



MONTHLY UPDATE

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Southern Sudan's Women Leaders Find Common Ground

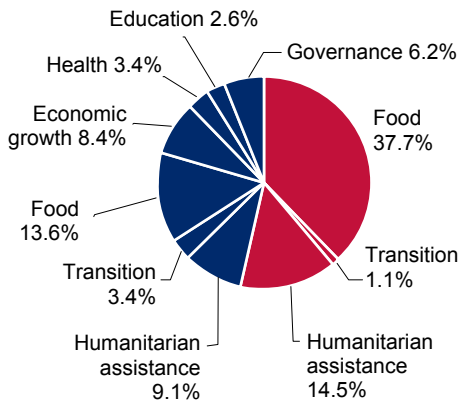
With the three major milestones of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement fast approaching—the 2008 census, the 2009 elections, and the 2011 referendum—Southern Sudan's leaders are accelerating efforts to boost popular participation in political life. Since the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan stipulates that a quarter of all positions in government be reserved for women, supporting female leaders is a top priority.

On October 3-6, USAID sponsored a conference called "Strengthening Women's Participation and Leadership in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas," which gave 70 rural female leaders the chance to come to Juba to plan a way forward with members of the Government of Southern Sudan. The conference, said Betty Ogowro, "is not about discussing the issues of women; we have been discussing the issues of women for many years. Today is about moving forward and strengthening women."

The conference was intended to help participants take first steps toward effective advocacy on women's participation, particularly by strengthening what until now has been a virtually non-existent network among female leaders, and by creating new channels of communication between these leaders and their communities. The conference focused on what participants identified as the key



USAID ASSISTANCE TO SUDAN FY2007, ESTIMATED



Darfur 53.3%

Food:	\$261.65 million
Humanitarian assistance:	\$101.00 million
Transition:	\$7.54 million
Darfur:	\$370.19 million

South, East, and Three Areas 46.7%

Food:	\$94.48 million
Humanitarian assistance:	\$63.00 million
Transition:	\$23.84 million
Economic growth:	\$58.25 million
Health:	\$23.79 million
Education:	\$17.75 million
Governance:	\$43.13 million
South, East, and Three Areas:	\$324.24 million
Countrywide Total:	\$694.43 million

The Three Areas are Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan.



After the conference, Monday Charity, left, and Charity Opani returned to Yei and began to engage local officials in ways to support women's rights locally. Photo: Mercy Corps



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challenges to women’s participation in public decision-making, including the low level of education, poor access to health services, lack of information, and restrictive cultural practices. Debate moved beyond simply analyzing the problems and focused on the potential for collective action. During group discussions, participants established steps forward to encourage women’s participation, and created channels of communication to increase awareness in their communities.

“Women need to wake up and take at the forefront of the development of this country, because this country belongs to women,” said Commissioner of the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Simon Kun.

Despite the interim constitution’s gender quota, few Southern Sudanese—even some of those attending the conference—are aware of it. Mary Nyamum, a member of a grassroots organization in Blue Nile state exclaimed, “I did not know women could hold such big positions, stand in front of men, and discuss government issues! I am very surprised!”

Rebecca Garang de Mabor, Presidential Advisor on Gender and Human Rights, reminded participants that even though women’s rights are enshrined in the constitution, they must still claim them. “We should not allow ourselves be confined to the 25 percent, but also participate in the other 75 percent if we work and extend our network and talk about what we discussed here.”

All the conference sessions identified two overarching needs: strengthening women’s literacy and overcoming cultural barriers. Around 95 percent of

Southern Sudanese women are illiterate, partly because of the war, but also because of societal attitudes that discourage women’s education. “During our struggle, we were fighting along with men, and I cannot stand that we should remain and follow the old laws that gave women very little chance for participation in public affairs,” said a representative from the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development, Mary Ajith.

Feedback from participants in this respect was enthusiastic. “This conference has made me aware of the existence of other civil society groups,” said Elizabeth Nyalada, the project manager of Leer Hygiene Promotion. The Women’s Forum of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly indicated it wants to sustain the links forged at the conference by participating in events organized by USAID and regularly exchanging information.

Participants have been swift in acting on the conclusions of the conference. Inspired and informed, female leaders returned to their counties with renewed commitment and strategies to support women’s rights in their communities. Two weeks after the conference, Charity Opani was back in Yei, meeting with her organization, Mothers and Widows Association, to share her experience and the conclusions of the conference. She then prepared a workshop to bring together civil society organizations, local government officials, and community leaders to define the plan of action for collaboration between government and local organizations. “Before the conference we did not know people in the high offices, but now we know we can approach them,” she explained. About 50 people participated this workshop, and Opani hopes they will



During the conference, participant discussed challenges faced by women specifically in their region. Photos: Mercy Corps



also assist in spreading the message to the community.

Just a few kilometers away, in Lainya, women who attended the conference are steering the creation of a coalition to advocate for land rights. In Agok, Dot Baai Women's Association shared the conclusions of the conference with 45 women, and is now preparing a similar meeting with government representatives.

The conference in Juba built on the continuing, long-term efforts of USAID's partners the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Mercy Corps, and International Rescue Committee to support civil society organizations across Southern Sudan, Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan. ♦

Radio Program Combats Forced Marriage

"I had to obey the orders of my uncle who was providing for us. My uncle said that the man was one of us and I was to marry him. He used to tell me that I had no reason to refuse this marriage, and that it would happen whether I accepted it or not."

These are the words of Halima, 26, a refugee woman from Gaga, a Darfuri refugee camp east of Abéché, Chad, spoken during an episode of "She Speaks, She Listens," aired on Internews radio. Forced to marry and live with a man she had never met, Halima's experience is similar to that of thousands of refugee women in eastern Chad who never have the chance to contemplate entering a consensual marriage—or to

leave their marriage if they are treated in an abusive manner.

Through this episode of "She Speaks, She Listens," Houda Malloum and Halima Nassir, two of Internews' female reporters, broke the silence surrounding forced marriage and exposed the plight of women in eastern Chad, refugee and Chadian alike.

"She Speaks, She Listens" uses daring features like Halima's interview to help improve the lives of women in the region. On air since 2005, "She Speaks, She Listens" is breaking new ground in eastern Chad by regularly addressing on air sensitive topics related to violence against women. The weekly feature, funded by USAID, aims to give a voice to women, stimulate community dialogue, and eventually affect positive behavior change toward women.

"She Speaks, She Listens" is aired on three radio stations, which cover an area that includes the majority of refugee camps in eastern Chad. The stations are all part of the Internews Humanitarian Information Service, a project designed to provide critical news and information to refugees from Darfur and funded jointly by USAID, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. ♦

Manual Provides Approaches for Generating Income in Darfur

Widespread human displacement caused by the devastating conflict in Darfur has disrupted traditional livelihoods and forced families to search for alternative sources of income. Often, displaced women resort to the collection and sale of firewood—an activity that requires them to leave the relative safety of their camps and increases the risk of exposure to rape and other forms of violence. Many popular alternatives to income generation, such as pasta-making, have provided social benefits but have not generated profit.

In 2006, USAID launched an initiative to provide organizations working in Darfur with the tools to train Darfuris how to generate income safely and beneficially. In collaboration with CHF International, USAID developed a methodology for income-generating activities that specifically addresses the context in Darfur and documented it in a training manual published in August. The manual introduces



An Internews reporter talks to a resident of Gaga refugee camp in eastern Chad. Photo: USAID



Women in Kass camp in South Darfur make cheese for sale to local restaurants and merchants. Photo: USAID

basic business skills, including market and cost-benefit analyses, marketing techniques, bookkeeping, and market niche assessments. The initiative funded a training of trainers, who then shared the methodology with people displaced by the conflict during a series of workshops, which has in turn resulted in a number of promising pilot projects.

In one instance, an initial market survey in Kass, South Darfur, revealed a strong demand for cheese, which is generally purchased in Khartoum and transported on insecure roads, creating frequent shortages. Based on this survey, a local organization in Kass provided displaced women with basic business skills, then taught them how to make cheese. By the end of the three-month course, the women were able to sell a high-quality product and obtain a steady flow of income. Today, 17 women gather daily to make approximately 40 pounds of cheese, which they sell to restaurants and merchants. One mother uses the extra income to pay for her children's school fees, while another purchases meat to enhance her family's diet. Several of the women also now buy firewood at the market instead of venturing outside the camp to collect it.

The USAID-funded income-generation manual for Darfur is available to the public online at <http://iqamanual.dai.com>.♦

Integrating Displaced Girls into Formal Schools

Karima came to Mornei camp in West Darfur with her family in early 2004 when she was 13 years old. There was no school in her home village, and she had not had any opportunity to receive an education.

After she and her family got to Mornei, Karima enrolled in a basic knowledge class offered by Save the Children-U.S. in a USAID-funded Women's Center. USAID has been supporting Save the Children's Women Protection and Support Network in Darfur since September 2004, with the aim to improve their physical, mental, and social well being. At the core of the project are 19 Women's Centers in eight camps in West Darfur, where women and girls can go to develop skills, build knowledge, and get emotional support to address stress and trauma.

For the last three years, Karima has spent two hours a day, five days a week, studying under the supervision of three teachers, who instruct her in mathematics, Koranic studies, and Arabic. For Karima and 23 other girls from Mornei camp, the classes at the Women's Center have enabled them to enhance their livelihood skills and build basic literacy and numeracy.

Karima is now 16 years old, and with the education she received at the Women's Center, she has been able to successfully integrate into the formal schooling system and is now enrolled in the school next to the center in Mornei.

Alongside her formal schooling, Karima continues to attend literacy classes at the Women's Center, as well as handicraft courses to enhance her livelihood skills. Women who graduate from handicraft activities such as tailoring or baking are often referred on to other Save the Children-run projects, which aim to generate income for families at the camp.



Karima works on her literacy at the Women's Center in Mornei. Photo: Save the Children



Nima's Story

Nima fled Abata village for the safety of Hamediya Camp near Zalingei, West Darfur, over three years ago. Her husband had just been killed and fearing for her safety, she fled with a group of others for the 40-kilometer journey. She was able to take with her only the clothes on her back.

"When we arrived, we had nothing," said Nima. "We were given soap and floor-mats, which was all we had to sleep on. At the start of the rainy season, we received plastic sheets," which help reinforce mud and grass shelters from Darfur's harsh rain and sandstorms. "Then we were given kitchen sets containing things like cups, spoons, plates, and a kettle."

USAID has also provided Nima and other Hamediya residents with blankets, jerry-cans to collect and store clean water, and a plastic tub for laundry. Nima feels that soap is the most crucial thing she has received, appreciating the importance of proper hygiene to fight off diseases such as diarrhea, which can be especially threatening to children.

As Nima tells her story, her 9-month-old daughter plays quietly beside her. Safa was born in a mud-brick hut in the camp—now home to 41,000 displaced people—and reminds her mother that, despite the many challenges she has faced, things have improved for her in the time since she arrived. Nima now has a job with USAID partner Mercy Corps working at a preschool, teaching the young children traditional songs, games, and lessons. Her work provides her new opportunities to learn and help her community, and provides her with much-needed income. And little Safa reminds her that wonderful things can happen even during the most difficult times. ♦

The Women's Centers also offer emotional support groups for women and girls coping with trauma and workshops and trainings on gender-based violence, women's rights, reproductive health, nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene.

"There are so many benefits for women and girls," says Karima. But for her the biggest benefit has been re-integrating in school. "Without the literacy classes, I never would have been able to go to school. I want to complete my education and then become a mathematics teacher in the Women's Center because this is where I started learning." ♦

Vitamin A Supplements Distributed in Abyei Schools

Chol stepped up to the desk, unsure of what was going to happen next. "Don't worry. It doesn't taste bad," said Elrasheed Abdalla. "Just open your mouth and stick out your tongue." The girl did as she was told, and Dr. Abdalla squeezed onto her tongue a drop of vitamin A—a life-saving nutritional supplement that the girl would have otherwise not received.

With a giggle, Chol told the girl in line behind her, "That was easy. Don't worry, it is OK."

Chol is one of 1,550 children who have recently received vitamin A supplements at eight schools in Abyei through the USAID-funded Health, Education, and Reconciliation (HEAR) project. Prior to dissemination days, staff informed community members about the upcoming distribution, and invited them to bring their children to the schools—whether they were students or not—to receive their supplements. HEAR staff also provided health education information to students, teachers, and parents that focused on what vitamin A is, why people need it, and how to protect children and mothers from vitamin A deficiency.



A child receives a vitamin A supplement. Photo: EDC

Many of the mothers present during the vitamin A activities said they would be happy to discuss the information they learned at the session with their neighbors. In fact, some were so enthusiastic that they went home and returned to the school with other children and even neighbors.



The World Health Organization has donated all of the doses of vitamin A so far, and USAID hopes to receive additional donations so that it can distribute supplements at schools in Kauda and Kurmuk. In addition to vitamin A distribution, HEAR focuses on improving the teachers' classroom skills and increasing their knowledge about topics including malaria prevention, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition. HEAR is also conducting deworming activities, distributing bednets, and training health workers.♦

New School Boosts Number of Trained Midwives

Maternal mortality rates in Sudan are among the highest in the world. On average, 590 women die per 100,000 live births, and the rate is even higher in rural areas, where 94 percent of all births take place in the home. In Southern Kordofan, less than half of all births are attended by a trained health professional.

With support from USAID, Save the Children-U.S. built the Abu Gebeiha Midwifery School in Southern Kordofan in an effort to offer better health services to pregnant women and new mothers—and to begin to reverse these rates. The school was inaugurated on September 4 by the State Minister of Health, the Director General for Health, and other local leaders. Since Save the Children had started training midwives even before the school's inauguration, the event also celebrated the graduation of 30 new midwives.

In her inauguration speech, school principal Zahra Ahmed Gaber stressed the importance of training midwives in rural areas. "They provide great support to society. Without the help of midwives, mothers have a difficult time delivering their babies and there is a risk of death for both mother and baby."

Since 2002, USAID has supported the training of 50 new midwives and provided refresher courses to 80 midwives already operating in Southern Kordofan. These midwives are now practicing in the communities surrounding Abu Gebeiha and able to assist home deliveries. The State Ministry of Health plans to train up to 200 midwives a year in Dilling, Kadugli, and Abu Gebeiha, with a goal of providing a trained midwife for each of the 600 villages in the three localities. Up to 100 a year will study at the Abu Gebeiha school.

USAID has been supporting Save the Children's work in Southern Kordofan since 1994. Save the Children has long been the largest healthcare provider in Southern Kordofan, supporting 85 health care facilities—including three new units inaugurated in September—which serve the health needs of over 350,000 people.♦

A Group Farm Helps a Community Rebuild

Khor Baraka in North Tokar, Red Sea State, is a long stretch of lowland that defines the tip of the Tokar Delta. It has high agricultural potential, but an invasive species of mesquite tree has left the population reliant on charcoal production and labor-intensive agriculture. Then in July, a group of 14 villages stretching over 70 kilometers was devastated by floods from Eritrea, the intensity and timing of which were unprecedented. Nearly 3,000 households—or about 15,000 people—were affected as the floodwaters flowed at dangerous levels for two months. Seven people lost their lives, farmlands and livestock were swept away, wells were submerged, the main bridge was cut off, and houses and household assets were destroyed.

Khojali Danwer is one of the six villages in Khor Baraka targeted for assistance due to the severity of the damage. The community lost a significant amount of livestock, every water point was damaged, and the



A Beja woman clears mesquite in North Tokar, Red Sea. Photo: Oxfam



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school and clinic were destroyed. USAID supported Oxfam in helping the most severely affected households by providing cash in exchange for community-chosen development projects, including group farm development, road rehabilitation, revival of charcoal production, and dike rehabilitation to protect from future floods.

Hashim Jaffer, the chairman of Khojali Danwer village, said that his community held discussions with Oxfam and considered its options carefully before choosing to develop a group farm. He said that earlier cash transfer work helped the villagers to open access tracks to the cultivation areas and that they now want to make use of the flood waters to grow tomatoes, peas, watermelon, and cucumber.

“The timing is just right for growing vegetables,” said Hashim. “We have opened up about 2.5 feddans [2.6 acres]. We water the farm using hand-dug wells since the Khor is well saturated with water. We have almost finished the first round of fencing. We have also put most of the area under vegetable crops with the support of Oxfam and [local organization] Omhail.”

One community member added, “We started with our own few tools and limited seeds to show Oxfam that we are very keen to move on.... We also plan to invest part of the first cash payment in adding more seeds and enforcement of the fencing to protect the vegetables”.

“The women have had a good role in this activity as they help in weeding and watering the vegetables alongside their husbands,” said one woman.

“We have a very strong group work now in place,” said Hashim. “In the future, we intend to work increasingly with others and continue to focus on developing our group farms for local consumption needs and later sell extra production for increased income. Thanks to the continued support from Oxfam and USAID, we should be in a strong position to do this.”♦

Library Collections Expand Horizons

Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) laid the foundation for democratic transformation in Sudan, many Sudanese are disillusioned by the country’s political history, while others—particularly young people—have known nothing beyond the current regime’s narrow ideology.



More than 1,000 new books and journals on peace building, human rights, and civic education have been provided to Khartoum’s libraries. Photo: USAID

Educational institutions have suffered as well, with syllabi censored to limit students’ exposure to texts on democratic systems and theories.

To enhance open access to resources on peace building, human rights, and civic education, USAID recently funded the expansion of library collections housed in two of Khartoum’s cultural centers. Collectively, more than 1,000 books, journals, and magazines in both Arabic and English were purchased, together with audio-visual materials. The centers are visited by 800-1,200 people a month, most of whom are young students in Khartoum’s universities and colleges. As a result of the new collections, students, researchers, and professors from various disciplines, ethnic backgrounds, and political affiliations have begun to access the new resources and discuss issues affecting the future of Sudan.

USAID supported a series of public events to promote the new resources and strengthen the centers as platforms for public dialogue. Large audiences gathered for book club meetings, lectures, public forums, and film screenings. Students, journalists, civil society activists, and staff from nongovernmental organizations, U.N. agencies, and embassies joined together to listen to well-known writers and politicians discuss peace and conflict in Sudan and the future of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. One presentation in Khartoum led by Abel Alier, a former Vice President of Sudan, on “Too Many Agreements Dishonored,” drew more than 300 people, including many Southern Sudanese.♦



Preparing the South for Conventional Banking

Conventional banking—charging interest on loans and paying interest on deposits—is a new concept in Southern Sudan. Prior to the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Islamic banking was practiced countrywide and was the only option available. With the CPA in place, the Southern Sudanese are now working to build a conventional system that will meet the needs of borrowers and the economy.

In 2007, USAID partner Bearing Point began working with senior management and staff of the Bank of Southern Sudan to strengthen their understanding of the foundation needed for a conventional banking system. Bearing Point conducted weekly seminars

with senior bank management on monetary principles to lay a foundation for an executive workshop held October 17-19 in Nairobi. Led by Dr. Warren Coats, a renowned monetary economist and former senior official with the International Monetary Fund, the workshop focused both on understanding theory and practice and on many important and sensitive issues facing the bank.

The workshop proved to be a great success and much appreciated by the participants, who said the program was extremely instructive and exceeded their expectations. “This is precisely, 100 percent, what we wanted, which we need to help to prepare us to implement monetary policy in Southern Sudan,” said Kornelio Koriam, Assistant Governor of the Bank of Southern Sudan. “I personally am grateful for this, and we would very much like to have follow-up sessions.” ♦

World Food Program Sudan Distributions



Bagging wheat for distribution in Darfur.
Photo: USAID

USAID is the leading donor of food assistance to Sudan. In fiscal year 2007, USAID provided 391,900 metric tons of emergency food aid worth more than \$393.9 million to Sudan and Sudanese refugees in Eastern Chad. Approximately 75 percent of this total goes toward feeding displaced people and refugees in Darfur and Eastern Chad, where conflict continues to disrupt food security. The remaining 25 percent is allocated to people in Southern Sudan, Eastern Sudan, Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan, where food aid continues to play a vital role in supporting returnees to Southern Sudan and helping communities recover from two decades of civil conflict.

WFP Distributions September 2007	
Region	Beneficiaries
Darfur	3,062,568
South	771,321
East	140,669
Three Areas*	99,575
Central	29,525
Total	4,103,658

* The Three Areas are Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan.

WFP Target vs. Actual Food Aid Distributions - Darfur

