to master the skills, but with the determination from us and our tutor we finally mastered it”, Diang Jiok said excitedly. She stated that with the skills they got from IRC, they successfully managed to produce liquid soap and sold it though individually but later thought of forming a group to increase their production. This is when the Combination of ideas women’s group was formed.

The group consists of three women (Angelina, Nyagok and Diang) currently living in different sectors within Bentiu IDP camp, together with their families. Interestingly before the crisis, the three women were living in different counties across Unity State. When asked about the group name, the three women stated that the group name symbolized the beginning of a new life’s journey.

The production of the liquid soap has supported the three women in generating some income. “We make the liquid soap and sell it to interested community members, as well as to NGOs. We have so far saved two hundred and thirty-eight thousand South Sudanese Pounds (238,000 SSP) in the VSLA box. On a weekly basis, our average sales are around 5,000SSP, which has benefited our families as we are able to meet our basic needs. We

use some of our money to purchase the needed raw materials to scale up our business. With this new venture, we no longer risk going to the forest to collect firewood. Different stakeholders such as the NGOs (Care International, IOM) and associations have contracted us to supply them. In addition, the liquid soap production is marketable within and outside the IDPs camp.” says Angelina.

The three women have taught 10 adolescent girls about liquid soap production, and they are willing to teach more women in the IDP camp. According to the women, the skills acquired are empowering them financially which has reduced their dependency on other people, including the men in their homes. They also no longer risk going to the forest to collect firewood.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to acquire new skills which have turned out to be our path to empowerment. We urge IRC and UNFPA to continue supporting women and girls to explore their human potentials and capabilities”, said the women.



Photo: Internally displaced women group display their soap during one of their roundtable discussions in Bentiu protection of civilians site (POC).

Canada will continue to invest to strengthen midwifery in South Sudan



Photo: Hon Harjit S. Sajjan, Canadian Minister for International Development and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development reiterates the importance of partnership during his visit to Juba Teaching Hospital

“Welcome, welcome! We, the student nurses and midwives of JCONAM welcome our visitors”. This was the thunderous greeting in honor of Hon Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Agency from Canada upon arrival at the UNFPA-supported training institute, Juba College of Nursing and Midwifery during his official visit to South Sudan.

Minister Sajjan, together with officials from the Canadian Embassy, the Ministry of Health, Juba Teaching Hospital, and UNFPA were led to a guided tour of the Juba Teaching Hospital one-stop center, maternity unit, and the Juba College of Nursing and Midwifery. During the visit, the Canadian Minister of International Development interacted with midwives and obstetricians who were trained from the Canadian support to the development of human resources for health as part of the Canada-funded Strengthening Midwifery Services project.

Hon Harjit S. Sajjan lauded the efforts of the Government of South Sudan and UNFPA in working

together to improve maternal health and training midwives. “Canada is committed to continuing to support the Ministry of Health and partners to ensure that women and girls have access to maternal health services”. He pledged

He, however, urged the Government to make more financial investments in maternal health services to sustain these efforts. Dr. Kediende Chong, speaking on behalf of the Honourable Minister of Health, Republic of South Sudan expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Canada for the support in the health sector. Dr. Abiodun Oyeyipo, UNFPA Deputy Representative thanked the Minister and the people of Canada for their generous contribution towards improving the health sector in South Sudan, “Canada has invested over 126 million CAD over the last 10 years through UNFPA for strengthening midwifery and maternal health. and much has been achieved with over 1500 graduate midwives in 2022 when there were only 8 midwives at independence”

During the visit, Minister Sajjan announced additional funding from Canada for improving maternal health in South Sudan. Canada has provided

additional funds to UNFPA to build on previous investments and to reach more than 4 million people with SRH/ GBV information and services by end of 2026.



Photo: A midwife ululates to welcome the Canadian delegation to the Juba teaching hospital.



Photo: Students set to demonstrate to Canadian delegation skills taught in their classes

Celebrating Hayat- an Obstetric Fistula Heroine in Juba



Juba-Soft-spoken, compassionate, and cheerful. Hayat Peter is one of the nurses who is contributing to ending obstetric fistula in Juba/South Sudan. A registered nurse by profession for the last 22 years, she has helped many patients. However, assisting fistula patients to regain their dignity is one of the biggest moments in her career, according to Hayat.

The 42-year-old is a mother of nine children, seven of which are adopted. Her husband died in 2007 while on duty as a police officer in Yambio State. Ever since she had to take care of her family as a single mother. Apart from being a mother, her other life-long dream was to help women suffering from Obstetric fistula. Hayat works at the gynecological section of Juba Teaching Hospital, the country's only referral hospital, and she is one of the 23 nurses trained by Amref Health Africa in partnership with UNFPA, in South Sudan to support fistula patients and offer obstetric care. "I am happy that I was trained to help women suffering from Fistula, I have supported over 200 fistula surgeries, I am proud of that," she confirms.

Obstetric fistula is one of the most serious and tragic childbirth injuries. A hole between the birth canal and bladder and/or rectum, it is caused by prolonged, obstructed labour without access to timely, high-quality medical treatment. A mother with OF suffers from urinary and or fecal incontinence.

The horrible ordeal fistula patients go through leads to dejection/abandonment by family and community members, but for Hayat, she provides hope and care to them; "I do not feel they are dirty, I talk to them, we laugh, hold hands, and hug, I burn an aromatic incense around the women which produces a scented smoke that makes them feel comfortable and happy," she explains.

During her 22-years nursing career, Hayat says most fistula patients are between 13-15 years something she attributes to early pregnancy and inadequate access to health facilities.

WHO (2018) states that 19.4% of births in South Sudan are attended to by skilled health personnel. This notwithstanding, about 1/3 of all girls in South Sudan get pregnant before turning 15

(UNICEF, 2020).

“It is important to sensitize and educate young girls as well as communities not to expose them to sexual abuse, child marriage, and early pregnancies because their bodies are not developed enough to handle pregnancy,” says Hayat

Her highest moments are when the survivors she serves call to express gratitude from the farthest parts of South Sudan, “Fistula survivors still call me to appreciate the free surgery that transformed their lives and this is not just once, it is rewarding and makes me proud,” she adds with beaming smile.

Since 2019, UNFPA and partners have restored the dignity of 1,212 women with fistula repair surgeries.

To meet the ever-growing need for services for Fistula patients, Ministry of Health, UNFPA, and partners including AMREF Health Africa mentor

and train health workers and sets up fistula repair teams from various states of South Sudan. These teams include fistula surgeons, medical officers, operating theatre nurses, midwives, ward nurses, and anesthetists in obstetric fistula surgery and care for fistula patients.

South Sudan has a limited number of facilities that offer obstetric fistula repair. The medical camps are periodic compared to the backlog of over 60,000 cases. Hayat urges Amref and its partners including UNFPA to support more camps for women to pick up the pieces of their lives broken by fistula and rebuild a better life for themselves.

Obstetric fistula is preventable but also surgically curable once it occurs. In the past few years, Ministry of Health, UNFPA and partners including AMREF launched the Campaign to End obstetric Fistula, now active to prevent and treat OF in more camps and to rehabilitate fistula survivors.



Photo: Hayat Peter (right) talking to Monica Khamis, a fistula survivor at Juba Juba Teaching Hospital

Representatives from Sweden visit maternity units at the Juba IDP camp

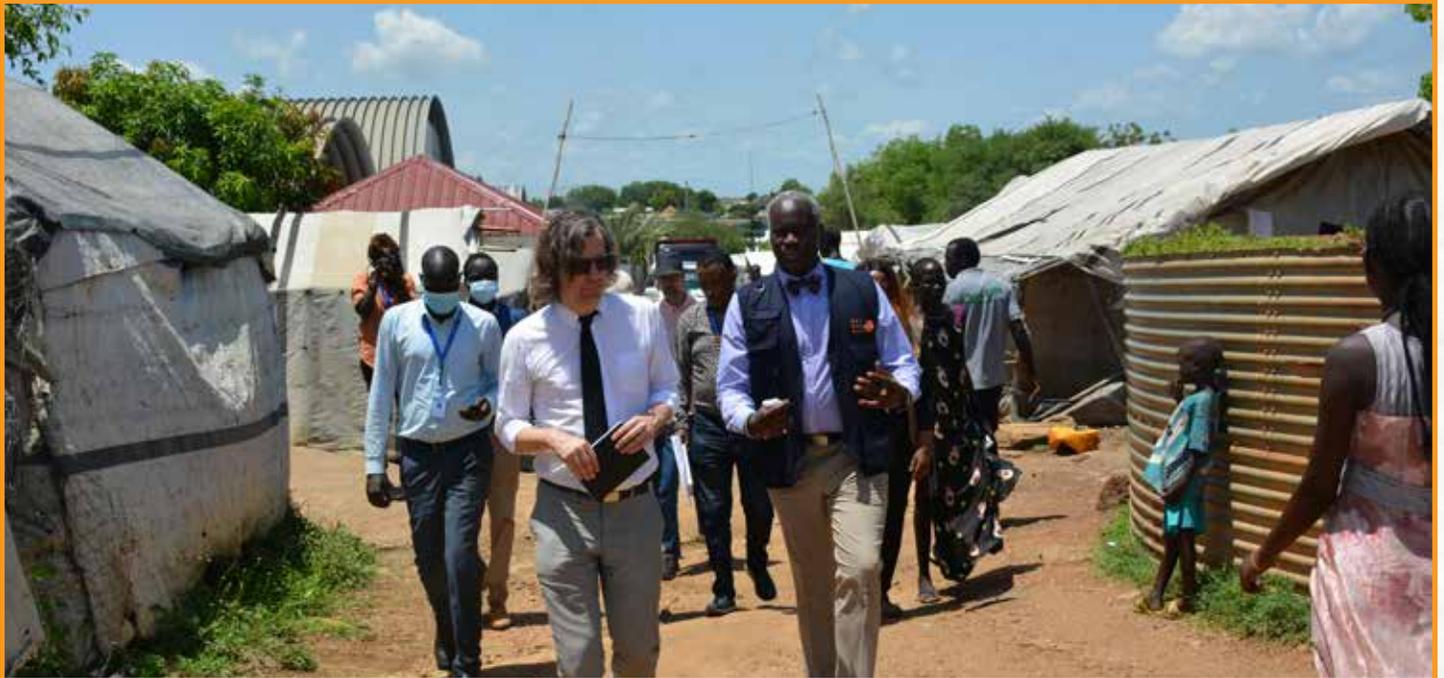


Photo: Dr. Ademola Olajide, UNFPA Representative and the Swedish delegation during the visit to the maternity units at the Juba IDP camp.

“I am pleased with the work taking place to provide reproductive health and gender-based violence services to women and girls in South Sudan. This sounds exciting.” These were the words of Mr. Ulf Kallstig, Assistant Director General for Africa who led a delegation of senior officials from the Sweden International Development Agency (Sida) on a mission to South Sudan in May 2022.

During discussions with UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide. Mr. Kallstig was accompanied by Mr. Petter Meirik, Head of the South Sudan Unit at Sida, and Mr. Henrik Herber from the Embassy of Sweden on a visit to the RH clinic in the IDP camp in Juba with a team from UNFPA led by the Country Representative. The visit, to the UNFPA-supported clinics in the IDP sites 1 and 3 are the only clinics offering reproductive health services including family planning and comprehensive emergency obstetric care to internally displaced persons in the camp.

UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide, expressed appreciation for the support from Sweden provided to UNFPA saying the support will ensure that quality maternal health services are

available to women and girls. He told the team of the efforts that are currently being made to scale up work with marginalized populations including persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and men groups including the boda-boda association.

UNFPA is currently receiving country program support from Sweden which has allowed for a scaled-up response in emergencies and to reach more vulnerable populations with SRH/ GBV information and services.

Adolescent girls in the Juba IDP camp aspire to become midwives to save lives and end preventable maternal deaths

Betty is 14 years old and has been living in the internally displaced camp (formerly the protection of civilian site) since she was 5 years old. Betty admires the midwives working at the only reproductive health clinic in the camp and now wants to become a midwife. “Midwives are heroes, and they help so many women and girls in the camp. I want to study and become a midwife so that I could also do the same.”

Betty made these comments during an event to celebrate the International Day of Midwife 2022 and to recognize and acknowledge the work of midwives working at the clinic, managed by the partner International Medical Corps (IMC). The event brought together 20 adolescent girls and women from the community who shared their experiences giving birth under the care of a midwife. Graduate and student midwives from the UNFPA supported Health Sciences institutes in Juba and members of the South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association also participated in the colorful event. UNFPA Representative, Dr. Demola Oljide congratulated the midwives and encouraged them to continue providing respectful maternity care to women and girls in the community.

There are over 10 midwives deployed at the RH clinics in the IDP site, providing sexual and reproductive health services, and conducting outreach in the community. During the event, the midwives expressed their joy at being recognized and acknowledged for their work. Stella Simon, a midwife who was also trained from the UNFPA-supported Health Sciences Institute, gladly told the audience “I have been working with IMC since 2013 when the midwifery program started here and today, I am happy that this celebration happened for the first time in IDP.” This was also reemphasized by Veronica Daniels working in the maternity unit at the RH center, “We are helping mothers in the community, and we managed to have zero maternal deaths at the clinic in the last three years. The number of pregnant ad-



Photo: Midwives display their certificates after undergoing a short course in midwifery.

olescent girls also reduced and now they can go to school”.

South Sudan has some of the worst health and social indicators in the world with the 2017 UN estimates reporting that the maternal mortality ratio was 1,150 per 100,000 live births. The 2013 internal conflict in South Sudan resulted in many people in particular women and girls fleeing their homes to see shelter and protection near the UN Mission compound in Juba. There are over 30,000 persons still in the camps which transitioned in 2020 to internally displaced camps. UNFPA has been supporting the provision of sexual and reproductive health services including comprehensive emergency obstetric care through IMC since 2013. UNFPA has also supported the training of midwives and the South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association as they continue raising the profile of the professions in the country.

Lead the way to end menstrual stigma, parents urged.

The Director of Adolescent and Sexual Reproductive Health in the Ministry of Health, Madam Sunday Imunu has urged parents to take the lead in advocating for Menstruation Health Management in the Country. She spoke to parents, representatives of the religious leaders, and teachers at an inter-generational dialogue on menstruation organized by the Shabab Le Shabab health alliance.

The session with partners and relevant government institutions which includes of Ministry of General Education and instruction, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare brainstormed cross-cutting issues taboos surrounding menstruation that affect girls' performance at school.

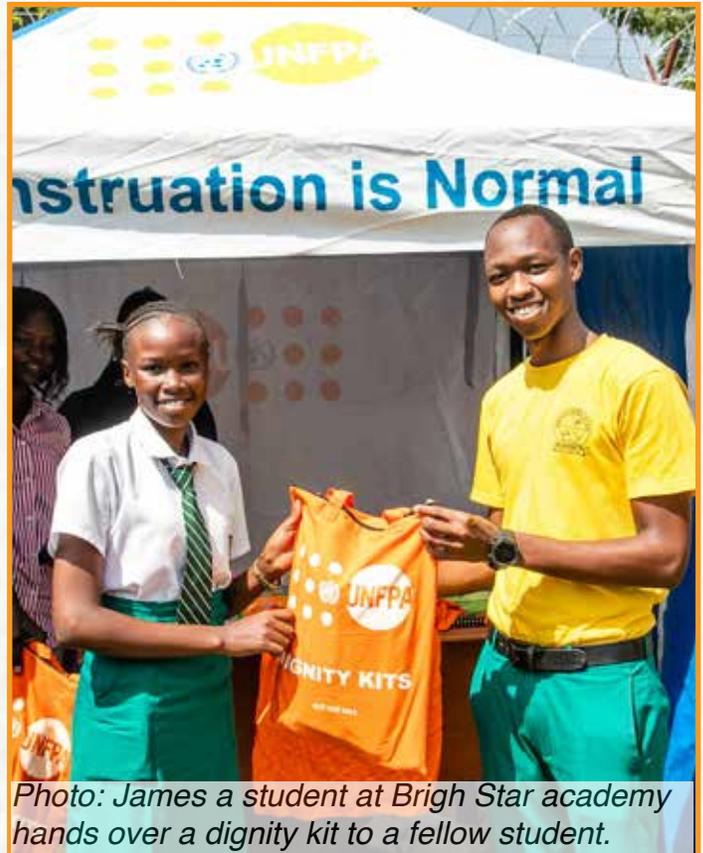
“Menstruation health management is our collective efforts as parents and relevant partners to promote reproductive health. It is not limited to the Ministry of Health and partners alone”, said Ms. Imunu

UNFPA Country Director Dr. Ademola Olajide pledged the organization's continued support to Shabab Le Shabab in ensuring that, they engage both government and youth to advocate and empower girls to realize their potential”,

“We take up the roles to fill the gaps, as UNFPA we provide sanitary products to schools and train girls and women local production of sanitary pads. We urge the government to exempt taxes on sanitary pads products and for us to be able to buy and supply more to needy women and girls in the Country”, he said.

The Intergenerational Dialogue was part of a series of events to mark Menstrual Hygiene Day 2022, the government and partners have been urged to strengthen the capacity of youths and girls to be assertive enough and advance the common goal of meeting standards on Adolescent and sexual reproductive health, also to integrate Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) into the curriculum and programs.

The coordinator of Shabab Le Shabab Mrs. Flor-26



ence Nelson commended the effort exerted by joint organizations and partners to provide and distribute sanitary pads to schools.

“We are today to continue commemorating this day on Menstrual Hygiene Day to remind and commended partners working closely with us in providing and distributing sanitary products to schools, we need to discourage myths and stigma on the menstrual path, where people do not talk about menstruation openly as perceived by many in our communities”, she said.

The menstrual Hygiene management Day 2022 was celebrated under the theme: Committing to Action on Menstruation with the hashtag; #MH-Day2022 and #WeAreCommitted# Endperiod-poverty,

Celebrating the Day of the African Child with young boys and girls at the Rajaf Educational Centre for the blind



Photo: Dr. Ademola Olajide, UNFPA Representative engages with young boys and girls at the Rajaf educational centre for the blind in Juba.

“I have run short of words, for the history of this school, this has never happened, but today you, UNFPA chose to be with us, this is a sign that we matter, may God bless you”. These were the words of the Headteacher of the Rajaf Educational Centre for the Blind, Mr. Levi Sunday clement during an event to commemorate the Day of the African Child. This day is celebrated on June 16 every year since 1991, when it was first initiated by the OAU Organisation of African Unity. It honors those who participated in the Soweto Uprising in 1976 on that day.

To mark the day, UNFPA in partnership with Resilience Organization, a national NGO held an interactive session with young people from ‘the girls not brides network’ and the Rajaf educational center for the blind. The session offered an opportunity for the young girls, boys, and all persons with disability to share their challenges in pursuit of education and other life skills, as well as their aspirations and dreams.

UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ademola Olajide who lively interacted with the young boys and girls from the center said, “efforts must be made to eliminate harmful practices affecting children with disabilities”. He told them that they have a right to health and education and encouraged them to share their dreams and aspirations. Several of the children with disabilities expressed interest in baking cakes and bread, cooking, sewing, and playing musical instruments. The young boys and girls were also encouraged by the young people from the girls not brides’ network to not be afraid to speak up if they feel someone wants to do harm to them. She told the young girls and boys living with disabilities that they have a right to information on reproduction including information on family planning and other measures to prevent unintended pregnancies. The headteacher also expressed gratitude to UNFPA and the Resilience Organization for choosing to mark the day at his school.

UNFPA handed over dignity kits to the young girls and women as a gesture of goodwill. The day was celebrated this year under the theme, “Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children: Progress on Policy & Practice since 2013. The teachers and children from the center also expressed their appreciation with songs of joy during the event.

UNFPA Flood Response in Bentiu



Photo: Distribution of flood relief items and dignity kits to women and girls affected by floods in Bentiu

Unity State has been engulfed by flooding in the different counties affecting 240,000 people and have caused massive displacements. In Bentiu alone, there are five (5) new sites for internally displaced persons (IDP), known as Site A, B, C, D, E, where displaced population are located. In March 2022, the population of the Bentiu town sites was counted at 52,257 individuals (8,662 households) of which 51.23% are female and 48.78 are male.

With the high number of women and girls being displaced and affected by floods across Unity State, essential materials to enhance their safety, promote basic hygiene, enable access to humanitarian services and their mobility is being given utmost attention. Without access to hygiene products, women and adolescent girls are at greater risk of GBV, their health is compromised, their mobility is restricted, and they may become increasingly isolated. Firewood collection is the source of income for many women and adds to their vulnerability to sexual violence and economic vulnerability. Therefore, it is essential to find sustainable solutions that contribute to women's economic empowerment while con-

tributing to environmental sustainability.

UNFPA Unity State Field Hub has taken action to respond to the needs of women and girls and to prevent and respond the GBV through its implementing partners International Rescue Committee and Hope Restoration South Sudan and other partners.

Dignity kits programming has been the priority activity, which was jointly undertaken by UNFPA, its implementing partners and other GBV partners in the different counties. The dignity kit contains items that help maintain their dignity during humanitarian crises such as reusable sanitary pads, underwear, t-shirts, among others and the solar torch which can help mitigate GBV risks. A total of 6,886 dignity kits have been distributed to the different areas (counties) / IDP sites. The distribution of dignity kits further served as an entry point for GBV awareness raising and information dissemination on the available services to survivors. Nyawich, a tea seller at the market narrates that the dignity kit has done wonders in her life. With

the received dignity kit, she is able to prepare and sell her tea the whole day, not so when she used to stay home during her monthly period for fear of staining her dress. “I am earning more money than before because I don’t miss a day at my business. I am clean and smart, wearing my Kanga and I am more confident and comfortable when attending to my customers”. She has noticed that more customers come to her place for tea hence an increase in her sales and she is able to buy some food for the family. She further said that all the items in the dignity kit are very important and has completely changed her life positively.

Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls
 Before the flooding, through the support of UNFPA, a number of women and girls were trained on production of reusable sanitary pads and liquid soap at the Women and Girls Friendly Space. With the flooding, it has become more challenging and riskier for women and girls to collect firewood. With the skills gained, they continue to produce the reusable sanitary pads and liquid soap which has become their main source of income. The reusable sanitary pads and liquid soap production has helped the women to earn a living amidst the flooding. Further, it decreases the vulnerability of women and girls to GBV risk and being in the contaminated flood water for firewood collection.

Around 10,000 reusable sanitary pads were produced by women. The women sell the sanitary pads to the community members and NGOs. The NGOs used the items bought from the women for distribution to their respective beneficiaries in the IDP camp and host communities. Women in the community are buying from the Women and Girls Friendly Space, and awareness on the availability of the product in the WGFS is continuously being undertaken. Reusable sanitary pads are sold to the organization per pack of 3 pads at 3 \$ each and to community members 1 pad is at 500 SSP. On the other hand, the women sell the liquid soap at affordable price of 500 SSP.

Rose Poni, the WPE Manager of IRC said

“through the funding support from UNFPA, the lives of women and girls engaged in the Women and Girls Friendly Space in the IDP Site and outside IPD site have greatly changed. The various life skills projects they acquired such as liquid soap and re-useable sanitary pads production, and selling has created employment opportunity for a total of 120 women and girls (70 beneficiaries through re-useable sanitary pads production and another 50 beneficiaries through liquid soap production) and improved their livelihoods.

One of the women who benefited from the skills building expressed, “Without obtaining these skills, our lives will be worse with this current flooding”

Scaling-up of Humanitarian Response

With aim of reaching out to more women and girls who are affected by flooding and other crisis, UNFPA is scaling-up its Integrated SRH and GBV humanitarian response in the different counties of Unity State, Rubkona, Leer and Mayiendit. Additional two implementing partners were identified to carry out specific actions to support women and girls. Among the key activities that will be implemented



Photo: Effects of the floods in Bentiu that have forced many to relocate to higher grounds

are:
Cash Assistance. A total of 530 women and girls will be provided with Unconditional Cash Assistance to help address a range of commodity-based needs. The direct provision of cash to be spent in local markets can shift demand for goods and services towards the needs of women and girls to include firewood, charcoal, their other basic needs, food and even payment for school fees of their children.

Fuel Efficient Stove (FES). 300 women and girls will be trained on production of local Fuel-Efficient Stove. With the currently flooding situation, firewood collection has become more a predicament to women and girls and with the high risk of GBV as they go for firewood collection. Through the FES, use of firewood or charcoal can be lessened, which will limit the movement of women and girls to the bush

vision of Income Generating Activities. 800 women and girls are targeted for income generating activities. Such will allow them to have access to and control over economic resources can be an effective means to enhance resilience, reduce vulnerability, mitigate the risk of GBV in emergencies, and help ensure that the needs of women, girls and their families are met

Construction of 5 Women and Girls Friendly Space. WGFS will serve as entry point for women and girls to report GBV concerns, express their needs, receive response services and psychosocial support services.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihood / Pro-



Photo:Community gathering at the IDP camps in Bentiu to distribute flood relief items such as soap and sanitary products to women and girls affected by floods in Bentiu

100 years of progress, State of Midwifery in South Sudan



Photo: Undersecretary, Ministry of Health Dr. Victoria Anib and UNFPA Representative Dr. Ademola Olajide engage with participants during the international day of the midwife 2022.

Every May 5 globally marks the International Day of Midwives, and South Sudan, like other countries around the world, celebrated this event under the “theme 100 years of progress” signaling 100 years of progress in midwifery globally that have led to healthier, happier families and communities in every corner of the world.

National celebrations were held across the country under the leadership of the South Sudan Nurses and Midwives Association with support from development partners including UNFPA. The event in Juba was held at the Juba Teaching Hospital. Undersecretary in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Victoria Anib used the occasion to call for more investment in midwifery and to support the work of midwives for better maternal health outcomes.

“Investment in Nurses and Midwives is value for money; the Ministry of Health will continue to engage all stakeholders to enhance nursing and midwifery services” she stressed

It can be recalled that at independence, South Su-

dan had only 10 qualified midwives, but UNFPA, in partnership with the government and partners like Canada and Sweden, supported the training of nurses and midwives at the various Health Science institutes across the country including Juba, Rumbek, Maridi, Torit, and Wau training institutes. Today, there are more than 1500 midwives who have graduated and are deployed at health facilities across the country.

“We commit to our continued support to strengthen midwifery services in the Republic of South Sudan,” pledged Jessie Ann Brouillette from the Embassy of Canada. These sentiments were also echoed by Mr. Ulf Kallstig from Sweden Headquarters, Stockholm.

On his part, UNFPA Representative, Dr. Demola Olajide, said, “Nurses and Midwives represent the largest professional cadre in the health system and can be the difference between a reactive health system or one which is responsive to the needs of the community, especially women and girls”. He expressed optimism that with “the prog-

ress being made in midwifery; South Sudan will be a better place for women and girls”.

South Sudan has some of the worst health outcome indicators globally, with the maternal mortality ratio standing at 1,150 per 100,000 live births, whereas neonatal and under-five mortality rates are 39.3 and 99.2, per 1000 live births respectively (2014). Evidence globally shows that with increased investments in midwives and midwifery, we will save an estimated 4.3 million lives a year by 2035 and that universal coverage of midwife-delivered interventions would avert 67 percent of maternal deaths by 2035. Therefore, training and deploying more midwives and those with midwifery skills in the bomas and payams across South Sudan will be critical for ensuring that there is a midwife at every birth and that no woman dies while giving birth in South Sudan.



Photo: Midwives celebrate during the international day of the midwife in Juba.



Photo: Midwifery students celebrate during the international day of the midwife in Juba.



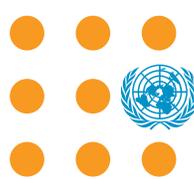
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