Young Sports Women and Men Championing for Peace

5th National Unity Day 2020
“...Celebrating and uniting around sports, like today’s events, is a vital platform to strengthen social ties and networks amongst young people, and promote ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice. South Sudanese love wrestling and has the power to unite people across boundaries, cultures and religions. We must work together to leverage this powerful and unifying platform, to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together.....”
Hon. Nadia Arop Dudi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports

“We are here to witness the talents of young men and women... and how the NUD is a uniting factor amongst the youth. NUD has brought together people of different backgrounds...”

Dr. KAYASHIMA Nobuko, JICA Senior Vice President

“...... you are the young leaders who can change society through sports. Through the experience of the National Unity Day, please overcome tribalism, foster friendship with others, and change South Sudan. When South Sudan becomes a peaceful country, I strongly believe a number of South Sudan athletes will show off their talent in future Olympic and Paralympic games and surprise the world......”
What is National Unity Day (NUD)?

The National Unity Day (NUD) in South Sudan has a long tradition. Historically, NUD has been used as a vehicle to promote peace in the country.

For example, Unity Day celebrations took place between 1973 and 1983. Since 2016, the celebration of the NUD has been taking place in Juba.

The main objective of the NUD is to promote interaction of diverse populations through sports, the spirit of fair play, and sportsmanship.
The principles of the NUD are:
Promotion of peace and unity,
Fair and inclusive,
Zero-tolerance for violence.

NUD celebrations have shown that the NUD has the potential to:

- Bring people together;
- Embrace the diverse peoples and cultures of South Sudan;
- Challenge stereotypes associated with tribe, sex etc;
- Promote the values such as teamwork, discipline, abidance by rules, respect for others;
- Empower women and girls and promote gender equality; and
- Build trust, between the government and citizens, and between citizens.
The 5th NUD took place from 25 January to 02 February 2020 in Juba, South Sudan with the theme "Sports for Peace & Social Cohesion".

The 5th NUD welcomed the participation of around 552 young athletes, coaches and officials from across the country.

NUD is organized by the Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports (MOCYS), in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Swiss Agency for International Cooperation and Development (SDC) and Universal Printers.

The 5th NUD comprised of: Sports events (football, athletics, volleyball, wrestling); Pre-NUD community events; Awareness sessions; Peacebuilding and gender workshops; and Peace and Culture Day.
Background on UNDP-PaCC

UNDP through the Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) is working with local communities in South Sudan to strengthen infrastructure for peace, improve social cohesion and foster reconciliation and healing. The aim of PaCC is to build capacities of communities to prevent, manage and resolve conflict in a non-violent manner.

PaCC also strengthens community relationships by identifying and strengthening cultural, social and economic connectors that make communities reliant on each other. PaCC is supported by Sweden, KOICA, Japan and the UN Peacebuilding Fund.
Wrestling is a home-grown sport. Since the NUD started, for the first time now, wrestling is part of 5th NUD! UNDP-PaCC has been working with civil society organizations, SMARD, WAV, UNYMPDA and GDASS to bring wrestlers to the 5th NUD. The 20 wrestlers are coming from Lakes (Amadi and Yirol Centre), Terekeka and Jonglei having emerged the winners after the elimination matches in their regions.

The wrestlers were accompanied by the members of the wrestling committees and the women support team.
What does peace mean to you?

Peace is love

Peace is source of life

I See You, I See Peace

Peace is the absence of war

Peace means forgiveness

Peace promotes reconciliation

Peace hinders gender base violence

Peace brings cooperation among the people

Through peace, we gain freedom and prosperity

Peace promotes the development in the country

Peace promotes games and sports in the country

Peace promotes unity and togetherness among the people

Peace means avoiding tribalism and showing love for a fellow citizen

Peace means the free movement of people from different parts of the country

Peace means proper security in all parts of the country despite the level of development and technology

Peace means the coming of different tribes of the country together with a strong love of nationality and citizenship
Bringing men and women together

Men and women respecting each other

Giving both sex their right of participation

Equal participation of women and men means:

• Bringing men and women together
• Men and women respecting each other
• Giving both sex their right of participation

Equality:

• Reduces the rate of sexual gender violence
• Is achieved when both men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect

Photo: JICA, 2020
Kur Bol Jok, Wrestler, Jonglei

“I am very impressed to meet other young South Sudanese during this NUD. I appreciate UNDP and its partners for promoting wrestling as one of the sports in the NUD. I urge all the youth from cattle camps and elsewhere to refrain from conflict and to do wrestling and other sports activities that promote peace in our country.”
Kakule Ladu, Wrestling Support Team, Terekeka

“…..I am very glad to have this opportunity to interact with my peers who came from different parts of South Sudan. ......we are from cattle keeping communities with no access to education. I urge the organizers to keep including us disadvantaged girls for the next NUDs, so we can overcome cultural barriers and embrace our potential. .....”
Awalic Ajuong, wrestler, Yirol

“The National Unity Day reminds us of our diversity, because we have met many people we have never met before”.

Wani Kindi Mach, wrestler, Terekeka

“....We came here as Mundari Community, however, we will go back as South Sudanese regardless of our tribes or origins...Our unity is paramount as young people of South Sudan. Together we can denounce violence and pronounce peace and development...”
Achol Bheer, Wrestling Support Team, Jonglei

“...NUD has contributed a lot to reuniting the youths of South Sudan including those in the POCs. Let us forget the past and embrace peace. As we are going back home, we will inform our communities that there is no room for tribalism again....”
Majok Deng Yak, wrestling, Jonglei

“…..I am very excited to interact with other cattle camp youths. This will reduce some conflicts between us as cattle camp youth because we have exchanged contacts with each other especially since Eastern Lakes and Terekeka are our neighbors, we will go back home to embrace peace…..”
Majolo Machar, wrestling, Terekeka

“…Sport is a symbol of unity. I didn’t know some of my colleagues from Jonglei, Eastern Lakes and Amadi, but because of this competition we will strive to live peacefully as brothers and sisters. I urged the organizers and supporters of this event to continue investing for peace to prevail in South Sudan....”
Juma Bernaba, Athletics

“I participated in the first National Unity Day in 2015. It means sharing sports together, meeting one another and having peace in our hearts. This is not for win and medals; it is for friendship and peace.”
“Peace is the best form of humanity. If there is peace, I would visit and play with friends in different states.”
Dani Gatlueng, Football, Bentiu

“Peace is about improving political stability, food security and proper development in the country. But above all, the spirit of forgiveness amongst the South Sudanese youth and elders is the key to peace in South Sudan.”
Photo: UNDP, 2020
Buoy Mayuay, Football, Bentiu

“Peace is what we are doing right now. We are happy, because we are in one place, there is no war and we love one another.”

Levo Steven, Athletics, Yambio

“What I have learnt here is that you should be friends, we should forgive each other, forget the past and start a new life.”
“Peace is what makes people stay together and share ideas and work for developmental projects within the country. Peace has enabled me to reach where I could not reach before... like coming to Juba for the NUD sports, it is because of the peace process and because we are living in harmony...peace brings change in the country...”

Photo: JICA, 2020
Sebit Lino, Football, Torit

“...Our coming here has made us meet people from other states, creating relations, interacting. I am sure I will keep in touch with my new friends through Facebook...."
Akimo Ayak Lual, Volleyball, Grogrial

“When I go back, I will call others so that we go to other states to play volleyball for peace and to see my country.”
Blessing Awal, volleyball, Pibor

“....Peace is a wonderful thing where people come together from different places. I learnt a lot of things during this National Unity Day event. I learnt cooperation with one another, approach one another in case of any problem and also how to unite different parties who are having some conflicts among themselves.......When I go home, I plan to promote peace to my fellow youth.....”

Photo: UNDP, 2020
John Leek, football, Abyei

“….Through games we are bringing peace. When I go back, I will tell all parents to keep giving their children the chance to participate in the NUD…..”
Akon Mayong Akon, Director of Culture, Youth and Sports, Gogrial

“...Young people, don't involve yourself in the war, peace is the only option. .... Make peace come first...... We are old now, this country belongs to you young people...”

(seated between two young sportsmen)
Martin Okech, Football, Torit

“.......When I go back to my state, I will create awareness in the community of the importance of football and how it can bring peace in our country.....”
Chok Jok Kuer, Chairman Wrestling Union, Jonglei

“......This NUD is very important to us as South Sudanese because it brought us together to promote friendship among athletes from across South Sudan......”
United Nations Development Programme - Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) Project
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