

UNMISS forum in Warrap stresses role of women in managing conflict and building peace

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The need to include women and youth in resolving conflicts and peacebuilding has been emphasized at a two-day workshop organized by the Gender Affairs Unit of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), in the Warrap region of South Sudan.

“Women are culturally excluded from intercommunal reconciliation forums or settings,” said Roda Sube, UNMISS Gender Officer in Warrap during the workshop that brought together some 75 participants in Jalwau, county of Wunlit, in Tonj. The county of Wunlit has recently been hit by inter-communal conflict between the Thiik and Jalwau communities, leaving about 70 people dead and several dozens wounded. The forum aimed to strengthen women’s capacity to prevent and manage inter-communal conflicts, in support of their own protection and protection of their communities.

“While they have no active initiative in influencing the youth in the communities to take revenge or fight during conflict, their involvement in peacebuilding is crucial,” stressed Ms. Sube, citing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.

Ms. Sube’s message was in line with the purpose of the two-day workshop, which aimed at creating awareness in the community about Security Council Resolution 1325. The resolution stresses the importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, while urging all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts.

It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.

“We are suffering a lot. We live in fear of conflict – there is not real protection of civilians when communities are fighting each other,” said Martha Ayen, one of the participants, articulating the need to share information with UNMISS if violations of women’s rights are committed in the community of Wunlit.

“I only want to see that children and women are not falling in the hole of conflict, where they are not protected,” said Martha, recounting that during inter-communal fighting, women and children suffer the most. She also underlined the need for the government to step up security for women and children, so that they do not to fall in the deadly zone.

“I’m very happy. This training is very useful to me. I just watched the video clips showing how to create peace within the community. I’m so much thankful to UNMISS. I want to say, let UNMISS organise more training on peace and conflict management,” said Mary Nyantoc, a participant who was grateful to UNMISS for reaching one of the most remote parts of the country, and availing training opportunities to women who have no access to such training.

Ms. Nyantoc said that more training opportunities would enable them to learn about their rights and role in conflict management and peacebuilding.

In addition to understanding and putting Resolution 1325 into practice, participants were also drawn to the UNMISS mandate, which includes protecting civilians, supporting peace initiatives, maintaining the rule of law, and promoting good governance.

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