



Waheeb Al-Eryani (second from right), with senior UNV officials and a member of the UNMISS Relief, Reintegration and Protection team visit a protection of civilians site in Juba, South Sudan.

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"When we act together, change happens"

"Peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference." □ Nelson Mandela
What comes to your mind when you hear of South Sudan? Despite the stories of protracted conflict that dot the media, many victories have been won, and many stories of success remain untold. A lot is changing in the country. In several places, communities are laying down weapons of war and coming together, resiliently forging connections and solidarity for a better life.

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan became the newest country in the world. On the same day, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established by the United Nations Security Council for an initial period of one year. UNMISS was mandated with consolidating peace and security and helping establish conditions for effective governance and development in the Republic of South Sudan.

However, since independence, the country has still faced ongoing conflicts,

mainly due to political challenges, resulting in one of the world's worst displacement situations, with immense suffering for civilians. The conflict has plunged parts of the country into famine and driven more than 2.2 million people into neighboring countries, while 1.4 million in South Sudan have been left homeless and 190,000 are living under direct United Nations protection.

“ In her recent visit to South Sudan, UN Deputy Secretary General Ms Amina Mohammed said, "Hope is a commodity of the United Nations. We have to keep that alive. We can never give up on the South Sudanese people."

Great efforts have been made to bring stability to the country, often behind the scenes. Such efforts have yielded mixed results, understandably so since conflict resolution isn't always a smooth process in any part of the world. After many years and efforts, South Sudan's warring parties agreed to form a unity government early this year, paving the way for a new, brighter future for the people of South Sudan.

I came to South Sudan to manage UNV operations in support of the UNMISS mandate. Since then, I have witnessed firsthand how peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist host countries in navigating the difficult path from conflict to peace.

Over the years, UN Volunteers have been central in supporting UNMISS work in South Sudan. They have helped with emergency relief support, engaged local authorities on human rights protection, assisted in restoration of rule of law and supported with disseminating relevant public information through various media.

“ The most significant contribution of UN Volunteers has been their ability to interact directly with communities and promote the core principles of volunteerism and human solidarity. I believe that the

“ core principles of volunteerism, such as community connections, human solidarity, empathy and resilience, provide a key ingredient for finding lasting peace in South Sudan.

Increasing the sense of community and social solidarity in South Sudan means that the citizens of the country once again begin to recognize each other's shared common needs and welfare. When people come together to build their local communities, the spirit of social solidarity promotes security, safety and wellbeing.

“ Only a peace process that considers the diversity of people, their lived experiences and shared grievances can deliver the peace that South Sudan needs. On this peace day, and as we commemorate 75 years of the UN, let us reflect on all that we have achieved together for the people of South Sudan, and all that is still left to do.

Let us recommit to the vision of the UN Charter of bringing 'we, the peoples' together in solidarity for peace and progress – it's more relevant today than ever before. When we act together, change happens.



• International Day of Peace

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

