

PRESS RELEASE:

NGOs Welcome Ceasefire Agreement In South Sudan, Reaffirm Their Commitment To Help All Populations In Need Of Assistance

Juba, South Sudan, 25th January 2014

Fifty-five major humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in South Sudan have expressed their deep concern about the current humanitarian situation in the country and reaffirmed their commitment to help all civilian populations in need of assistance.

The fifty-five NGOs have been deeply alarmed at the scale of human suffering seen in the country in the past six weeks, and so welcome the recent signing in Addis Ababa of a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Government of South Sudan and the opposition forces, and trust that it will lead to a swift reduction in the suffering of civilians. In this regards, the agencies continue to call upon all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, to refrain from targeting attacks on civilian areas, and to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

The NGOs themselves operate in accordance with the four key humanitarian principles of:

- **The Humanitarian Imperative:** NGOs seek to alleviate human suffering, wherever it is found.
- **Impartiality:** aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
- **Neutrality:** aid is not used to further a particular political or religious standpoint, and NGOs do not take sides in a conflict.
- **Independence:** NGOs formulate their own policies and implementation strategies and do not seek to implement the foreign policy of any government.

“The humanitarian imperative means that we seek to provide assistance to any civilians who may need it”, explained Wendy Taeuber, Country Director of the International Rescue Committee. “Collectively, we want to be able to help all people in need, wherever they may be located in South Sudan and regardless of who is controlling that area”.

However, the NGOs emphasized that in order to be able to provide assistance to those who need it, it is essential that all actors recognize the independence of NGOs, and ensure respect and protection for their staff, assets, facilities and humanitarian activities. “We call upon all parties to the conflict to allow unimpeded humanitarian access, and to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of our staff” said Caroline Boyd, Medair’s Country Director.

“Violence against aid-workers is always unacceptable” added Alan Paul, Country Director of Save the Children, “and any restrictions on the movements or activities of NGOs simply hinder us from providing vital assistance to those South Sudanese who need it most”. Sadly, at least 3 aid-workers, all South Sudanese nationals, have been killed since 15th December.

“Access is urgently needed”, noted Mercy Corps’ Country Director Mathieu Rouquette, “as the rainy season will be starting in just a few months, which will make it difficult to transport supplies and leave some locations entirely cut-off”.

The NGOs reiterated that their neutrality means they are separate from any military actor or party to the conflict, and they maintain impartiality by providing assistance on the basis of need alone. “Although some NGOs are currently providing assistance to displaced people seeking shelter within UNMISS bases, we are maintaining our independence and respecting humanitarian principles as separate entities from UNMISS” explained Emilie Poisson, Country Director of ACTED.

Background

South Sudan

South Sudan gained independence on 9th July 2011, and is the world's newest country. Out of a population of about 12 million, it is estimated that more than half a million people have been displaced since fighting broke out just over one month ago.

Humanitarian Principles

Further details on humanitarian principles are given in the Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, available at www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/

The Fifty-Five NGOs

The majority of the fifty-five NGOs have been working in South Sudan for at least ten years, and several have been present for more than 30 years. In 2013, the agencies collectively spent over one-quarter of a billion US dollars on humanitarian and development programmes to assist the people of South Sudan.

Each NGO is registered in South Sudan with the Ministry of Justice and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), and every NGO is obliged to respect the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan, and abide by the country's laws.

Details of the five NGOs specifically quoted above are as follows:

ACTED has worked in South Sudan since 2007, and in response to the current crisis has been acting as site manager (including coordination, site planning and community mobilization) for locations hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Juba, Awerial and Bor, as well as providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for IDPs in Juba.

The **International Rescue Committee** has worked in South Sudan since 1989, and is addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and providing protection responses for IDPs sheltering at UNMISS bases in Juba. It is also preparing health, WASH, GBV and protection responses for people affected by conflict in Awerial County and Bentiu, and is planning a health and WASH response for IDPs at the UNMISS base in Bor, as and when the security situation permits.

Medair first worked in South Sudan in 1992, and has had a continuous presence since 1995. In response to the current crisis, its experienced emergency response teams are assisting displaced populations with WASH, health, nutrition and non-food items and emergency shelter (NFI/ES) services, in four locations in Juba, with other locations in Jonglei planned once suitable assessments have been completed.

Mercy Corps has been present in South Sudan since 2003. To address the current pressing humanitarian needs, it is providing NFI/ES assistance in two locations in Juba, is providing a WASH response for IDPs in Unity State, and is conducting assessments to determine the impact of the current crisis on markets and supply chains in Warrap.

Save the Children has been working in South Sudan for over 20 years. In response to the current crisis it is providing child protection support to displaced communities in Juba, Awerial and Nimule, including working to reunify children separated during the conflict and providing psychosocial and education support services to children affected by conflict and displacement. It is planning to provide child protection, education and nutrition services in Bor and Malakal as soon as the security situation permits.

Further information regarding each signatory NGO is available on each agency's website:

AAR Japan	www.aarjapan.gr.jp/english
ACTED	www.acted.org
Action Against Hunger	www.actionagainsthunger.org
Africa Educational Trust	www.africaeducationaltrust.org
African Medical and Research Foundation	www.amref.org
CAFOD	www.cafod.org.uk
Care	www.care.org
Caritas Switzerland	www.caritas.ch
Christian Agenda for Development	www.cad-nl.org
Christian Aid	www.christianaid.org.uk
Compass	
Concern Worldwide	www.concern.net
Cordaid	www.cordaid.nl
COSV	www.cosv.org/en
Diakonie Emergency Aid	www.diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de
Farm Africa	www.farmafrica.org
Forum for Community Change and Development	
Food for the Hungry	www.fh.org
Handicap International	www.handicap-international.org
Healthnet TPO	www.healthnettpo.org
HELP	www.help-ev.de/en/
ICCO	www.icco-international.com
International Aid Services	www.ias-intl.org
International Medical Corps	www.internationalmedicalcorps.org
International Rescue Committee	www.rescue.org
INTERSOS	www.intersos.org
Johanniter International Assistance	www.thejohanniter.org
Joint Aid Management	www.jamint.com
Medair	www.medair.org
MENTOR Initiative	www.thementorinitiative.org
Mercy Corps	www.mercycorps.org
Mission Aviation Fellowship	www.mafint.org
National Relief and Development Corps	www.nrdc-southsudan.org
Norwegian Refugee Council	www.nrc.no
Oxfam	www.oxfam.org.uk
People In Need	www.clovekvtisni.cz/en
Plan International	www.plan-international.org
Project Education South Sudan	www.projecteducationsouthsudan.org
Relief International	www.ri.org
Save The Children	www.savethechildren.org
Skills for South Sudan	www.skills-southsudan.org
SNV Netherlands Development Organisation	www.snvworld.org
Solidarites International	www.solidarites.org
South Sudanese Development Organization	www.ssdoprog.org
SEM (Sudan Evangelical Mission)	
Tearfund	www.tearfund.org
Terre des Hommes	www.tdh.ch
UNKEA	www.unkea.net
Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse	www.vsf-suisse.ch
War Child Holland	www.warchildholland.org
Welthungerhilfe	www.welthungerhilfe.de
Windle Trust	www.windle.org.uk
World Relief	www.worldrelief.org
World Renew	www.worldrenew.net
World Vision	www.wvi.org

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