

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IN SOUTH SUDAN, ALAIN NOUDÉHO

Remarks on World Humanitarian Day

Juba, 19 August 2019

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

19 August marks World Humanitarian Day.

It is a day that we come together in support of people in need of humanitarian assistance. On this day, we also pay tribute to all humanitarians who are working with great dedication around the globe.

They work in difficult conditions and are often attacked and killed.

To all the humanitarian workers in South Sudan, I applaud your courage and your remarkable sense of purpose in delivering assistance to the communities in need in this country.

This year, we want to particularly honour the millions of women humanitarians.

Globally, women make up over 40 per cent of the humanitarian work force.

In South Sudan and around the world, women are often the first to react in humanitarian crises.

I pay tribute to their determination, and their demonstrated ability to help the most vulnerable groups who are often located in difficult-to-reach places.

I want to also highlight the strength of women humanitarians, and their perseverance against all the odds. In their work, they put their personal safety at risk and are often subject to discrimination and sexual harassment.

They are undeniably essential to the successful operation of our humanitarian response in South Sudan. We therefore need to do more at all levels to improve their working environment and address the challenges faced by women humanitarians.

During my two-year tenure in South Sudan as Humanitarian Coordinator, I have seen the work that women humanitarians do – from the grassroots to the highest levels of coordination.

Women in South Sudan play a vital role in every aspect of the humanitarian response. They make decisions about the delivery of humanitarian assistance; they coordinate groups of actors providing protection and social services. Women also provide shelter; they prepare and distribute

food; they set up schools to educate children; they provide other women with a space to talk about gender-based violence. Women often get to people when others cannot.

I have seen women advocate for girls to be allowed to learn at school; I have listened to women call for an end to child marriage – as you will hear Mary Boyoi, head of a humanitarian organization and musician, sing about later.

In South Sudan, there are just over 40 national women-led organizations, out of 214 national NGOs. That's less than a fifth. Women's role in humanitarian leadership is crucial. More needs to be done to improve their presence in decision-making positions.

Women's greater participation and leadership role and a better understanding of our humanitarian context, with disaggregated analysis of vulnerabilities, will go a long way to help address existing inequalities and improve the effectiveness of our operations.

We are grateful that during the year 2019 so far, we have not experienced any loss of life in the humanitarian community.

And access to the most vulnerable people continues to improve throughout the country.

This year, through your hard work and with the generosity of the donor community, more than 4 million women, men and children have already received assistance as part our Humanitarian Response Plan for 2019.

I hope the improved security situation in the country will continue to hold to allow people to rebuild their lives.

I take the opportunity to call on all political leaders who are party to the revitalized peace agreement of September 2018 to stay the course for its successful implementation for a sustained peace in South Sudan.

To conclude, I would like to leave you with the words of Jesca Wude Murye, a South Sudanese Nutrition Officer working for UNICEF. She recalls what being a humanitarian is like. These are her words:

“Being a humanitarian worker is not something that everyone can do. It takes a special type of person. People who have compassion, love, and are willing to sacrifice their time and take time to give a smile to someone else. I enjoy working as a humanitarian because it is life saving and I can see the results of what I do.”

Together with humanitarians like Jesca, we can help to improve the lives of people who need assistance.

I want to thank all humanitarian actors from the NNGO and INGO communities; from local communities, from the government, from UN entities, and from the donor community, for being part of that effort.

I wish everybody a happy World Humanitarian Day!