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VOICES

from the field

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With WHO Support, Communities in Pibor Take a Stand Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse



By JIL Jok Mayom, JOYCE Laker, YIEY William Ruai, and DOMINYAK Diana

Pibor, 13 October 202 – 2025 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), has taken major steps this year to strengthen the fight against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) in emergency and humanitarian settings.

One of the PRSEAH strategic objectives requires WHO country offices to establish a strong partnership with the Ministry of Health to facilitate the implementation of PRSEAH activities, and particularly in emergency situations. In this context, WHO received the appointment of PRSEAH focal

points from the national and state Ministry of Health (MoH), who would work in close collaboration with the WHO counterparts to facilitate the coordination of such activities.

The MOH has formally nominated 28 focal persons from the national MOH, each of the 10 states and 3 administrative areas. This initiative marks the MoH's strong commitment and engages the state-level Ministries, which is an important step forward.

To facilitate the work of the Focal Points, a three-day orientation workshop was held by WHO in January 2025 to the Ministry of Health PRSEAH Focal points.

Dr. Humphrey Karamagi, the WHO Representative in South Sudan, emphasized during the workshop that

“engaging the Ministry of Health is a crucial step toward fostering a safe and respectful environment within humanitarian and development programs, especially at state levels.”

The workshop was followed by the roll out of PRSEAH training to SMOH personnel in all 10 states and 3 administrative areas by WHO in collaboration with the State MoH Focal Points.

One of these activities took place in Pibor, where WHO and MoH focal persons led a training and awareness campaign from 23–29 August 2025. The initiative is part of WHO's commitment under the Emergency Response Framework II to reinforce accountability, build institutional capacity, and protect communities during health emergencies.

Giving Communities a Voice

For many participants, the training marked the first time that Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) was discussed openly. Survivors, health workers, youth leaders, and religious representatives came together to confront a sensitive yet urgent issue.

Leading the training was Jok Mayom Ji, WHO PRSEAH Focal Point and EPI Officer in Bor, Jonglei State. ***“I am an advocate of PRSEAH, and I am committed to sharing this knowledge with all colleagues and partners,”*** he said. Participants described the training as eye-opening, noting that it increased awareness, strengthened reporting mechanisms, and reinforced their commitment to survivor-centered approaches.

Hon. James Chacha, Minister of Health in GPAA, emphasized the shared

responsibility to act: ***“PRSEAH is not just a policy requirement—it is a moral and professional obligation. Together, we can end sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in all its forms. We will embed PRSEAH in all our programming, particularly in emergencies where women and children are most vulnerable. With more support, we can reach underserved areas like Boma and Pochalla.”***

From Gumuruk County, County Health Director Mr. Santo Ligo pledged to integrate PRSEAH principles into health policies and cascade the training to his staff: ***“Female health workers are often the immediate victims of sexual misconduct. This knowledge will help us protect them and the communities we serve.”***

Community voices echoed with the same determination. Mrs. Yayo Ngazi,

a female support staff member, reflected on the transformation: ***“We didn’t know what to do before, but now we understand survivor-centered approaches and reporting mechanisms. This training has given us the courage to speak up to save our daughters and future generations.”***

Religious leaders also highlighted their crucial role. Pastor Samuel Logocho stated: ***“PRSEAH is not only against the law—it is against biblical teachings. As spiritual leaders, we must protect our people and spread the message.”***

Youth leader James Marine underscored the power of young people to drive change: ***“We are the future leaders. This training opened our eyes to speak up and stand together. I will spread the message in schools, football clubs, and youth gatherings.”***

Progress and Challenges

The Pibor sessions have already increased awareness among frontline health workers and empowered communities to recognize, report, and respond to SEAH. However, challenges remain, including Cultural taboos and stigma around discussing SEAH; Limited confidential reporting systems in remote areas; Low literacy levels that hinder awareness campaigns; Inadequate survivor support services.

Impact for the Future

To address these gaps, WHO and MoH recommend expanding PRSEAH training to all counties in GPAA, strengthening survivor-centered reporting systems, and engaging community, religious, and traditional leaders as advocates.

The Pibor training has created momentum for a more accountable health system in GPAA. By equipping health workers and community leaders with tools to prevent and respond to SEAH, WHO and the MoH are fostering a culture of dignity, safety, and protection for vulnerable populations.

The work in Pibor demonstrates that when communities, government, and partners stand together, change is possible and the call to protect the most vulnerable grows stronger.

Pictorial

