

SSWEN

SOUTH SUDAN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT NETWORK

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

APRIL 2012

SPECIAL POINTS OF IN- TEREST:

- *Building self-confidence and capacity to participate effectively in peace and security processes.*
- *Train the Trainers Program supports Women to know their rights in the Transitional Constitution*

ABOUT SSWEN

South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network is a non-profit, nonpartisan and non-governmental organization formed in 2005 and focuses on the empowerment of South Sudanese women through programs that encourages women to participate in decision making and gender and human rights advocacy.

Our goal is to achieve economic, social and gender equality and a healthy and peaceful society through human rights for all.

Our Mission is support the empowerment of women through programs that address their rights in education, health, gender based advocacy and organizational development.

Our vision is to alleviate the factors that contribute to poverty and social exclusion, and to disseminate information to facilitate social inclusion and gender equality.

GENDER AND STATE BUILDING IN SOUTH SUDAN



Over 50 women from the ten states of South Sudan gathered in Juba on the 19th March 2012 for a five days training of Trainers (TOT) on women's rights in South Sudan sponsored by the UN Women. The aim of the training was to equip the women with knowledge and skills to create awareness about their rights in the transitional constitution and to solicit their inputs for the permanent constitution at the state Levels. During the deliberations, the women have realized that certain laws and customs are not in line with the bill of rights in our constitution. For example, restriction under the customary law on inheritance, succession the degrad-

ing treatment of widows and domestic violence. We have observed that human rights throughout the interim and the eight months of independence, the 25% of affirmative action has been poorly implemented. For examples women in decision making bodies represent:

- 1) Presidential Advisors— 1 out of 6 are female and equates to 16% representation.
- 2) Cabinet Ministers 4 instead of 7 out of 29 are female this is 14%.
- 3) Heads of Independent Commissions, 2 out of 20 are female (10%) and should be 5.
- 4) Undersecretary 4 out of 27 are female (14%) should be 7.
- 5) Ambassadors 9 out of 90 are female which equates to just

10% representation.

In addition to the above, there are 15 members on the Austerity Measurement Committee established by the President. No woman sits on that committee!

The country cannot achieve its political, economic and social objectives without successful integration of women into the nation and state building projects. The participants broke out into groups according to their states and developed action plans on how they will pass on the skills learnt in the conference to grass root women in their communities.



Hon. Agul Deng,
Women's Rights
Activist

"There are people who neither belong to the north or the south, especially after the referendum!"

25% Constitutional provision are not always met at all levels!



Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba,
Minister of Housing and
Physical Infrastructure

WOMEN & THE TRANSITIONAL CONSTITUTION

This conference was organized by a consortium of women organizations namely, South Sudan Women Empowerment (SSWEN), New Sudan Women Acting Together For Change (NS-WATCH), South Sudan Women Lawyers Association (SSWLA) and South Sudan Women General Association (SSWGA) with support from the UN Women and the Norwegian Peoples Aid. The conference was attended by

140 women from the ten states of South Sudan and from different sectors. This was a follow up of the first National Women Conference on the Transitional Constitution held in May 2011 which was an attempt from women to debate issues such as gender mainstreaming and including women's rights in the transitional constitution. The conference also helped to highlight the plight of women with disabilities and

the injustices that South Sudanese women are subject to, including force marriages. The conference agreed that, the sensitization of women on the constitution and other international instruments is vital, as well as lobbying and advocating for women to be appointed as chiefs in local courts in order to address cases of abuse and effect change among others.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE NATIONALITY ACT

In December 2011, SSWEN in collaboration with the UNHCR and the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Foreign Affairs, conducted a roundtable discussion on the South Sudan Nationality Act passed by the National Assembly in 2011. The workshop was attended by a wide range of stakeholders focused on

issues related to implementation & understanding of the Act by the civil society and entire public. There were many challenges and critical issues discussed in the roundtable, including the duration of individuals married to foreigners and eligibility to apply for nationality and dual citizenships.

Means of implementing these laws and awareness were among the challenges discussed, including the status of people who neither belong to the north or south especially after independence. Most of these critical issues were discussed and agreed upon by the participants.

ELECTIONS BILL: GENDER ANALYSIS!

The participation of women in political and public affairs of south Sudan is a fairly new phenomenon. A 25% constitutional provision is not often met at local levels (states, counties and commissions) and therefore women's participation at the lowest levels of government is weak. Increasing the number of women elected or their possibility to stand as candidates risk being ineffective if not combined with a long term strategy to foster women's capacity in leadership and administration, as well as their actual participation in politics. Removal of formal barriers to public partici-

pation does not imply genuine equal opportunities. In fact actual inequities and informal barriers are the most common factors hindering women's involvement in the public spheres. The Global Justice Center also made suggestions and comments regarding the national elections bill of South Sudan. These included increasing the number of women MPs from 25% to 35%, at least 3 members of the appointed electoral commission members should be women. Literacy is a requirement to ensure the quality of the candidates. It should be addressed that illiteracy rates in

South Sudan are significantly higher for women than men, which would weaken women's participation. It ought to be considered that CEDAW provides that "indirect discrimination against women may occur when laws, policies and programs are based on seemingly gender neutral criteria which in their actual effect have a detrimental impact on women". Women should also be appointed to public positions such as the judiciary or other professional groups that play an essential part in the everyday life of all societies.

SOUTH SUDAN URGED TO RATIFY CONVENTIONS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS



Lawrence Korbandy,
Chairperson
of South
Sudan
Human
Rights
Commission

In February 2012 SSWEN together with the Joint Donor Team; Norwegian People's Aid, South Sudan Women Lawyers, UN Women, United Nation Mission in South Sudan organized a two day conference on key international and regional instrument

on human rights. The workshop stressed the need for the government of the Republic of South Sudan to accelerate the ratification of international instruments related to women. The conference deliberation focused on the following instruments; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW, 1979); The African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in

Africa (1995) and the UN Security Council resolution 1325. The conference concluded that as much as its important to ratify these instruments and develop a national action plan, it is critical for civil societies to be influential. CSOs need to continue advocacy programs, identify individuals and institutions in the government who are willing to take up such cases and finally CSO's need to know the government's plan by obtaining information from the relevant ministries.

*For civil
societies to be
influential
they need to
do a lot of
advocacy
programs!*

MARRIED OFF AT 9 YRS AS COMPENSATION

Atia's brother had killed a man over a cattle dispute, so Atia was handed over to the man's family as compensation. It is a traditional practice in communities across her state of Eastern Equatoria in South Sudan, the country that became independent from Sudan in July 2011 after decades of civil war. For girls like Atia, their life becomes one of servitude and abuse as the new families often harbor bitterness taking revenge upon the girls they are given. When Atia turned 9 years old, she was married to a son in her new family. When that man died of an illness, she was passed on to a younger brother. She spent her days scrubbing and cleaning, and being raped repeatedly by her new husband and other men in the family with the intention of producing a child to replace the murdered family member. She was beaten if she fought back. "I tried to kill myself twice," says Atia, now 14 and still living in servitude. Cattle are the economic mainstay for most communities in Eastern Equatoria; a young man cannot marry and build a homestead without them. A man must have at least 20 cows, costing 1,000 South Sudanese Pounds each (roughly

\$335), to win a woman's hand in marriage. Desperate grooms end up conducting cattle raids to acquire sufficient numbers. Following 22 years of civil war, many areas of South Sudan remain severely underdeveloped. According to South Sudan's Statistics Bureau, only 19 percent of the population over the age of 15 is literate in Eastern Equatoria. Amos Gudo, an elder chief who presides over a traditional court in an Eastern Equatoria village called Kiyala, says the practice of giving away girls must continue, as a way of solving conflicts between community members. He notes an absence of prisons in the state, inducing communities to keep relying on this tradition to resolve disputes. Not all elders agree. A woman named Alima Biaka is devastated that her 16-year-old granddaughter, Igitu Imuta, was recently forced into marriage as compensation for a so-called blood feud. An uncle of Igitu's had killed a man in a fight, promising the bereaved family his niece. Bewildered and frightened in her new family, Igitu has since vowed to take her own life, her grandmother said. Now, that grandmother has decided to fight back. She has started campaigning with the local government and nongovernmental organi-

zations, demanding her granddaughter's release. "She is the only daughter I have left in this world, and I am not going to lose her," she said. Lucy Iliha is the head of a state organization called the Women Civil Society Network. Along with Godfrey Victor Bulla, she is actively campaigning to stop the traditional practice, working with government officials and traditional leaders. Last month, she organized a demonstration with women's groups across the state, calling on the state assembly to draft a law to forbid the practice. It is an uphill battle, as some influential members of society continue the practice. Still, the activists are dedicated. "I promised myself to change this cycle of life," said Victor Bulla. "One day we shall hopefully never have to recount the tragic stories of Atia and Igitu. Instead we will be discussing their marks at school."





"Today's Vision for Tomorrows Mission"

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SSWEN are very much looking forward to working with Helen Animashaun who is over from the UK and joined our team in March as a VSO Volunteer. She will be volunteering with SSWEN for the next two years and will be based in Juba. SSWEN would like to thank Volunteer Service Overseas and express their appreciation in this new opportunity to strengthen SSWEN in meeting our strategic objectives of the empowerment of women and gender equality.



Lilian Riziq, SSWEN Director, below Helen Animashaun, VSO Volunteer



I am very excited to be working with SSWEN over the diverse issues impacting upon gender equality capacity building in South Sudan. VSO is an

international organization whose remit is to send volunteers as a sustainable human resource as opposed to sending aid. We aim to work in partnership with local partners to facilitate a mutual exchange of knowledge, technical expertise and skills as a sustainable means of supporting positive changes in peoples lives. In just a short space of time (3 weeks) of having arrived in Juba, I have already met such strong and inspirational women. Knowledge is our most powerful tool for advancing change and I hope to contribute to sharing our knowledge and personal experiences.

EXCHANGE VISIT: GULU WOMEN— LRA VICTIMS

East Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative for women (EASSI), conducted a learning exchange visit of women and men peacemakers from the East African members states of Kenya, Uganda as well as the newly independent South Sudan to Gulu in Northern Uganda to share, learn and draw lessons from the PRDP, in order to identify national and regional strategies that can contribute to a holistic approach to peace building and development.



While the Juba Peace Talks failed in their objective of reaching a signed peace agreement between the Lord's Resistance

Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda, the period of relative peace and



security that has since been enjoyed in Northern Uganda has nonetheless led to a renewed sense of hope regarding the rebuilding of the region's economy. Almost 6 six years of peace have enabled large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return home – with nearly 100 percent of the original camp population now out of camps.

Global armed conflicts within and between states, sharpened by growing threats to human security is on the increase. Unfortunately, conflicts normally take place

in the world's poorest countries, where state capacity to act may be weak. Situations such as these hinder governments from delivery of basic needs for the people and at times result in a state of emergency. In addition, in times of armed conflict with several male relatives killed, injured or displaced, women take on additional responsibilities to care for their families. Yet traditionally, women and girls tend to have less access than men to education, skills, and fewer prospects for employment. The maintenance of peace and security at the global, regional and local levels is crucial for the protection of the human rights of women and girl children, as well as for the elimination of all forms of violence against them and their use as a weapon of war.

