

# South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network



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*Today's Vision for Tomorrow's Mission*

## **“Mainstreaming Women’s Agenda in the Post-Referendum Arrangements”**

**Organized by the  
South Sudan Women’s Empowerment Network (SSWEN)**

*In collaboration of the Institute for Inclusive Security  
Under the Auspices of the Government of South Sudan Ministry of  
Gender, Child, and Social Welfare  
New Sudan Palace, Juba, Sudan  
February 17-19, 2011*

From February 17-19, 2011, over a hundred women from all over Sudan came together to make sure women’s concerns, experiences, and priorities are central to on-going negotiations on post-referendum arrangements.

This conference could not have come at a more critical time. Having ensured a peaceful and successful referendum, parties are about to resume talks on a broad range of critical issues that are not yet resolved.

Participants at this historic conference came from South Sudan’s ten states, Khartoum and other states and regions in the North, Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile states, and the Diaspora. They represent civil society, the grassroots, government, and legislatures. Participants were joined by gender experts, facilitators, and legislators from neighboring countries in Africa, Europe, and North America. Participants and guests included Government of National Unity, Government of South Sudan, and state ministers and parliamentarians, members of the clusters negotiating post-referendum arrangements and the Joint Technical Secretariat; the South Sudan Referendum Commission; and the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel.

In addition to ensuring more representation for women in the negotiations, the conference sought to respond to the urgent need to form consensus and identify the gender-specific priorities of women as they relate to the post-referendum negotiations.

The conference built upon and complements previous and ongoing efforts by civil society throughout Sudan in support of more transparent and inclusive political processes. It echoes and incorporates local, national, and international conventions, resolutions, and agreements that promote gender equality and women’s full participation.

Participants made concrete, urgent recommendations on the four clustered themes of the negotiations: **security; citizenship; economic and natural resources; and international treaties and other legal issues.** Their analysis and recommendations are detailed in a separate document.

Participants emphatically called on parties and other actors to:

- **Increase the transparency and accountability of the negotiations process.** There is a severe dearth of information available to the public on the negotiations process and on progress of talks in the four clusters.
- **Appoint more women members to each cluster's negotiating teams and task forces.** Women's participation in the teams is nowhere near the 25 percent level required through quotas in the National Elections Act and interim Constitution of South Sudan. Out of 54 members appointed to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Task Force, only five are women. Even fewer are present on the National Congress Party's team.
- **Establish and support a team of gender experts to integrate women's perspectives and priorities into the negotiations.** Participants acknowledged with appreciation the role of the African Union's High-Level Implementation Panel headed by President Thabo Mbeki and the presence of a gender officer appointed to advise the Panel. The Panel could further ensure the integration of women's analysis and recommendations by formally establishing an independent team of Sudanese women experts to provide this input equally to both parties along the four cluster areas.
- **Incorporate the gender analysis of cluster areas generated through this conference into the talks and consider carefully women's specific recommendations.** Participants produced a relevant, detailed analysis of how the issues being negotiated in each cluster can affect women differently from men. Without a full understanding of this analysis, negotiators risk reaching agreements that don't reflect true needs and priorities, ultimately jeopardizing sustainability and success of the entire process. In addition to analysis, women recommended specific actions to assist all negotiators and facilitators.
- **Create an official mechanism for civil society to participate in the process.** The agreement guiding the process, the Mekelle Memorandum of Understanding on Post-Referendum Issues and Arrangements (signed by the NCP and SPLM in June 2010), states, "Parties shall discuss ways of involving civil society organizations and the Sudanese community at large, in the process." This involvement must occur in a deliberate and structured manner and be facilitated by official parties and supporters of the talks.

Participants also felt there are other areas that warrant the urgent attention. These include a peaceful solution to the Darfur conflict with meaningful participation of women; constitutional reform and other processes in both the North and the South, the Abyei referendum, instability in Upper Nile, Jongeli, Western Equatoria and elsewhere; popular consultation in Southern Kordofan state, the announcement of the outcome of the popular consultation in the Southern Blue Nile; and the current situation of women in Northern Sudan.

The inclusion of Sudanese women's voices and a gender perspective will ensure post-referendum arrangements are complete and comprehensive. Most importantly, they will help ensure greater equality, including between women and men, and lasting peace.

**We will not rest until our voices are heard!**

Juba, Sudan, 22 February 2011