



United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit
Communications & Public Information Office

PRESS RELEASE

Juba, 31 October 2013

UNMISS ASSISTS SOUTH SUDAN PRISONS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MENTALLY DISORDERED PRISONERS

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is collaborating with and assisting the National Prisons Service of South Sudan (NPSSS) in the management of mentally disordered prisoners.

There are currently 118 (104 men and 14 women) mentally disordered prisoners in South Sudan - a majority in Juba. Many of them have been transferred to the capital because of the lack of appropriate facilities to adequately cater for their security needs in the States.

Mentally disordered prisoners in South Sudan comprise inmates detained for criminal behavior or on the prompting of their families (through Prosecutors and according to existing South Sudanese laws), as well as prisoners who became mentally disordered while serving their sentences. The trauma of many years of war, the existing legislation allowing for mentally disordered persons to be detained on grounds of security and the complete absence of facilities for psychiatric care have all worked together to affect the numbers of mentally disordered persons in prison custody.

In Juba, UNMISS is working with NPSSS in developing a pilot project to improve the quality of life for mentally disordered prisoners. So far, over 60 mentally disordered inmates have received treatment in the Juba prison before being released while more are currently treated.

In Maridi, Western Equatoria, the Mental Health Advisor of UNMISS Corrections Advisory Section (an expert from the Zimbabwe Prisons Service) together with his colleagues from the Uganda and Sierra Leone Prisons Services have treated three mentally disordered

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prisoners jailed for many years. The prisoners have been cured thanks to a combination of drug therapy and counseling. They have been released and re-united with their families. They are now gainfully employed, having learnt some skills while in custody.

Mental disorder is not a crime and is curable, as on-going treatments demonstrate. One of the objectives of the program is for the NPSSS to have confidence and trust in treating mentally disordered prisoners in order, among other issues, to abolish the use of shackles to chain mentally disordered prisoners.

The Mental Health Unit of UNMISS Corrections Advisory Section is also assisting the NPSSS in developing a Mental Health policy to guide and support the NPSSS in the management of mentally disordered cases country-wide.



UNMISS visiting prisoners mentally disordered



UNMISS and prison staff



UNMISS and medical staff in the prison