



UNMISS raises awareness of mandate with SPLA



Participants of UNMISS sensitization seminar in Juba.
Photo:UNMISS/Murugi Murekio

To build confidence and share information on the UNMISS mandate, Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and military operations, the mission launched the first of a series of sensitization seminars for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on 23 February in Juba.

"UNMISS is a new mission with a new mandate and a new approach," said UNMISS Chief of Staff Paul Egunsola, addressing the gathering.

He said UNMISS would support South Sudan in preventing, mitigating and resolving conflict, protecting civilians and laying foundations to govern effectively as well as democratically.

The mission would also assist the new nation to strengthen security and rule of law institutions, monitor and prevent human rights violations and build foundations for sustainable development, Mr. Egunsola said.

The seminar, which brought together members of SPLA headquarters and commanders from the Greater Equatoria states, representatives from the South Sudan Police Service and UNMISS, also provided a platform to share views on security challenges and strengthen collaboration.

UNMISS Force Commander Major General Moses Bisong Obi said he hoped the session would entrench existing cooperation between the government and SPLA on the one hand "and UNMISS and the UN family on the other hand, towards the smooth implementation of the UNMISS mandate".

Government of South Sudan Deputy Defence Minister Majak D' Agoot, said, "I appreciate the initiative of UNMISS and want to urge them to maintain such collaboration with SPLA in the future."

Other participants included the SPLA Chief of General Staff, the Inspector General of South Sudan Police Services (SSPS), officers commanding SPLA Divisions, SPLA principal staff officers and Defence Attaches.

Similar seminars will be organized at state levels, starting with Wau and Malakal.

The UNMISS military component holds regular coordination meetings with SPLA representatives and conducts joint field visits to troops and SPLA field commands to enhance understanding and increase cooperation at all levels.

The UN Mission in South Sudan was established on 8 July 2011.

Lakes governor signs transitional constitution

In the presence of thousands of residents, Lakes State Governor Chol Tong Mayay signed the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (2011) and was sworn in anew under its provisions on 25 February in the capital Rumbek.

Adopted in 2011 after South Sudan gained its independence on 9 July, the transitional constitution will serve until a permanent one is enacted and adopted.

All 10 state governments of South Sudan are expected to approve the transitional constitution. Eastern Equatoria became the first on 22 January.

Governor Tong said his first priority as head of the cabinet would be to address insecurity through civilian disarmament across the state and enforce the rule of law indiscriminately.

The state government would "involve communities in maintenance of security through sensitization, apply customary laws duly passed earlier ... continue to disarm the civil population ... speed up the apprehension of criminals, urge relevant courts to hasten trial of cases on time and clear backlogs cases", he said.

The governor urged the state judiciary to hasten pending trials and clear the case backlog, calling on chiefs and traditional authorities to fully engage in peace building and reconciliation in the state.

Mr. Tong reminded all Lakes State government officials to declare their assets as required by law to the state's anti-corruption commission before the 31 March deadline.

"Our guiding principles shall be transparency, accountability, respect for and protection of human rights, justice for all and equality before the law, to mention only a few," the governor said. "We shall also continue our efforts to achieve an effective and productive government."

Congratulating the governor, UNMISS Lakes State Coordinator Renuka Chidambaram said the UNMISS mandate aimed to support good governance.

Ms. Chidambaram said the UN would also support the drafting of a permanent constitution.





UNMISS celebrates women's day at Juba hospital

On 7 March, a day before the world marked International Women's Day (IWD), UNMISS representatives visited pregnant and newly delivered women at Juba Teaching Hospital.

Despite a rise in women seeking antenatal care in hospital, less than 20 per cent actually deliver there, according to Dr. Mergani Abdalla, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist.

"Eighty per cent are delivering at home," Dr. Abdalla said. "We have to encourage pregnant mothers to come and deliver in our facilities."

The physician added that haemorrhage during pregnancy and birth was one of the leading causes of maternal mortality.

"Bleeding means a patient needs a blood transfusion," he said. "We do not have a blood bank. We have transfusion services. We depend on the relatives to donate blood. We need a blood bank and we need to have a culture of donating blood."

Dr. Abdalla added that unsafe abortions, malaria, infections, hepatitis, jaundice, and pre-eclampsia (a hypertensive disorder) were also leading causes of maternal mortality.

"We do not have specific statistics, but some months we lose two to four (mothers) and some months we do not lose any," he said, adding that girls under 15, women carrying multiple fetuses and women over 40 were the most vulnerable.

In his message to girls and women on International Women's Day, Dr Abdalla urged girls to avoid teenage pregnancies, women to use contraception to space their children and the pregnant to visit antenatal clinics for care during pregnancy.

This year's Republic of South Sudan theme for IWD is empowering rural women to end hunger and working together to

end violence against women, UNMISS Gender Officer Ruth Kibiti said.

"(As life-givers) women have an important role to play in ending hunger and poverty, and women have an important role to play in peace building to end violence in the community. That is the most critical message we are sending," she said.

The UN theme for this year's celebrations, held annually on 8 March, is "Empower Rural Women - End Hunger and Poverty".

"Tomorrow should be a day when all women stop to reflect on their achievements, challenges, experiences and redefine their way forward in terms of dealing with challenges," Ms. Kibiti said.

The UNMISS team, which consisted of representatives from UNMISS gender, human rights and police sections, donated toiletries to the women.



UNMISS staff visiting Juba Teaching Hospital as part of International Women's Day activities.

Photo: UNMISS/Isaac Gideon.

A million returnees expected in Upper Nile

About a million returnees expected to leave Sudan in April by road would pass through his state, Upper Nile Deputy Governor Andrea Maya said on 24 February during a meeting in the capital Malakal with a top UNMISS official.

With on-going insecurity along the Sudan/South Sudan border, the only viable route for returnees was through Kosti to Renk and then on to Malakal, the deputy governor told UNMISS Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) Raisedon Zenenga, who was on a one-day visit to the state.

Mr. Maya noted that 8 April was the deadline set for South Sudanese living in Sudan to legalize their status or leave the country.

"Most of the South Sudanese living in Sudan would not be able to regularize their legal status before the deadline of 8 April ... and would opt to leave for South Sudan," he said.

The deputy governor added that receiving such a huge number of returnees would challenge the state, as a humanitarian crisis already existed with returnees on the ground.

He observed that about 80,000 refugees from Blue Nile State (Sudan) were currently residing in Maban County of Upper Nile and more were expected to arrive.

Mr. Maya appealed for more humanitarian assistance in helping reintegrate returnees who chose to settle in the state.

"I call upon the UN family and humanitarian partners to assist with the transportation of returnees, and to provide them with basic

needs such as shelter, food, water and medical facilities upon their arrival," he said. DSRSG Zenenga said the International Organization for Migration in collaboration with UN agencies was ready to support returning South Sudanese.

"The mission is developing decentralized structures, the County Support Bases (CSBs), that would allow the UN and partners to deliver services and assistance effectively," Mr. Zenenga said.

The DSRSG also travelled to Melut County, where he met its commissioner, Frances Ayul Nyok, and UNMISS staff at the Melut CSB.

Commissioner Nyok informed Mr. Zenenga that state and county authorities had reinforced security around oil installations in the county, following a 13 February incident when 23 oil wells and installations were either vandalized or robbed.



UNMISS DSRSG Raisedon Zenenga (right) speaking with Deputy Governor Andrea Maya in Malakal.

Compiled by the Public Information Office, Juba, United Nations Mission in South Sudan

International Women's Day Celebrations

On 7 March, a day before the world marked International Women's Day (IWD), UNMISS staff visited pregnant and newly delivered women at Juba Teaching Hospital. The UNMISS team consisted of representatives from UNMISS gender, human rights and police sections who donated toiletries to the women. Photos:UNMISS/Isaac Gideon





Jonglei journalists discuss coverage of recent conflict

For the first time since independence, a dozen representatives of local and independent media in Bor, Jonglei State, met on 23 February to discuss how South Sudanese reporters had covered recent disturbances in their area.

Organized by the UNMISS Public Information Office, the roundtable also provided an opportunity for participants to air their opinions of coverage provided by international media, and call on national authorities to trust them with more information as well as up-to-date professional and telecommunications equipment.

Members of the city press, including the governor's press staff and others working with the state Ministry of Information, said they had exerted their best efforts in producing accurate and unbiased reports about tribal incidents, but could have done more.

Difficulties in reaching far-off areas of the state, coupled with unreliable telecommunications networks, made it harder for members of the press and state government officials to collect the level of accurate information the world could have used, said participants.

That vacuum, they added, left reportorial space open for some international media to show over-reliance on national government sources, some of whom lacked the most updated information.

"Some of the international media have portrayed events in Jonglei as recent phenomena that have started since independence, ignoring the long-standing historical roots of the

issue," one participant said.

To help disseminate more timely and accurate information about their state in future, roundtable participants called on the national government to foster better ties with media officials and representatives in Jonglei.

They said state journalists and press officials currently lacked training in media laws and needed hands-on print and broadcast workshops. They also called for additional equipment.

Several participants said lack of knowledge on media rights and laws had, in effect, created a self-censorship atmosphere that hampered effective reporting of events.



Media representatives from Jonglei holding discussions during roundtable organized by UNMISS. Photo: UNMISS/Peyman Pejam.

Western Equatoria launches volunteer road crew

Striving to maintain existing routes and extend its limited road network, Western Equatoria State launched a volunteer "Road Maintenance Crew" on 6 March in the capital Yambio.

Organized by the state Ministry of Physical Infrastructure, the 367-member crew will be deployed to camps in five of the state's 10 counties (Mundri West, Maridi, Ibba, Yambio and Nzara), where they will maintain roads with hand tools.

In opening remarks, Minister for Physical Infrastructure Boutros Alison Magaya said the crew aimed to administer a community-based maintenance system, focusing on the road corridor Mundri-Yambio-Diabio.

"The road camps will enable us to maintain our existing road network in a ... cost-efficient manner and repair it more rapidly," Minister Magaya said. "We came up with the idea of establishing a Road Maintenance Crew based on volunteerism in order to alleviate the problem of shortage of funds."

He added that the work would create seasonal opportunities for youth and encourage them to directly participate in state reconstruction. It would also improve overall security by opening up areas to police and other personnel.

"It is truly a landmark event for the state and will enable it to use its available resources properly," the minister said.



Governor Joseph Bakosoro (right) handing over tools to road maintenance crew in Yambio. Photo: UNMISS/Hailemichael Gebrekrstos.

Noting that the road crew was the first of its kind in South Sudan, state Governor Bangasi Joseph Bakosoro encouraged youth to work hard when they deployed to counties.

"All youth should consider themselves as part and parcel of the government, and they should understand that there is no development without their involvement," the governor said. "Roads are vital for development and security and we must maintain and build our roads by ourselves using existing resources."

Governor Bakosoro urged international organizations and development partners to provide tools and other equipment to crew

members, as his government was unable to send enough to the counties.

Paramount Chief Wilson Gbduwe, chairman of the state Traditional Leaders Authority, encouraged volunteers to perform their tasks properly. "We should maintain the roads ... because they are ours and we are the ones who are going to use them."

On behalf of the road crew, Alfred Karaba pledged that its members would work hard. "We are committed to successfully perform our assignment," he said. The state has established 16 road crew camps in five counties to date.

