

## Unity state: Authorities initiate campaign to reduce cattle rustling

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December 20, 2012 (BENTIU) Commissioners from the nine counties in South Sudan's Unity state on Wednesday vowed to ensure effective service delivery to rural communities as a mechanism for reduce cattle rustling and border conflicts.

The resolution during a two-day commissioners' forum held in the state for the first time since South Sudan become independent in July last year.

The forum agenda, officials told Sudan Tribune, mainly focused on deliverance of developmental projects to communities, seen as a way of eliminating unrests emanating from cattle rustling practices in counties bordering each other.

Over the years, tension has been high among the Dinka and Nuer tribes, and this forum was regarded a foundation for resolving the seemingly historical grievance between these two neighboring communities.

Most parts of South Sudan, having experienced decades of civil war, remain highly marginalized with poor infrastructures, low agricultural activities and generally poor living standards among the population.

At least half of South Sudanese, according to a recent household survey from the National Bureau of Statistic (NBS), are extremely poor and live on less than a dollar (SSP4.5) per day.

Majok Gatdet Deng, the Parieng county commissioner said he believes rural-urban influx would massively reduce, if more schools, health centers and roads were constructed rural areas.

Such developmental initiatives, he added, could also contribute to reduction in cattle rustling among communities.

"We are in power [and] we are [the] delegates to send the towns to the people and bring the services close so that people would not be able to move to go and to minimize the influx of the people from villages to the town such that [they] can [be] able to get services that they need from the town," Deng told Sudan Tribune.

Making services available to the rural population, he added, will encourage self-reliance and encourage sustainable development.

South Sudan, prior to its secession from the north, used to benefit from the strong trade relations with its neighbor, but a dispute over the two borders has gravely affected business activities in the young nation.

Meanwhile, the Parieng commissioner blamed Unity state lawmakers for alleged failure in their mandate to implement laws related to settlement of marriage-related disputes.

A case in point, he said, was the lack of advocacy from MPs for the reduction in marriage dowry, which they claim have immensely contributed to cattle rustling activities in the communities.

"So it might be the policy of our elders [to] try to lay down the mechanism of which they should have to minimize or to reduce the dowry because it is one of the factors which may force one to steal cattle from other community in order to pay bride price," Deng remarked.

In their proposal, however, commissioners at the forum agitated that at least 20 cows be introduced as the benchmark for traditional marriage, instead of over 100, usually required as dowry by most communities.

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