



# United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit  
Communications & Public Information Office

## PRESS BRIEFING

### Press Briefing Wednesday 17 February 2016

#### Near verbatim transcript

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unmissmultimedia/sets/72157664193651150>

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear journalists and Radio Mirava listeners, welcome to our weekly press briefing. Today, **our guest will be Mrs. Tizie Maphalala, Education Manager with the UN Children Fund (UNICEF)**. Although school has already started for many pupils in South Sudan, Mrs. Maphalala will tell you more on the **Back-To-Learning campaign** launched this morning in Juba at 9 o'clock with the national authorities. The campaign, Ms. Maphalala will explain, aims to provide learning opportunities to children in conflict-affected areas as well as children who have never gone to school.

#### Statement by the Secretary General on the death of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former UN Secretary-General

I will start this briefing with 2 statements, the first one, is a sad one following the death of the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, **the first African UN Secretary-General** to have headed the United Nations.

I will read you some excerpts of what the current Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon said:

*"I am deeply saddened to learn of the death of my predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The late Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was a respected statesman in the service of his country, **Egypt**. He was a well-known scholar of international law and brought formidable experience and intellectual power to the task of piloting the **United Nations through one of the most tumultuous and challenging periods** in its history, and guiding the **Organization of the Francophonie** in subsequent years. As Secretary-General, he presided over a **dramatic rise in UN peacekeeping**. He also presided over a time when the world increasingly turned to the United Nations for solutions to its problems, in the immediate aftermath of the cold war.*

*Boutros Boutros-Ghali did much to shape the Organization's response to this new era, in particular through his **landmark report "An Agenda for Peace"** and the subsequent agendas for development and democratization. He showed courage in posing difficult questions to the Member States, and rightly insisted on the **independence of his office and of the Secretariat** as a whole. His commitment to the United Nations – its mission and its staff -- was unmistakable, and the mark he has left on the Organization is indelible. I extend my deepest **condolences** to Mrs. Boutros-Ghali, as well as to the rest of the family, to the Egyptian people, and to the late Secretary-General's many friends and admirers around the world. The United Nations community will mourn a memorable leader who rendered invaluable services to world peace and international order."*

[bit.ly/1PERz6H](http://bit.ly/1PERz6H)

#### On the appointment of Riek Machar as First Vice President of South Sudan

The UN Mission in South Sudan has welcomed last Thursday's announcement by President Kiir of the appointment of **Riek Machar as First Vice President of South Sudan**. It is an important step in the formation of the Transitional Government and the implementation of the peace agreement.

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The Mission has urged Mr. **Machar to return to Juba**, in order for the Transitional Government of National Unity to be established as quickly as possible and outstanding issues delaying the implementation of the agreement addressed.

The Mission however remains concerned by reports of clashes and ongoing tensions including ongoing violence **between communities in Jonglei**, which is leading to the displacement of civilians.

The Transitional Government, once formed, must do its utmost to take forward its primary responsibility in protecting civilians within its borders.

**On the Protection of Civilian sites**

<http://bit.ly/1Q0Iir4>

<i>STATE</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>Number of civilians seeking protection</i>
<i>Central Equatoria</i>	<i>UN House PoC I &amp; III</i>	27,950
<i>Unity</i>	<i>Bentiu</i>	119,476
<i>Upper Nile</i>	<i>Malakal</i>	47,791
	<i>Melut</i>	700
<i>Jonglei</i>	<i>Bor</i>	2,289
<i>Western Bahr El Ghazal</i>	<i>Wau</i>	234
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>		<b>198,440</b>

Malakal

In Malakal, where there are over 45,000 civilians, UNMISS and partners on the site continue to **ensure that living conditions improve** with the installation of a **new pipeline** from the river to the UNMISS compound. The pipeline is almost completed, and with the erection of an elevated tower, the **quantity and availability of water** in what is known as Sector 1 of the PoC site will be increased. In addition, clearing, leveling and **improvement of the drainage system** in the PoC site Sector 4 is also ongoing. It will be crucial when the rainy season kicks in.

As UNICEF is launching its Back-To-Learning campaign, let me also add that the UNMISS Field Office together with education representatives of UNICEF, the International Organization for Migrations (IOM), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Shilluk community leaders have conducted a working visit to the site to assess **locations for a school for Shilluk children** who have not yet attended classes. An agreement was reached regarding the location to establish a school for children.

Bor

Just a note on Bor, to raise the awareness of our listeners, as well as community leaders. Unfortunately, the **last polio and measles vaccination campaigns have been poorly attended**. Let me stress how important it is for parents to take vaccination campaigns extremely seriously. Vaccination campaigns are meant to prevent the spread of contagious diseases that may kill. **Vaccination saves lives**; it can save the lives of thousands of children; it will save the lives of your children. So please do not miss the next vaccination campaign, it is for you, it is for your children.

Bentiu

With the presence of UNMISS in Bentiu through constant patrolling since July, some communities have felt more secure to return to the town where schools, however, have been closed since the conflict started. **UNMISS is currently engaging with the SPLA and the authorities for the vacation of educational and other**

**social service facilities occupied by armed forces.** The Mission has also raised the same issue with **SPLA in Leer** to vacate the school of the Comboni Brothers.

Next to Bentiu, UNMISS is also **renovating a school in Rubkona**. UNMISS has also restored a **school in Pariang**, further north, where the Indian battalion, conducted a two-day patrol earlier this month, which was also an opportunity to deliver school items for children.

### **Under Secretary-General (USG) for United Nations Department Safety and Security visits South Sudan**

The Under Secretary-General (USG) for the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), Peter Drennan, has completed a routine visit to South Sudan **to assess the security conditions in which the United Nations work**. Peter Drennan met with senior UN and South Sudanese security officials, traveled to Bentiu where he visited the PoC site, and expressed his appreciation to UN staff and implementing partners for the work they do under very difficult conditions in their efforts to improve the life of all the people of South Sudan.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unmissmultimedia/24694814709/in/album-72157662408783843/>

### **Nigerian Police Medal Parade**

A Medal Parade took place yesterday in Juba UN House to reward the Nigerian Police contingent for its contribution to UNMISS. The parade was attended by the Nigerian Ambassador H.E., B.C. OKERE, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Moustapha Soumare, the Police Commissioner Fred Yiga and the Nigerian commander of the Police, Chief Superintendent Ayo Faniyan. The Ambassador congratulated the troops for their professionalism and dedication over the past 8 months in South Sudan, and urged them to consider their decoration as “a clarion call to greater service”. There are 18 Police officers from Nigeria in South Sudan, deployed in Juba, Malakal, Bentiu and Bor.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unmissmultimedia/albums/72157662442553713>

Before I give the floor to my UNICEF colleague, please if there is anything you want us to highlight, **send us a text at the following number: 0912 17 16 81**.

The floor is yours: Mrs. Tizie Maphalala, UNICEF Education Manager

### **MRS. TIZIE MAPHALALA, UNICEF EDUCATION MANAGER**

The **Back-to-Learning** campaign is an initiative led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology with support from UNICEF and other partners to ensure that all children in South Sudan have access to learning opportunities whether through formal school or non-formal system. It is designed to address the low level of education access to quality education in the world’s youngest nation which has been made worse by the 2013 conflict.

### **Key Issues**

- South Sudan faces the risk of losing a generation of children in danger of not being educated. Currently **there are more than 1.8 million out-of-school children** in South Sudan. Even before the December 2013 crisis, South Sudan was already one of the most difficult places in the world to be a schoolchild with only one in ten children completing primary school. **A girl in South Sudan is three times more likely to die in childbirth than complete primary school.**
- The **2013 conflict** worsened the situation by **forcing more than 400,000 additional children out of school**. **Primary school enrolment rates have decreased from 42% to 35%** since the onset of the conflict. Girls’ enrolment continues to lag behind boys by more than 10 percent.
- **Schools that should be zones of peace have been instead occupied by military or destroyed.** Children have not only been affected by the disruption of education but their physical security and well-being have been endangered by attacks against schools. **Over 331 schools** have been closed, damaged, occupied or otherwise not functioning whereby one third is the consequence of military use and attacks.

**Back-to-Learning 1 - 2015: Success**

- Back to Learning is a life changing campaign that aims to give children in South Sudan the opportunity to go to school – both boys and girls who have never stepped foot in a classroom and those who have been forced to drop out because of poverty, gender and war.
- UNICEF and other partners supported the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to launch the Back-to-Learning initiative in 2015 targeting 400,000 children in conflict and non-conflict affected states. By the end of 2015, UNICEF with support from donors and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other partners **reached close to 370,000 children with education services**.
- To respond to the high demand for Education, UNICEF responded by **establishing new learning spaces, reopening closed and occupied schools, and mobilizing and training 6,145 teachers** who are required for these new learning spaces. UNICEF exceeded the set training targets due to the continued insecurity, which resulted in the increased number of displaced children requiring education. As a result UNICEF and partners had to mobilize and train more teachers to cater the needs of these children, especially in PoC sites like Bentiu.

### **Back-to-Learning 2 - 2016**

- Back-to-Learning 2 builds on the success of Back-To-Learning 1 which allowed close to 370,000 children to access education in 2015.
- This year, UNICEF will support the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other partners **to reach over half a million (589,332)** vulnerable children in conflict and non-conflict affected areas with education services.
- UNICEF shall provide **equitable access** to quality basic education by consolidating gains of Back-To-Learning 1 and reaching out to new children in humanitarian and development context, focusing on the most vulnerable girls and boys by improving access to learning opportunities, enhancing the quality of education, strengthening the capacity of educational institutions and individual levels at national and sub-national levels and by bridging the humanitarian – development divide.
- To provide access to learning opportunities for the more than half a million vulnerable children and adolescents aged 3 to 18, **UNICEF and partners require US\$75 million**. The funds will be used to provide learning facilities and education materials to newly enrolled children in schools; to continue education services to children in conflict-affected areas; and to enroll new students out of school for other reasons.

### **Closing Remarks**

UNICEF is grateful to all partners for their continued support. We would like to thank our donors such as the Government of Norway, USAID, Government of Japan and the Global Partnership for Education for their generous contribution towards education for children in South Sudan.

<http://www.childrenofsouthsudan.info/education-drive-to-benefit-half-a-million-out-of-school-children-in-south-sudan/>

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### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*Question, Waakhe Simon Wudu (Voice of America): As UNICEF is launching its Back-To-Learning campaign today, could you please explain to **which extent you have been able to reach children in opposition-controlled areas?***

*Tizie Maphalala, Education Manager, UNICEF South Sudan (TM):* I don't have specific figures but I can confirm that **2/3 of the children reached by UNICEF Back-To-Learning campaign last year were from conflict-affected areas**, especially from and around Protection of Civilians (PoCs) sites. UNICEF is working with national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to ensure that these children can learn in a safe place. This goes from ensuring that traumatized children feel safe enough to learn to training the teachers and providing teaching materials.

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Question, Parach Mach (The National Today Newspaper): UNICEF Back-To-Learning campaign intends to reach half a million children this year with the support of the Ministry of Education. **Which efforts are you putting in place to fulfil this objective?**

TM: UNICEF is working with the Ministry on several initiatives, for instance on **The Girls' Education in South Sudan's project** to get girls into schools. UNICEF is also cooperating with national authorities and NGOs to **mobilize communities** and bring children even from less conflict-affected areas to school. But a critical point remains. We need to have teachers in classrooms and for that, **teachers need to be paid. This is a primary duty of the government to pay salaries** to teachers. UNICEF is supporting with training and provision of teaching materials but our goal is not to get children in the classroom on the first day of the Back-To-Learning campaign but also for the children to remain in school the rest of the year with teachers to educate them.

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Question, Emmanuel Tombe (MBC TV): You have just mentioned the teacher salaries. What are the other challenges UNICEF is facing?

TM: One of the main issues is **the distance to school, especially for girls** who cannot, due to security reasons, walk long distance to reach the school. Another point is that many schools are organized in **temporary shelters or under trees** and only **2/3 of them have sanitation or water points**. This makes it very difficult for children to attend school all day. UNICEF is working on **improving water sanitation and hygiene** with its partners and on providing **school meals to children with the World Food Programme (WFP)**. **Teaching materials** remain another challenge along with school grants. Although these are provided by the national authorities, they **still need guidance and training on school development plans**, school management communities and on establishment of Parent Teached Associations (PTAs). But again, we all know that **teachers need to be paid every month** to be able to come to the classroom and be motivated.

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Question, Junior Ali (Eye Radio): Regarding the latest numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living on UNMISS PoC sites, I can see that there have been new arrivals but no figures for IDPs who are being resettled or going back home. What can you say about it?

Ariane Quentier, UNMISS spokesperson (AQ): UNMISS is indeed ultimately working **for civilians to be able to return to their homes**. The Mission wants to create safer and more secure areas with among other **initiatives, the establishment of Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs) such as in Leer or Mundri, from where troops conduct patrols** in areas where there has been conflict and destruction. For two years now, South Sudan has faced an extremely violent conflict. Civilians need a sense of safety and security before they decide to return to their homes. They need to be able **to rebuild their livelihoods** with the possibility to plant their crop, have access to water, send their children to school and enjoy basic services. As mentioned in the **latest Human Rights report** released by UNMISS in January, there have been **extremely severe human rights violations and abuses** committed by all parties; **the scorched earth strategy** that has been inflicted by all warring parties is **preventing the immediate resumption of communal life** in conflict-affected areas. A peace agreement has been signed but we are still waiting for the **peace to be implemented and for a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) to be formed so the country can move forward, and basic services can be delivered to the population so people can return to their homes**.

Question, Waakhe Simon Wudu (Voice of America): I have two questions. The first one is for UNICEF. **How much funding has been allocated this year for the Back-To-Learning campaign?** The second is for Ariane and regards the **situation in Western Equatoria**. There has been ongoing fighting for the last two weeks but not figures from the area on your PoC site update. What can you tell us about the situation there?

TM: UNICEF has allocated **75 million USD this year for the Back-To-Learning campaign**, which represents 175 USD for a child to be able to go to school and 85 USD for children enrolled last year to be able to continue with their education.

AQ: The situation in the Western Equatorian region has been and remains very tense, especially in **Yambio and Mundri areas**. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM)

of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) visited Mundri (you can find the report of the visit on JMEC website [here](#)). UNMISS has established a **Temporary Operating Base in Mundri to be able to patrol the area** but the main issue we are facing is **access**, while thousands of civilians are reported to be in the bush without any protection or assistance.

The figures on the PoC update only represent civilians under UNMISS protection in our PoC sites on six of our bases throughout the country. And as a reminder, **opening the gates of our compounds remains a last resort measure** that UNMISS will take only if lives of people are directly threatened, within the capacity of the Mission. What UNMISS recently did in **Mundri and Yambio is to engage with local authorities and military forces while conducting patrols** to attempt to diffuse a worsening situation and try **reinstating a sense of safety and security**. But UNMISS has a very limited capacity in the Western Equatorial region.

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*Question, Waakhe Simon Wudu (Voice of America): Is then UNMISS looking to **scale up its capacities** in Western Equatoria?*

**AQ:** UNMISS has **between 12 and 13,000 troops** on the ground. **Half of them are deployed around and in the vicinity of the PoC sites.** The **rest of troops are meant to ensure the implementation** of some aspects of our mandate such as **protecting civilians, documenting human rights violations and abuses and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.** To do so, the Mission attempts **to project its forces through establishing Temporary Operating Bases and patrol conflict-affected areas** like we have done for instance in **Leer or Mundri.** Having said that, the situation in Mundri is not easy because we still have **major issues of access.** And this is not only affecting UNMISS and the Western Equatorial region, but **all the UN Funds Agencies and Programs, humanitarian NGOs, and all areas where the conflict has been ongoing.** Again, we need access to project our troops and create safe areas so people can return home.

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*Question, Deng Garang (Al-Wehaad Arabic Newspaper): A question for UNICEF. Regarding the number of children out of school, do the numbers include **street children**?*

**TM:** In South Sudan, 1.8 million of children are out of school and this includes street children, children who dropped out of school or are not attending school from financial, social or cultural reasons, **no matter of they are living in the street or within communities.**

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*Question, Parach Mach (The National Today Newspaper): For UNMISS. I can see on the PoC update that there has been a decrease in the **numbers of IDPs in Bentiu.** Does that mean that some people are feeling safe enough to return to Bentiu town? Is that linked to the appointment of Riek Machar as First Vice President?*

**AQ:** It is hard to track people individually. We are using the same methodology to keep our figures as updated and accurate as possible (head count, food distribution.) Civilians tend to go to the PoC sites when they have no food, no water or do not feel safe. In Bentiu or Malakal, some of the civilians are coming only for food distribution and then return to their homes in the vicinity of the sites. But the exact reasons why people are coming to our sites – or leaving – are very complex; they range from lack of safety to food insecurity. Also, the decrease you mention is not that significant, we are talking about only thousands of people but the overall numbers, unfortunately, do not change much.

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*Question, Waakhe Simon Wudu (Voice of America): UNMISS, you've mentioned the problem of access in Western Equatoria. Who is blocking UNMISS for accessing the area?*

**AQ:** Unfortunately, the issue of freedom of movement and access is not only in the Western Equatorial region. UNMISS is experiencing a **lack of access from both warring parties and also armed militias in most conflict-affected areas.** UNMISS is in South Sudan with an agreement from the government, there are **humanitarian principles regarding assistance to civilians applying to all warring parties.** As per our mandate, **UNMISS role is to protect civilians, report and monitor human rights violations and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.** To do so, **UNMISS needs access everywhere needed.** This again is not only a problem for

UNMISS but also for other UN agencies, fund and programs as well as implementing partners and NGOs. For instance, WFP is currently trying to pre-position as much food as possible in food-insecure areas ahead of the rainy season, but this has also proven difficult. Food is denied to South Sudanese because of the lack of access. This is very unfortunate for the people of South Sudan; they deserve better.

**[END of BRIEFING]**