

EDITORIAL

LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF COMMON PEOPLE AND ACT

Common people, in any country, make up the majority of the population. Yet they are usually the most neglected by governments, NGOs and the agencies of the international community, especially in Africa.

In Southern Sudan, which has been at war for over half a century, there are many helpless people; widows, orphans, the disabled, illiterate, rural communities crippled by poverty and disease, employees going for months without salary; the list is long.

A close look at the media in South Sudan, especially the print media, reveals that the voices of such needy people are not sufficiently reflected. Most newspapers in South Sudan go for statements from the authorities and other powerful people who make headlines, but the silent majority remain unheard.

Even in many of the statements of people elected by the rural poor to represent them you hardly find a word that mentions issues that need to be addressed in favour of rural communities. Having no voice and nobody who has the courage to talk on their behalf, the needs and hopes of the most disadvantaged members of society and rural communities go unheard.

This situation is a challenge which has brought together the London based Media Diversity Institute (MDI) and the Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan (UJOSS), supported by the European Commission, to give a voice to the most disadvantaged people and the rural population and create a bridge between them and their leaders.

This voice and bridge is the 'People's Voice' newspaper. So, let's listen and act. ■

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STREETS IN YEI RIVER COUNTY TO GET NATIVE NAMES

By Agele Benson Amos

Yei River County elders have decided to rename streets and local administrative units to conserve community cultural and traditional values. The decision to rename the streets and at least one payam came as a result of elders deciding to do away with what has been referred to as "colonial" names.

The raging controversy over renaming and replacements of colonial street names with local ones has resulted to the formation of advisory committees to spearhead the exercise.

Michael Modi Apollo, who is Kakwa community Advisor living in Juba, is the chairman of the Street and Administrative Units Renaming committee in Yei River County.

He said that the six years plan will be completed once all streets are renamed on the basis of cultural richness of great mountains, rivers, trees,

men and women of Yei River County.

This, he insisted must be done before the end of the referendum exercise for the South scheduled for January 9, 2011.

Mr. Michael Modi Apollo warned indigenous Southern Sudanese people against giving foreign names to their children without knowing and understanding the meaning of the name and their connections to their historical background. "Local names and religious name with meaning must be used only", added.

The idea of renaming streets and administrative unit in Yei River County is not welcome by everybody in Yei River County. Mr. Ndole Ndoromo Kumama the chairperson for Yei River County Referendum Committee said the idea of renaming the streets and the Payam before the referendum is "pre-mature".

According to him those who started the programme must ensure that only names of credible people and martyrs be used in renaming the streets and Payams in Yei River County. ■

EU REFERENDUM OBSERVERS IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

By staff Writer

The European Union Referendum Observation Mission (EU EOM) to the Southern Sudan referendum 2011 has deployed 32 long term observers to the field as part of a comprehensive assessment of the Southern Sudan Referendum process. The observers are expected to spend nearly five weeks in their assigned areas.

They have to assess local political conditions, and the general environment, logistical operations and technical procedures. The EU Observation Mission covers the 10 states of Southern Sudan as well as 8 states in the northern Sudan where there are Referendum Centers. They will be joined by some 60 short term

observers for the period of polling and counting in January 2011.

Three experts and 16 EU Referendum Observation Mission observers were already in Sudan since last November, to assess the voter registration exercise and exhibition of voter lists. Their findings will contribute to the Mission's preliminary report to be released publicly two days after the polling ends.

The EU was invited by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission to provide an independent, neutral and comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the referendum process, and assess compliance with Sudan's legal framework and with the international standards

for democratic elections and referenda.

Nearly all observers in Sudan referendum for self-determination are apparently unanimous in their predictions that the majority of South Sudanese are poised to vote for independence on January 9, 2011.

A total of 3.3 million people, representing 96% of eligible voters have registered in Southern Sudan ahead of the region's independence referendum on January 9, according to officials from the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB). ■

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