United Nations in South Sudan

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First-ever comprehensive National Curriculum launched

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on 8 September launched the first-ever comprehensive national education curriculum for South Sudan.

Speaking at the launch in Juba, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Honourable, Dr. John Gai Yoh said that the completion of the curriculum marked an important milestone in the history of Education in South Sudan as the country now has a complete, harmonized and recognized curriculum in line with regional and international education standards. With support from the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF (as its Managing Entity in South Sudan) partnered closely with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to support the Ministry of Education launch the new curriculum under the theme: ‘Harmonised Education Service Delivery for Nation building, Peaceful Co-existence and Lifelong Learning for All.’

In keeping with global trends, the new South Sudan Curriculum is competency-based and integrates life skills and peace education, gender, human rights and environmental awareness into school subjects. The curriculum includes academic and co-curricular activities to provide a variety of experiences for learners. The new curriculum is designed to systematically strengthen early literacy and numeracy, impart basic life skills that are important for peacebuilding (cooperation, tolerance, identity, appreciation cultural diversity, etc.), and engage learners to enhance their overall positive cognitive, psychosocial and attitudinal transformation. Prior to the launch of the national curriculum, there was no complete or comprehensive curricula in South Sudan. Some schools were using the South Sudan curriculum while others were using curricula from neighbouring Uganda, Kenya and Sudan. The new curriculum covers the whole basic education system including Early Childhood Development, Primary Education, Secondary Education and the Accelerated Learning Programme and Community Girls’ Schools.

“Today’s launch marks the beginning of a long road for all,” said Jonathan Veitch, UNICEF Representative in South Sudan. “We must focus on getting children into schools, for while the curriculum is complete, textbooks must be designed and published; teachers need to be trained to implement this curriculum, and school managers, inspectors and supervisors require training to provide the required management and oversight.”

Participation in education in South Sudan has deteriorated since the conflict broke out in December 2013, which saw an estimated 400,000 school-aged children forced to drop out of school due to displacement and insecurity. Critical gaps in education include: limited school infrastructure (less than 50% of schools have semi/permanent classroom, 60% without drinking water and 43% have access to latrines), lack of trained teachers (60% untrained), low primary school completion rate (less than 10%) and lack of basic teaching and learning supplies. South Sudan remains one of the countries with the lowest literacy indicators globally, with only 27% of adults able to read and write. The new curriculum aims to foster a new generation of learners who are knowledgeable, respectful and supportive of peace and prosperity, growth and development, harmony and for justice, as clearly articulated in the National Curriculum Framework.

FAO trains extension workers on livestock production in Aweil and Kuajok

As part of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s wider goals to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty in rural areas, efforts to build resilience of livelihoods in South Sudan are among its strategic objectives. One of the activities under this strategic
objective is support in developing the capacities of livestock service delivery systems at all levels throughout the country.

In South Sudan, cattle are a symbol of status and wealth and most pastoral communities rear livestock to provide subsistence products (milk and meat), to meet social obligations (bride price, stock alliances and stock patronages) and to insure against disaster (drought, epidemics, raids). Livestock products contribute to subsistence in two ways: directly, via milk and meat for home consumption; and indirectly, via sales to generate cash or exchanges for cereals and other crops.

FAO with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) successfully tested the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach in 2009/2010 and prescribed it as an appropriate extension approach for improvement of farming practices in South Sudan. Today, within the scope of FAO South Sudan’s Country Programming Framework, SDC-supported activities focus on improving food security, livelihoods and income generation for vulnerable, but economically active agropastoralists in the two target states who rely on crop and livestock production.

Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW) and other livestock workers play an important role in the provision of basic veterinary and livestock production services for their communities at the county level. In order to strengthen these extension providers’ networks, FAO organized a three-day workshop in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Warrap States, to improve livestock service delivery to the agropastoralists in the area.

The workshop focused on milk production, processing and hygienic handling as well as pasture management, fodder production and forage preservation. Forty participants from the State Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries Industry and NGO partners in both states completed the Training of Trainers workshop and will become trainers of agropastoral field school (A-PFS) facilitators who train the A-PFS members in the various communities.

The workshop aimed to improve livestock production practices in order to boost livestock productivity for pastoral communities, thus improving their food security and enhancing income generation from livestock. Key to this has been interest of livestock-owning communities and service providers. As noted by FAO’s Livestock Officer and training facilitator, Julius Lonyong, “The commitment shown by the participants in this workshop implies that they want to be empowered, so that they can provide the services required to bring change to the livestock sector. This change can move this country in the direction of economic development.”

Ultimately, the project aims to benefit 7,050 households or approximately 50,000 people in the selected states, while building the capacity of government and state extension workers to positively impact food security, nutrition and poverty among agropastoralists in South Sudan.

WHO providing emergency life-saving health services to IDPs in South Sudan

The World Health Organization (WHO) and partners are racing to cope with the health needs of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northeastern South Sudan where fighting continues and the humanitarian situation remains dire.

More than 10,000 people have arrived to the Malakal protection-of-civilians (PoC) site since 1 August 2015 stemming from a month-long aid blockade to the region. The influx brings the total number of asylum seekers in the PoC to 46,567, with families crammed together with little or no access to safe water or sanitation.

“Malakal PoC is now a home for thousands of South Sudanese and overcrowding easily results in water contamination and diseases like dysentery, bloody diarrhoea, hepatitis E and cholera,” says Dr Allan Mpairwe, Head of Outbreaks and Disasters Management at WHO in South Sudan.

Given the vulnerability of their situation, there is an urgent need to strengthen coordination mechanisms to scale up the health services, provision of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services to prevent disease outbreaks.

“There is a serious need of health care services and access to clean drinking water and sanitation. WHO and health cluster partners are racing to ensure WASH supplies are available to prevent infections and the spread of diseases, especially in vulnerable populations like children, pregnant women and the disabled,” adds Dr. Mpairwe.

Besides cholera and other water-borne diseases, malaria, measles and polio are other significant public health threats to IDPs. In response to the rapid influx, additional clinics and outreaches have been opened in order to improve access to prevention, screening and treatment of these serious threats. WHO has supported health cluster partners to vaccinate over
37,000 IDPs with the oral cholera vaccine during the first round and the second round is expected to begin on 1 September 2015.

To prevent malaria and other vector-borne diseases, response actions have been undertaken to improve access to timely and appropriate care, interventions to interrupt community transmission and coordination of behaviour change communication. With the support from WHO and partners, stocks of artemisinin combination therapy (ACT), malaria diagnostics, and other malaria case management supplies have been dispatched to Malakal and other deep front areas. The WHO immunization programme and vaccination teams are positioned to vaccinate all new arrivals in the PoC site against measles and polio.

IOM promotes disease prevention at UN displacement sites in South Sudan

To help stem the spread of disease in displacement sites in South Sudan, International Organization for Migration (IOM) health teams place a strong focus on preventative health care. As part of this effort, IOM has led two oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaigns, with the aim to protect more than 113,600 internally displaced persons (IDPs) against the disease.

From 13 August to 5 September, IOM and partners conducted a two-round OCV campaign at the UN protection of civilians (PoC) site in Malakal, Upper Nile State, reaching more than 42,300 people with at least one dose. Preventing the spread of cholera is critical as the recent influx of IDPs has led to crowded living conditions for the estimated 45,400 people seeking protection at the site.

In June, IOM also led an OCV at the UN PoC site in Bentiu, Unity State, vaccinating more than 71,200 people against cholera. To respond to the steady stream of new arrivals, additional cholera vaccines have been dispatched to the site, which is sheltering more than 116,700 IDPs—an increase of more than 50 per cent since April.

Since the start of the rainy season, IOM clinics have seen a more than doubling of confirmed malaria cases since mid-July. IOM provides diagnostics and treatment for malaria, supports malaria prevention for pregnant mothers and promotes good hygiene habits to encourage disease prevention. IOM clinics in Bentiu, Malakal and Renk, Upper Nile, also provide routine vaccinations for children under five to protect them against diseases such as measles and polio.

The OCV campaign in Malakal was generously funded by USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Government of Japan.

UNHCR livelihoods support to refugees

At Ajuong Thok refugee camp in South Sudan’s Unity State, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)’s partner African Action Help-International (AAH-I) is working to boost livelihood opportunities among refugees from Sudan’s South Kordofan State.

With AAH-I support, refugees are learning new skills in leather craft and shoemaking. They have teamed up with Yohannes, a leather craft trainer and shoemaker, who came to South Sudan to work with refugees after gaining experience as a shoemaker trainer for refugees in his home country of Ethiopia. “There is no shortage of market. Market we don’t fear,” says Yohannes.

In May 2014, the first batch of 13 trainees (including 3 from the host community and 3 women) graduated from a 3 month full time course. Yohannes taught them how to make belts, wallets, purses, handbags, folders and keyholders.

The graduates, who each received start-up kits, have now been divided into three groups – a group of five in Yida camp, where UNHCR supplied tents and transport for accommodation, five in Ajuong Thok market, and a group of three host community members. The groups are already in business and enjoying the prospect of additional earning potential.

Neema Ashabat, aged 23, one of the women trained, is optimistic “the course is beneficial for my future and is in my interest. I’m happy to attend. I’m comfortable (being on the course) because I know it will ensure my future and make my life more comfortable.”

“I’m used to wearing shoes, but I didn’t know how they were made.” She added that the course will benefit not only herself. “In future I will also show others and work with them.”

UNMAS continues clearance in Bor

In August, UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) conducted battle area clearance and delivered mine risk education to residents of Malek village, located in Bor South County, Jonglei State, along the Bor-Juba road. UNMAS commenced operations in the area in July 2015 by delivering several mine risk education sessions.
with the help of the Community Liaison Team. The team used information banners and leaflets describing the various explosive remnants of war that the community members could find in the area and the dangers such items posed.

While mine risk education was being delivered, clearance teams conducted battle area clearance (searching for explosive remnants of war items found on the surface). UNMAS presence helped build confidence within the community enabling returnees to come back from neighbouring villages and Bor town and settle in Malek. In total, the team cleared 57,450m² of land which was then handed over to the village chief. The community is now able to use the land without fear of any explosive remnants of war. As soon as UNMAS handed over the safe area, families started planting crops.

**Photo Story: UNMISS supports Rajaf community**

To boost relations with the local community, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been assisting in Rajaf village, 15 kilometers south of Juba. UNMISS Peacekeepers have undertaken multiple activities, in the areas of agriculture, construction, carpentry, and education. As part of this Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) project, the Mission has cleared 1.8 square meters of land for farming. The UN Mine Action Service cleared the land of any potential mines and unexploded ordinance before the Bangladeshi Engineers began preparing it for cultivation on 28 August. “We are conducting here a farming project with four (military) units (Chinese, Ethiopians, Nepalese and Rwandese),” said Ethiopian Deputy Commander Colonel Murie Legese. Prior to the farming project, the Chinese Battalion erected basketball poles and put basketball net for Rajaf Primary School, which was handed over on 28 August. The Ethiopian Battalion held a carpentry workshop to help repair school desks and chairs. The Nepalese Battalion conducted a health awareness class on 29 August and donated medical first aid items.

To familiarize the more than 40 children with the presence of UN peacekeepers and stress the importance of education for sustainable peace, the UNMISS Female Peacekeepers Association held a drawing competition at the local kindergarten.

Photos: UNMISS/Isaac Alebe.