



# MRDA Update

Change agent for the community

SEPTEMBER 2010

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

### MRDA Leads New Initiative against the Spread of HIV/Aids



**MRDA Board member Dr. Wesley Bokati Natana hands over copies of the newly launched booklets to Chief Guest Hon. Mou Mou Athian Kuol as MRDA Director Light Wilson Aganwa looks on.**

adults and children with facts about HIV and Aids and their militating effects on gender.

Titled *HIV and Gender Booklet for Adult Learners and Talking about HIV/Aids and Gender*, a book for class 1, 2, 3 and 4, the two books were unveiled at the White Nile Lodge in Juba, in a ground-breaking ceremony attended by senior State and Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) Officials, NGO representatives, and school teachers.

The chief guest Hon. Mou Mou Athian Kuol who is Undersecretary for the Ministry of Education (GOSS) lauded the move saying he would give MRDA his full backing.

“This launching means we take seriously the threat posed to our children, society and welfare by the deadly disease,” said Hon. Kuol during his key-note address.

“It also means we recognise that this deadly disease and the threat it

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**By Moses Bukachi**

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in Southern Sudan, Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA) has launched a set of booklets that are designed to equip both

## COMMUNITY FUND-RAISING

### Annual MRDA Charity Gala Raises 26,000 SDG

**By Moses Bukachi**

The 2010 ‘MRDA WEEK’ charity gala came to a close on September 26 with organizers managing to raise a total of 26,893 SDG from the community both in cash and pledges, plus assorted items worth an estimated 3000 SDG at market value.

The amount raised represents a significant increase in donations compared to

last year’s event which raised 17,000 SDG that went to the construction of a chief’s court in Mundri West County.

The closing ceremony of the week-long event took place at the Mundri Payam Office where guests were treated to plenty of entertainment from various youth groups and speeches from leaders from all walks of life.

**Hon. Kosti Manibe**

Speaking during the occasion, the chief guest Hon. Kosti Manibe, who is Minister for Cabinet affairs in the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), praised the MRDA management for surmounting past financial challenges that had been occasioned by decline in funding from foreign donors and the war situation in Southern Sudan.

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MUNDRI

SOUTH-SUDAN

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## The Benefits of Community Participation



Light Wilson  
Aganwa,  
MRDA Director

*Stress must however be placed on the fact that community development theory is directed toward improvement of community systems and not toward personal aggrandizement.*

By Light Wilson Aganwa

The idea of participation in society goes back to a very significant but frequently overlooked element in Classic Democratic Theory. It proposes that participation stimulates the learning and development of individuals (Lively 1977). At times, whenever this consequence of participation, i.e., increased learning and individual growth, is considered, they are normally judged specifically in terms of how an individual has benefitted.

However, experience seems to indicate this not to be the case always. To a specific person, the considerable costs in time spent, energy employed and frustration borne may more often than not outweigh the direct or tangible benefits accrued. To say the least, the direct returns of 'learning and development' through participation in public life seem problematic, given the definition of "rational behavior" common in rational choice for those following the dictates of selfish utility maximization (Laver, 1981).

But from the point of view of Community Development Theory, the benefits from broad and open participation will normally accrue to the system. While individuals may profit or suffer from the learning and development gained through their own civic participation, the system will nonetheless have a net increase in its potential as individuals become active and as incidents of participation diversify.

In the abstract, it may seem that any increase in knowledge, sophistication and resourcefulness regarding public affairs that stem from an individual's participation would be evidence of personal improvement. Yet, in any given case, the reasons for the participation and adjustment of expectations, behaviours and worldviews that follow after the experiences of civic involvement may bring changes to the individual that he/she will deem to be negative. In other words, an individual in his/her own eyes may be worse off, or farther from the realization of personal aspirations after being involved in active participation than before.

But even when this is so at the individual level, the system still profits. The aggregate result of civic participation expands the information, skills and comprehensions of individuals within the system. The reservoir of ingredients on which the system draws is enriched. Such participation extends the potential of community systems. It increases the possibility that requisite intelligence, skills and information will be available to improve the system's competence and capabilities.

This of course does not mean that the peoples' needs are overridden entirely. As a matter of fact, community development theory postulates that increased capabilities and effectiveness of community systems brings substantial benefits to the people who are its members. There

would be no purpose of working for elaboration of community systems to improve abilities and performance unless there was the expectation that this would bring benefits in excess of cost to the people served. In fact, theory accepts this proposition as the basis for concentrating on actions at the community level.

Stress must however be placed on the fact that community development theory is directed toward improvement of community systems and not toward personal aggrandizement. This will help to avoid any misleading expectations on the part of individuals about the consequences of civic participation that are suggested by the community development theory. The theory does not imply that positive results from participation in community affairs fall directly to the individual participants. It does not suggest that individuals who increase their civic involvement and /or their participatory skills will necessarily improve the circumstances of their personal life.

The prescriptive proposition of community development, that people should become active in citizen roles whenever such opportunities and their own inclinations converge, is based on the idea that extensive involvement is a mode of systemic capacity building. It is not based on the assumption that each participant will secure or be moved closer to their personal aspiration.

## MRDA Leads New Initiative against the Spread of HIV/Aids

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poses needs a solution. We also recognise that no one and no community can fight this alone. A way out lies in our coming together, dialoguing, sharing and communicating ideas in order to find some way out. This launching is one such solution," he said.

**Ten States of Southern Sudan**  
Earlier, amid applause from those in attendance, Dr. Wesley Bokati Natana, a member of the MRDA Board officially handed over the booklets to the chief guest Hon Kuol.

Dr. Natana who was representing the Chairman of the Board at the ceremony said some [44000] copies of the booklets would be distributed among all the 10 states of Southern Sudan where teachers will facilitate awareness raising among the target groups.

For his part, MRDA Director, Light Wilson Aganwa asked the government to endorse the booklets which he said had taken two years to complete. He gave due credit to a number of contributors towards

the project including May Kilemeko, MRDA's HIV/AIDS Project Officer; Western Equatoria State Government; Curriculum Development Center, Maridi; and Oxfam Novib, the sponsor of the project.

### Never Before Published

Never before have such booklets been published in Southern Sudan. Their contents are expected to radically change perceptions about HIV/Aids in the region where efforts to stem the tide of the global pandemic have so far been hindered by ignorance, cultural taboos, and false misconceptions among communities.

Among those who spoke during the occasion was Dr. Luke Riek from the Directorate of HIV/Aids and STIs in the Ministry of Health (GOSS) who emphasised the need for teachers to take the books seriously because most communities in Southern Sudan remained silent on issues of sexuality. Dr. Riek however cautioned on the need to use words carefully during lessons.

For her part, the Director General of Gender, Equity and Social Change (GOSS), Mama Helen Maya said that it was



Guests listen intently to speakers at the White Nile Lodge, Juba during the launching ceremony of the booklets on HIV/Aids and Gender.

not possible to protect oneself from HIV/Aids except through education. A representative from the Ministry of Education, Eastern Equatoria, Otto James Alfred, former county commissioners from Mundri East and West and a representative from Christian Aid also praised MRDA for the initiative.

Following the ceremony, a planned two-day intensive training meant for 30 teachers from Western and Central Equatoria commenced. MRDA plans to train a further 134 teachers across Southern Sudan.

*The contents of the books are expected to radically change perceptions about HIV and Aids in the region ...*

## Micro Finance Institute Gets New Manager

**By Moses Bukachi**

Mundri's premier Micro Finance Institute (MFI), founded by MRDA has a new boss.

Gobindo Chakravartty from the People's Republic of Bangladesh takes charge as General Manager of the institute in a move designed to inject professionalism into its operations

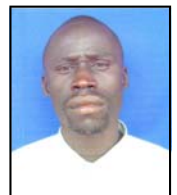
and to give fresh impetus to its growth plans.

Prior to joining MFI, Mr. Gobindo served at BRAC in Juba as Micro Finance Manager where he was instrumental in laying out the institute's framework policies and guiding its expansion programme.

He brings with him a wealth of experience in

Microfinance Management which will come in handy as he puts in place new systems of operations at the MFI in Mundri.

Meanwhile, Moses Bukachi, formerly of Relief Organization of Fazugli has joined the MRDA staff as Advocacy & Communications Officer.



**Clockwise from top: Mr. Gobindo Chakravartty, Eric Jaffara and Moses Bukachi.**



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## Annual MRDA Charity Gala Raises 26,000 SDG



H.E Hon. Kosti Manibe, Minister for Cabinet Affairs, GOSS (center) and MRDA Board Chairman Professor Peter Tingwa (bespectacled) listen attentively as MRDA Director Light Wilson Aganwa explains a point during the closing ceremony of MRDA WEEK at the Mundri Payam Office.

*"In western countries, organisations like MRDA get their money from their own people and from their governments as well. Since the work of building schools and constructing clinics is supposed to be done by the government, if you (MRDA) present your proposal to the government, will they not give you the funds?"*

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Amid applause, the minister advised the MRDA management to begin writing proposals to GOSS for annual allocation of development funds, saying no organisation in the past had ever asked for such funding.

"In western countries, organisations like MRDA get their money from their own people and from their governments as well," said Hon. Kosti. "Since the work of building schools and constructing clinics is supposed to be done by the government, if you (MRDA) present your proposal to the government, will they not give you the funds?" he posed.

### Launch of the Event

Earlier, during the launch of the event on 19 September, 1859 people gathered at the E.C.S Cathedral after the morning service to listen to organizers and to give their donations. Among them were prominent guests who included Hon. Joseph Ngere, M.P, Southern Sudan Parliament; Hon. Stephen Kayanga, Deputy Speaker, Western Equatoria legisla-

tive assembly; and Hon. Pascal Elkima, member of legislative assembly, Western Equatoria. All together, 13, 274.50 SDG was raised.

### The Final Day

On the final day of the week, MRDA Director Light Wilson Aganwa set the tone for the closing ceremony with a firm emphasis on the need for community members to participate in local resource mobilization as a basis for gaining social, cultural, economic and political recognition.

He said participation of the community in their own development was a key factor in the attainment of sustainable community development and warned that without such involvement, all efforts to alleviate poverty would prove futile.

"This process whereby people learn to take charge of their own lives and solve their own problems is the essence of development," he said.

For his part, the MRDA Board Chairman Professor

Peter Tingwa cautioned on the need to avoid depending entirely on foreign donors, stating that all organisations that had begun together with MRDA had collapsed for doing so. Professor Tingwa who also holds the Chairmanship of the Referendum Committee (GOSS) urged members of the community to continue with the spirit of giving to MRDA as has been the practice since its establishment in 1991.

Others who spoke during the occasion were the SRRS Secretary James Smith who pledged to give his support to MRDA's development efforts in the County; Ms. Joy Sabatha, the women's representative, who praised MRDA for its development track record; Rev. Maurice Mele who gave a brief history of the organisation, and MRDA's former director Kennet Korayi who suggested the need for MRDA WEEK to be highlighted in forthcoming calendars to enable everyone to be well prepared for future events.

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# MRDA WEEK PICTORIAL



MRDA Director Light W. Aganwa inviting Cabinet Affairs Minister Hon. Kosti Manibe for the MRDA WEEK at his Juba office.



The MRDA Director motivating congregants at E.C.S Cathedral in Mundri moments before the fund-raising began.



Deputy Speaker, W E Legislature Hon. Stephen Kayanga, Hon. Joseph Ngere, M.P (GOSS) and Hon. Pascal Elkima, M.L.A, W E, spoke to congregants.



Invited guests pose with church leaders during a photo opportunity after the church fund-raising.



MRDA staff members unload in-kind donations from residents of the far-flung Torewande Boma.



MRDA staff members took part in the charity walk to Lui - 15 miles from Mundri town.



Guests dance their hearts away during the closing ceremony of the MRDA WEEK at the Mundri Payam Office.



A youth group from Mundri West County provided comic relief for guests during the occasion.

## FCA Partners gather for PME Workshop in Mundri

By Moses Bukachi

In a bid to promote better understanding of Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) among partners, and to enhance quality in project planning procedures, Finn Church Aid (FCA) held a consultative workshop in September at Mundri's Youth Friendly Center where 14 representatives of its three implementing partners gathered for a five-day course.

The workshop which ran from 6 to 10 September was a rare opportunity for participants from Resource Center for Civil Leadership (RECONCILE), Episcopal Church of the Sudan (E.C.S) and Mundri Relief and Development Association (MRDA) to share their real-life experiences on PME, within the context of the projects they run and to learn from each other through plenary session presentations.

### Fresh Understanding

The workshop also provided participants the chance to gain fresh understanding of PME and to acquaint themselves with FCA guidelines as the facilitators, Ben Malinen, Eija Mustonen and Tal Vikki took them through the course.

During the workshop, both practical and theoretic exercises were employed.

### Important Criterion

The highlight of the work-



Participants listen as Peter Bay of MRDA gives a plenary presentation during the PME Workshop in Mundri.

shop however was FCA's emphasis for partners to put into consideration a number of important criterion during project planning. Key among them: the need to clearly identify and define target beneficiaries; ensuring the project fits into organizational and FCA strategies; engaging key stakeholders in the planning process; considering cross-cutting and thematic issues; ensuring sustainability of the project; and ensuring the project takes into account the wider development plans by other actors.

During the course, it was noted that different donor agencies had unique reporting formats and slightly different PME formats necessitating the need for partners to acquaint themselves well with each donor's systems.

At the end, participants were conferred with certificates of participation for

PME1 with the FCA facilitators hinting at more training sessions to come.

### Impromptu Dinner

Meanwhile, during an impromptu dinner party at the MRDA Guest House in honour of guests from FCA, MSC, RECONCILE, E.C.S and USAID, MRDA Director Light Wilson Aganwa took the opportunity to commend the donors for their partnership in the development of Greater Mundri.

The dinner also served as an opportunity for guests to acquaint with each other and to speak about their organizations.

FCA is one of Finland's largest non-governmental organizations working on developmental issues in more than 30 countries.

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# The Making of a Nation

By Peter Yaga

Sudan today stands at a cross-roads. Come January 9, 2011, citizens of Southern Sudan will decide through a popular vote whether to part ways with the north or to stay put as one country in a referendum provided for by the 2005 CPA.

Currently, secession is the mantra of the day, with most of the Southerners believing that separation from the north is obvious, automatic, and smooth sailing.

But even as the day approaches rapidly, tensions remain high between the mainly Muslim north and the under-developed south where most people are either Christian or follow traditional belief systems. Regardless of these tensions, it has now become quite clear which way the vote will go.

Now, with secession already being touted as the right way to go for Southern Sudan, would it also not be wise for citizens be made aware of the ramifications that come with being an independent state?

Arguably, the widest implication will have to do with oil. It is no secret that the bulk of the nation's oil reserves lie in the south, while all the pipelines run north. This means that a new oil deal will have to be agreed.

Secondly, there is the potentially volatile issue of the north-south border which is yet to be properly demarcated. The border cuts through oil-rich areas and has been a major bone of contention between the south and the north. Presently the case is still in arbitration.

Third, there is the issue of identity: Where will southerners living in the north belong after the separation? What about the future of the border states of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan? Although these areas are administratively under the control of the north, the south has considerable political interest in them.

Fourth, both the north and south share a number of water bodies. An agreement on this will also have to be reached.

Lastly, as Southern Sudan approaches this very

crucial CPA benchmark, the whole episode is being watched closely by secessionist movements. Could an independent Southern Sudan spark renewed interest in separation by such groups in other marginalized regions of Sudan?

All this information is not far-fetched but is the result of a focussed group discussion that was held in Mundri West County on September 15, 2010. As the civic educator and a member of that group, I feel obliged to share this information with the general public.

To sum up, for the Southerners to fully grasp their specific goal of an independent South, it would be worthwhile to first understand all the wider implications of secession.

In as much as people are free to speak about the secession, the issue must no longer be taken as a piece of fried chicken placed in a silver platter, ready to be consumed. Rather, it should be seen as an intellectual battle that still has to be won.

Unless the above-mentioned issues are properly ironed out, the secession that people talk about may fall short of being the bed of roses that many expect.

It is therefore our duty as Sudanese citizens to tell those who are completely ignorant about this information.

*Peter Yaga is MRDA's Civic Education Coordinator.*



**Peter Yaga**

*Currently, secession is the mantra of the day, with most of the Southerners believing that separation from the north is obvious, automatic, and smooth sailing.*

## Micro Finance Institute Gets New Manager

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He takes over from Beatrice Maina who has since moved on to other responsibilities.

Among his duties will be to create awareness about MRDA and its Programmes and to enhance the image of the organization.

Moses will be assisted by Eric Jafara formerly of Mundri Active Youth Association (MAYA).

### QUICK FACTS

#### What is Micro Finance?

**It is the provision of financial services to low-income clients including consumers and the self-employed, who traditionally lack access to banking and related services.**

*(Sourced from www.Wikipedia.org)*

# A Guest House that Caters For All Your Travel Needs

By Moses Bukachi

Tucked away in the remote township of Mundri, the MRDA Guest house is the archetypal townhouse within a rural setting. The tranquil atmosphere surrounding the newly built house offers visitors a quiet escape from the hustles of town life and is a welcome respite for fatigued travellers.

A guided tour of the house reveals an elaborately built structure that is intentionally modern and comfortable. Five neatly-kept and spacious rooms complete with WCs and instant shower fittings are available to guests on a day to day basis. The beds are large and the linens are kept fresh, promising a restful night.

Just a few yards away, meals are served hot in a gazebo-like dining room. A stone's throw away is a conferencing room and a community library ideal for workshops and research work in that order. At dinner guests have a chance to catch up with the latest news and to enjoy their choice programmes on DSTV.



A side view of the new MRDA Guest house

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## MRDA WEEK Raises 26000 SDG

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### Annual Social Event

MRDA WEEK is an annual social event that falls between September 19 and 26. During this period, staff members engage the public in a wide range of activities to motivate them into donating both in cash and in kind towards a specified project.

Activities normally range from a charity walk, to collections from households, traders and churches. Various entertainment shows, charity auctions and games-for-cash also feature during the event.

Although the idea of holding the event annually was first mooted in 2007 during the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

of the organisation, the origin of the principle goes way back to 1991 when a group of Southern Sudanese residing in Kenya came together and began sending contributions to Mundri to alleviate the suffering of the people caused by war.

Since then, MRDA has through such contributions managed to implement a number of projects in the county including the construction of its office premises, a community library and a chief's court.

This year's proceeds are earmarked for the construction of a dam on Royi river to address the perennial problem of water shortage in the area.



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### Mundri Relief & Development Association



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