



Some 250 participants literally kick off the 5.5 km charity run UN Volunteers helped to organize to raise funds for solar panels to provide more electricity to the teaching hospital in Wau, South Sudan. June 2013. Photo: Fiona Stitfold, UNV UNMISS

UNV Duathlon in South Sudan raises funds for hospital solar panels

On 15 June 2013, 250 participants ran and bicycled in a five and a half kilometer charity run through Wau, South Sudan. Organization of the event was spearheaded by a team of UN Volunteers assigned to this UNMISS duty station, who rallied support for all levels of government and sectors of the international and local community. The UNV Duathlon raised enough funds for electricity producing solar panels for the Wau Teaching Hospital and its Maternity Ward.

“Run for Light” the posters proclaimed. And in June, some 250 competitors assembled outside the Wau Teaching Hospital in South Sudan to run and bicycle in the UNV Wau Duathlon. The charity event was held to raise funds for solar panels to help light up the hospital.

The partnership of the UN Volunteers with the Wau Teaching Hospital started during local activities for International Volunteer Day 2012, when the hospital administrator expressed the need for electricity. Aswila Sood, UNV Medical Doctor, took up the challenge, enlisting Catherine Onekalit, UNV Civil Affairs Officer, Jennifer Lukania, UNV GIS Specialist, and Takhir Nurov, Logistics Assistant, to form a team to address this challenge.

They conceived the idea of running for light to raise funds for solar panels which Winnie Babihuga, state coordinator for United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), said, "galvanized the whole of UNMISS" as well as "contractors and UN Agencies". According to the state coordinator, "UNV spearheaded and mobilized [the event in a] true demonstration of peace keeping and peace building."

The organizing committee worked closely with the Ministry of Health, Wau Teaching Hospital and was supported by State Mission management. One of the many sponsors donated caps and canary yellow t-shirts for all participants which bore the UNV logo, as well as the donor's.

The event literally mobilized the community. Those who ran or walked the five and a half kilometers past knots of curious onlookers included: the State Governor and members of the Western Bahr El Ghazal (WBeG) Ministries, Wau Teaching Hospital medical personnel and administrators, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) commanders, UNMISS personnel including Winnie, the state coordinator, contractors, troop contributing countries (TCC), UNPoL, members of community groups, international NGOs, local businesses, students and Wau athletes.

The first 40 runners cycled five kilometers on bicycles borrowed from UNMISS sites around South Sudan. South Sudanese competitors won all the prizes awarded that day.

The event was such a success, exceeding expectations by raising 10 000 USD, that the project to provide solar panels will be extended to the Maternity Ward where UNMISS Engineering will install the panels.

The State Minister of Health, Dr. Isaac Cleto, acknowledged the "specific service to children" (the) "future of our country" in his speech. State Governor, Rizak Zakaria, pronounced, "UNV, we thank you very much" concluding the event with the words, "Good news to the public. UNV Oyee!"

At present, there are 421 UN Volunteers deployed to UNMISS.

Sustainable Development Goal: