



Boma Entry Workshop © IOM 2021 / John Miakol



Overview

The Enhancing Community Resilience and Local Governance Project (ECRP), funded by the World Bank and implemented in partnership with UNOPS, seeks to strengthen the capacity of local governance and community-level institutions and to build infrastructure to address gaps in basic services in 20 counties across 10 states in South Sudan. Since implementation began in March 2021, IOM has engaged selected communities in participatory planning processes at the county, payam, and boma levels. These processes mobilize and empower communities to convey their needs, analyze challenges they are facing, propose creative solutions to those challenges, and vocalize their preferences to promote and shape community development. ECRP works to instrumentalize South Sudan's Local Government Act by supporting the formation and functioning of Boma Development Committees (BDCs) and Payam Development Committees (PDCs) as sustainable drivers of community development.

Boma Entry Workshops

During Q2, 135 boma entries were conducted, resulting in the completion of 147 boma entry activities since implementation began. While some communities were more engaged and enthusiastic than others, the responses from participants and attendees were overwhelmingly positive by the end of the five-day workshop. Many individuals explicitly emphasized that they had never been directly solicited about their needs or invited to participate in development activities by humanitarian / development actors and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to voice their concerns, preferences, and ideas for bettering their community. They explained that their faith in the project was enhanced by ECRP's assertions that the program is intended to support communities to drive and sustain their own community development projects.

A total of 10,996 individuals took part in boma entry activities during Q2 and 12,036 individuals have taken part in boma entry activities since they began. During Q2, 1,450 BDC members were elected to represent their bomas and 1,563 have been elected since boma entry began. Of these BDC members, 47% are women and 49% of the leadership positions on the BDC are held by women. Though often initially reticent to speak out during the entry activities, women have proven integral to shaping the thinking, conversations, and decisions made during the five-day workshop. IOM facilitators and gender / GBV staff have reiterated that when they articulate to women why women's perspectives and opinions are essential, women increasingly gain confidence throughout

the workshop and become ever more willing to speak on behalf of women in their community, even when their assertions may run counter to the perspectives, preferences, or priorities of men. IOM staff have reported that women have frequently vocalized their appreciation at being heard and have emphasized that they are not typically able to express their thoughts or contribute to their communities in the way that ECRP enables them to do.

Additionally, 7% of BDC members are persons with disabilities, many of whom have also been elected to leadership positions on the BDC. A man in Wau with a visual impairment was elected by his peers to serve both as chairperson of the BDC and as the male PDC representative. BDCs in the 10 new counties also incorporate individuals of different displacement statuses. Approximately 87% of BDC members are local community members, 15% are returnees, and 7% are internally displaced.



Boma Development Committee in Leer © IOM 2021

At the end of the boma entry workshop, participants prioritized the projects they had identified to address problems and needs in their community, creating a “Boma Priority List.” Bomas were able to list up to 10 projects. During Q2, a total of 1,147 projects were identified and prioritized. The types of projects most frequently listed as one of the community’s top three priorities were: 1) health facility infrastructure, 2) water infrastructure (such as boreholes or wateryards), 3) education infrastructure, and 4) community access roads.

Payam Prioritization Workshops

During Q2, IOM conducted 5 payam workshops, the first 3 of which were considered pilot workshops. These 5 payams included: Wau South (Wau County) (pilot), Wau North (Wau County) (pilot), Guat (Leer County) (pilot), Pibor (Pibor Administrative Area), and Kodok Town (Fashoda County).

The payam workshops proved more challenging than the boma workshops, as they required bringing together different bomas whose preferences did not always align. It was also challenging to identify community development projects that could benefit people across multiple bomas. Despite these difficulties, workshops most often served as a unifying activity. Furthermore, most participants seemed to be very engaged and invested in the ECRP process, including women. It was evident overall that the workshops motivated community members and instilled confidence in their own abilities and agency.

Each BDC elected two Payam Development Committee (PDC) Representatives during their five-day workshop, one male and one female, to create a mandatory 50 / 50 balance between men

and women at the payam prioritization workshops. For the five payams in which ECRP conducted workshops during Q2, there were a total of 40 PDC members that had been elected by their respective BDCs to participate in the payam workshops. IOM staff that participated in the payam workshops specifically noted that the confidence of women participants typically increases over time and that this confidence often leads male community members to be more receptive to input from female PDC members. At the end of the workshop, Payam Priority Lists were compiled to then be evaluated in the context of the allotted payam budget and subsequent site assessments for proposed projects.

While debate over the prioritization of payam level projects could become heated, this passion also displayed participants’ commitment to and investment in the process. Community members appeared to fully appreciate the importance of the process and of collaboration once they saw the PPL written in full as a representation of their payam’s community development goals.

PSEA

During Q2, 7 ECRP staff (5 men and 2 women) attended IOM’s three-day PSEA training. These staff have taken the knowledge and skills obtained from the training and imparted it to ECRP’s Community Outreach Assistants (who conduct much of the facilitation for ECRP activities) through continuous in-person, on-the-job mentorship, information sharing on WhatsApp platforms, and the creation and dissemination of short videos on gender, GBV and our Grievance Response Mechanism.

Stories from the Field

In late June, IOM staff conducted a Payam Prioritization Workshop in Kodok Town, Fashoda, where the invaluable role of women and the powerful role they can play in bettering their communities was exemplified. The PDC was composed of two male and two female PDC members and the workshop was also attended by county officials, all male except for one woman. The two female PDC members were quite reticent to speak on the first day, until they had the opportunity to break into groups where males and females were split to discuss mutual problems facing their bomas.

The women told the IOM facilitator that they usually were not given the opportunity to speak about issues that women uniquely face or about their needs because men often dominate the conversation. The women became very passionate when conveying the hardships women in their community endured.

Notably, most of the issues they vocalized had not already been brought up in previous discussion at the payam workshop. They named a variety of issues but were especially concerned about the high levels of maternal and infant mortality during childbirth in their communities. The two women PDC members, who had never met before, quickly bonded over this mutual suffering in their communities and determined that interventions addressing this severe issue must be prioritized. They decided to propose expansion of the existing PHCC to include a maternity ward. Both women visibly gained confidence in their roles as community influencers and decision makers and were visibly eager to see this project through to help the women in their communities. In the plenary discussion the women stood up and advocated for the maternity ward, explaining confidently why it was essential and speaking over men who tried to interrupt.

The women managed to convince the rest of the PDC and county officials about the importance of maternal health and the maternity ward was ranked first on PPL by female and male PDC members, with the support of the male county officials. Unfortunately, the maternity ward was not ultimately selected by the PDC due to concerns over availability of healthcare professionals and the cost. However, the director of health committed to take up the project with the national government and other partners now that he was more aware of the need for maternity services in the payam. The fact that the women were able to raise an issue that wasn't identified before and convince everyone, particularly a large group of men, about the need to prioritize it is affirmation that, if given the opportunity, women can exercise their insight in deeply meaningful ways and come up with powerful and impactful solutions.



Kodok Town Payam Prioritization Workshop © IOM 2021

Stories from the Field

BDC members in Wungony boma, Lekanguole payam in Pibor Administrative Area were especially inspired by the boma entry workshops and committed by the end of the five days to determine what they could do for their boma outside of the proposed projects for ECRP. Only weeks after the boma entry workshops, these BDC members began construction of a new children's playground within their boma, having erected a volleyball net and other recreational features. The initiative displayed by Wungony community members and its BDC exemplifies the goals of ECRP: to empower communities to come together and build the capacity to transform their community and better the lives of its residents through community-driven development projects.



Community mapping exercise in Leer © IOM 2021