

Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services Program

SUCCESS STORIES 2009–2011



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WINROCK
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Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services Program

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■ South Sudanese citizens had high hopes for freedom prior to the 2011 referendum.

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■ Many South Sudanese citizens have now voted for the first time.

South Sudan: From Independence to Nation Building

After the signing of the US-brokered 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between Sudan and southern Sudan, which afforded southern Sudan a measure of autonomy and which provided for a secession vote in 2011, it was imperative to strengthen the nascent, semi-autonomous government of southern Sudan so it could demonstrate tangible peace dividends to its people. However, after 20 years of civil war, the government of southern Sudan (GOSS) had very limited capacity to deliver services to its people. GOSS was constrained by lack of finances, but also by lack of know-how. Many of the new government officials were former soldiers with little or no experience in governing and very limited education from which to draw. The fact that southern Sudan was one of the poorest regions in the world made a challenging situation for GOSS even more problematic.



■ Remnants of war can still be seen in many parts of South Sudan.
Despite this, people are hopeful for the first time in decades.

It is against this backdrop that Winrock International designed the Building Responsibility for the Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) project, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The program mainly works in 4 key border states—Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Unity, and Jonglei, where poverty is pervasive, refugees from the north are numerous, and insecurity is prevalent.

The BRIDGE program is an integrated program with 5 components:

1. **Governance**, aimed at strengthening the capacity of local government to deliver services
2. **Community Development**, aimed at strengthening the capacity of communities and government to jointly address community needs
3. **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**, aimed at increasing access to safe water and sanitation in a sustainable manner
4. **Agriculture & Livelihoods**, aimed at increasing food security and promoting rapid, broad-based, and self-sustaining economic growth; and
5. **Education**, aimed at expanding access to quality education

The BRIDGE program was designed to build the capacity of local (state, county and community-level) government to deliver concrete peace dividends. Winrock's approach is both top-down and bottom-up. This means that, in addition to improving the performance of local level governments to deliver services, Winrock also works with communities to help them aggregate and articulate their needs to local government, ensuring they have a voice in the service delivery decisions that affect them. BRIDGE builds democratic habits at the grassroots level while improving the performance of democratic government bodies.

In the Governance and Community Development areas, BRIDGE has trained 2,408¹ government officials and improved the performance of 108 state and county government bodies. With much of the training and mentoring focused on the annual planning and budgeting exercise, which is the basis for service delivery, Winrock has helped 10 counties in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap and Jonglei to develop and produce their first- ever comprehensive County Profiles and three-year Strategic Plans, which serve as vital budgetary roadmaps. Winrock has also built the capacity of state legislatures in parliamentary procedure and legislative drafting, revision, and implementation, while also improving the efficiency of state ministers, directors general and other top-level civil servants with the adoption and implementation of new Council of Ministers Procedural Guides.

In order for the governance thrust of the BRIDGE program to be successful, there had to be concrete dividends to improved governance. Otherwise, capacity building without visible benefits would have been met with failure. Therefore, in order to support the governance and community engagement components, BRIDGE also designed the 3 service delivery components. The Agriculture; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; and Education components are focused on helping government deliver concrete peace dividends through a combination of training in relevant state ministries and county departments, coupled with hands-on, learning-by-doing service delivery. This means that, in partnership with local governments, Winrock has been able to deliver the following service delivery results:

¹ As of the end of September 30, 2011.

- **2,408** government officials trained in planning for service delivery, public financial management, community engagement, parliamentary procedure, and legislative drafting
- Performance improved for **108** state and county government bodies
- **10** counties developed their first ever comprehensive County Profiles and three-year Strategic Plans
- **11,242** farmers trained (by state agriculture officials) in crop production, ox-plow and land preparation to improve crop yields, thereby strengthening food security
- **88%** of trained farmers have adopted improved skills and technologies to increase crop production
- Average of **38%** increase in cereal production and **41%** increase in land cultivation since 2010 for selected farmers
- **452,869** people now have access to safe and sustainable drinking water through the construction and rehabilitation of **88** boreholes
- **41,135** people have received culturally-appropriate education on improved hygiene and sanitation activities to reduce levels of diarrheal diseases
- **4,764** people have benefitted from the construction of **16** Ventilated Improved Pit latrines in schools and **281** household latrines, thus improving access sanitation facilities and improving health outcomes

In 2011, southern Sudan became the Republic of South Sudan and the world's newest country was born. With the birth of the new country, the imperative to deliver concrete peace dividends to the new citizens of South Sudan became even clearer and BRIDGE's focus on building the capacity of local government to deliver those essential services shifted to providing hands-on mentoring and training for state and county governments in the area of planning and budgeting and public financial management, with BRIDGE staff sitting at select ministries and departments, working side-by-side to improve the performance of the government bodies.

As the state and local government bodies improve their service delivery performance, Winrock is supporting the USAID Forward initiative by working closely with government officials in the implementation of service delivery projects, building their capacity in tendering of bids, evaluation of bids, project award, and project monitoring through BRIDGE's small grant program, the Local Government Development Fund.

The following 20 success stories provide real-life snapshots of the impacts of Winrock's BRIDGE program. They are focused on the concrete benefits that South Sudanese citizens have gleaned from BRIDGE. The stories are organized by the 5 BRIDGE components. The compendium has been designed to allow the reader to browse at his or her leisure, enjoying whichever stories capture the reader's attention. We are proud of the accomplishments of the BRIDGE program and hope you enjoy learning about how Winrock is bettering the lives of South Sudanese women and men.



Demetria Arvanitis, Director, Volunteer Technical Assistance



■ **County Headquarters, Gogrial West County, Warrap State – one of the four states in which BRIDGE has been providing support.**

Governance

The BRIDGE Governance Program is the lens through which all other components are viewed. In short, the Governance Program provides government officials at the state and county level (as well as the community level) with the skills, knowledge and tools to govern effectively and efficiently, particularly in the area of service delivery.

Practically speaking, what this means is that Winrock ties its capacity building activities to South Sudan's annual planning and budgeting process and its Public Financial Management Act. Through training and on-the-job technical assistance, Winrock staff help state and county officials understand the annual process of planning for service delivery and the practice of budgeting for those plans in accordance with the precepts of the Public Financial Management Act. This includes activities such as developing county-by-county profiles (strategic assessments), aggregating and articulating the needs of communities, prioritizing infrastructure projects, and budgeting for those projects. These activities are all the more important in light of South Sudan's current economic crisis.

As a further way to concretely support the annual planning and budgeting process, Winrock has developed a Local Government Development Fund. The Fund is a small grants mechanism that provides mostly in-kind grants for projects that have been identified and prioritized in annual plans, but for which government funds are not available. As an ancillary benefit, Winrock is using the fund as a learning-by-doing opportunity for government officials, improving their performance in the area of public procurement and project management.

Additionally, Winrock has, at the request of the Local Government Board, developed and implemented procedural tools to help government be more efficient, while also building the skills and knowledge of key government officials. Winrock's development of the Council of Ministers Handbook, as well as capacity building to state legislatures on parliamentary procedure and legislative drafting, are examples.

Historic Strategic Planning Process Empowers Local Government

In South Sudan, where more than 300 non-governmental organizations and other international agencies are deployed to assist in development of the fledgling nation, it can be hard for anyone to get a grip on who's doing what. Coordinating the delivery of basic and badly-needed public services – including the provision of clean water, construction of schools and clinics, and assistance to farmers – is often complicated and cumbersome due to the lack of good, up-to-date data about the status and nature of the myriad projects unfolding in different jurisdictions. For local government administrators and financial planners operating in remote locations in the countryside, the immense task is exacerbated by inadequate resources including communications and computer equipment.

*Barnaba Bol Mawain,
Director of the Gogrial
West County Planning
Unit, and other county
planners worked hard
to produce the first
county strategic plan
in early 2012.*



With assistance from Winrock International's BRIDGE program – funded by USAID – counties in the rural states of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBG), Warrap and Jonglei in early 2012 successfully completed the first-ever three-year strategic plans and comprehensive county profiles in the new nation's history. The invaluable documents, which are now serving as development blueprints for each county, were assembled after a series

“The Strategic Plan gives us a very clear idea of what we are going to do, not just this year, but for the next three years.”

—Barnaba Bol Mawain, Director of Twic County Planning Unit

of consultative meetings between community members and government officials, including county planners, payam and boma administrators, and tribal chiefs to ensure widespread input and buy-in, and have already had an impact in places like Gogrial West, Tonj North and Twic counties, in Warrap State. Those three BRIDGE-supported counties were the first to officially “launch” their strategic plans in February 2012 by publicly approving them and requiring that all subsequent development-related planning and budgeting work is linked to previously-established priorities and projected budgets – the first time such a mandate has been issued. Completion of the plans and profiles also has helped firmly root the planning and budgeting process in South Sudan where it rightfully belongs – at the county level – and marks a turning point in a country determined to operate with a decentralized system of government.

By the end of March, 2012, with BRIDGE assistance, all five counties in NBG and all six counties in War-rap State had finalized their strategic plans and county profiles, as well as two counties in Jonglei State (Bor and Akobo), despite widespread insecurity problems there in late 2011 and early 2012. BRIDGE helped by facilitating SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses in payams during the consultation process, crunching numbers to determine if projected revenues could cover planned expenditures, meeting with key county and state officials to ensure communities and government were on the same page with regard to local priorities, and assisting in production of the final documents, which will be used as vital references as counties begin the process of preparing their 2012/2013 annual plans and budgets in advance of the new fiscal year in South Sudan, set to begin in July 2012.



County government staff actively participate in planning and budgeting sessions.

Local Government Capacity Building in South Sudan

Helping Government Staff Perform More Effectively and Efficiently

Local government staff in South Sudan do their jobs with little to no training and scarce resources. For a successful transition from relief to development, it is crucial to build the capacity of local government to perform more efficiently and to more effectively meet the needs of citizens.

USAID's Sudan BRIDGE program, led by Winrock International, is addressing this critical need, providing hands-on training, technical assistance, and grant resources to local government ministries in Warrap, Unity, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal States.

Many local government staff attended planning and governance training for the very first time.



In October 2009, Sudan BRIDGE provided support to Planning & Budgeting Training for local government administrative officers in Warrap State, led by the State Ministry of Local Government (SMoLG). Twenty-seven participants, including Payam Administrators, Deputy Administrators, and bookkeepers representing six counties, came together for six days to improve their skills. Working with the Democracy & Governance Advisor of the SMoLG, BRIDGE helped facilitate training on topics such as participatory planning and budgeting, good governance practices, facilitation skills, and gender mainstreaming. This was the first training of its kind to be offered to this group of local government staff.

Participants discussed common challenges and ways to improve accountability and transparency. Participants also learned new approaches to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the group learned how to use standard financial forms to guide them in preparing budgets for salaries, operational costs, capital expenditures, and incoming revenues.

Post-training, 82% of participants indicated that the training gave them new ideas on budgeting techniques, including the use of the financial forms, which are expected to improve the way officers organize, collect, and manage resources. Barac Atem Barac, the Payam Administrator in Tonj South County, states, "I was shocked to know that in my work there are some financial forms to be used. When I go back to my payam, I will start using these forms as I have been taught." Barac and the other participants stressed the importance of this kind of training and have requested that Sudan BRIDGE continue to provide similar trainings across the state.

Local Government Development Fund Helps Tribes Achieve Peace

Negotiation and Mediation at Conference Paves Way for Post-Conflict Development

For more than two decades, development opportunities in Mayom County, Unity State, were severely limited due to a long-standing feud between members of two rival Nuer tribes. They stole each other's cattle and skirmished over scarce water supplies and pastures. The tit-for-tat conflict left scores of pastoralists dead and wounded in revenge killings, kept people in constant fear, and prevented neighbors from working together to improve infrastructure and gain the skills needed to advance in the post-civil war era in South Sudan.



Mayom Peace Conference participants gather for a ceremonial blessing by religious leaders at the start of the meeting.

In late 2010, when community members, government and traditional leaders and other stakeholders in the area, including representatives of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, (NGOs) considered how to unlock the region's development potential, they put peace at the top of the list. Water, health, agriculture and education are all critical sectors for development in Mayom County, but how could the community either start or sustain this vital work without first establishing security and stability between neighbors? Together, the stakeholders decided to try tapping into a new United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored program called the Local Government Development Fund (LGDF) for assistance arranging a formal peace conference for mediation and negotiation between the tribes. With assistance from the USAID-funded Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) administered LGDF program, the first-ever Mayom Peace Conference was held in January 2011, and, more than seven months later, the community continues to reap the dividends of reduced conflict and increased cooperation between tribes. Additionally, the new era of peace has enabled development work to occur including the construction and operation of

“In the past, just two members could ignite whole clans to fight. After the conference, the situation is totally different.”

—Hon. George Mathony Leaw, a Member of Parliament who represents the area

new public health clinics in each of the two communities, and six new boreholes were drilled in the two communities, bringing clean water to more than 4,200 people.

“People from the two communities are enjoying free movement....and disarmament took place smoothly,” said the Hon. Angelina William, a Member of Parliament who represents the Mankien constituency. The success of the conference, and the establishment of peace between the tribal neighbors facilitated by the LGDF program, took on new significance in mid-2011 as the conflicts in Abyei and South Kordofan threatened to destabilize the region. Residents of Unity State endured food and fuel shortages, as well as transportation problems caused by the border closure, the laying of landmines and skirmishing between militias. Sustained cooperation and partnership between the Nuer neighbors in Unity is now more important than ever.

Conference participants included leaders of the two adversarial clans from the payams of Riak and Mankien, as well as payam and boma administrators. Others included local youth and women’s groups, county commissioners, army and police officials, religious groups and staff from the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Representatives from the United Nations Mission in Sudan participated as well as Members of Parliament representing the conflict area. Conference delegates developed their own written work plan for peace that focused on voluntary disarmament of both tribes; compensation by aggressors to victims’ families; and agreement to provide security at celebrations and functions such as weddings and dances, to keep disagreements from developing into larger problems.

Government Procurement Processes

Promoting efficiency and fair practices in South Sudan

As the President of South Sudan summarized at the Governors' Conference in August 2009, "we didn't know how hard it would be to govern." Still rebuilding after decades of war, the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) has made significant progress and continues to work towards developing and maintaining effective operations. Many government officers do their jobs with few resources and very little (if any) formal training.

Through the Local Government Development Fund (LGDF), the US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program supports government-led construction and infrastructure improvement projects to rebuild physical infrastructure that supports government operations and community development.



One of the many government buildings that GOSS has newly constructed or rebuilt with BRIDGE support.

A key part of the LGDF process is to put in place sound and effective processes and documentation to support government-led procurement and contracting. The procurement processes have often been neglected, or at times even non-transparent. But this is no longer the case in Unity State, where important changes have taken hold.

BRIDGE worked with the Unity State Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development (MOLPSHRD) in Bentiu to initiate construction of office space for the expanding ministry. BRIDGE worked with the government team to review and adopt GOSS public procurement guidelines and to develop clear, detailed invitations for bids outlining a comprehensive scope of work and drawings of the engineering requirements. Invitations were sent to contractors in Unity and Juba, providing a fair and transparent chance for interested groups to participate in the bidding process. Bids were sealed in wooden boxes with locks, and the committee, composed of contractors and ministry officials with participation of Winrock staff, conducted the selection process in the presence of bidders, using selection criteria such as financial capacity and past performance. Such a process was the first of its kind in the ministry's history.

At completion of the selection process, BRIDGE and the government staff jointly developed a contract template, with clear roles and responsibilities for each party and a full description of payment terms, contracting provisions, and scope of work. This paved the way for swift implementation and minimized potential problems. Six months later, the construction is almost complete.

After securing additional financial support from the ministry to add more office space, a second contract was signed for an expansion of the building project. The staff is now able to replicate these processes and tailor the document templates for future work.

Procedural Guides Help Ministers Govern More Effectively and Accountably

When the new Republic of South Sudan was born in July 2011, citizens turned their gaze expectantly toward government, watching and waiting to see how it would respond to the monumental challenge of building a functional public service delivery system in a country long on hope but short on everything else – including basic education, health, water, transportation and economic infrastructure.

*Hon. Garang Kuot Kuot,
Secretary General in
NGB State, holds a
copy of the new COM
Handbook.*



To start on the right path, the governments of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NGB) and Jonglei, approached the United States Agency for International Development's BRIDGE program to help them develop a set of detailed operational and ethical guidelines for their top state executives to follow. Unless the highest-level officials – including Ministers, Advisors to the Governor, County Commissioners, the Secretary General and other senior civil servants – were on the same page regarding their duties, responsibilities and ethical obligations as public servants, they asked, how could these various powerful entities function effectively and accountably on behalf of the citizenry?

In August 2011 the answer arrived, in the form of customized Council of Ministers Procedural Guides, developed with technical assistance from BRIDGE for use in each state, where they have since been approved and are now helping speed up decision-making processes and establish uniform ethics and operating procedures in each state's top governing body, the Council of Ministers. The Guides include detailed guidance on everything from how to prepare and document proposed items for inclusion on a Council of Ministers meeting agenda, to proper procedures for Ministers to follow when seeking approval for personal or professional travel, and protocols for how ministers should appropriately interact with each other, civil servants and members of their state Legislative Assemblies. In addition, each of the Guides includes a substantive "Ethics and Integrity Code" with specific do's and don'ts – including instructions regarding disclosures of conflicts of interest.

Garang Kuot Kuot, Secretary General in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, whose job includes facilitating and supporting smooth Council of Ministers operations, said the Guide immediately helped effect changes that have increased the Council's productivity. For example, Kuot tailored the NBG Guide to include simple guidance regarding seating arrangements during Council of Ministers meetings, to ensure that those who most frequently need to speak directly to the Governor, who chairs the meetings, can consult him discreetly without having to walk from one end of the room to the other, reducing the amount of time needed for deliberations and discussions.

Kuot said the Guide and its new ethics and integrity code are strengthening the capacity of government “because it builds the confidence of people in the government. It helps the public in a lot of ways, including eliminating conflicts of interest....That is something that affects everybody.”

In Jonglei, state Ministers quickly signaled their intent to follow procedures codified in the Council of Ministers Guide when, immediately after the Guide's official approval, Ministers began following procedures prescribed in the Guide for submitting travel authorization forms to the Governor documenting the exact nature of their travel-related business, the specific benefits that the proposed travel would bring to the state, and evidence that the cost of the trip is within the state's approved travel budgets. The Guide also includes new procedures that call for the development of a detailed report by the traveler regarding the outcome of their professional travel.

His Excellency the Governor of Jonglei State, Kuol Manyang Juuk, called the Guide “a starting point of re-shaping our principles and moralities,” and urged Ministers and other senior executive officials to study and implement it.

Adoption of the new rules and procedures in the Guide applies not only to Ministers, but also to Ministerial Advisors, Commissioners, Directors General, Executive Directors and Senior Defense and Security officials, and is creating more transparent administrative systems in the two states.

“We are tasked with a responsibility of creating new systems in all our operations in the government,” H.E. the Governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal Paul Malong Awan wrote in the NBG Guide's introduction. “We have an opportunity to adopt and use a Council of Ministers Guide as part of our resolve to correct unwanted practices while creating new ones for us and future generations. The future generation need not start from zero.”

“It's like the bible. I went through it page by page and could not believe how much information is in it. It's the formula, from A to Z, to make government work better.”

—Hon. Garang Kuot Kuot, Secretary General in Northern Bahr el Ghazal



■ **Community Action Group members line up behind their chosen candidates, in first-ever community elections.**

Community Development

The BRIDGE Community Development Program directly supports the Governance Program by building the skills and knowledge of rural communities to work together and with local government to meet the community's needs. Where the Governance Program builds capacity at the top, the Community Development Program builds capacity at the grassroots level. But both programs have the ultimate goal of improving service delivery through improved governance and improved government performance.

One of the primary ways that Winrock is educating communities about their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy is through the establishment of Community Action Groups. These groups gather together to identify key community needs, prioritize them, and develop solutions to meet them. Sometimes those solutions are entirely community-driven; sometimes they involve international NGOs and relief organizations; and sometimes they involve the local government. The leadership of the Community Action Groups is democratically elected, which has provided many community members with their first taste of democracy in action. Moreover, it has provided the first opportunity for many women to have formal a leadership role in their communities.

The Community Action Groups are nascent civil society organizations, and Winrock invests significant face-to-face time visiting the groups and helping them organize their communities, aggregate and articulate their communities' concerns, and advocate for their communities with local government bodies. An outgrowth of the Community Action Groups is the Women's Support Groups, which every Community Action Group has as a partner. Additionally, membership in and leadership of other BRIDGE-supported civil society groups, such as Water Management Committees, Parent-Teacher Associations, and Farmer Producer Groups is frequently drawn from the Community Action Groups.

Community Action Groups Move from Relief to Development

Panlit villagers plan and invest in their own community improvements

Despite years of war and ongoing struggles, communities all across South Sudan still have hope. One community, Panlit village in Warrap State, has put this hope and strong resolve into action.

The Panlit Community Action Group (CAG) was formed with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program in 2010. Since then, through regular meetings, during which men and women jointly brainstormed and crafted an activity plan for the development of their community, the CAG members proactively moved forward to implement their community projects.

Community members are now coming together to discuss issues at regular community meetings.



When BRIDGE provided Panlit with a borehole and latrine, improving access to water and sanitation facilities, the CAG members decided to build on that progress by constructing a primary school in the village. They rallied the villagers to start laying bricks for the school, and its management committee contributed seven bulls to start the construction. Soon after, community members volunteered their labor, village chiefs made personal contributions, and women began to cook food and fetch water to support the efforts. Eventually, villagers contributed 30 bulls, six goats, and eight bags of sugar to implement their own project.

A culture of self-reliance, activism and community ownership has taken root in Panlit, spurred by CAG leadership that has demonstrated its ability to listen and respond constructively to the needs of its people and to communicate with local government. The Twic County government took notice of Panlit's strong community spirit and hard work by awarding the village 4,000 Sudanese Pounds and one bull to help complete work on the school. In addition, the county commissioner has accorded Panlit village boma status, bringing pride to the village while showing that Panlit is a model for what a motivated community working cooperatively with a responsive, supportive government can accomplish.

BRIDGE has been supporting other communities and CAGs that, like Panlit, are proudly improving their life, taking similar initiatives that foster unity and trust within the community and building concrete linkages with their local government. To date, BRIDGE has supported 230 CAGs across Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap and Unity states.

Building a Culture of Democracy

For the First Time, Villagers Vote for Chief

As the members of the newly formed Community Action Group (CAG) in Abyei Village, Gomjuer Center Payam, Aweil West County in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan lined up behind their chosen candidate for CAG leadership positions, they took a stand for themselves and planted seeds for their community's future. Never before had the citizens of this community participated in an election. The impacts have proven to be far-reaching.



Voting for the first time.

Sudan BRIDGE, a USAID-funded integrated development program operating in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Unity States in South Sudan, came to Abyei Village to foster hope, build the skills and leadership capacity of community members and local government, and link the community to basic services that they so desperately need. After spending time with the community, BRIDGE facilitated the formation of a Community Action Group, comprised of local representatives who would lead efforts to assess, prioritize, and engage in initiatives to address the community's needs.

14 men and 6 women joined the CAG and participated in a voting process to nominate and elect CAG leaders. One by one, each member got out of their seat to stand behind the person they wished to support for the various leadership positions. It was a powerful moment for the men and women of this community who, for the first time, were able to actively participate in an election and see a peaceful outcome. A seed was planted as community members began to experience the spirit of democracy.

The seed grew. After this first successful election, community members subsequently contacted Sudan BRIDGE staff to assist with another election, for the position of village Executive Chief.

In Sudanese culture, chieftdom is historically inherited, accepted as an inevitable right of a select few. Accordingly, when the seat for Abyei Village Executive Chief opened up, the son of the Chief expected to inherit the seat. However, the CAG members and community elders had a different thought, and together, decided to ask for an election. The Sudan BRIDGE Team was happy to help facilitate.

Community Action Groups Foster Local Ownership and Empower Leaders

Alikhook Arieu Akec cares for her family of nine, tends her small farm, and serves her community in Anwei Boma, Warrap State as the Community Action Group (CAG) Chairperson. As Chairperson, she serves as a role model, not only within her own small community, but on a much greater scale. She is the first woman to be elected as a CAG Chairperson across the entire State.

“Before, women weren’t given a chance. I am thankful that the community elected me and I have had a chance to learn that the chance is possible,” she proudly states.

Women are increasingly elected to leadership positions in their communities.



Alikhook knows that her role comes with big responsibilities. She is ready to take them on, alongside her fellow CAG members. “We need changes,” she asserts. And she is learning that the solutions can be found through collaboration, commitment, and determination within the community itself.

The USAID-funded Sudan BRIDGE program is working with community members like Alikhook to form self-sustaining CAGs across three states of South Sudan –Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Unity. The CAGs are comprised of community representatives and elected leaders who work together to enhance community participation and ownership in development projects and to serve as a voice to local government. Alikhook and her fellow CAG members are working together to prioritize and address community needs, starting with agricultural development. Taking advantage of agriculture training provided by BRIDGE, the CAG members are working hard in their newly established gardens. Alikhook notes, “If someone knows how to grow, the entire community benefits.”

“Before BRIDGE, we didn’t know that we could do something to help ourselves. The program has shown us how to work hard. We now know that we can rebuild this town on our own.”

—Ms. Alikhook Arieu Akec, CAG Chairperson

Across the three states, Sudan BRIDGE has witnessed several impacts and accomplishments from the CAGs in a short period of time: More communities are embracing the role of women leaders. CAGs are initiating development projects –such as school rehabilitation and construction of community centers– on their own. Linkages between communities and local government are strengthened, as local government increasingly participates in dialog and activities with the CAGs and wider community.

Perhaps most importantly, the CAGs are building hope and fostering a strong sense of ownership within the communities they serve. Alikhook is proud that this sense of ownership is changing the community’s historical dependence on relief, moving from “what can you do for us?” to “we can do this together.”

Community Empowerment Leads to Elections and More Responsive Leadership

Simon Thel Akol lives in Nyarkec Village, a short drive north from Kuajok Town in central Warrap State, a fertile area where maize and sorghum crops grow as tall as the conical thatched roofs on the residents' mud brick homes during the rainy season, and herds of goats and cattle abound. Akol and other village residents could see the area's potential, but the pace of progress was slow, and their traditional leader – appointed years earlier during the era of military governance in South Sudan – seemed unmotivated to effect changes or respond to suggestions for improvements.



Simon Thel Akol was elected Deputy Executive Chief of Majongrial after serving as Chairman of the Nyarkec CAG in Gogrial West, Warrap.

In 2010, the local Community Action Group (CAG) and Women's Support Group (WSG), formed with assistance from the United States Agency for International Development's Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program, elected Akol as the CAG chairman. He paid close attention during CAG training sessions, which touched on subjects such as community engagement and planning, leadership skills and group dynamics, conflict prevention and promotion of gender equity. He listened to the group's members when they identified the need for better access to safe water supplies and cited the need for a borehole in nearby Machok Village. Akol established rapport with local government officials and worked to receive approvals for drilling the borehole, which will commence after the rains subside, bringing clean drinking water and improved public health to an estimated 700 residents. Through those few straightforward actions, the community saw what a responsive, representative leader working in partnership with local government, could do for their community.

Dissatisfied with their current leadership, and having seen representative government in action through the CAG, in June 2011, members of the CAG/WSG approached their boma and payam administrators and requested

“The BRIDGE-supported CAG/WSG helped my community to understand that leaders are voted by the majority of the population. The government or the military cannot know the best leader, since they didn't have knowledge of the person and the community may not respect a leader who is not of their choice.”

—Simon Thel Akol, elected Deputy Executive Chief of Majongrial

permission to hold new elections to choose their own chief to replace the one appointed by the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) during military rule. Local government listened, and the village successfully held transparent elections, lining up behind Akol, who became the new Deputy Executive Chief of Majongrial, bringing representative leadership to the area for the first time in years.

"If we were not organized, if we had not been meeting together in our groups, we could not have elected him," said Ajok Majok, deputy chairperson of the Nyarkec Women's Support Group. "Good things have happened because we are meeting and talking together now, and we did not do this before," said Majok, during a break from working in her garden on a hot August day. Majok and her neighbour, Rebecca Akon Ayok, another WSG member, said the community has renewed hope for making progress on their short list of priority projects, including creation of a community vegetable garden for growing pumpkins, maize and okra, completion of a local school building project that has stalled, and construction of a public health clinic, in addition to the borehole for Machok. "We talked about these improvements with our previous chief, but he was not listening," Ayok said.

*Ajok Majok, left, and
Rebecca Ayok, members
of the Nyarkec WSG,
who held democratic
elections to pick
a new chief.*





■ CAG members work together on community gardens and other community improvement programs.



■ Many villages now have their own boreholes, bringing water closer to home for thousands of South Sudanese citizens.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

In developing countries, such as South Sudan, about 80 percent of illnesses are linked to poor water and sanitation conditions. One out of every 5 deaths under the age of 5 worldwide is due to a water-related disease². Only half of South Sudanese have access to clean, potable water. In order to support the improvement of service delivery by local government in the water area, Winrock designed and implemented the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) component of the BRIDGE program.

At the government level, Winrock improves the performance of county Rural Water Departments (RWDs) by assisting them with mapping of water points, supported by GIS technology, so that government officials can rationally plan the optimal location for new water points. Winrock is also helping Rural Water Departments improve their performance in the area of managing routine water point maintenance. Winrock has worked with the Rural Water Departments and is developing a strategy for the county-wide storage and management of borehole spare parts and a system for improving the flow of information between the state and counties, while also prioritizing the maintenance and repair of the boreholes.

Winrock also educates water officials in the annual planning and budgeting process, ensuring that water, hygiene and sanitation priorities are accounted for in the final county budget submissions. Additionally, Winrock has developed an illustrated and culturally-grounded Water, Sanitation and Hygiene learning tool, and has trained government officials as WASH trainers. These officials, armed with the illustrated tool and the knowledge gained from their training, visit communities and schools to educate populations on basic hygiene and sanitation. In support of this training, Winrock provides key materials for the construction of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines to individuals who take the training and are willing to provide the labor to construct the latrines.

At the community level, Winrock establishes Water Management Committees for each BRIDGE-supported borehole. These Water Management Committees are democratically elected and are responsible for the maintenance of the community's water point. They receive training on borehole management, maintenance and repair. They also receive training on how to collect fees from water users so that there will be adequate funds to repair the borehole when it breaks. The Water Management Committees are examples of grass-roots civil society organizations, which serve a vital link between individual citizens and the governments that represent them.

2 Source: The Water Project: www.thewaterproject.org

Breaking Tradition, Women Learn To Fix Vital Water Supply Equipment

Community training empowers Warrap women to do it themselves

Water is in extremely short supply in Akoc Chaz Village, Twic County, as it is throughout South Sudan. A single borehole and the hand-powered pump attached to it, drilled with funding provided by the US Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program, provides the only means in this part of Warrap State. If the pump stopped working or needed a spare part, people once waited until a man with some mechanical ability became available to take a look. It could take days to get the hardware fixed and for life-giving water for drinking, cooking and cleaning to start flowing again.

That all changed after Nyankirr Ajak, a 35-year-old mother of five, and fellow village mother Ariec Gak, 28, were trained as hand pump caretakers. Initially, the two women, who are members of the local Water Management Committee (WMC), resisted the idea of learning how to carry out equipment repairs on their own, considering such work to be the responsibility of men. But with encouragement from others and support from the WMC and the government Rural Water Development (RWD) agency, their confidence grew.

"Our eyes were opened" after attending the training on basic pump repairs and maintenance, the two women stated. Now, the women have added pump maintenance to their traditional repertoire of household skills such as food preparation, crop cultivation and child care. Instead of waiting, these women can help maintain and even repair equipment themselves, ensuring maximum community gains from the borehole and pump project.

Consultations between and trainings of the RWD

agency and community-supported WMCs are a key to empowering local communities to become

active in decision making processes and achieve self-sufficiency. To date, 58 members of local WMCs have participated in BRIDGE-supported hand pump repair trainings in Twic County, Warrap; 28 of those trainees were women, indicating that communities in South Sudan are now grasping the importance of directly involving women in all aspects of community development.

Ariec Gak said handling tools and repair equipment normally used only by men in her village felt strange, at first. But at the end of the training, as people gathered around to watch her and Ajak successfully replacing the pump head, Gak said she is looking forward to using her new skills to keep one of her village's most vital resources – its water – flowing safely and reliably.



Women and men learn to repair and maintain boreholes in their communities.

*"What a man can do,
a woman can do."*

—Female Trainee, Water Management Committee,
Twic County

Access to Water Becomes a Reality in South Sudan

Community Works Together to Seek Solutions on Their Own

For years, Akual Kuec, a mother of four in Aweng, Twic County in Warrap State of South Sudan, had to walk 30 minutes each way to get water for her family. Over time, the borehole broke down due to poor maintenance, and since then, Kuec has been forced to walk three hours to the next closest water source. “After our borehole stopped working, my family and I had to walk very far to collect water. We had to wake up very early in the morning so that we could be back in our village by mid-day. This was very difficult for all, especially for my small children who had to wait until I returned from fetching water to eat,” remarks Kuec. “The elder children had to stop attending school, as I needed them to help me transport the heavy jerry cans.”



Thanks to ongoing efforts to rehabilitate and construct boreholes, women in the BRIDGE-supported communities now walk shorter distances to retrieve water.

Unfortunately, she is not alone. Though South Sudan has numerous lakes and rivers, the vast majority of its population still does not have access to water. Thousands of individuals like Kuec must also walk several hours to reach the nearest water source.

To address the critical need for water, USAID’s Sudan BRIDGE program is working with communities to rehabilitate or construct boreholes and establish community-based water user committees to manage them. The borehole closer to Kuec has been repaired, along with 191 others across Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Unity States.

BRIDGE also trains local “super technicians,” men and women who live in the area and are able to help with more complicated repairs at the water sites. The super technicians are provided with repair kits and extensive training on hand pump repair and maintenance, to enable them to respond quickly to problems.

Now, community members not only have closer and more reliable access to water, but they have also been able to establish a run-off channel to support vegetable production and provide drinking water for livestock. The time saved and multiple uses of the borehole have significantly improved lives.

“Since our borehole was fixed, I have been able to fetch water and still have time to prepare food for my children, send them to school, and work in the vegetable garden.”

—Ms. Akual Kuec, Twic County, Warrap

Communities Collaborate with Government to Plan, Budget and Manage Clean Water Sources

In years past, when a borehole broke down in or around Ngapkuot Jok, a village in Gogrial West County, Warrap State, hundreds of people used water from pools and streams or walked miles to the next village to try to find a functional source of safe water. Back then, notifying the military-era government and asking for help with a water problem didn't do much good, because few mechanics with the knowledge and skills to fix the machinery were available. And even if a mechanic could be located, spare parts were in short supply and too expensive for the government to readily provide. With the signing in 2005 of an official peace agreement between South Sudan and its northern neighbor, followed by full independence in July 2011, a new approach was needed – one that would both empower communities and support the nascent local government's ability to effectively plan, budget, and deliver vital public services like clean water to constituents.

In 2012, that vision has become reality in states across South Sudan where Winrock International's BRIDGE program (funded by USAID) has assisted villages – like the one at Ngapkuot Jok – to take ownership of their water supplies and collaborate with better-informed and equipped local government officials to ensure water sources remain fully functional and protected.

A payam WASH coordinator records information about the location and status of a borehole in Ngapkuot Jok Village, Gogrial West, after consulting with members of the local WMC.



Machol Deng Anei, the Gogrial Payam WASH coordinator who oversees Ngapkuot Jok Village, has witnessed this progression, first hand. Anei said that BRIDGE-supported activities including the establishment and support of local Water Management Committees (WMCs) – comprising community members who are trained in basic water point maintenance and repairs – wherever BRIDGE-funded boreholes are drilled has significantly improved his ability to collect information about the status of water points, enabling him to work with local WMCs to fix problems faster. In October 2011, Anei cited an issue with Ngapkuot Jok borehole as a case in point. The chairman of the village WMC, Akot Achuil Bak, notified Anei that the borehole was broken – and that the WMC already had a plan for fixing it. As soon as the problem occurred, Bak called a meeting of the WMC's leadership to discuss the nature of the breakdown; a replacement connecting rod was needed to get water flowing again, at a cost of about 68 South Sudanese Pounds (SSPs), or approximately \$17 U.S. dollars (USD). During the meeting, the group's treasurer, Yak Kajang, verified that the WMC's existing account balance, derived from previously collected community contributions, could cover the cost of the part, along with estimated labor charges of approximately 44 SSPs, or \$11 USD.

Knowing that the WMC was ready for action – and able to cover the cost of repairs through contributions – prompted Anei to quickly assign a local hand pump mechanic, Majok Akech of Gogrial Payam, who had received technical training from BRIDGE earlier in 2011, to complete the work, getting life-giving clean water flowing again for an estimated 700 residents who rely upon the borehole.

Household Latrines Reinforce Safe Hygiene and Sanitation Practices

Rebbecca Amath Kengyang Lual, 50, a single mother of three in Marial Bai, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, was worried. She understood that the lack of sanitation facilities in her community could increase the risk of cholera for her children and for herself. In Marial Bai open defecation is the norm, the community uses open water sources to draw water and bath, and there are few alternatives. Rebecca would walk her children to the bushes each night, worried about disease, snakebites, and predators.

Though she had seen latrines in other villages and knew of the health benefits they could offer, Rebecca never thought that she could begin construction of one herself. Interested, she attended a hygiene and education training sponsored by the USAID-funded Sudan BRIDGE program, implemented by Winrock International. The training highlighted the benefits of proper sanitation facilities and demonstrated how to properly prepare a pit latrine. In exchange for digging the pit, BRIDGE offered to provide interested community members with a concrete slab and ventilation pipe for their latrine, as well as the tools to complete construction. Rebecca took advantage of the opportunity immediately.

After digging the pit and installing the slab and vent pipe, Rebecca initially thought about constructing a simple thatched structure to enclose the latrine. After careful consideration, she realized that a more permanent building would cost her less in maintenance over time, and she purchased bricks and corrugated sheeting to complete the structure. Her inspiration came from latrines she had seen in Mading Aweil and other villages. “I have stayed in many towns and know the importance of practicing good hygiene and sanitation at home,” Rebecca mentioned.



Serving as a role model for others, Rebecca Lual unlocks the door to her new, self-constructed latrine.

After completing the structure, Rebecca and her children quickly became role models, earning the respect of much of the village. She noted that “many people were surprised,” to see that she could complete such a structure on her own and now her example has inspired others to begin construction on their own latrines. Motioning to her latrine, Rebecca said, “We appreciate the assistance from the BRIDGE program because it has helped us to improve the sanitary conditions here in Marial Bai.”

Thanks to Rebecca’s lead, BRIDGE is now helping residents across Marial Bai to construct their own latrines and has also completed a set of latrines for students at the Marial Bai Primary School. Rebecca is enthusiastic about the new developments, stating, “It helps a lot because students learn proper hygiene at school and are able to practice at home.”

To date, Sudan BRIDGE has helped residents to complete 281 latrines in Marial Bai and other communities across Unity, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Warrap States.



■ Agricultural Producer Group members are ready to work on their community garden.

Agriculture & Livelihoods

South Sudan is a potentially wealthy country, yet it remains one of Africa's least developed. South Sudan's White Nile valley has productive soil and more-than-adequate water supplies; however, subsistence farming and cattle-keeping continue to provide a living for the vast majority of the population, and South Sudan depends largely on imports of goods, services, and capital from neighboring countries, even though it has abundant natural resources.

The Agriculture and Livelihood component of the BRIDGE program supports state and county agriculture bodies in improving agriculture-based service delivery in the BRIDGE target areas. At the government level, Winrock works with state ministries of agriculture and forestry to train agricultural extension agents, while also providing support to government officials in the annual planning and budgeting process so that agricultural needs are represented in the annual budgets.

At the community level, Winrock establishes community-based producer groups who work together to create off-season community gardens. These community gardens provide vital nutrition, dietary diversity and extra income to the members of the producer groups. Winrock also provides training to farmers on a variety of topics designed to improve food security. For instance, Winrock trains farmers on the use of animal traction technology to increase the area of land cultivated, thus increasing yearly crop yields. Winrock trains farmers on proper post-harvest crop handling to reduce spoilage, improve food safety, and save seeds for next year's crop. Additionally, Winrock has provided improved livelihood training in non-timber forest products, such as beekeeping, and in timber-based products, such as harvesting and marketing gum acacia, a common food additive.

Ox Plow Technology Creates New Opportunities for Rural Farmers

Only a few months after participating in BRIDGE-supported Ox Plow Training, one farmer in Aweil West County, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, is already seeing that new technologies not only improve labor efficiencies and increase yields, but can also result in new and profitable business opportunities.

Ataak Yel Yel is the CAG Chairperson for Akewich Boma and an active member of the community's vegetable producer group. Before the introduction and adoption of the ox-plow technology, Ataak and his family of five used to work for 30 days or more to cultivate only 2 feddans each planting season. The food they produced from this plot, after selling a small amount for salt, soap, and other basic requirements, would last less than six months, even at one meal a day. Struggling to get by, Ataak was first introduced to ox plow technology in 2007 when he saw a neighbor, Piol Kuol Kuol, who had been trained by another NGO. "I was so impressed," said Ataak, "I asked Piol how I could acquire such skills to solve my family labor problem." Unfortunately, the other NGO's program had stopped and though he looked, Ataak could not find another opportunity to be trained.

Farmers receive training and subsidies for ox plow technology, which can substantially reduce labor and increase yields.



In early May 2010, Sudan BRIDGE launched a campaign to introduce ox plow technology to selected communities in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Unity States. In addition to providing instruction on animal handling and the proper use of plows, BRIDGE connected with local merchants to supply subsidized ox plows at a reduced cost to farmers who completed the program. When the BRIDGE team came to Akewich CAG for the sensitization campaign, Ataak listened carefully and remembering his earlier experience, went home and shared the idea with his wives and younger brother. Impressed by his enthusiasm, they decided to release a pair of bulls and Ataak and his brother went for training.

"Now with our trained bulls, we are able to cultivate 6 feddans in two different gardens in only 12 days," Ataak stated. "Hopefully as we gain efficiency we will reduce the hours even more."

In fact, the ox plow has saved so much time, that Ataak and his brother Mau Yel Yel are now able to offer their services to neighboring households, charging 250 SDG (approximately \$100) per feddan. The increased income has allowed Ataak and his family to eat three meals a day and to begin saving for his children's education. Ataak also has high hopes for his own sorghum crop, from which he is anticipating high yields that will bolster his family's diet and wealth and a newfound appreciation for his cattle.

Animal Traction Technology Increases Yields and Improves Food Security

Maliah Gai Loui returned to Lingere, Unity State, South Sudan in 2000, after years of living in an IDP camp on the outskirts of Khartoum. At 30 years old, he is responsible for 18 dependents whom he supported with a small retail shop and cattle-trading business. Maliah first saw ox plow farming during his time in Khartoum but never considered that they would one day be available in South Sudan.



Maliah Gai Loui shares what he was able to achieve as a result of training and a maize seed grant.

In June 2010, Maliah learned of the USAID-funded Sudan BRIDGE program implemented by Winrock International, and the availability of training on ox plow use and improved farming practices. Before signing up, he spoke with his Nuer community members to ask their opinion. “Why do you want to punish your bulls by making them pull a plow?” they asked. “Are you mad?” In this pastoralist community, the idea of using the symbol of one’s status and wealth to till the land was going to meet with resistance but Maliah was undeterred.

Maliah attended BRIDGE training on planting techniques, pest control, seed varieties, and, of course, the use of ox plows and his two bulls attended 30 days of voice-command training and plow-pulling practice. At the conclusion, BRIDGE provided Maliah and another farmer with an ox plow to share as well as a grant of maize seed.

This quarter, Maliah reported record maize yields, something he attributes directly to the training and assistance from BRIDGE. “I’m so happy for what BRIDGE has done, imagine I have harvested 10 bags, nearly 1,000kgs, in just one season,” Maliah said, “this year food will not be a problem for my family.”

Maliah was not the only one to notice the benefits of the new agricultural approach; news of his and other community member’s success with ox plow technology traveled rapidly through the surrounding villages.

“Why have we left ourselves dying of hunger if we could produce so many bags of maize using our bulls? If only BRIDGE had come here sooner.”

—Farmer, Unity State

After Maliah's training, 20 community members approached BRIDGE to show that they have bulls and are ready to participate in training. Despite the interest, Maliah still believes it will take additional effort to overcome traditional norms on a larger scale. He urged BRIDGE to continue efforts to increase awareness of the technology, something that the program has planned for 2011.

Maliah himself is convinced. He plans to save money in order to buy his own plow for next year's planting season in order to expand his crop even further.

*With BRIDGE support,
Maliah Gai Loui achieved
record maize yields.*



Sustainable, Year-Round Food Growing Initiatives Take Root

It's late January – the middle of the hottest, driest part of the year in South Sudan. In Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, which borders Southern Darfur and the conflict-torn region of Abyei, it hasn't rained in months. Once-green fields planted with tall staple food crops like sorghum and maize have turned into vast brown expanses of brittle chaff, and mid-day temperatures regularly climb over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Standing in the middle of the community garden in Agor Boma, though, it's easy to forget this is a sub-Saharan country in the middle of the dry season. There is food everywhere: big red onions with green, knee-high stalks; tender clumps of local greens called regila; broad-faced, iron-rich kale leaves. Guava fruit hangs from low shrubs, okra is flowering, and there are pumpkins, squash and tomatoes. Where did it all come from?



The community garden in Agor, Aweil West County, NBG, is just one of several community food growing projects that remain sustainable more than a year after start-up.

The Agor garden is the creation of members of a local agriculture producer group and Community Action Group (CAG) supported by Winrock International's BRIDGE project – funded by USAID. BRIDGE helped the local growers' group, which then consisted of approximately 30 members, start the garden in 2010 by providing basic training on seed spacing, row planting, weeding, irrigation, pest control and harvest techniques, in addition to supplies of start-up seeds and tools such as hoes and spades. The community cleared a good spot for the garden just over the edge of a river bank, to maximize use of a pair of simple, foot-powered treadle pumps and connecting hoses, also supplied by BRIDGE. Those modest investments in training and materials, combined with the community's sweat equity, local know-how and experimentation, have yielded tremendous gains for the group, which now boasts 50 food-growing members and occupies over one acre of carefully cultivated, well-weeded and irrigated vegetable beds. The garden is securely fenced with hundreds of sturdy wooden poles and several hinged gates to protect the plants from damage by livestock, and even the paths between beds are meticulously kept clear of weeds or other debris. The result: even during the dry season, members say they can now grow enough food to supplement their family's meals daily with healthy produce, while selling off the surplus to raise household income.

The Agor garden is one of a number of community food growing initiatives in BRIDGE target states that continue to flourish and support increased household incomes in 2012, well after direct BRIDGE support ceased.



■ **Thumbs Up for Education!**

Education

South Sudan has a literacy rate of about 20 percent due to years of civil war, lack of educational resources, and the prevalence of a pastoral lifestyle. Winrock seeks to help state and local government in South Sudan address the literacy gap by supporting teacher training, building the skills of government education managers, and by paying teacher salaries in non-traditional settings, such as cattle camps.

At the government level, Winrock works with government education officials to identify and train teachers and to ensure that the state's educational priorities are reflected in the annual budget submissions.

Winrock also provides a full scholarship program to selected female teacher candidates in order to boost the very low representation of women teachers in South Sudan. These women teachers will be able to provide positive role models to girl students and hopefully increase the number of girls enrolled in school. Winrock works with state education officials and target communities to identify schools in need of renovation or repair and, through the Local Government Development Fund, works with local government to tender construction bids, evaluate the bids, choose a contractor, and manage the work of the contractor. This process instills crucial skills in public financial management and procurement to government officials through a learning-by-doing process.

At the community level, Winrock has established Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), which are often linked to the Community Action Groups and are frequently tied to schools receiving Winrock funding. Winrock's work with the PTAs focuses on helping the groups take an active role in their children's education and in the management of the school. These Parent-Teacher Associations are grassroots civil society organizations, which are a key ingredient in a healthy democracy.

Cattle Camp Schools Provide Children with Education on the Go

Mobile teaching program brings schools into pastures

Akol Lueth has spent his childhood tending to his family's cattle, moving from pasture to pasture in a ceaseless search for food and water for the herd. The itinerant lifestyle meant Akol, a teenager now, almost never attended school in his village in Aweil East County in Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBG).

But a new initiative funded by the US Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Building Responsibility for Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program in partnership with government, is teaching Akol and other pastoralist children in his region to read and write – by putting mobile teachers inside cattle camps. Recently, Akol, 17, proudly wrote his own name for the first time.

Cattle Camp Schools grew from cooperation between Winrock, the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) and the state Ministry of Education, in an effort to create education opportunities for hard-to-reach pastoralist families. In a country stunted by 20 years of civil war and where less than 24 percent of the population can read or write, education is a top priority and seen as a key to advancement. The innovative Cattle Camp program is an education initiative that literally stays with children and families, wherever they roam.

*GOSS and BRIDGE
found a way to bring
education to pastoralist
children living in
cattle camps.*



Government provides the training for mobile teachers. BRIDGE helps with teacher startup salaries for the first year and kits for teachers including tents, exercise books and blackboards. Significant results are already visible. Approximately 130 children who previously only rarely attended school due to their pastoral way of life are now enrolled in cattle camp schools in three counties inside NBG, where six mobile teachers are at work. The program will expand into Warrap and Unity in May 2011, deploying six additional teachers across three counties in each of the two states.

Inspectors from the state Alternative Education Services department who visited Chief Akeen's cattle camp with BRIDGE staff in April 2011 found children in outdoor classes practicing the alphabet and learning to spell when not helping with herding duties. Teachers Kuan Garang Kuan and Mawien Athian reported that the children were advancing academically, though challenges remain. For example, students still must leave class regularly to help with foraging and food production, including fishing, and the constant struggle to find fresh pastures for herds means camps move frequently and sometimes split apart, making it difficult for students to concentrate and for teachers to track down their pupils.

Despite these challenges, GOSS is demonstrating its ability to meet the needs of some of its hardest-to-reach citizens, by responding in creative ways to provide access to education for pastoralist children.

Building Capacity to Improve School Administration in South Sudan

Education Administrators in South Sudan do their jobs with little to no training and scarce resources. For a successful transition from relief to development, it is crucial to build the capacity of school managers to perform more efficiently in order to ensure that teachers, students, and schools meet the necessary standards to develop an educated and informed workforce.

USAID's Sudan BRIDGE program, implemented by Winrock International, is addressing this critical need by providing hands-on training and technical assistance to education management staff in Warrap, Unity, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states.



An increased number of girls are now attending school in South Sudan.

Peter Makuac, Education Supervisor for Turalei Payam in Twic County, Warrap State, is one of the officials participating in BRIDGE's training activities. Peter manages 24 head teachers and is responsible for compiling data on enrollment, teacher performance, and student test results from each of the schools under his supervision. Like so many other government staff in South Sudan, Peter and his colleagues at the Ministry of Education do their jobs despite a severe lack of resources and professional teaching capacity. Few of the teachers he supervises have any formal training in education, many classes are conducted outside under trees due to a lack of infrastructure, and books, blackboards and other materials are in short supply.

Realizing these challenges, Peter was enthusiastic about the management training offered by BRIDGE and was determined to translate the lessons learned into practical support for his district. The training provided him with instruction on report writing, management skills, and the design of forms and follow-up tools to facilitate the collection of data from each of his schools. This has allowed him to make informed management decision and better utilize the limited resources available.

With the skills learned through BRIDGE training, Peter now has comprehensive data on the schools under his supervision, including lists of trained and untrained teachers, enrolment numbers, and the age distribution of students. This has enabled him to better distribute teachers among the schools, ensuring equal student-to-teacher ratios and to allocate resources, such as WFP food deliveries based on the needs of each school. Additionally, Peter has mobilized resources to organize new activities for children including sporting events and games. Peter is encouraged by the new activities. "It is sometimes difficult for children to strike a balance between school work and play," he says, "but creating a timetable which includes leisure activities helps to improve their performance in the classroom."

The trainings and support provided by BRIDGE have strengthened the skills of Peter and his colleagues and empowered them to take initiative in the communities in which they serve. Their efforts are already demonstrating strong impacts across the county in improved school enrolment and happier and healthier children thanks to the new sports programs and regular food distributions.

Parent-Teacher Association Makes a Commitment to Education in South Sudan

In the aftermath of Sudan's long civil war, communities across South Sudan face damaged or non-existent school buildings, few qualified teachers, and generations of people who never had the opportunity to go to school. Struggling to survive, families cannot afford to pay for uniforms or school supplies, and moreover, they rely on their children to fetch water or help with farming during the day. Many parents do not see the value in sending their children, especially girls, to school.

*Improvements in
education foster happier,
healthier schoolchildren.*



Despite these challenges, the USAID-funded Sudan BRIDGE program has made strides towards helping parents understand the importance of education for all children, in helping communities rehabilitate schools, and in building the capacity of teachers and government education officers to improve the quality of education across three states of South Sudan. For Mayen Abun Village in Twic County, Warrap State—and for numerous other communities also working with BRIDGE—these efforts are paving the way for youth to benefit from a better education.

Thirty-three people including parents, community leaders, and school staff from Mayen Abun came together for a two-day Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) training facilitated by Sudan BRIDGE. It was the first time the community had an opportunity to receive PTA training. By the end of the two-day session, the viewpoints and perspectives of the PTA members had noticeably shifted. “BRIDGE has changed our minds,” asserted one member. “We are the ones who are responsible.”

During the course of the training, BRIDGE staff facilitated group discussions on the objectives of the PTA; roles and responsibilities of PTA members, school administrators, and local government; the importance of education for all children, including girls; and priorities for school improvement. Members learned about the GOSS education policy framework and guidelines for effective PTA management.

The Deputy County Education Director, Mr. Corrado Cyier, came on the second day to provide insight on the government's priorities and to offer congratulations to the PTA members for participating so actively and investing in the education of today's youth. The parents cheered and sang, afterwards expressing their gratitude to Sudan BRIDGE and sharing how the workshop has changed their point of view.

South Sudan BRIDGE has witnessed similar transformations in other communities like Mayen Abun. BRIDGE has formed and/or supported 48 PTA groups across Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Unity States.

Scholarship Program Turns Young Teachers into Confident, Professional Educators

Grace Dalat remembers the day she arrived at the Yei Teacher Training College, located in the far south of the new Republic of South Sudan, 600 kilometers from her home village in Unity State. It was nearly two years ago, and she was a 19-year-old teacher from Pilieny Payam in Leer County with no formal training in her field – just the desire to become a professional educator capable of lifting the quality of primary schooling back home in Unity.



Proud scholarship recipients attend Yei Teacher Training College.

“It was very difficult for me at first,” Dalat said. “I was afraid. I was the only Nuer (tribe member) here,” among a co-educational student population of nearly 200 and, she admits, she was unsure she could succeed at the two-year-college, one of the largest and longest continually-running teacher training institutions in South Sudan.

But perseverance, and a strong belief in her mission – to improve the delivery of educational services in South Sudan and demonstrate that women are as capable and competent as male educators – have paid off for Dalat and three other women recipients of full scholarships from the Building Responsibility for the Delivery of Government Services (BRIDGE) program, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The four scholarship recipients – two from Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBG), one from Warrap and Dalat, from Unity – have not only survived, but have made names for themselves among the faculty due to their strong dedication and high level of motivation to succeed, said Suzan Voga, deputy principal of academics at the college.

Each of the four students is proud of her achievements so far, and relishing the challenges ahead: to return to their homes and apply their newly gained knowledge as role models and mentors to improve the level of teaching in rural primary schools.

*“You have given us knowledge.
Now we have to apply it.”*

“This training has given me wider knowledge. Now I can better monitor my child every day.”

“BRIDGE has given me knowledge of my own role and responsibilities.”

“I now understand what education really means.”

—PTA Members, Twic County, Warrap

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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