



### ***From Words to Action: Empowered Journalists Pledge to Champion Progress in Reporting on Protection Issues***

In a rapidly evolving landscape, where addressing delicate topics like gender-based violence, child protection, mine action, and housing, land, and property rights demands accuracy and empathy, the South Sudan Media Training on Ethical Reporting on Protection has emerged as a pivotal force in empowering media professionals.

This initiative was brought to life through the collaboration of key stakeholders, including USAID's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Systems, South Sudan's Protection Cluster, the Association for Media Development, and the Union of Journalists in South Sudan. The two-day media training gathered 19 reporters and several editors from diverse regions of the country.

Moderated and led by Garang Abraham, a training consultant, the core mission was to equip media practitioners with knowledge in the four Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) of the Protection Cluster. The heartfelt testimonials from the participants bear witness to the transformative impact of the training on their journalistic endeavors."

Emma Kwaje, a broadcaster journalist at Juba Echo TV and a Project Assistant at the Union of Journalists in South Sudan, shared how the training enhanced her ability to protect children's identities and amplify their voices in television broadcasting.

*“For me who reports so much on children’s issues mostly, from today onward, I will be very careful with issues to do with children’s consent, as well as ensuring I listen to children voices when getting their stories. Additionally, for my television content, hiding children’s identity when necessary is something I personally obtained from the training,”* said Emma.

Angelo Majok from Door FM in Tonj town, Warrap State, voiced his appreciation for the comprehensive training, illustrating his commitment to driving impactful discussions on critical issues like child marriage and land grabbing through his radio talk shows.

*“All four areas of responsibilities were so new to me, because I didn’t attend such a training before. This knowledge is so applicable back home in Town and in other parts of South Sudan, and this information needs to be passed on to my listeners in Tonj as quick as I can”* Angelo concluded.

Majok Guet, a seasoned broadcast journalist and presenter at Mingkaman, expressed how the training broadened his understanding, particularly in handling landmine-related incidents, and his plans to educate his radio audience on community safety to prevent tragedies involving landmines and explosive ordinance.

*“The training has really impacted me. The presentation on land mines was so new to me. With what the team took me through, I now know how to protect myself when heading to scenes where a land mine related issues has happened. For my radio audience, am going to produce public service announcements and radio jingles on community safety and how people can protect themselves, in order not to become victims of land mines and explosive ordinance”* Majok stated.

David Hattar, South Sudan’s Acting Protection Cluster Coordinator, underscored the tangible outcomes of the training, highlighting the enhanced skills, knowledge, and sense of purpose instilled in the participants. He emphasized how their dedication to applying their learnings signifies an important stride towards fostering informed dialogue and advocacy for protection issues in South Sudan.

*“The collaboration between the media and the protection cluster, facilitated by such trainings, is leading to significant strides in building a safer and more inclusive society,”* said David.

## WORKSHOP RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### Pre-assessment

An analysis of pre-assessment forms revealed that many participants had varying experiences with protection training. Some mentioned attending similar workshops organized by UNMISS or UNFPA. Several respondents noted that they had not participated in training on housing, land, and property, as well as mine action. In contrast, many said they had attended trainings on gender-based violence and child protection.

Most journalists covering protection topics are quite knowledgeable about their medium and the journalistic code of ethics. Additionally, many reporters expressed difficulties and concerns regarding options for referrals or inquiries, as well as challenges in reporting protection-related issues.



Group exercise on different AoR editor dilemmas and scenarios

### Post-assessment

Post-assessment results showed that most participants gained a comprehensive understanding from the four AoR sessions. They rated the session presentations highly, highlighting aspects of participation, inclusion, and respect for differing viewpoints.

When asked about the most beneficial aspect of the course, one participant emphasized the importance of the ethical training session on gender. They stated, *"Because of my training, I now feel a responsibility as a journalist to ensure public awareness of protection issues, enabling them to report to the appropriate authorities. We work in an environment where numerous human rights breaches occur frequently."*

Another participant responded to a question about applying the knowledge gained in training, saying, *"I will use this knowledge and skills to orient my fellow journalists so that we can collectively inform the public and our audience, particularly on issues of child protection, mine action, and housing, land, and property."*

### Findings:

During the editors' sessions, it was found that a significant gap exists between the media and stakeholders in protection. Journalists emphasized the need for meaningful collaborations with the Protection Cluster to bridge this gap and facilitate their work.

Trainees expressed that reporting on protection issues demands tact, especially when holding those in positions of authority accountable. Discussions suggested that sharing sensitive stories with international media outlets is crucial for journalists' safety and protection, representing a primary step towards overcoming this challenge.

Furthermore, editors revealed that their editorial practices concerning protection-related topics were quite stringent. They emphasized the need to relax or revise these practices, underscoring that stories related to protection should not reach a dead end.



*Mine Action AoR session delivered by MAG team lead.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The gathering underscored the need to develop a user-friendly media protection policy, which takes into account the concerns of both media stakeholders and protection actors.
- Trainees called for refresher training sessions in various states, targeting both previous seminar attendees and those who were unable to attend.
- It was recommended to establish media fellowships aimed at further equipping journalists in protection issues, particularly to enhance their capacity for investigative reporting in this area.
- To improve communication and coordination, there was a suggestion to create a contact address book for journalists and members of the protection cluster.
- The assembly advised media outlets to engage in meaningful and balanced partnerships. This would help identify common interests between journalists and protection actors and encourage more flexible editorial policies on protection-related matters.

### CONCLUSION

The South Sudan Media Training on Ethical Training on Protection was a pivotal initiative that successfully accomplished its set objectives. The training has enhanced the participants' abilities to report accurately on protection issues, contributing significantly to accountability, transparency, and advocacy in the South Sudanese media landscape.

By adhering to ethical standards and improving their skills in handling sensitive subjects, these media professionals are now better equipped to act as guardians, amplifying marginalized voices and advocating for social change.

Moreover, the establishment of networks and contacts between media professionals and protection cluster members marks a crucial step towards fostering collaboration and information-sharing. Such connections are key to ensuring accurate and timely reporting on protection issues, broadening awareness, and effecting positive societal change.

Lastly, the dedication and commitment shown by both participants and facilitators throughout the training program highlight a collective effort towards enhancing responsible journalism in South Sudan. The application and further development of these newly acquired skills are set to raise the bar for media professionalism and ethical reporting in the country, leading to a more informed, empowered, and civically engaged society.

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