



# CEPO ACTIVITIES

# NEWSLETTER

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## Yakani to head regional civil society forum



**(ARUSHA)** - Edmund Yakani has been elected the President of the East African Civil Society Organization Forum (EACSOF) for the period 2023-2025.

Yakani, the Executive Director of Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), was elected during the East African Civil Society Summit held under the theme; "Harnessing citizens' prosperity in EAC and AfCFTA integration processes" in Arusha, Tanzania from May 3-5, 2023.

"This remarkable move is for the South Sudanese civil society family. I and the rest of the East African Community civil society team will work in the best interest of regional integration processes," he told the summit.

The annual summit brought together over 300 representatives from regional civil society organizations, EAC institutions and organs, EAC partner states, academia and development partners from the region to amplify citizens' voices and concerns above important matters in order to complement government's initiatives and hasten socio-development within the region.

The 2017 civil defenders award winner also pledged to proactively engage with regional member state governments for successful regional integration for meeting best interests of citizens of the East African Community (EAC).

Established in 2007, EACSOF is the premier platform organization that brings together civil society organizations in the East Africa region. Its goal is to have a regional integration process that is inclusive of the voice of East African citizens and responsive to the needs and demands of the people.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Civil-Military Dialogue calls for improvement in relations

May 2, 2023 (LAINYA) -

The fifth civil-military relations dialogue held in Lainya County of Central Equatoria State successfully ended with calls for enhancement in relations for peaceful co-existence at community levels.

The three-day reconciliatory community-level dialogue, organized by Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO), attracted over 50 people, including

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## Women rights defenders launch protection initiative

**(JUBA)** - An initiative to promote collaboration and coordination among women human rights defenders in South Sudan has officially been unveiled.

The Women Defenders Protection Net (WDPN) launched at the end of a training organized by Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) with Support from Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI).

It attracted 20 participants engaged in women's rights, land rights gender based violence, disability rights, civil, political, social and economic issues.

Edmund Yakani, CEPO's Executive

Director described WDPN as a platform that prioritizes protection of women human rights defenders and activists.

"This platform will greatly enhance safety, security and protection of women human rights defenders and activities across South Sudan," he said.

Women rights defenders often face the same types of risks as all defenders working to uphold the rights of people, communities and the environment.

They are exposed to gender-specific risks and are targets of gender-based violence. This may be due to the fact that women human rights defenders

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## CEPO's e-learning program empowers women, youth

(JUBA) – Over 800 people enrolled for the Digital and Innovations Skills Hub (DISH), an e-learning platform targeting women and youth in South Sudan.

The project, which was implemented by Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) with support from the Dutch organization for internationalisation in education (NUFFIC), had four online training courses.

"DISH increased enrolment in certificate education to increase employment possibilities. Especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth and women face challenges to find employment, while employers struggle to employ people with matching skills in fast-growing sectors in the market," said Peter Bidali Elias, CEPO's officer for the project.

Through DISH, online short certificate courses, which included



Business Administration, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Peace Building and primary school teaching, were created and made available.

According to Bidali, the three-month certificate courses increased employability of youth and women because they linked to key emerging sectors in employment and contributed to stability, peace and resilience.

"The opportunities and sectors of employment have been

identified through research by the partners in earlier programs which identified key employment sectors for youth," he stressed.

While the certificate in Business Administration attracted 431 students, Peace Building had 386, Primary School Teaching had 161 and ICT got 88.

Perina Juye, a Business Administration student, said she learnt a lot from the course, especially key considerations when one intends to open a business.

"My advice is that learning sessions should be more interactive," she noted.

For his part, Martin Seree, a student of Basic ICT, said the e-learning platform provided opportunity for youth and women to acquire employment skills.

"During the course, I was able to acquire a lot of networking skills, learned operating systems and other IT related skills that were lacking," he stated.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth and women faced challenges in employment as employers struggled to find skilled people.

The latest World Population Review (WPR) ranks South Sudan third in the world for literacy rate and it was anticipated that DISH courses would bridge that gap by focusing on low-threshold e-learning certificate courses.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Civil-Military Dialogue calls for improvement in relations



chiefs, civil society, army (SSPDF), religious leaders and eminent personalities to discuss ways of rebuilding the fractured social cohesion and restoring trust between the civilians and military personnel.

Malish John Scopas, CEPO's project officer for the Greater Yei said the dialogue aimed at building trust and confidence through reconciliation to restore peaceful co-existence, acceptance, tolerance and social cohesion between the civilians and the ground forces in Loka West Boma.

"The dialogue facilitation was centered on mediation approach where civilians and the military identified issues that affect their relations," he said.

Lack of mutual respect between civilians and military personnel, lootings, harassment, killings and road blocks were identified as some of the

issues affecting peaceful co-existence among civilians and the army in Lainya.

The deputy commander of the SSPDF ground forces, Col. John Malou described relations between the military and civilians as "peaceful" one.

"Our relationship with civilians is good. We have been communicating and coordinating things together. It means we are in peace with one another and our demand is the implementation of the peace agreement," he said.

Early sharing of information between civilians and the military, reduction in number of checkpoints to allow free movement of civilians, regulation of drug consumption among soldiers as well as calls continuous civil-military dialogues were some of the key resolutions at conclusion of the dialogue.

In 2016, clashes between SPLA-IO and government forces, coupled by the current National Salvation Front (NAS) insurgency and worsened by attacks from Dinka Bor and Mundari cattle keepers have destroyed livelihoods.

This led the displacement of civilians in Loka west Boma to Lainya center and to refugee camps in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with support from UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) project is designed to help communities in Yei, Lainya, Morobo and Kajo-Keji counties reconcile and end violence, bring stability where they live and create new incentives for peaceful coexistence.



## South Sudanese complete digital innovation skill courses



**(JUBA)** – The first batch of students successfully completed three-month certificate courses under the Digital Innovation and Skills (DISH) programme implemented by Community Empowerment for Progress organization (CEPO) in South Sudan.

Supported by the Netherlands government, DISH is an e-learning platform developed to provide access to youth and women to develop employment skills.

Courses were designed to provide certificate to students at pre-university level.

The three-month courses included Peace building, Teacher Training, Business Administration (BBA) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Peter Bidali Elias, the project officer at CEPO, said the certificate courses mainly targeted youth and women particularly impacted on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The objective of DISH is to increase enrolment in certificate education in order to increase employment possibilities. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth and women face challenges of finding employment," he said.

Bidali cited lack of gadgets and poor connectivity as challenges to the program.

He said plans are underway for inclusive education for persons with disabilities.

Mori Misak, the operations and human resource manager at CEPO said the organization specifically strives to empower community members for self-reliance.

"CEPO is an institution that focuses on a better and balanced society. To realize such a society requires well trained personnel. We expect you [graduates] to go and practice the knowledge and skills gained from the various courses," he said.

Kennedy Khamis, a BBA graduate, lauded the donors for supporting CEPO's work.

"CEPO has planted good seeds that will yield good fruits for the nation. We appeal to donors to continue supporting the continuity of the program," he said.

The DISH platform was established with partners in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Netherlands to implement two projects funded under the Orange Knowledge Programme managed by Nuffic and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The projects contribute to peace building, employment for the vulnerable youth and women and strengthening resilience.

## Over 40 farmers trained on self-reliance in Kajo-Keji

**(KAJO-KEJI)** – At least 40 farmers concluded a two-day training in Kajo-Kejo County of Central Equatoria State with calls for self-reliance among them.

Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) organised the farmers' training with support from Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

Kenyi Nason Felix, a field officer with CEPO, said the two-day training aimed at empowering the women and girls under the farming for peace initiative.

"The project impact is to contribute to gender equality, empower women and girls to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies," noted Kenyi.

"Without farming, peace cannot prevail in our communities," he added.

Wani Sylvano Yokwe, a farmer, said he acquired skills for peace building, peaceful co-existence and mediation

systems during the two-day training.

He cited climate change as an obstacle to farming practices in the county.

Agnes Diiko, a vegetarian grower, said learnt self-reliance at the training.

She, however, urged CEPO to regularly train them on best farming practice.

"CEPO should organize refresher trainings so that we do not completely forget about what we learned during the two-day training," stressed Diiko.

The Strengthening Conflict and Gender Sensitive Community Resilience (SCCR) project operates in Northern Uganda and Central Equatoria.

It targets refugees, host and migrating communities in the two countries.

The greater Yei region, including Lainya, Morobo and Kajo-Keji counties are known for their conducive farming weather and fertile soils for agriculture.

Despite the huge potentials, agriculture in South Sudan largely remains at subsistence level with average field sizes of just two feddans per household



## FROM PAGE 1 Women rights defenders launch protection initiative

are perceived as opposed to accepted sociocultural norms, traditions and stereotypes about femininity and the role and status of women in society.

Their work is often seen as challenging traditional notions of families.

Elizabeth Daniel Lubanga, CEPO's Justice and Protection team leader said human rights defenders are victims of deep inequality, discrimination and abuse since they are frequently the targets of social and political hostility.

"The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of WHRDs and mitigate the impact of online and offline attacks against WHRDs, provide knowledge on mitigating gender-based attacks,

criminalization of their work, as well as offer practical strategies for enhancing WHRD's safety on and offline," she explained.

The training tackled safety tools for preventing and responding to attacks as well as the Cybercrimes and Computer Misuse Provisional Order 2021.

Flora Gume from Western Equatoria State said WDPN will enhance discussions on issues among women in South Sudan, specifically citing gender based violence, abductions and forced marriages, among others.

"CEPO should focus on building capacities of women at the grassroots. There is a need to access capacities of women at lower levels," she noted.

Wilma Atuduk, a participant



Transitionaj justice workshop

from Eastern Equatoria State cited cultural stereotypes as a major obstacles to the work of human rights defenders.

"The Women Defenders Protection Net should expand to all states to enable women participate at national, state and grassroots level," she said.

Women rights defenders often act under the protection of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1999).

# IN BRIEF

## CEPO coordinator summoned

(WAU) - Western Bahr el Ghazal State assembly speaker summoned CEPO's state coordinator, Stephen Robo over an interview on a local radio station.

He was summoned to appear before the Assembly Business Committee.

"I questioned the state parliament on their performance and decision to retain the Raja County commissioner from returning to his headquarters on allegations of promoting gold mining in Boro Madina," explained Robo.

The state legislative assembly had earlier formed a committee to investigate the alleged illegal mining of gold in Boro-Madina, Raja County.

## Dialogue urges IDPs to return home

(WAU) - A dialogue on the voluntary return of IDPs held in Wau County.

Held on theme: "Enhance voluntarily return of IDPs, reintegration and livelihood in Kpaile Payam, Wau County", the dialogue organized by CEPO created secure environment for safe, dignified and voluntary return of IDPs.

"The dialogue also aimed at developing practical intervention plans to address emerging challenges of return and reintegration," said Stephen Robo, CEPO's coordinator the Greater Bahr el Ghazal region.

Key beneficiaries of the dialogue included state and local authorities, traditional leaders, IDPs in Naivasha camp and the SPLM-IO controlled areas, hosts communities, youth, women and persons with disability (PWD).

## Peace campaign concluded

CEPO and the UNMISS Civil Affairs Division concludes "Never Ever again to violent peace campaign" with a sports for peace match between Athoi and Kook football teams in Malek-agok payam of Rumbek East County.

The event aimed at promoting peace and stability among communities of in Pachong, Mathiang, Malek-agok and Cui-cok payams of the county.

In recent years, intercommunal violence, often related to cattle and involving youth, has been common in Lakes State. In a bid to prevent such frequently deadly incidents, UNMISS in cooperation with local authorities established youth, peace and security committees in conflict-prone areas.

## CEPO, UNMISS hold peace workshop

A forum facilitated by UNMISS and CEPO to put together a roadmap for settling differences and building peace ended in Western Equatoria State.

Participants included state lawmakers as well as heads of organized forces.

The aim of the event was to discuss ways and means in which these actors can work together in the spirit of compromise to improve the lives of citizens.

## Teachers trained on code of conduct

CEPO in collaboration with National Education Coalition (NEC) conducted a two-day training of teachers on professional teachers' code of conduct.

The training aimed at building the capacity of teachers drawn from selected public schools within Lakes State and created awareness on their code of conduct to enhance gender-based violence reporting in schools.

It was supported by Oxfam South Sudan Program under the SIDA project.

## 45 attend girl-child education workshop

CEPO conducted a two-day workshop on provisions that protect Girl Child Education in passed Lakes State Customary Law and Public Order Act 2022.

The workshop targeted 45 participants from school children, Community leaders, CSOs, Police and members of Lakes state parliament.

The workshop also covered issues of GBV, Child protection and sexual exploitation and Abuses among other discussed topic. The workshop discussed role of stakeholders toward protection of women's and girls in relation to the new laws in the state.



# Forward

**C**ommunity Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) is engaged in the democratic transformation of society in South Sudan, through effective and influential engagement on public interest advocacy and lobby engagements. During this period, CEPO has scored some tangible results around governance and development across the country. With support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Quick Impact Projects and the United Nations Multi-donor Trust Fund (MDTF), CEPO has delivered several infrastructural projects. Such essential infrastructural projects include constructions of youth and women centres, police posts, renovation of existing schools and construction of community radio stations.

Our successful advocacy resulted into South Sudan's President Salva Kiir sign international and regional human rights treaties on February 24, 2023.

This has positioned CEPO as an influential civil society body in South Sudan.

On several occasions, our role in advocating for democratic transformation and embracement of good governance has been recognized by society.

We feel honored when CEPO is recognized as a key pressurizing government and other actors to respect human rights, promote democratic governance and boost citizens' participation in governance.

We vow to maintain and increase this impact and level of influence to meet our aim towards the practice of democratic governance in South Sudan.

It would, however, be unfair if I don't acknowledge our staff in their various capacities across the country. Special thanks also goes to our donors, partners and government for the support offered to CEPO in various forms.

**Edmund Yakani, Executive Director,**  
Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO)





## CEPO's engagement on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**(JUBA)** - South Sudan Parliament ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2015. However, since 2016, the process of having the president ascend to the ratified UNCRPD delayed 2016 due to the armed violence among the warring parties of South Sudan.

In 2022, CEPO started influential advocacy around the process of president ascending the UNCRPD into law. This advocacy strategy worked and it motivated many of our partners to collaborate and partnered with CEPO to ensure pressure is mounted for the president to sign the UNCRPD into law.

Among the key partners that effectively supported CEPO in the process of drumming this influential advocacy on ascending the UNCRPD into law was Light for the World, an international disability and development non-governmental organization aiming at ensuring there is an inclusive society.

Light for the World's financial support for CEPO has strengthened our influential advocacy and collaboration with the organizations for the persons with disabilities such as the South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities, among others. As such, the president's decision to ascend to the UNCRPD on February 24, 2023 was considered one of CEPO's success.

It also demonstrated our strength to successfully advocate and lobby.

As a civil society, CEPO previously engaged in advocacy for ascension to other international and regional human rights treaties, namely, the United Nations Convention on Civil and Political Rights, United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Paris Agreement on Climate Change and African Union Maputo Protocol. All these names treaties had for long been delayed by the president, especially between 2016 and 2017.

Owing to this, CEPO declared February 24 as the "National

Day for Disability Rights". The first celebration across the nation shall be on February 24, 2024.

It also important to note that following our successful advocacy and lobby for the ascension of the UNCRPD by the president, CEPO has undertaken key steps for concrete engagement on promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. This, with support from Light for the World, is seen as a strategy of influencing honest implementation of the UNCRPD.

We developed fact sheets to raise awareness on the UNCRPD and this was translated into national languages; formation of a "Disability Inclusion Technical Team (DITT)", which consists of senior civil servants, international NGOs, UN agencies, organizations of persons with disabilities, media and the civil society organizations. DITT will be responsible for developing a national action plan for UNCRPD implementation and final facilitation of government and

stakeholders' periodic roundtable on its implementation.

This roundtable discussions will bring together political leaders, donors, organizations of person with disabilities, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, media and civil society to engage on making decisions for effective implementation of the developed national action plan on the UNCRPD.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that CEPO scored remarkable results on pushing for meaningful public participation of the organizations of persons with disabilities in South Sudan. Our success story includes pressuring the government to ensure persons with disabilities participate in public governance process, namely the establishment of the Commission on Truth, Healing and National Reconciliation and establishment of the National Constitutional Review Commission. Currently, persons with disabilities have three seats for representation and participation in these national institutions.



## CEPO's role in mediating community violence

**C**EPO, partnership with several UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations, is effectively engaged in mediating the numerous deadly communal violence across the country. The recent experiences of CEPO in the community violence mediation indicated that the majority of the deadly communal violence are triggered by various, including youth with limited access to income that would have determined their livelihoods and social lives; competition over wealth control that makes access to land for multiple usages problematic and political elites using violence as a mechanisms to rise to power.

For attaining durable resolutions to the ongoing deadly community violence, it is essential for the government to develop a national strategy for community violence prevention, where conflict early warning and early responses are seriously taken serious at the political and financing level by the political leaders.

Furthermore, investing in the economic empowerment of the youth will have a positive impact in reducing the deadly communal violence across the country.

In addition, the country's political leaders are also required to take serious steps on holding

perpetrators of deadly communal violence accountability. Among the players that really require to be hold accountable are the ring leaders of the youth groups that wage deadly violence, the spiritual leaders that mobilize youth to wage deadly armed violence and political leaders with a habit of using violent approaches for resolving community disputes as well as their political grievances.

Our mediation team will continue to invest in driving mediation of the communal violence in partnership with the various UN agencies and international NGOs.

### Benefits of strengthening Civil Society Advocacy Skills



With support from the Civil Society Facility (CSF), CEPO carried out effective advocacy capacity building activities targeting civil society in Wau, Yambio, Torit, Aweil and Juba. These advocacy training sessions were aimed at building the capacities of civil society coalitions on advocacy as well as lobby skills. It is essential to increase civil society capacities on influential advocacy and lobby.

One remarkable outcome of advocacy and lobby sessions CEPO conducted with CSF's support for the civil society coalition was the development and adoption of the civil society national calendar for advocacy and lobby events.

The National Civil Society Advocacy Calendar (NCSAC) is an instrument that is intended to provide national timelines or key dates that can be used for striking influential advocacy and lobby on the best interests and concerns of the public.





## Community Empowerment for Progress Organization



**CSF** M M  
supporting communities MOTT MACDONALD

### National Advocacy Events Calendar

NATIONAL EVENT		
Timeline	Events	Action to be Undertaken
Friday of Week	National Council of Ministers Meeting	Lobbying a particular minister for tabling public interest concern
Monday to Wednesday of the week	National parliament sessions or sitting	Lobbying for parliamentary debate on a particular issue
Months June–July of the year	Preparation of National Budget at National and States level	Budgetary advocacy and lobby
24 <sup>th</sup> February	National Disability Rights Day	To amplify voices for promotion and protection of rights of persons with Disabilities
9 <sup>th</sup> July of the year	National Independence Day	Day for national concerns advocacy
20 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> December of the year	Last Council of Ministers meeting	Period effective advocacy for influencing president closure of the year speech
24 <sup>th</sup> December of the year	President Christmas speech	Day for calling president to response to public interest matters
30 <sup>th</sup> or 31 <sup>st</sup> December of the year	President closure of year speech	Good day for influencing president's closure of year speech
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> January of the year	First Council of Ministers meeting of the year	Lobbying for shaping new year public interest priorities
16 <sup>th</sup> May of the year	Military (SSPDF) Day	Security and Defense sector reform advocacy
30 <sup>th</sup> June of the year	Martyrs Day	Day of reminding political leadership on constitutional obligation for delivering democratic transformation
East African Community and African Days		
25 <sup>th</sup> May of the year	Africa Day	Engaging African leaders in Juba on public interest matters
16 <sup>th</sup> June of the year	Africa Child Day	Campaigning for child rights protection
20 <sup>th</sup> June of the year	African Refugee Day/ World Refugee Day	Advocating for Refugees
7 <sup>th</sup> July of the year	African Integration Day	Mobilizing in Juba for common good
11 <sup>th</sup> July of the year	African Anti-Corruption Day	Campaign for fighting corruption
31 <sup>st</sup> July of the year	Africa's Women Day	Promoting women rights
10 <sup>th</sup> August of the year	Africa Day of Decentralization and Local Development	Advocating for decentralization and local development
10 <sup>th</sup> August of the year	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day	Advocating for civil registration
9 <sup>th</sup> September	African Union Day	Influencing AU for peace and stability
21 <sup>st</sup> October	Africa Human Rights Day	Advocating for human rights
30 <sup>th</sup> October	Africa Food Security and Nutrition Day	Lobby for food security
1 <sup>st</sup> November	Africa Youth Day	Advocating for youth meaningful participation
11 <sup>th</sup> November	East Africa Community Day	Striking advocacy on East African Community Regional integration
18 <sup>th</sup> November	African Statistics Day	Advocating statistic importance
7 <sup>th</sup> December	Africa Telecommunications and ICT Day	Lobbying Telecommunication and ICT

**Important Note:** It is essential for the civil society in South Sudan to be proactive and know the South Sudan cabinet's weekly calendar, African Union calendar and East African Community (EAC) Calendar



Promotion of social cohesion, protection of human rights, transitional justice and quick impact projects



Promotion of peace building and civilian-military relation



Strengthening civil society coalition capacity and civil society engagement on conflict early and response



Promoting effective advocacy and lobby on inclusion of disability

