



South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network

Weaving Together: Strategizing for a Just and Sustainable Peace

**August 18 - 21, 2008
Juba, South Sudan**

Conference Report



South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network (SSWEN)

MISSION

The mission of SSWEN is to empower Sudanese women through programs that support and encourage women's rights, education, policy advocacy, and organizational development. We are committed to helping Sudanese women achieve economic, social, and gender justice in Sudan's civil society sector by building healthy and peaceful communities within our country, with human rights for all.

VISION

SSWEN strives to alleviate the factors that contribute to poverty and social distress, and to improve communication and the dissemination of information that will lead to social inclusion and equality. We dedicate ourselves to support for the poor, vulnerable women in Sudan, and those impacted by the Diaspora.

In pursuit of this vision, we provide interpersonal assistance and information to women about education and social services; we organize instruction and develop trainers who will teach organizational development and women's advocacy; and we raise awareness among local, national, and international leaders about the plight of Sudanese women.

CORE VALUES

The core values that guide our work are inherent in everything we do. These values shape our work, and ensure that our approach is consistent with our results. We list them without reference to priority, because they are of equal value in how we live our professional and personal lives.

Respect - We are each unique individuals and as we grow we and explore our individuality, we also respect the unique qualities and contributions of others.

Teamwork – By definition, 'teamwork' is the ability and the willingness to work together toward a common vision. A commitment to teamwork demands that individual accomplishments are directed toward organizational objectives. Teamwork is the ingredient that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Responsibility - We are not responsible for the attitudes and programming we inherited in childhood. However, as adults, we are 100% responsible for changing negative attitudes and behavior and improving our relationships and interactions with others. We become wise not by the recollection of our past, but by taking responsibility for our future.

Founded in 2005, SSWEN is recognized in the United States as a 501(c)(3) organization based in Arizona. SSWEN is also registered with Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in Khartoum, Sudan, and Sudan Relief and the Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC) in Juba, Sudan. In addition to representatives in 7 states (AZ, MN, NJ, SD, TX, WA, and Washington, D.C.), SSWEN has volunteers and advocates located in Toronto- Canada, Cairo-Egypt, London-England, Berlin-Germany, and Juba and Khartoum, Sudan.

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A Note from our Founder - Lilian Riziq

In August 2008, the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network (SSWEN) hosted an international conference comprised of a diverse group of Sudanese women leaders, civic activists, NGOs and government officials to address issues pertaining to women residing in South Sudan and those who had been impacted in the Diaspora as a result of the Second Civil War. Although a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 giving the South six years of self-rule to determine their ultimate course of action, few of the official efforts to address the unique needs of women in South Sudan have been implemented. The women of South Sudan are redefining their role and pursuing specific reforms to bring about lasting change. The process by which South Sudan resolves these issues in the coming years sets the stage for further reforms across our continent.

For those of us working for an independent nation and the re-establishment of civil society across Africa, it is necessary to have baseline assessments of several areas and to identify concrete benchmarks that will indicate progress toward our goals. We narrowed down our areas of focus to:

Women's Education
Women's Health
Equal Participation in Leadership and Politics
Women's Legal Rights
Violence Against Women
Women in Business
Social and Family Issues

***"Why is it important for women to have equal participation?
Can we achieve good governance without women's
participation? No, because the absence of women's
involvement means that women have no voice in achieving
political, social and economic justice on their own behalf.***

*- Honorable Jemma Nunu Kumba -
Governor of Western Equatoria State*

Over the course of three days, we analyzed the current conditions, shared ideas, discussed options, and articulated a new way of looking at these problems. Discussions could be considered "lively" at times! Participants broke into work groups led by trained facilitators and coordinators. Each group had language interpreters (English and Arabic) to remove that barrier to effective communication. By the end of each session, groups were able to document:

- Consensus on a problem statement for each issue.
- A list of private entities, government institutions, or NGOs designated to address these issues and a review of what approaches work and which ones don't.
- A goal statement designed to address the specific problem identified.
- Specific, measurable next steps to take to help close the gap between the problem and the goal statements.

This Conference Report is the result of their labor. I am pleased to present the official report of the 2008 **Weaving Together: Strategizing for a Just and Sustainable Peace** Conference. It is our hope that this report will serve as a blueprint for action!

We need to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support. Without their contributions of time, talent and treasure, this annual conference would not be possible!

***Humanity United
Mama Cash
The US Consulate in Juba
National Democracy Institute
Darfur Human Rights Organization***

***Bridge Way Foundation
SPLM Office in Juba
World Food Program
Mercy Corp in Juba
Sudan Sunrise***

***New Sudanese Indigenous NGOs Network
Norwegian Church Aid
GOSS Mission in DC
The Office for Regional Cooperation: GoSS
My Sister's Keeper and Sisterhood for Peace
Ms. Angela Gracey and Jen Marlow***

We have before us an unprecedented opportunity to chart the course of history in our communities, our nation, and across the continent. Our leadership and commitment to the fundamental principles of equality and justice will impact future generations. Thank you for joining us in this cause.....the cause of liberty, the cause of justice, and the cause of peace!

Sincerely,

Lilian

Overview

From August 18 - 21, 2008, a distinguished group of community leaders, volunteers and civic officials gathered in Juba, South Sudan, for a Conference designed to lay the foundation for lasting peace in the region. Participants in the conference included women from across the ten regions of Sudan, the marginalized areas of Darfur and Nuba Mountain, as well as women displaced by the violence.

This conference report outlines the scope of the issues affecting Sudanese women, an assessment of current conditions, the preferred end state or goal for each issue, and the steps needed to achieve each goal. We refer to the follow-on steps as **SMART Steps**:

Specific, Measurable; Area, Realistic and Time (time period)

These are the specific, measurable actions we must take to advance the issue within a given timeframe. The information serves as a starting point for further discussion and action.

We welcome your continued feedback and participation in the process of establishing a lasting peace in our region. Through continuous dialogue that builds on the success of each year's efforts, we move closer to our stated goals. It is our hope that the issues and action steps outlined in this report affect lasting change in both policies and attitudes.

Women's Education

Throughout the world, education is seen as the great equalizer. Participants in this first working group heard from several panelists on the challenges preventing the equal participation of women in educational opportunities.

Key Challenges

In identifying the major obstacles to participation, we asked "Why does illiteracy exist among girls in Sudan?" Answers included:

- ◆ Early marriage and pregnancy
- ◆ Poverty
- ◆ Some cultures prevent girls from going to school (gender discrimination)
- ◆ Lack of awareness about education and more specifically, the education of girls
- ◆ No stability during the civil war
- ◆ Orphans have no one to support them in the area of education
- ◆ Girls in rural areas are left out (geographic isolation combined with other factors listed here)
- ◆ Household duties and babysitting younger siblings prevent girls from going to school
- ◆ Co-education – Especially, in intermediate/middle school, girls tend to drop out once they get their menstrual period (and may then have other responsibilities such as the ones listed above)
- ◆ Children and teachers transitioning from Arabic speaking schools in the North struggle with English in the South.

If we educate 65% of the women in South Sudan.....

- ▼ Reduce child mortality.
- ▼ Improve immunization
- ▼ Enhance women's domestic roles
- ▼ Strengthen family survival strategies
- ▼ Reduction of diseases and AIDS

Professor Elias Nyamillel Wakoson's presentation highlighted some of these Key Challenges. Here is a brief summary of his remarks...

Since the establishment of Sudan, women's education has been neglected, limited, and restricted. Until independence there was no secondary school in Sudan. Women were trained mainly as elementary school teachers and were given mostly home economics training. Some ended up being nurses while some were trained to become nuns. Traditionally, this was the only education available for women. This underscores the disparity between educational opportunities of men versus women--this is why women are relatively absent in politics and in business. It also explains why Sudanese society is lagging. Consider these impediments to women's education:

- *Early marriage and high early pregnancy rates. Women don't go to school because they must take care of the baby.*
- *Differences in socialization between boys and girls. Sudanese girls are trained to do everything, while boys are allowed to play. The high level of illiteracy is not because of women's capacity, but because of the way they are socialized.*
- *While poverty affects both boys and girls, it affects girls even more. Girls do not go if they can't be properly dressed.*
- *In many families boys are valued higher than girls. Parents who devalue girls see little utility in educating them.*



During the Addis Ababa agreement, many schools for girls were opened. However, many girls were exploited even by government officials—were taught to have sex at an early age. Girls became pregnant and were forced to drop out of school. The disparity between male versus female students persists at every level. Redressing this disparity is the responsibility of the government and civil society.

Professor Wakoson concluded his remarks with some very direct recommendations:

“Men must change the way they look at women, especially schoolgirls. We must impress upon the GOSS to pay special attention to the education of girls and women.”

Specific actions we may take immediately include:

- *Discouraging early marriage.*
- *Training teachers how to interact with female students.*
- *Establishing consequences for sexual harassment.*
- *Making school materials gender-sensitive.*
- *Reinforcing that the ultimate responsibility to assure girls' attendance at school lies with the parents .*
- *Educated woman are critical for the long term prosperity and peace in any country. That is why the Sudan People's Liberation Movement has given women 25% representation.*

Work Group participants also heard from Dr. **Kout Mawein** on the status of girls' education internationally.



While some countries have made achievements, in Khartoum and Al- Jazeera areas, girl school children are much lower. Girls' enrollments in some parts of the world are increasing because governments are formulating policies that target girls' education. In poor countries, 38% of all schoolchildren were girls. Today girls are 48% of schoolchildren. Figures are worst in Sudan. Consider:

- ▶ 60% of South African schoolchildren are girls
- ▶ 40 million are in sub-Saharan Africa
- ▶ 66% of South Asian schoolchildren are girls
- ▶ 99% of South Sudanese women are not educated

Let's examine Warrap State as an example;

They are opening schools under the trees because they cannot wait to build schools. They are giving incentives to families who enroll girls in the form of financial support, food, etc. One ongoing concern is retention: 99% of school dropouts in southern Sudan are girls. Even during colonial times, families were forced to enroll their girls.

While our first challenge is enrollment, an even greater challenge is retention. Our girls lack of role models as teachers, ministers of education. During war, women served on front line and behind the lines, giving up any effort to attend school.

Today there are several barriers to girls' education in Southern Sudan: Our education system was planned with boys in mind. Nilotic areas have particularly low rates of girl-child education due to a range of social and economic factors. In many instances, families are concerned about losing a dowry if girls go to school and don't marry.

WHY is girls' education so important?

- * **Experts identify girls' education as critical**
"Educating girls yields a higher rate of return than any other investment in the developing world. "
Lawrence Summers, then Chief Economist of the World Bank, said in 1992.
- * **Millennium development goals include addressing the disparity in girls' education.**
- * **Recruiting and retaining girls has several benefits:**
 - *Reduces child mortality
 - *Reduces malnutrition
 - *Delays age of marriage
 - *Lowers rate of TB
- * **Education enhances women's political participation**
- * **Strengthens family survival structures**
- * **Education reduces incidences of diseases including HIV/AIDS**

So what action can we take? Dr. Mawein suggests lobbying the government and NGOs to do something about education; to formulate policies that highlight women's rights, ensure the enrollment of all children regardless of sex, improve the education rate for all children, and promote attitudes that fight negative thinking toward girls' education.

Key Achievements: Who is doing what? What is working?

The Education Work Group identified the following set of achievements by the new Government and NGOs:

1. Government achievements: There is a functioning Ministry of Education which provides or at least tries to build and maintain some schools, hires teachers, and provides books and other training materials, has an operating budget, and offers some limited scholarships.

2. NGO achievements: The following organizations are working on education issues for women and girls:

- * UNICEF is leading in education by providing school materials, teacher trainings, and sponsoring programs that specifically support girls' education.
- * Save the Children provides teacher training.
- * World Food Program provides food for educational programs.
- * Catholic churches have schools in Sudan.
- * Mercy Corps has programs in adult education and sometimes builds schools.



Women's Education discussion group

Key Challenges:

The Education Work Group identified a set of Challenges that have inhibited women's education:

1. Government shortcomings: Though we have a formal office, the Ministry is not working well or doing enough. For example, teacher salaries are not being paid on time; classrooms in South Sudan that were controlled by the Khartoum government during the Civil War have not been updated and no new schools have been built; private church schools are overcrowded and many public schools have been combined. Some counties have very few if any schools. School budgets are not used wisely. Some government personnel discriminate and practice nepotism (when there is a scholarship, many send their own children and don't give others a chance.)

A big challenge is the lack of a uniform curriculum across Sudan to ensure equitable learning opportunities. At a minimum, the government should have a law that requires all parents to send all of their children to school.

2. General Challenges: A general challenge has to do with a lack of communication and coordination between NGOs and the Government which contributes to the following conditions:

"Thank you for keeping me in the loop with regards to the important need of supporting girl education in Southern Sudan. You can always count on my support. Keep up the good work and God bless you."

Dr. Barnaba M Benjamin Minster of Regional Cooperation

There are too many non-skilled teachers. Many primary and elementary schools have new curriculum programs from East Africa (Uganda, Kenya) which lack a uniform quality. There is a lack of transportation for school children, and no school uniforms. There are no boarding schools for girls and very few short-term, skilled trade centers (welding, carpentry, nursing, etc.) for post-secondary education. Even if women wanted to pursue an education, there are no childcare facilities that would allow mothers of young children to return to school.

Key Problem: The group reached a consensus that the fundamental problem for women in education is *illiteracy*.

Our SMART goals and objectives include the following:

- ✓ **Reduce illiteracy by establishing adult education centers.**
- ✓ **Establish mentoring and other programs that allow women who are educated to help with women's education.**
- ✓ **Standardize curriculum for all grade levels throughout Sudan.**
- ✓ **Have teachers who were trained in Arabic attend English language training in order to make them more skilled teachers. Seek bilingual teachers.**

Final thoughts:

Women's Education was the largest of all of the discussion groups during the Conference so the topics outlined in this report only cover the high points of their discussions. It was clear by the number of women interested in education and through our group discussions that this is an important issue which impacts and influences all other issues in South Sudan. The group strongly believed that the education of girls and women is one of the keys to making the new Sudan a more equitable country for everyone. The education of women and girls will make families, government and civil society stronger, while increasing political participation and strengthening the peace process.

According to UNICEF.....for every one of the estimated 1.3 million children at School in Southern Sudan today, there is at least one other who is not, and the great majority of those who remain out of school are girls.

Girls' education is the single most important investment any nation can make and the benefits of educating girls are enormous. For Southern Sudan to quickly reverse the worst effects of its two decade war and to achieve economic growth and reduce infant mortality, a substantial investment in education is essential, especially for girls.

- Sudan Tribune, July 9, 2008 -

Women's Health

Women's Health was another popular topic for our Conference participants. For this issue, two discussion methods were chosen to generate ideas and provide information—a plenary session and a group discussion.

Results of Plenary Sessions

During the first portion of the session, Dr. Achir Achir created scenarios presenting hypothetical stories of conditions and events. Participants would then discuss how the situation would be addressed and what the eventual outcome would be if this scenario happened in their own communities. This method proved to be particularly useful in discussing sensitive issues, as the discussion was not based on personal experience but on a hypothetical case.

Summary Discussion of Three Scenarios...

1. Tawolina is a 30 year old woman who is married to a violent drunkard. She has recently given birth. Her husband carries pistols. What can she do to protect herself? Postulation: the husband was in the army and has just returned from the war and may have PTSD which predisposes him to drinking and drugging.

Is her life at risk? Yes—She is afraid for herself and her baby.

What can Tawolina do to protect herself? Go to her family; identify support in the community; call the police (to get a restraining order); seek counseling .

2. Anawina is an 18 year old woman who likes going out with young men. What are the health risks she might face and what can she do to avoid them?

Health risks include STDS/STI, pregnancy, shame, and stigmatization

How could she avoid these? Abstinence, health education and sex education at home, school, and church. She could reach out to find a supportive peer community, supportive adult relationships (especially with her mother and other women). Anawina should seek accountability relationships and possible counseling to cope with the reactions to her behavior or to change her behavior. Economic independence may help her to avoid this situation and her apparent need for male attention.



Women's Health Panel, from left to right: Dr. Ayan Bona; Dr. Achir Achir; Ms Lilian Rizi (RN); Ms Rosa Weet (Health Care Professional)

3. Miawa is a 14 year old girl who was doing well in school. Unfortunately, she became pregnant. What are the risks associated with the pregnancy?

There are several risk factors that Miawa may face during her pregnancy. Her youthful age and physical development may mean an obstructed, high risk or difficult labor; perhaps even miscarriage or death. She may lack prenatal care and have no access to family planning programs. She also potentially faces social rejection and isolation.

Miawa's physical and emotional needs as a youth will require specialized medical support, counseling to understand the risk factors and the responsibilities that come with motherhood, health education for both her own body and that of her child's, and the consistent support of her family.

Results of group discussion:

The session began by creating a Women's Health Base Assessment. The group discussion revolved around the fact that women have limited access to reproductive healthcare and may face specific serious threats to their reproductive health and rights.

Challenges during pregnancy: Participants noted a lack of healthy nutrition during pregnancy and after delivery. Blood loss during delivery and lack of good nutrition to replace the lost blood contributes to rising cases of anemia. Lack of health awareness and health education mean that many women do not recognize the signs that something is wrong. Miscarriages were the most commonly mentioned problems in reproductive health after sexually transmitted diseases.

“Maternal mortality in southern Sudan is one of the highest in the world – with 2,053 maternal deaths for 100,000 live births. Late presentation and lack of emergency obstetric care add to this high maternal mortality.... Women tend to deliver at home and only seek medical help if a problem arises.”

— Medecins sans Frontieres, March 2008 Report—

Lack of Transportation: There is a lack of women's health centers in communities and counties. Pregnant women are forced to walk for miles to reach the nearest hospital. Many women have delivered or died on the way to the hospital or at home during a home delivery. Some women prefer to deliver at home rather than risking the trip to the hospital.

Diseases and Infection: There are reports of widespread diseases due to contaminations, and the lack of clean water or sterile conditions. Despite universally recognized precautions, health care providers are not trained to use gloves, mask or gowns. In addition, many of these providers lack proper training in basic CPR, First Aid and washing hands. The movement of people as a result of the war has contributed to the spread of many diseases, particularly when men force girls and families to go with them.

Medication: Some medications and vitamins essential to women's health are not always available (such as folic acid.) Since the Ministry of Health has no control over the distribution of medication, it can be found anywhere and sold to anyone without prescription. Due to unqualified medical personnel, some medications are still being used to treat ailments even though safer and more effective treatments are now available (example: chloroquine is no longer a Malaria treatment for pregnant women, yet it is still been used.)

Labs: There is a serious lack of laboratory equipment and qualified lab technicians.

Immunization: Not enough information is provided to women to follow-up on medical instructions. Many children did not receive immunization due to lack of medicine or information to mothers on the importance of immunizations.

HIV/Aids: There are no statistics on HIV/AIDS rates in Southern Sudan. Many States do not have HIV testing centers and there is a general lack of HIV/AIDS prevention awareness. For many, HIV/AIDS is considered a woman's disease. Men, therefore, are not likely to go for HIV/AIDS tests.

Cultural Myth: Girls are seen as "property" and are forced to get married as early as the age of 12. They face many health issues during and after pregnancy, such as pelvic abnormalities or malformation due to their undeveloped bodies. Female Genital Mutation (FGM) is a great concern, many women underwent FGM and they suffer during and after delivery. Many women also suffer from infections as a result.



Women's Health Work Group

Health Care Resources: Several programs and agencies exist to address many of the concerns raised during the Women's Health Session. They include;

SPLA medical corps is a military hospital and treats only military soldiers and their families.

Juba Teaching Hospital, that serves the citizens in Juba town.

Red Cross, they treat patient for free but they only operate during conflicts.

Egyptian Clinic- it's a private clinic and operates in Juba town only.

Samaritan Purse a humanitarian agency.

MSF- provides nutrition.

Our "SMART" Next Steps for Women's Health:

- ▶ Educate men about women's health; the right to rest and the importance of healthy food.
- ▶ Provide workshops on health awareness.

- ▶ Encourage pre-marriage screening.
- ▶ Discourage early marriages.
- ▶ Build women's health centers in the counties/villages.
- ▶ Train and upgrade the health care providers.
- ▶ Decentralize medical personnel.
- ▶ Update the immunizations system in Southern Sudan.
- ▶ Provide updated medical equipment.
- ▶ Educate and treat both women and men equally when infected.
- ▶ Increase education on HIV/AIDS prevention.
- ▶ Implement laws to protect patients' rights and health.
- ▶ Control the medications through regulatory guidance and reform.

Final thoughts

Reproductive health in general, and sexually transmitted diseases in particular, are extremely important challenges faced by women in Sudan. Sex education must be the focal point to close the gap in perceptions about reproductive health issues in communities, among service providers, and also community leaders. Health awareness could be used as the **first step** to involving communities in assessing needs and planning service provisions.

Equal Participation in Leadership and Politics

Many of the issues addressed during the Conference has a direct impact on this session. The following objectives were identified as being **critical** to improving women's participation in leadership and politics:

GOAL: Increase women's inclusion as leaders to sustain the peace in Sudan.

OBJECTIVES:

I. Enhance communication and collaboration among women leaders of organizations focused on Sudanese women's issues in the Diaspora and Sudan. This will be accomplished by promoting synergy and encouraging partnership development between diverse groups of women leaders—including professionals in business, academia, politics, NGOs, religious groups, and traditional female leaders—to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences.

II. Expand the leadership capacity of women and women's organizations to accelerate the reconstruction process. By providing information and training on strategic issues such as approaches to poverty reduction, and challenges inherent in educating rural (mostly illiterate) women, we involve women in the process of policy formulation at the community level.

III. Foster the development of a coalition of Sudanese women and women's groups. We will seek increased involvement of women in societal transformation, including attaining and surpassing the current ICSS quota of 25% female representation in the national government, and will work to have gender equality enforced by the judicial and legislative systems.

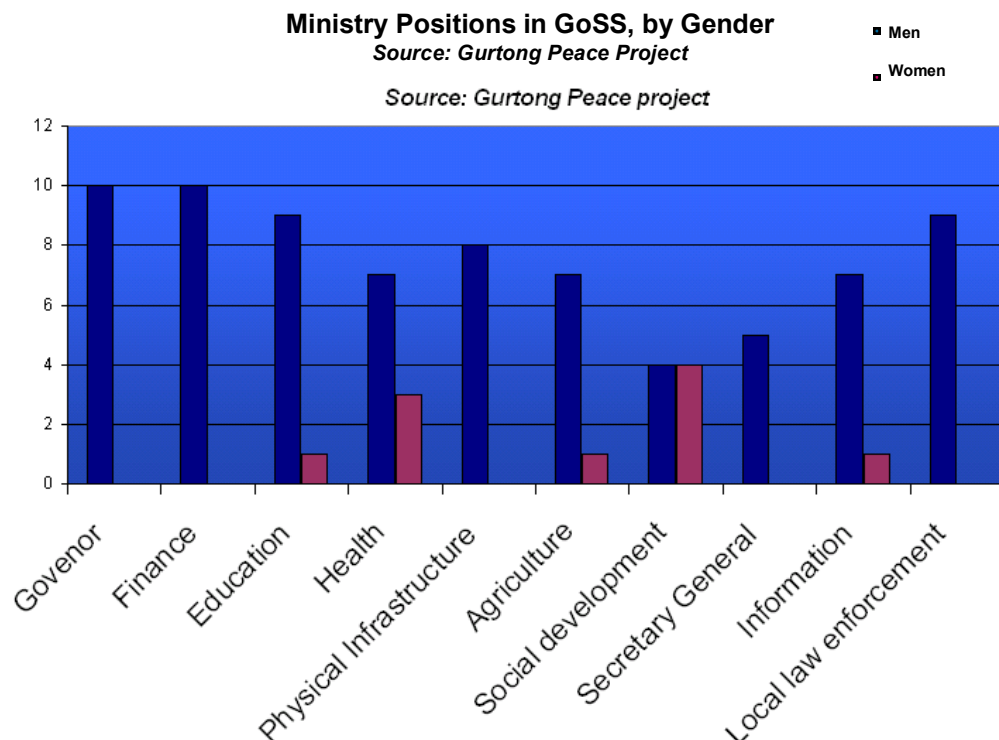
IV. Discuss and define integrated measures to address and decrease violence against women. We will encourage research into the causes and consequences of violence against women in Sudan, and will examine the effectiveness of different preventative measures. We will also promote programs and policies offering medical, psychological and social assistance to victims of violence.

Conference participants were treated to an inspiring and motivational presentation by **Governor Jemma Nunu Kumba**. A brief summary of her remarks follows:

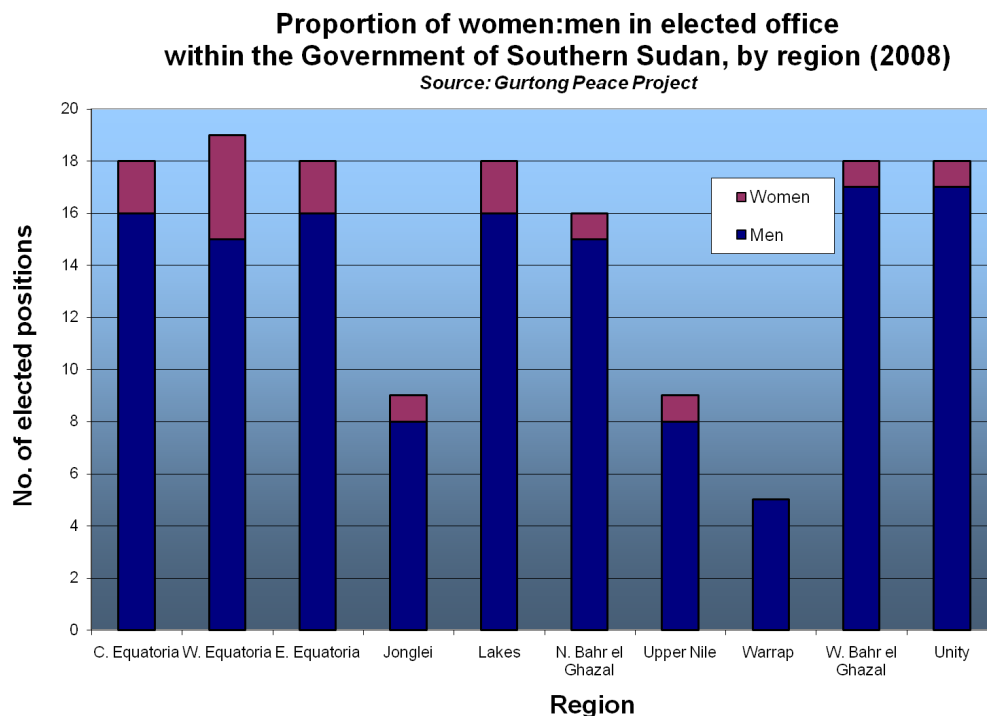
The spirit of a New Sudan is in the hands of the women. Dr. Garang was the hero of women's empowerment. The sounds of guns will be replaced by the ululation of our women and the laughter of our children. Today I will address equal women's participation in politics in our region. We will begin with an overview of gender equality, touching on how this concept has evolved over time. We will examine the main factors influencing women's participation and what steps we can take to increase participation

Women's empowerment undergirds the community as a whole. Gender equality means that all men and women are free to be who they are called to be, taking control of their own lives, and experiencing fairness of treatment.

Why is it important for women to have equal participation? Can we achieve good governance without women's participation? No, because the absence of women's involvement means that women have no voice in achieving political, social and economic justice on their own behalf.



We must take gender seriously in all arenas of government. This will require a review of all policies, social mores and cultural attitudes. Attitudes that have been useful in another era may not serve the community well in the context of changing times and changing situations. For example, there are fewer situations whereby mothers can choose to be stay-at-home moms, as both parents must now work outside the home.



Environmental issues are becoming increasingly important. Women play a very central role in protecting the environment. It is estimated that 80% of subsistence farmers are women. Due to women's roles in farming, they have developed significant expertise and must be included in discussions as governments begin to develop responsible plans.

Social and cultural attitudes have formed barriers that have led to broad marginalization of women. Women must first change their own attitudes—too many of us believe that men are better, stronger, that women are subservient. We must adjust these attitudes before we see meaningful change. In the past, most women failed in elections because women did not support them.

Formal education can cultivate intelligence and ethics. Those women who benefit from education should govern. The situation for women in 1983 was very different from our post CPA era. For the first time in history, women's rights are enshrined in the CPA, the regional constitution, the constitution of South Sudan, electoral law and commission policy. As a result, a good number of women occupy important positions in South Sudan's government.

***"If Her Excellency can make it, all Sudanese women can make it.
We are the ones we have been waiting for."***

Nevertheless, we still need to increase the capacity of women to play role in government. The constitution contains a new national election law that call for 35% inclusion of women in political parties. That still does not represent women's total percentage of the population.

As we seek ways to increase participation, we must deal with several problems. The lack of funds for electoral campaigns means few women can afford to run for office. Potential leaders need capacity building and training on how to conduct a campaign. Women need to learn communications and management skills to become good leaders. The overall unity among women must be enhanced. We are challenged by inadequate and inaccurate publicity. We must improve civic education and political awareness (each citizen must make 12 votes). At the same time, we must continue to work on negative cultural and traditional beliefs.

So my advice for increasing the participation of women in leadership and politics is to first, **read the CPA**; learn it, and understand it. Take the time to update your skills and information. Do not isolate yourself from other women—your fellow women are your strength. And finally, try to win the support of our men as our comrades. Empowerment is about dialogue.

Following this presentation, the Equal Participation in Leadership and Politics group discussed the challenges women face and action steps needed to increase awareness and participation.

Key Challenges

The group first discussed the key challenges preventing the equal participation of women in leadership and politics. These included:

1. **Social and cultural challenges:** Poor education and illiteracy, unfair division of labor, segregation and dominance of male decisions in the home, coupled with domestic responsibilities mean that women have less time to pursue political office.
2. **Economic challenges:** A lack of resources for women's political and social programs, and poor access to credit and land lead to feminized poverty. There are significant challenges to funding a political campaign. Poor communication facilities mean that even if a woman can garner the resources to run for office, she has difficulty getting the word out.
3. **Political challenges:** Nepotism has resulted in a poor link between women in leadership and women at the grassroots level. There is still significant discrimination against women in the political sphere resulting in a lack of support and respect for women who want to pursue leadership positions. They face a lack of knowledge, understanding and the financial support to run a campaign.



Equal Participation in Leadership and Politics Session: From left to right: Ms. Sunday Taabu, (GOSS mission –DC), Gov. Jemma Nunu, Ms. Lula Riziq; SSWEN's president and Ms. Rosa Weet, SSWEN-AZ Chairlady.

*"There are successful strategies we can use to ensure gender equality. The empowerment of women—**South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network**—is an instrument by which that can be achieved"*

There is a general lack of knowledge amongst women about politics; a lack of unity and support amongst women for women. Add to that the fact that political parties rarely support women candidates. Most women leaders are the result of political appointment and then their lack of adequate qualifications feeds the discrimination. There are no political parties for women and they are left out of the decision-making process.

A major challenge is the prohibition of unmarried and divorced women from holding public office. The more powerful and well-funded offices are never assigned to women. Finally, language differences and difficulties (including privileging of English in the political sphere) put women at a disadvantage.

Collaborative efforts can significantly increase our likelihood of success.

Key Achievements:

Despite all of these challenges, the group was able to identify a set of noteworthy achievements of the new

Government, NGOs and civil society. These achievements give women in South Sudan the unprecedented opportunity to set specific goals to advance women's participation in leadership and politics. The most noteworthy achievements:

1. **Government achievements:** Women's involvement has been codified into law and regulation through the signing of the CPA, gender equality articles in the ICSS, and new laws protecting the rights of women and establishing the standard of a minimum of 25% women in political positions. In addition, the signing of the Beijing document, micro-finance initiatives, the National Election Law of 2008 further advance the cause of women's equality.
2. **NGO achievements:** The growth of seminars, trainings and workshops targeting women and democracy are helping to build capacity for women in South Sudan. The work of NGOs has led to an awareness for women, self-support for women in politics, and a growing partnership between women's NGOs focused on women in politics.

Key Failures:

Despite these achievements, the group also identified a set of failures that have inhibited women's political leadership including:

1. **Governmental failures:** Many laws designed to protect and promote women are not implemented. Key measures to protect women such as CEDAW have not been signed or ratified, and there remains a lack of adequate funding for NGOs focused on women. The Government continues to be dominated by men and is not delivering enough in the way of resources and programs to upgrade women. Many posts are filled with women unqualified for the position and without adequate capacity building to develop the essential skills needed for the job.
2. **NGO failures:** NGOs and civil society organizations where many women leaders are working are not well-coordinated. There is a lack of strong women's bodies and organizations dedicated to meeting the specific needs of women.

From here we discussed the key problem to address through our goals, efforts and our objectives.

Key Problem:

During the discussion, the group focused on one set of key challenges. They highlighted the fact that the link between grassroots women and women leaders is very weak. **The ultimate goal was seen as closing the gap between women in leadership and those at the grassroots level, and ensuring full representation of all women by women in political positions of power.**

“Throughout history, women have been subservient—this is reinforced by the process of socialization by institutions such as churches and schools. The term “gender issue” has been misunderstood. It needs to be understood in its political, social, and economic context. “

This goal can be reached by educating women in basic civic rights and responsibilities including voting, campaigning, and political leadership. The group developed two sets of goals, long and short term:

Short term goal: By December 2009, 25 women leaders in each State will receive training on successful campaigning and political leadership.

Long-term goal: By the end of 2011 each of these 250 women will train 10 women in their communities on the upcoming referendum.

Our “SMART” Objectives

1. Identify 25 women in each State with diverse representation from all Payams.
2. Select trainers from various women’s groups/organizations, connect them to organizations that can help provide materials. In turn, these women will cover the needs of women in their communities.

Final thoughts:

If all women are not active in influencing national laws and politics, the reforms we are seeking will never be achieved. We should unite in addressing our concerns and have a say in the making of the laws, policies and decisions that affect our lives.

Women’s Legal Rights

Ms. Faye Okaya from the National Democracy Institute made a presentation at the beginning of this Work Group session. A summary of her remarks follows:

Women’s marginalization in Sudan..... How does this occur?

It begins with limited access to property ownership. When few girls are sent to school, they lack the knowledge and skills to change their condition. It results in a lot of problems. Because there are limited provisions after divorce, there is therefore limited access to divorce. Domestic violence and rape are often a factor. Our Patriarchal society and traditional gender roles play a large part.

Throughout our history, women have been excluded from political participation. Their active participation has been constrained due to economic dependency and inadequate financial resources. Illiteracy and limited access to education and unequal work opportunities contribute to the problem. We have endured cultural and social discrimination while bearing the burden of responsibilities at home. Women have faced intimidation and harassment, violence and lack of access to information. As a result, low self-esteem led to absence or low level of participation in the community affairs.

But there is good news! Under the new government we have codified a new role for women and have given them specific legal rights. But with those rights come responsibilities and duties.

Women and the Bill of Rights

Women shall have the right to own property and share in the estate of their deceased husband.

The government will “enact to combat harmful customs and traditions which undermine the dignity and status of women.

The government will provide maternity and child care and medical care for pregnant and lactating women.

—Article 20 (4a)—

Women’s Rights:

- ▶ **The right to vote:** Every citizen who has reached the required age as set out by law has the right to vote and to be elected for public office.
- ▶ **The Right to Property:** Every citizen has the right to acquire and own property and no property can be confiscated except by the order of a court.
- ▶ **The Right to Education:** Education is a right for every citizen and the State shall provide access without discrimination as to religion, race, ethnicity, gender or disability.

Women’s Duties:

- ▶ Respect the rights of others. (ICSS, art 49 (K).
- ▶ Promote harmony, unity, fraternity and tolerance among the people of Southern Sudan.
- ▶ Avert and combat corruption.
- ▶ Abide by the law and cooperate in the maintenance of law and order.
- ▶ Promote democracy, good governance and rule of law.
- ▶ Take part in general elections.

The next steps to encourage women to exercise these rights can be summarized in four ways:

Information: We must increase awareness of women’s rights and how to claim them. We need a better understanding of women’s bodies, health, sexual and reproductive rights and needs. Women need access to information about laws, policies and the institutions and structures which governs their lives. They also require access to appropriate counseling, advice and psycho-social support available for victims of violence. Finally, all women would benefit from HIV/AIDS prevention, awareness advice and support.

Skills: *Women must build confidence, self esteem and skills to challenge and confront the existing power structure. We need to develop support networks and positive role models. Women should seek practical vocational skills training when available.*

Resources: *We must move away from employment discrimination through the creation of trade unions. Women can generate income through community-based projects. Our communities must provide direct support to women and girls affected by violence.*

Advocacy: *We need to support education and awareness-raising activities. We should assume a “challenge-and-change” attitude towards multiple forms of violence against women. We need to create an enabling environment; a political, legal, economic, and cultural climate that allows women to engage in decision-making processes in a sustainable and effective way.*

After the presentation, the Work Group met to discuss key issues in the Legal area.

Key Challenges:

In terms of challenges, participants recognized that in terms of traditional life and customs, women are considered inferior and even “property”. As a result, they suffer tremendous denial of basic rights.

“I want to be able to go into those spheres of work and political involvement that traditionally in Sudanese culture women are not supposed to be in.

I’m seen as the exception but that only motivates me more. SSWEN can change the image of women. People will look at us and see that women mean business!”

- There remains a lack standard, established rules of law to protect women’s rights. Many southern communities still rely on traditional forms of justice administered by tribal chiefs.
- Elements of customary law often clash with modern legal norms regarding women’s and children’s rights, despite the fact that these new rights are in the Constitution. There is a lack of trained Sudanese judges and lawyers, particularly in the southern system, to ensure that the Constitutional and international rights are recognized, respected, and enforced.
- The capacity of the police for conducting investigations, handling suspected criminals, and providing public security is extremely limited. Spousal abuse and wife beating is not a crime that is punished or condemned in most parts of Sudan.
- Forced and arranged marriage are the result of the application of traditional practices that limit the choices available to women in their personal lives. This is a particular concern when the decisions involve underage marriage and marriage at any age without the consent of the bride.
- Husbands often will not give wives permission to attend school, pursue professional training, or accept a job away from home for fear of women neglecting their heavy household tasks.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a big concern because girls will undergo this practice mainly between ages of 7 to 10 when she is still a child. The international community considers FGM a form of abuse since parents make the decision for children. South Sudan can lead in changing attitudes about FGM through education, enforcement of existing law, and awareness.

Key Achievements:

The Work Group did note some achievements in South Sudan in terms of Women's legal rights.

1. Government: The Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) has

provided policy instruments designed to protect women and girls, and to ensure that women's concerns are addressed. This includes the establishment of institutional mechanisms of governance such as the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs; the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, which has a gender desk; the Human Rights Commission that deals with women's human rights; and the Committee on Gender, Social Welfare, Youth and Sports of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, which has the mandate to deal with gender issues.

2. NGO's: Several NGOs are working on behalf of women to advocate for legal rights.

- UNIFEM sponsored and supported several Gender Workshops and programs in Southern Sudan to increase awareness and understanding of the issues.
- NDI promotes the equitable participation of women in politics and government through a radio show in partnership with Sudan Radio Service

Our Smart Next Steps

- ▶ The progression and continuous promotion of women's legal rights is not solely conferred on women. The development of rural women is a direct responsibility of the State, political parties, and trades unions; not just independent women's organizations. Men shall take equal responsibility to achieve a consistent advancement of women's legal rights. Women shall be committed to accomplishing these goals in close cooperation with men.
- ▶ The progression of women is directly related to the application of the international human rights instruments, especially those concerned with women's rights.
- ▶ The realization of full equality between women and men does not negate the right of women to maternity or any other special concerns of the women for the family and children.
- ▶ Emphasizing the equality of sex with respect to all rights and freedoms, Sudanese men are strongly required to show full respect to the significant roles that the women play in the socialization of Sudan's new generations.
- ▶ The women's right to establish political, economic, social organization and assembly to exercise the freedom of expression is a fundamental issue to ensure full enjoyment of human rights by all women of Sudan.
- ▶ The Sudanese women shall have the right to represent female farming and working classes, housewives, or female students in all positions of political, judicial, or administrative leadership. This includes the Judiciary, diplomatic missions, and the other important public service activities of the State.

Women's Rights and Duties from the Constitution Perspective

"We, the people of Southern Sudan are committed to establish a decentralized multi-party system of governance in which power shall be peacefully transferred and to upholding values of human dignity and equal rights and duties of men and women...."

—Preamble, Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan—

- The liberation of Sudanese society from the misconceptions and harmful habits (such as FGM) that undermine women's status and role is a national mission for all men and women to pursue throughout the country. Without prejudice to women's organizations which endeavor to lead the campaign for the elimination of all gender-negative ideas or practices, the responsibility of enforcing such programs is a public activity for all People of Sudan.
- Commitment to the International Agreement on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, The Copenhagen Agreement)
- Provide financial support and programs to improve rural women's professional training, as well economic and political status.

Final thoughts:

Women continue to be under-represented in all areas of decision making, such as religion, the media, culture and law. They still face significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions which govern their lives. Throughout the world, the power relationships that shape social, political, economic and cultural life prevent women from participating fully in all areas of their lives— in homes, or in the public arena. Women's dedicated efforts to challenge the status quo have allowed more women to reach positions of power in recent years.

Violence Against Women

Keynote speakers on "Violence against Women" were Dr. Priscilla Kuch, Mama Lucy Laguga and Joseph Achacha. The session began with comments from **Dr. Priscilla Kuch**, the Intern Chairperson of SPLM Women League . A summary of her comments follows:

Violence against women is not only physical, but also emotional. We perpetuate the cultural myth that women want to be beaten. When we tolerate the violence, we also promote it. Structural violence against women is promoted by structural systems when women are prohibited from certain jobs. Unfortunately, structural violence is inherent in traditional laws.



Violence against Women Panel; from left to right: Mama Lucy (UNIFEM-Juba), Dr. Priscilla Kuch, Ms. Agum Afash, Lagna representative and Ms Asia Awad

Women can be given away in marriage, so that family or community objectives trump her personal objectives. This undergirds the reality that women do not have a say in their own lives. Most traditions allow for young girls to be given as inheritance, as a social protection when she is young. In order to support her family, she feels she must stay in the marriage even when it is bad. To buck the system is to risk isolation and shame.

To report rape is tantamount to confessing adultery in our culture. Sometimes we condition ourselves as women to tolerate subservience. We confess our own powerlessness when we criticize other women. We raise our children to perpetuate stereotypes.

The SPLM-inspired constitution is an affirmative action move. While there is a national program to empower women, it requires our diligence to see it come to fruition.

“We have come here together to discuss the greatest challenges facing women here in Sudan, to bring them out. Now we have to ask ourselves, “What next?” How can we respond to what we have heard?’ Now is the time for us to make change. It must begin with us. We cannot sit back and wait for others to do this work for us.”

—Lucie Luguga, UNIFEM-Juba—

The next speaker was **Mama Lucie Luguga**. She serves as the Program Manager for UNIFEM in Juba.

According to the United Nations....

- ▶ *1/3 women and girls have experienced violence, coerced sex or sexual abuse*
- ▶ *Violence is the main cause of death and disability for women ages 15-44 years.*
- ▶ *In 1994, a World Bank study revealed that among the 10 selected risk factors facing women ages 15-44 years, rape and domestic violence rated higher than cancer, MVA and malaria. Several studies show an increasing link between violence against women and HIV/AIDS.*

Violence is defined as acts that cause direct physical, mental or sexual harm and suffering including threats.

Gender-based violence is violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals based on their gender or sex

There are several common types of Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence:

Sexual violence

Physical violence

Emotional and psychological violence

Harmful traditional practices (FGM)

Trafficking and slavery

Dowry murder and Honor killing

Several factors contribute to violence against women. Cultural attitudes and early and or forced marriage (a Sudan Household Health Survey in 2006 revealed that 48.1% of women 15-49 years of age were first married before the age of 15.) Poverty and economic conditions increase instances of violence. This is especially true for our region which has a long history of protracted war. The denial of education for girls or women particularly in rural areas affects violence and women's response to it. Finally, the lack of legal protection for women allows incidents of violence to go unpunished.

What are the effects of violence against women?

Not only are there physical consequences, but psychological consequences as well—humiliation, shame, loss of self-esteem, chronic fear, and often a sense of stigmatization.

“The history of all times, and today especially, teaches that women will be forgotten if they forget about themselves.”

—Lucy Otto—

Emotional effects include anger, hostility, anxiety, disgust, sadness, feelings of powerlessness and worthlessness, isolation, and the ongoing fear of repeated exploitation.

Violence against women has behavioral effects, too. There are social consequences—social rejection, self-hate, depression, even dropping out of school. This issue significantly impacts the entire community. Children who experience sexual assault face a variety of threats including abduction, rape and prostitution, difficulty with trust. There can be sexual exploitation within a family which is very difficult to uncover or treat.

Southern Sudan JAM report (pp. 48-49) establishes Gender Based Violence as a priority undergirded by the legal system. Unfortunately, no reliable information and data on Violence Against Women is available. Reports of personal experience with were 4% from Yei, and 7% from Mundri; Yei (11%) and Mundri (12%) report a relative had been raped, and that child sexual abuse is considerably high.

We face several challenges in Southern Sudan. There is limited documentation available and a lot of silence on the issues. There are also issues with the privacy and the confidentiality of victims. Strong cultures and customs may be difficult to overcome. Traditional chiefs are also administrators of justice, especially in areas where the court or legal systems are not yet developed. They may not pursue justice in cases of Violence Against Women. There are inadequate medical facilities for the survivors of abuse.

The good news is that we still have time to come up with strategies that can mitigate the violence against women associated with popular elections. We also have opportunities at the Global level:

- ✓ *In 1996, the UN Trust Fund was created to eliminate Violence Against Women*
- ✓ *2000 UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*
- ✓ *June 2008, UNSC passed Resolution 1820 that recognizes sexual violence as a tactic of war and to seek reporting from the Secretary-General on how to improve the UN's prevention and protection response to this atrocity including training peacekeeping personnel.*
- ✓ *Nicole Kidman's 2008 campaign on "Say No to Violence Against Women" raised awareness*
- ✓ *CEDAW, ICRC, Beijing Platform for Action 1995 included the violence issue*

There are some opportunities for us to create positive change in Southern Sudan. The CPA and the ICSS contain some provisions for the protection of women. Several Sudanese Laws are applicable to Sexual Assault :

- *The Criminal Procedure Act 1991 (form 8 filled out by doctor)*

ICSS Articles affecting women's rights.....

- ✦ *Article 15: the state shall protect motherhood and women from injustice*
- ✦ *Article 32L: the state shall combat harmful customs and traditions which undermine the dignity and the status of the women*
- ✦ *Article 47: on ethnic and cultural communities promotes cultural rights over women's rights*



- *The South Sudanese Laws of 2003*
- *The South Sudan Penal Code 2008*
- *The Child Bill*

A gender policy is currently before Parliament for approval. Hopefully there will also be a VAW/GBV policy to guide the work around the issues.

The final panelist to address the Work Group was **Emmanuel Achaha:**

Violent Behavior is an abuser's choice! Why does a man hit a woman? Our first response is, "To gain control over her." But more so to humiliate—to make her feel worthless so as to justify the violence.

Violent behavior can be used to isolate a woman from her family and the outside world. It is a brutal form of dominating the woman. The man must then make all decisions for her. The abuser uses violence to threaten her, intimidate her, and ultimately to shift blame to the woman so the cycle of abuse continues.

Final Thoughts:

We, women from across Sudan who participated in **The Weaving Together Conference**, believe that the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan should consider reviewing the CEDAW for ratification to guarantee elimination of all forms of violence against women.

Family and Social Issues

Ms. Diana Surur Served as the presenter for this Work Group. The group first discussed what we mean by "family and social" problems. We acknowledged that this topic is very subjective. The definition of a social problem can depend on many variables, including whether or not the problem has affected a significant amount of people, and whether or not these people have power. The group used a tree diagram to identify a series of social problems (the roots) and their consequences (the 'leaves'). The group focused on problems around marriage and cultural rites directed towards young women.



Some of the main examples are listed below.

Key Problems:

1. The group identified early marriage, polygamy and marriage within families as primary concerns. Arranged marriage, divorce, and the issue of Wife inheritance were also very important. Consequences of these issues include poor health through early pregnancy, depression, sadness, divorce, lack of openness, family tension and possible violence. The illiteracy rate is high and young girls are highly affected. With no fathering, children become victims, broken hearts and broken families suffer as a result of a clash of cultural rights. The group also listed a series of other social issues they considered to be problems.
2. **Other problems** include street children, incidence of violent behavior within the family, drinking habits, all forms of abuses – Child, domestic violence, rape, suicide, wife beating. With lack of family planning knowledge abundant children cause many family problems. There is the ongoing discrimination between boys and girls, highlighting gender inequality in the home.

Mr. Zachariah Deng Majok: (left) his father married 155 women who lived in a very harmonious life. So the question is not how many women you marry, but whether you are going to treat them fairly. In my opinion says Mr. Majok, Christians should marry one wife. The question is what type of man you marry. If you cannot change the mindset of the man you marry, then the problem is not the man, but the woman.



Our SMART Next Steps

1. Conduct culturally appropriate information sessions with women and other community members to raise awareness about effects and appropriate ways of dealing with abuse.
2. Assign focal points in each location and create centers focusing on social problems in areas where SSWEN is involved.
3. Encourage grassroot activities that start with women in local communities and are supported by Government and NGOs assistance.
4. Make resources available so that women can conduct community seminars and forums where they can discuss issues affecting their lives and find ways of helping themselves.
5. Explore ways that parents and family members can take active roles in parenting and disciplining their children.
6. Conduct consultative sessions between women /youth/community members and the welfare agencies to clarify their exact role in relation to family affairs.

Women in Business

The Keynote speaker for the Women in Business session was Ms. Yar Manoa Majok. A summary of her comments follows:

What were the women doing during the 22 years of war?

- *Progressing with their lives despite being loaded with burdens of war.*
- *They served as both mothers and fathers at the same time.*
- *They were the bread winners.*
- *Above all, women learned to do business.*

There are three different types of women in Southern Sudan based upon where they are living:

1. *The internally displaced—those who remain in the country but not necessarily at their homes.*
2. *Women in war zone areas.*
3. *The refugee women—women forced to flee.*

All of the women in these three areas learned to survive on home-based businesses such as tea making, ice cream, nuts and peanut butter, tassali, donuts, home-made alcohol, cloth making, bed sheet embroidery, chairs and table covers, and all manner of hand crafts. Many women actually farmed, worked in manufacturing or even mining. They produced products considered “modern” by many, if they had the training and education to do so. Look at the women who used papaya and ash to produce soap. These are not only businesswomen, but artists. What they crafted was beautiful and useful.

We face many challenges as we seek to expand women in business in South Sudan. There is the political instability that threatens whatever programs or services we develop in future years. The uncertainty has left us with a lack of low cost and productive labor; we need a strong workforce to advance. We struggle with poor physical infrastructure and lack an efficient, reliable transportation system for urban and rural areas. We lack sound economic policies and strategies for promoting the private sector. We suffer from weak institutions and poor governance which results in high taxes and no incentive to be productive. Women lack access to start-up capital and financing for business ventures. In the absence of strong local entrepreneurship examples, people are only exposed to social and cultural norms that are not conducive to hard work and development.

I recommend that we urge the Government of Southern Sudan to create programs to support women in business, including entrepreneurs, with personalized assistance in writing business plans, marketing, management and technical assistance, and financial planning to secure adequate financing for business ventures.



After the presentation, the Women in Business Work Group was tasked with identifying the major barriers to women-owned and operated business. Recognizing that financial independence has such a major impact on issues like education, political involvement and preventing violence, this group sought to identify the most pressing issues facing the women of South Sudan today.

Key challenges

The group first discussed the key challenges preventing the participation of women in business. These included:

- Lack of transportation.
- Education in general, literacy, and access to school.
- Specific training in business and finances.
- Lack of money to start a business.
- Taxes – there seems to be no accountable tax system in Sudan. Tax collectors do not seem to know what they are doing and take more money from women than they are supposed to. It is an inequitable system.
- Property – women usually don't own their own property in general or for business. Cultures think that women can't do anything and should not own property.



Key Achievements:

According to the women in the group, there are no achievements to report in this area—only challenges. Similar conditions existed before and during the war so there is no basis or system on which to establish themselves in this post-war period.

One woman said the government gave women a small loan to start a business, but only gave them a short time to pay the money back. Women want more flexible loan programs that give them a longer time to pay the money back, at least a couple of years, and more options for small business loan products.

Key Failures:

Several of the women in the Work Group have tried to run their own businesses only to face more and more challenges. For example, some women talked about trying to go to Uganda and Kenya to get raw materials and wholesale products, like clothing, to sell in Sudan. However, transportation between these locations is very difficult.

A woman from Jonglei, Bor, said she was conducting a business during the war. She brought her products to Juba to sell them but faced taxes when she went to make deliveries and return to Bor. She paid the money while on the road to Bor, and then again was presented a tax bill in Bor itself. Tax collectors were not trained in taxes. She soon ended her business because the government required more money from her than she was making. There is no transparency nor uniform code when it comes to business and taxes.

As members of the group presented their ideas for future business ventures, the women repeated the challenges addressed above. Due to lack of education, women feel they have very few options or alternatives. They need ideas about what kind of business could be successful. And they need more support from training. A lot of them have ideas but no formal training or support.

Key Problem:

One of the biggest problems for women in business is **education**; all forms of education, from attending school to literacy, from training in business and finance to management and accounting.



Our “SMART” Objectives and Goals

1. Identify organizations or governmental agencies who work on business issues and advocate for women business owners.
2. Build support and awareness in the broader public for women in business.
3. Establish a microcredit organization for women.
4. Select trainers from the government, existing business, and/or NGO sectors to help women apply for small loans; establish training in business and finance with time to repay the loans.

Final Thoughts

Women played a very crucial role in building of our nations before, during and the after the time of war. Their long history in business sets the foundation for the businesswomen of today. Economic prosperity will help our people to grow strong and independent. The future is bright for all to thrive and serve our country better.

Next Steps

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of **ACTION**. The women who gave of their time and talents to attend the conference deserve our best efforts in seeing many of these recommendations come to fruition.

At the end of the conference we requested feedback from participants to evaluate the program—what worked, what should we change, how can we make it better? We received many encouraging notes from women from all regions and walks of life. We also received wonderful feedback from our male participants who provided wisdom and support that many of our women have not experienced in the past. As a result of this feedback, we learned that women would like to address the plight of Sudanese children: from displaced and vagabond children, to motherhood and childcare. They would also like more information on counseling, treatment and first aid issues to deal with some of the challenges Sudanese women face. Practical knowledge combined with scholarly discussion was a format that most appreciated.

Participants in the 2008 conference would like to return next year so that we can evaluate what changes over the next year in each of the issue areas. They would also like to see greater participation by hosting the event in different areas each year. Many recognized that there are other NGOs and agencies who could partner with SSWEN to meet goals in several issue areas. We will try to include them in our planning for next year's event. All agree that the work of SSWEN is important, timely and essential for South Sudan to move forward.

In the months ahead we will work to ensure that this conference report reaches the hands of community leaders and decision makers in all regions. SSWEN will work with government agencies and NGOs to continue to place the issue of women at the forefront of reform efforts. Each of us can advance these issues by discussing them in our own communities and by taking small steps to ensure that women receive information and support.

We thank once again all who made this conference possible:

Humanity United
Mama Cash

The US Consulate in Juba
National Democracy Institute

Bridge Way Foundation
SPLM Office in Juba
World Food Program
Mercy Corp in Juba

Norwegian Church Aid
GOSS Mission in DC
The Office for Regional Cooperation: GoSS
My Sister's Keeper and Sisterhood for Peace

We look forward to your continued support on behalf of the women of South Sudan. A participant summarized the enthusiasm and optimism of our movement when she said:

“It was AWESOME to meet so many outstanding women and amazing men. I was inspired by the depth of the presentations and especially encouraged by the quality of interaction among all the participants. That's the good news. But here's the great news.... THE BEST IS YET TO COME! “



South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network

Board of Directors

Lilian Rizig

Director and founder of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network. Lilian is an RN-ADN currently a student at the Arizona State University, majoring in Public Health and Non-profit Leadership Management, Lilian is currently working actively to promote and bring awareness about Sudanese women's health and rights, and the challenges faced by women in Darfur. In particular she has sought to highlight the injustices faced by women in Darfur and to alleviate key issues caused by poor women's rights and a lack of gender equality and respect.

Lily Akol

Lily Akol holds a BA in French and English Language from the University of Khartoum and is currently studying for a MA in corporate and organizational communication at the Fairleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey. She has worked as a financial aid coordinator at Princeton University and has worked teaching and advocating for Sudanese refugee communities in Cairo, Egypt.

Agnes Oswaha

Agnes Oswaha holds Bachelors degrees in Law, Society and Justice and in Political Science from the University of Washington (UW), Seattle. She is currently a graduate student at the UW School of Social Work examining the links between post-conflict trauma and domestic violence amongst the Sudanese refugee community in Washington State. Agnes studied Law in Khartoum before she was forced to leave the country in 1998. She had worked there to secure Southern Sudanese student's rights at Al-Nileen University. She has co-founded several non-governmental organizations such as Hearts of Angels for Health and the Southern Sudanese Women's Association. Agnes is also a board member for Save Darfur Washington State and has represented the organization at many speaking, advocacy and event venues since its founding. In Washington State she worked as a Legal Advocate for the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) and is actively engaged in public speaking, advocacy and other events, especially those concerning immigrants/refugees and Sudanese affairs.

Bonnie Lloyd

Bonnie has worked with Sudanese refugees in Arizona for the past seven years. She is on the Board of a number of organizations including SSWEN, The Esther Company, T.I.L.T. (Teens In Literacy Training) and the Worldwide Perspectives Program. She has worked for several 501(c)3 organizations including: Aktion Komitee fur Verfolgte Christen (Frankfurt, Germany), the Association of International Mission Services - AIMS (Virginia Beach, VA), Faith Community Church (Phoenix, AZ), and the Living Water of the Valley Church (Phoenix, AZ).

Rosa Weet

Rosa is the chairlady SSWEN's Phoenix, Arizona office. She is a founder and former Executive Director for Refugee Women in Phoenix and is one of the strongest advocates for refugee issues in the region. Rosa worked with refugee women from all backgrounds and was instrumental in developing programs and services to meet their needs. She has worked with The Lost Boys of Sudan and serves as a member of the "family selection" committee for the Valley of the Sun Habited for Humanity Chapter. Rosa currently serves at the Minister's office for Public Service and Human Development in Goss, Juba.