

Child protection survey launched in Unity state

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By Bonifacio Taban Kuich

February 26, 2013 (BENTIU) - Unity state's minister for gender, child welfare and social development, Lubna Abdelgani, said Tuesday that the issue of girl's being forced to marry before they are of a mature age needs to be addressed.



Lubna Abdelgani, Unity state minister for gender and Child welfare 26 February 2013 (ST)

Abdelgani urged those who had been trained in child abuse prevention strategies to work within their communities to tackle the issue.

“As you go to all fields, you have to make sure and identify those negative issues, that mostly affecting the underage girls. Among Nuer and Dinka early marriage is a challenging situation among young girls as their parents forced them for marriage before mature age”, said Abdelgani.

One of the outcomes of the training is for a survey to be conducted on the number of street children living in Unity state to determine the extent and causes of the problem.

The quantitative survey will kick off on Monday across Unity's nine counties, using the participants in this week's training.

The research will also look at what role government institutions related to children, justice, and gender can play in addressing the issue.

The group of researchers will also talk to chiefs and civil society to carry out assessments to better understand existing child protection mechanisms.

Abdelgani urged the commissioners of Unity state's counties to cooperate with the child protection survey and encourage those trained to conduct the survey to investigate the reality that children face in society.

The child protection survey is planned to take place in all of South Sudan's 10 states to evaluate the overall child protection system so that the government and UNICEF can look for solutions.

Many children are forced to roam the market areas of the Unity capital, such as eight-year-old Dak Puot, who says he has been forced to walk along the streets to find food in order to survive.

"I'm taking this life on the street in order to feed myself and also at least to do some work to buy clothing", said Puot.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that heavy floods and a poor harvest in Unity state have contributed to the increasing numbers of street kids in Bentiu and Rubkona town.

Some children are forced onto the streets due to a lack of guardians, while some are forced to sleep rough because their families cannot support them.

Twelve year old Kam Wiecni told *Sudan Tribune* on Wednesday that he took to the streets after loosing his parents.

"I have been in the street, not because I like it but due to condition of no one taking care of me, I lost my family some five years ago and have no where to go but taking street as home for myself", said Wiecni.

(ST)