



MRDA Update

Change agent for the community

JUNE 2011

MUNDRI

SOUTH SUDAN

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

FROM THE 2
DIRECTOR'S DESK

RURAL 3
LIVELIHOOD

GENDER ISSUES 4

CHILD-FRIENDLY 5
INITIATIVES

CAPACITY 6
BUILDING

EARLY WARNING 7
SYSTEMS

MRDA CONTACTS 8

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Focus now turns on chiefs as the key players in the search for peace



MRDA Executive Director Light W. Aganwa presents to the Governor of Lakes State a report of the April Reconciliation Workshop at his office in Rumbek. The Governor was positive in his response and gave his blessings to MRDA's plans to engage chiefs from Lakes State in the ongoing peace process between the Jur and Atuot Dinka communities.

By Moses Bukachi

Paramount, Executive and Boma chiefs are poised to play a crucial role in renewed efforts to end hostilities between the Jur community of Mvolo County and the Atuot Dinka of Yirol West County.

Under a peace plan reached in April between parliamentarians from Western Equatoria state and Lakes state during a

reconciliation workshop facilitated by MRDA's Centre for Democracy and Peace Studies (CDPS), the chiefs are to play a central role in mobilizing members of their communities at the grassroots as a key strategy towards ending the senseless cycle of violence that has since February claimed the lives of more than 60 people, displaced tens of thousands and resulted in the destruction of property

of unspecified value on both sides.

The plan to involve chiefs in the peace process is in line with a bigger plan by the leaders of both states to convene an all-inclusive peace conference at a later date that will bring together chiefs of all rank and file from both communities for talks that are geared towards achieving sustainable peace between the two communities.

(Continued on page 6)

Let's put a stop to these senseless clashes

By Light W Aganwa



Light Wilson
Aganwa, MRDA
Executive Director.

Article 3 of the universal declaration of human rights expressly states that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”

Within the community of civilized nations, the value of human life is so highly regarded that this declaration, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, has over the years been used as a reference point during the making of many national constitutions.

Yet after enduring so many years of civil war in which millions of people died and property of immeasurable value was lost, it is quite disheartening to see that violation of human rights in South Sudan still exists in yet another form - tribal clashes.

The recent surge in the loss of life through tribal clashes leaves one to wonder what kind of society we are living in. Since February for instance, a tribal conflict has been raging between the Jur of Mvolo and the Atuot Dinka residing in Yirol west, where we as an organization have worked tirelessly (and are still at it) to bring the conflict to an end. The upshot however is that both sides have expressed their thirst for peace and are in the process of negotiating (see cover page story).

The recurrent Murle-Lou Nuer inter-tribal clashes in Uror County of Jonglei State that has so far claimed the lives of hundreds, left many others wounded, and occasioned enormous loss of property only adds to questions as to whether we as a society truly mind about the welfare of our people. One is not lost to the fact that many parts of South Sudan including Western Equatoria, Lakes, Warrap, Upper Nile and Unity states are experiencing similar conflicts with devastating results. Which brings me to make this important statement: that *no one* has the right to arbitrarily take the life of another.

Even as the conflicts persist, the question that constantly comes to mind is for how long will we continue to fold our hands on our chests and just watch?

Tribal conflicts are manageable. Perhaps the main problem facing us is the attitude of looking for excuses. This has resulted in our failure to accept the realities on the ground and to own the responsibility of mediating and using the most practical and honest ways to resolve the conflicts permanently.

As south Sudanese we have a long way to go. It's a high time we stopped finishing each other and embarked on a course that will lead us towards development.

SPLA is a strong force to reckon with and so, together with respective state security apparatus, they must genuinely ensure that the citizens are free from internal and external aggressions and provide all civilians with adequate protection.

Losing the life of a single person and losing property can impact very negatively on humanity. Given the scale of the ongoing clashes, have we ever stopped to ask ourselves what it will cost to recover from the resultant mayhem? More importantly, have we given thought to the fact that life once lost cannot be recovered?

Fellow South Sudanese, let's face it head on: It is time we understood that there is need to respect human rights and that universality of human rights is not a negotiable matter. It is our responsibility as citizens, with the help of the Government, to ensure that the rights of our fellow citizens are upheld. The Right to life is just as important as other rights and South Sudan is no exception to this.

Lastly, we all know that we have one of the lowest population densities in the world because of the enormous land at our disposal. Which begs the question: why then are we ruthlessly and heartlessly wiping out each other?

Archbishop Deng lauds MRDA's partnership with ECS in the training of pastors in agricultural production



Archbishop Deng (Centre) with the graduating pastors, bishops and with MRDA's Executive Director at Ambalapi Training Centre.

By Lawrence Hissen

Sudan's top Episcopalian primate, the Most Rt. Rev. Dr. Daniel Deng Bul has commended MRDA for the role it played in the training of pastors in agricultural production.

Archbishop Deng was speaking at the Ambalapi Farmers Training Centre on Friday, June 24, 2011 where he presided over the graduation of 13 pastors drawn from various parishes of the Diocese of Mundri.

The training which took place from June 13th to 24th was aimed at inculcating in the clergy basic cultivation skills that would help enhance food crop production among the Christian leaders.

During the occasion, the Archbishop thanked the Bishop of the Diocese of Mundri, His Lordship Rev Bismark Avokaya for the initiative saying that the same kind of training should be replicated in all other ECS dioceses.

Recalling the difficult conditions he had gone through when he began his tenure as Bishop of Reng Diocese, the primate said it was necessary for the clergy to take part in agricultural

production to ensure there was food security in the church.

"When I was appointed Bishop of Reng Diocese, I found that most of the people living there were [from other religions] and it was very difficult for me to get assistance since there were no Christian communities to help me.

"I was so helpless. All I could do was to move around and see what exactly the community in Reng was doing. I discovered that most of them were farmers and that the only crop they produced was sorghum. I then decided to engage myself in farming. As a result, I was able to produce about 5,000 bags of Sorghum which I later sold and earned about 8,000 Sudanese Pounds. This was a lot of money then. From that money I was able to minister strongly and also to pay my pastors' salaries," he recalled.

"To this day the foundation I laid in Reng has remained strong and pastors continue getting their salaries from agricultural production," he added.

Earlier, during a guided tour of the centre the Archbishop visited several sites including the vegetable demon-

stration farm run by women groups, fruit seedlings, agro forestry, fruit tree plantation and bee hives. He was accompanied by, among others, the Bishop of the Diocese of Lanya, the Bishop of the Diocese of Mundri, MRDA executive director and MRDA's rural livelihood programme staff.

During his speech, MRDA executive director Light Wilson Aganwa thanked the Archbishop for attending the meeting saying that his presence was a blessing to the training centre and that God would bestow his favor on the centre through him.

At the close of the meeting, Archbishop Deng asked the executive director of MRDA to collaborate further with ECS and help train more pastors throughout South Sudan in crop production.

"MRDA has done a wonderful thing establishing this facility here, and I believe this centre will not only benefit Mundri, Lui or nearby communities, but the whole of South Sudan," he said.

Lawrence Hissen is MRDA's Agriculture Extension Officer.

GBV survivors receive training and seed capital



Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors display savings & loans passbooks together with start-up capital which they received from WOYE MFI and the Gender Project respectively, shortly after completing a two days training on business skills. Standing at the far left is Regina Samson, MRDA's Gender Officer while at the far right is Asunta Bango, MRDA's Psycho-Social Counselor.

The exercise was the culmination of several weeks of groundwork during which the GBV survivors were identified during community meetings, counseled by the Gender Project Psycho-social Counselor and trained in the arts and science of starting and running a business enterprise successfully.

By Moses Bukachi

Twenty five survivors of gender based violence (GBV) in Mundri have received a new lease of life, thanks to an initiative by the Scottish International Aid Fund (SCIAF) and MRDA's Gender Project.

On June 29, 2011, following two days of business skills training, the GBV survivors (24 women and 1 man) received a seed capital worth SDG 375 each which they will use partly to start a business of their choice and partly to open savings accounts with WOYE MFI through which they can access loaning facilities from the microfinance institution.

The exercise which was witnessed by the Mundri West County Executive

Director Mr. Alwasila Angutwa and WOYE MFI staff was the culmination of several weeks of groundwork during which the GBV survivors were identified during community meetings, counseled by the Gender Project Psycho-social Counselor and trained in the arts and science of starting and running a business enterprise successfully.

According to MRDA's Gender Officer Regina Banduwa, the initiative stems from a research that was conducted during the implementation of a pilot project in 2009. Many of the GBV victims at the time appealed for funds for starting petty businesses to enable them meet basic household costs that were being ignored by their spouses.

"In 2009, the women voiced their problems during inter-

views carried out by donors and during the drafting of the new proposal, the seed fund was factored in," she said.

During the second part of the project, 25 other GBV survivors will be identified, trained and funded to meet the desired target of 50.

Titled *Women Empowerment in Mundri Counties*, the Gender Project is a two-year project whose key objectives include: Providing support to GBV survivors to enable them start sustainable business; enhancing the capacity of women to prevent violation of their basic rights; raising public awareness on violence against women and increasing the level of human rights and legal literacy among women themselves; and enhancing the capacity of MRDA to implement sustainable GBV projects.

Testimonies of comfort kit beneficiaries

Objective of Project:

To reduce the number of girls missing school during menstruation by providing sanitary pads.

By Moses Bukachi

Ever since she reached puberty, Violet Edward (name changed to protect identity), 17, has never had to endure the humiliation of being jeered out of school by her fellow pupils because of a menstrual leak. The fact that this happened to a school mate before her very own eyes makes the cheery P8 pupil of Hai Malakal Primary School all the more grateful for the regular sanitary pads she receives, courtesy of the partnership between the SCA Company, Oxfam Novib and Mundri Relief & Development Association (MRDA).

Violet is one of many beneficiaries of the Child-friendly Initiatives Project through which Mundri Relief & Development Association (MRDA), with the support of Oxfam Novib and sponsorship of SCA Company, provides comfort kits with the aim of reducing the number of girls missing school during menstruation thus increasing school attendance in Greater Mundri, Southern Sudan.

Recalling the incident that took place within the school premises, Violet says: "I saw my friend having her period just before home time. When she discovered the leak, she grabbed my bag and used it to cover her backside as she ran across the field to a classroom where she abandoned the bag.

"For 7 days the girl failed to come to school due to embarrassment, and since the incident, we no longer meet regularly as we used to," she adds.

A keen volley ball player and an ardent musical composer, Violet – the first born of seven children – says she's not worried at all about her menstrual cycle interfering with her school life. "I keep coming to school confidently without fear of embarrassment and I feel free to participate in any kind of



Comfort kit beneficiaries from Baya primary school engage in fun at the school compound.

games." Violet aspires to finish school and study music.

For Elizabeth Bullen (not her real name), 18, skipping school during her monthly cycles was a regular feature until she began to receive sanitary pads in November 2009. According to her testimony, whenever her periods came, she would stay home for as many as 7 days just to avoid the chance of being embarrassed. This would time and again affect her school performance, leading to questions of whether she would complete her education. But now, thanks to the SCA Company which provides comfort kits to girls in Southern Sudan through the agency of Oxfam Novib and MRDA, Elizabeth is happy because she is able to focus fully on her studies.

"I used to miss classes during my periods to avoid the chance of a leak and the resulting embarrassment before my colleagues," says the shy but jovial P7 pupil of Baya Primary School. "In those days I found it very difficult to catch up with class work because no class mate was able to explain to me properly lessons they had learned during my absence. But nowadays I never miss school during my periods and am free to play games and do anything," she adds.

Recalling a past incident in which her period came unexpectedly whilst she was in school, the sixth born of eight children says she suffered great distress that almost caused her to drop out of school.

"It happened when I was walking towards the borehole," she recalls, referring to a water point near the school compound. "Some girls noticed it and advised me to go home. Unfortunately it was break time and all the pupils were all over the compound. As soon as they noticed my predicament they began to clap their hands and to jeer. I was so embarrassed that I stayed away from school for 21 days," she says.

Looking back, Elizabeth says she no longer feels embarrassed about the incident because she has since matured up in her outlook of life. Nevertheless she is grateful that she does not have to go through the same episode again. She hopes to study all the way to university and become a surgeon.

MRDA staffer joins World Bank's mapping programme



Eric Jaffara at his World Bank Office in Washington DC, USA.

MRDAs Assistant Communications Officer Eric Jaffara has joined The World Bank as a Short Term Consultant.

Eric was among 4 lucky candidates from South Sudan who were selected to join the Bank's *Mapping For Sustainable Result Programme* whose terms of reference includes reviewing World bank continental projects and identifying their challenges. A total of 38 people applied for the position in South Sudan.

Eric will serve as a consultant for a period of two months during which he will also receive training on complex project management, policy making, monitoring and evaluation.

Focus now turns on chiefs as the key players in the search for peace

(Continued from page 1)

It is worth noting that the divergent life styles of the Atuot Dinka who are pastoralists and the Jur who are basically cultivators have occasionally given rise to disputes between the two communities which have often flared into deadly cycles of violence involving cross-border revenge missions.

In mid-May, following the deployment of security personnel to the conflict zone by the Government of South Sudan – fulfilling a key resolution reached during the workshop – a semblance of calm and order gradually returned to the area with isolated cases of deadly violence and looting being reported in the intervening period. *MRDA Update* has reliably learned that the security personnel, drawn from the elite Joint Integrated Unit (JIU), were deployed following requests from both the Governors of Lakes State and Western Equatoria.

Meanwhile, several other aspects of the peace plan consisting of nine resolutions are in the process of being fulfilled, including the provision of humanitarian assistance to the displaced.

During a follow-up visit to Lakes State on June 30, the executive director of MRDA Mr. Light W. Aganwa met with the Governor of the state H.E. Hon. Chol Tong Mayay, the Speaker of the Lakes legislative Assembly Hon. John M. Makur and the Minister of Local government and Law Enforcement Hon. Mabor Meen Wuol to whom he submitted copies of the April reconciliation workshop report. The executive director was well received by the three leaders who lauded MRDA's efforts at reconciling the two communities and assured him of their continual support throughout the implementation of the peace plan.

For his part, MRDA's executive director emphasized the importance of engaging chiefs in the peace process

and requested authorization to travel to Yirol West County to speak to the people about it, which was granted.

Later in the day, the executive director, accompanied by three MPs including the MP for Yirol West Hon. Anjelina Nyabilini Arok travelled to the county where he met a galaxy of leaders including the Commissioner of the county, county administrators and chiefs of various ranks.

During the meeting, held at the Yirol West County head quarters, speaker after speaker voiced their bewilderment at the hostilities with each wondering why the two communities, having enjoyed close relations for a long time through intermarriage, had now turned against each other. At the end there was consensus among the leaders that organizing a peace conference involving chiefs of the two communities to sort out their differences was the best way forward.

Early Warning Systems as an important tool for disaster risk reduction

By Janet Ombogo

Every day, nations around the globe are threatened by storms, floods, drought, landslides, earthquakes, conflict and other natural hazards and suffer misfortunes because of their social, economic, geographic and environmental circumstances. Sudan is no exception to such occurrences. News highlights about economic losses incurred during natural disasters are reported time and again with each disaster resulting, more often than not, in the loss of human life. The loss of both human lives and property could well be avoided if proper precautionary measures are in place. Reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards is an essential condition for reducing loss of property and achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Policy makers are beginning to recognize that preparedness for natural hazards needs to be an integral part of national and international development policies and practices.

Generally, it is the poorest people living in the poorer parts of the world who are most vulnerable to hazards. Disaster risks can be countered through approaches such as public awareness campaigns, knowledge of hazards and vulnerabilities, community preparedness programs, early warning systems evaluation plans, long term land use planning and environmental protection, and the application of sound building codes. Through such schemes, governments and communities can help people to become more resilient to hazards and their impacts, thereby reducing the chances of hazardous events turning into disasters.

With this in mind, in June 2011, Oxfam Novib in collaboration with International Institute of Rural Reconstruction invested in building the capacity of its partners by training them on Early Warning Systems. MRDA being one of the partner organizations supported by Oxfam Novib was represented by the Programmes Manager and the Agriculture Extension Officer in the 5-day training conducted in Isiolo town, Kenya. Organizations represented in this training included



Janet Ombogo (Back row, centre) and Festus Taban (Seated left) pose with participants of the early warning systems training in Isiolo during a photo opportunity.

Nuba Relief & Rehabilitation Development Organization (NRRDO), Sudanese Environmental Conservation Services (SECS), MAAN, ACORD and SOS Sahel. Isiolo town was selected as an appropriate venue for the training due to the striking similarities it bears in the kinds of hazards that affect it along with Sudan. Both are perennially affected by drought and insecurity.

Among the lessons learned during the training is that early warning systems are a major element of disaster risk management and reduction. However, for the systems to be effective, communities at risk must be actively involved, public education and awareness of risks must be facilitated, warning messages must be effectively disseminated, and a constant state of preparedness must be maintained. Early warning systems promote public safety; improves the protection of human lives and protects a nation's resource base and productive assets. Also, by reducing the impact of disasters, a government will avoid the financial and political burden brought about by massive rehabilitation costs. The reduction of environmental losses can, if properly managed and publicized, bring both long term benefits to the economy and short term benefits to the governing authorities.

Early warning systems must therefore be people-centered, with clear mes-

sage dissemination systems that reach both the risk managers and the public. Although natural disasters are not precisely predictable, they are most often generally foreseeable. Many natural hazards can be predicted from past experience, from the analysis of current patterns of land use or from population distribution. Early warning systems as well as other disaster reduction applications should also fall within the remit of government responsibilities, especially since response to disaster may require exceptional executive powers for a specific period of time. But the success of such applications cannot be guaranteed without the benefits of widespread decision making and the participation of the public. Although government is ultimately responsible for the safety of its citizens, all sectors of society should be encouraged to participate.

In conclusion, in case of an emergency, it would be worthwhile for the private sector to offer complementary resources and necessary infrastructure that are needed for disseminating warnings and the civil society to provide social infrastructure at the grassroots. *The use of already existing capacities within the community is not only effective but ensures the continuity and maintenance for the system.*

Janet Ombogo is MRDA's Programme Manager.

MRDA BRIDGE GUEST HOUSE



Tucked away in the remote township of Mundri, the MRDA Bridge Guest House offers a serene and quiet environment where guests can rest comfortably as they avail themselves of a wide range of facilities including a library, a conferencing room and DSTV. For further enquiries, please call +249929259974. All are welcome.



MRDA Staff members pose with journalists from Britain who were flown in by Scottish International Aid Fund (SCIAF) to document the implementation of the Gender project which they sponsor. Their itinerary included visits to survivors of gender based violence (GBV) who are currently benefitting from an empowerment scheme being implemented by MRDA.



Mundri Relief & Development Association



MRDA Head Office,

Off Juba — Mundri Road, Mundri Town,
P.O Box 339, Juba, South Sudan.

Your Feed back

What do you think about the MRDA Update?

Feel free to contact us through the following address:

info@mundridevelopment.org

OR

Telephone: +249 929 259974

We now provide space for advertisements.

For enquiries, email us at
info@mundridevelopment.org

Or call +249 929 259974