



SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC)

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER 2021

FIRST EDITION

FOREWORD



Fr. James OYET LATANSIO General Secretary, SSCC and Bishop Dr. Arkanjelo WANI LEMI seated with children and women who were abducted and rescued under the leadership of the Chief Administrator, Major General Joshua Konyi of Greater Pibor Administrative area.

I greet you all my dear brothers and sisters in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and wish you all a happy new year in this first edition of SSCC's 2021 newsletter. Already this year, as last year, South Sudanese continue to face persistent challenges. I urge those of faith to recall God's test of Abraham (Gen 22:1-18), and remember that in these challenges, God may be testing us – reminding us to stay faithful even when times are hardest.

I would like to acknowledge the gradual progress that has been made toward implementation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU). Particularly, I applaud the formation of many state governments – which will provide critical administrative services throughout the country. However, much work remains, and the Council of Churches calls on the government to expedite the speedy implementation of the remaining state governance structures. In this vein, the Council remains concerned that the absence of effective governors in many areas, along with the absence of social services, exacerbate the already dire conditions faced by many in the country.

More than a year has passed since a deal was struck forming the current unity government, but South Sudan continues to witness mass intercommunal, sexual and gender-based violence, displacement of civilians and severe economic turbulence. The Council of Churches urges the actors charged with implementing the RTGoNU to work harder to ensure the government contributes to the core objectives of peace, stability and security in South Sudan, in addition to meeting the basic benchmarks of the agreement.

COVID-19 poses an ever-growing threat to South Sudan, as the country is gripped in the second wave of the pandemic. The Council of Churches urges each and every person in the country to understand that we must work together to fight this virus. Please, take precautionary measures – wear a mask, practice social distancing, stay home if you are ill. It is on all of us to protect our loved ones and those around us. Together we can have a South Sudan free of COVID-19.

This year, through the Action Plan for Peace and other programming, the Council of Churches will continue to advocate for sustainable peace, meaningful reconciliation and genuine forgiveness throughout all of South Sudan. We urge all South Sudanese to lift up their voices and act with purpose to fulfill the promise of peace. May you all be blessed and stay safe.

Fr. James OYET LATANSIO
General Secretary, South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)

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COURTESY SOLIDARITY VISIT TO WESTERN EQUATORIA

A delegation from South Sudan Council of Churches visited Yambio and Tambura, Western Equatoria State, this February to pay a solidarity visit to the religious community there.

Headed by Most Rt. Rev. Dr. Badi Arama Justin, the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) and Fr. James OYET LATANSIO, Secretary General of South Sudan Council of Churches, the team were warmly welcomed amidst sounds of celebration and jubilation at Yambio Airstrip by a group of youth, women and government officials all comporting with COVID-19 regulations.

The solidarity visit aimed at encouraging political and Church leaders on the ground to work for peace, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation among the people of Western Equatoria state – which has witnessed consistent instances of conflict in recent years.

Part of the delegation focused on a community consultation with Balanda and Azande communities in Tambura – attempting to identify drivers of conflict which have precipitated a tense relationship over the past several years.

Tambura Church leaders on the ground led the process, which aimed to map the root causes of the communities' recent conflict and formulate a strategic plan for conflict resolution. The process is expected to continue until the Church finds an amicable peaceful, sustainable solutions to the conflict there.



Tambura; Photos taken during the community consultation with Balanda and Azande communities in Tambura

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SSCC CONTINUES ITS COVID-19 MEDIA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



Juba & Malakal; Pictures of SSCC guests for radio talk-shows on different radio stations in South Sudan as they create awareness on COVID_19

Amid a surge of COVID-19 cases across the country, the South Sudan Council of Churches remains committed to using media campaigns to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures. With support from partners Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Finn Church Aid (FCA), SSCC has made COVID-19 awareness a central part of its ongoing programming.

The South Sudan National Task-force on Covid-19 reintroduced a partial lock-down on the 3rd of February 2021. The Task-force asked citizens to respect the one-month restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the corona-virus with immediate ban on gatherings such as sporting events, religious events, funerals, political events and weddings, among others.

ECUMENICAL NETWORK SOUTH SUDAN 2021

The Ecumenical Network of South Sudan conducted a digital meeting from 20 to 21 January to update the Ecumenical Network of South Sudan on recent developments. The primary objective of the meeting was to raise support for the international, regional and national advocacy the Council of Churches conducts to benefit the peace process in South Sudan. The meeting brought together ecumenical friends from the African Hub, European and Northern America Hub, Members of the South Sudan Council Churches, and supporting partners including APP Core Group members.



ENSS Virtual meeting

However, the virtual platform also allowed participation of a broader number of participants than usual.

The meeting, which was held digitally to prevent the spread of COVID-19, was conducted over the course of two afternoon sessions, both graced with opening and closing prayers. As a result of the digital format, this year's networking opportunities were limited, as was space for plenary discussions.

Among the outcomes were a renewed commitment by network participants to continuous and intensive advocacy messaging; continued capacity building for grassroots partners; and continued high-level strengthening activities.

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CITIZEN'S REACTION AS THE COUNTRY MARKS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVITALIZED TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY.



Paramount Chief Mbori Bamu Renj Tomburo

I am the paramount Chief of Tombura County. As the head of the community at grass root, I feel we have not yet felt the effectiveness of the Revitalized Peace Agreement because there were so many things that were signed and agreed upon by the parties for example the issue of the cantonment areas where all soldiers are to be kept there, unfortunately in my area soldiers still loiter around within the community and they keep disturbing the civilians. They go on looting, raping women and other bad things. I urge the political parties to look back on what they inked. We believed that all that was signed was for the interest of the communities and not to the interest of their parties or their own self. If they do not consider the community at the grass-root the Agreement might not hold. CPA was felt even at the grass-root but with this we are failing to understand. We call upon all the international guarantors to the peace agreement that was signed to keep up to date with everything that is happening to the agreement because our people are suffering, there are no roads, no services, we need health facilities. We do not need anything from them, all we want is good schools, health facilities in our communities, and necessary development for our land and a good environment to raise our children.

My name is Magrete Micho Debeisa. Enough is enough we are tired. Our children are supposed to be in school not joining rebel groups or being recruited into the army since they are our future leaders. Watching our Children die every day gives us pain. We do not have peace of mind since gun shots continue to rage every night. If really peace was signed, we want our government to ensure total peace in the Country. By then we used to dig, make our local alcohol in order to support our children so that they can eat and go to school, but now we can't. Our young girls continue to get pregnant and getting married at a tender age. If you have to recruit our children into the army you have to train our children to become good armies not those soldiers who knock our doors and even sleep with us forcefully. As a mother all I want for my country is total long-lasting peace. Enough with the sound of the guns, enough with the rape, enough with the looting. We are tired. For how long will we live like this???



Magrete Micho Debeisa a resident in Tambura

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Rev. Fr. Beil Emmanuel Parish Priest.

I am called **Rev. Fr Beil Emmanuel** the Parish priest of St John Catholic Parish Mobekwu Tombura. As we mark the one-year anniversary but the way I look at it is that it is still far away in the sense that there are things that were to be implemented but unfortunately have not been implemented. Here in Tambura, we still faced with a challenge of soldiers who keep loitering in the town and harassing the civilians, we call upon the concerned authorities to take soldiers to the cantonment sites as stipulated in the agreement. We yearn for development of our towns, we need roads, we need services for our people, we need schools to shape the future of our future generation. And we can only achieve this by working together towards peace in South Sudan. We are tired of war; peace needs to prevail enough is enough.

My name is called Emmanuel Bolba Bakoro. I study at St Genevive Secondary School. I am in senior one. In future I would want to become a Priest who is a doctor. I want to go to school and study hard but for me to become what I want, South Sudan must be Peaceful. I do not want to hear the guns anymore; I want to be able to go to good schools without the fear of which ethnic group I come from. I therefore call upon our leaders to bring for us peace in South Sudan.



Emmanuel Bolba Bakoro a student at St Genevive Secondary School

COVID-19 IS ON A RAMPAGE, PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR LOVED ONES AND THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.

1. Avoid crowded places
2. Keep social distance
3. Always wear a clean mask
4. Frequently wash your hands with clean water & soap
5. Do not shake hands.

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WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2021

The World day of Prayer is an international ecumenical Christian lay-women's initiative that run under the motto "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action," and is celebrated annually in over 170 countries including South Sudan under South Sudan Council of Churches every first Friday in March. The movement aims to bring together women of various races, cultures, and traditions in a yearly common Day of Prayer, as well as in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year.

Affected by COVID-19, this year South Sudan Council of Churches commemorated the day through talk-shows on different radio stations within the three regions. During the radio talk-shows women were encouraged to take up the burdens of other people, to sympathize with the problems of other countries and cultures and pray with and for them. They are further encouraged to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of society. The day was commemorated in all the three (3) Regions of Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bar El Ghazal in partnership with Norwegian



SSCC Radio talk-shows that were conducted on World day of Prayer within the three (3) Regions

Church Aid (NCA)

The World Day of Prayer aims to demonstrate that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world. This year, the day was commemorated under the theme; "build on strong foundation" from the book of Matthew 7:24-27

CUEI-BET CONSULTATIVE MEETING

SSCC frequently uses community consultative meetings as peace-building, grassroots-led process to resolve conflicts between communities throughout South Sudan. The process involves discussions between and among conflicting communities, providing a neutral space for individuals to air grievances, compare experiences in order to prepare a ground for reconciliation. SSCC facilitates these discussions to ensure calm and productive exchange and to help coalesce support for positive resolutions and reconciliation.

SSCC conducted one such community consultation this quarter in Cuei-bet county, Lakes State, bringing intellectuals from communities of Ayiel, Joth, Waat, Pagok and Kongor together for discussion after conflict that has roiled on and off since



Rumbek: Photos of participants during the consultative meeting in Cuei-bet

2012. Resulting cattle raiding, revenge killing and other forms of inter-communal violence have made reconciliation difficult, and SSCC has intervened to address these cycles of violence. Using the community consultation process, SSCC will remain involved in this inter-community process as long as it takes for the communities to arrive at a positive outcome.

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GREATER JONGLEI SOLIDARITY, PEACE & RECONCILIATION CONSULTATIVE MEETING.



Photos taken in three different locations of Pibor, Akobo and Bor during the Solidarity Peace and Reconciliation consultative meeting in Greater Jonglei.

A delegate from South Sudan Council of Churches that comprised of several Church leaders from the greater Jonglei headed by Fr. James OYET LATANSIO and Former Chairman of SSCC, Bishop Dr. Arkanjelo Wani Lemi embarked on a solidarity and Peace Consultation meeting to the embattled state of Jonglei that has continuously experience believed to be driven by multiple and conflicting agendas that include lack in strategic visions, political influence, lack of inequality development, cattle raiding, child abductions, Idleness among the youths among others.

South Sudan Council of Churches believes that a Church led Peace mediation effort could be able to resolve the long protracted violence that has ravaged the state despite attempts by different stalk holders to attain a sustainable and effective Peace in Greater Jonglei.

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WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY STATES MEETING IN JONGLEI



Bor; Photos of women in Bor during and after discussions on popularization of Women, Peace and Security agenda in Bor and the greater Jonglei area.

Increasing the effective participation of women in peacemaking and conflict prevention efforts is key to South Sudan's movement toward peace and reconciliation, yet significant barriers to entry remain. South Sudan Council of Churches has endeavoured to work with women's groups to reduce these barriers to entry and promote women's active participation in the sub-national peace processes SSCC oversees.

On 26th January 2021, South Sudan Council of Churches, in partnership with Organization for Responsive Governance, met with women in Bor to discuss the popularization of Women, Peace and Security agenda in Bor and the greater Jonglei area.

Participants discussed women, peace and security issues as they apply in Jonglei and identified the roles women play in peace-building efforts throughout the state. The meeting was attended by Church and civil society leaders, women's groups from both Christian and Muslim communities, representatives from the Ministry of Health, police and Inter-Church Committees sponsored by SSCC.

The group was able to have fruitful discussions about flooding and inter-communal violence in Jonglei, sexual and gender-based violence, and the ongoing problems posed by water borne disease and livelihood destruction.

The meeting was also an opportunity for Bor women's groups to select representatives for a national conference on Women, Peace and Security.

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