

ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023

RECLAIMED WHISPERS, PAINTING  
A TAPESTRY OF RESISTANCE



MA' MARA SAKIT  
VILLAGE



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# A Year of Growth & Resilience

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We are excited to share a detailed summary of our accomplishments and advancements over the past year. This report captures the dedication, creativity, and enthusiasm that have propelled us to greater success. Looking back on our progress, we take pride in highlighting the hard work and loyalty of our team members, who have been instrumental in our achievements. Come along as we explore the narratives, achievements, and influences that shape Ma Mara Sakit Village.



# A feminist Community

## Five (5) Feminists Talking Circles: 158 Community Growth.

Liberation begins with the understanding of self beyond what South Sudanese girls and young women are socialized to believe about who they are and their role in the world. In 2022, we launched our **Feminists' Talking Circle (FTC)**, a 5-day feminist conscious raising training program that started with 28 young women in the first cohort. In 2023, we conducted five other FTCs, and the community gained 130 additional community members, bringing this community to 158 young women from diverse backgrounds.

Sometimes, all young women and girls need is a space to self-reflect, share personal experiences, connect with other young women and girls with different identities and from diverse backgrounds, draw inspiration from each other, heal, and **gain the courage to question things and think deeply about their privileges and what they can do to make South Sudan better for themselves and other young women and girls**, especially those who are less privileged. Reflections, such as the few below, affirm the objectives and goals of these FTCs.





“

For the first time in my life, I had time for myself; thinking through these questions and answering them made me realize I never reflect about myself.

”

“

I just realized that I have no one I can go to when I need support because I am always in my room by myself most times.

”

“

The training has been eye-opening; I've just discovered that I have been living my life to fulfill the societal expectations of me and neglecting how I truly desire to design and live my life as a woman.

”

“

The space gave me the kind of sisterhood bonding that I needed, and that's why I have shared my personal experiences such that the young girls here can learn and draw experiences and strength from my own stories

”

“

This space has affirmed to me that I matter, and I deserve to be humanized also in the society, ana Ma' Mara Sakit.

”

“

I have kept something in my heart since childhood, but after listening to your stories, I have healed

”





The FTCs are designed to cultivate all that and provide an opportunity to enhance their knowledge of gender and African feminisms and frameworks that help them name their feelings and experiences in actionable and forward-looking ways. While feminist consciousness is a great start, the big question is *what they can do with that consciousness, individually and collectively*. Some reflections and stories from this space, such as the few below, are why we will continue to hold his space and grow it more.

“

I have attended trainings, but I have never understood feminism until today, thanks to the trainers for enhancing my knowledge.

”

“

After these five days of training, I have realized that I need to educate myself more on gender and feminism; I have been judgmental towards other women and have always blamed them, not knowing these are systemic and deeply rooted issues

”

“

Having been part of this training, I can't help but think of a great change that South Sudanese women can make if this training reaches each one of them. Thanks to the village for the opportunity; through this training, I have discovered my purpose.

”

“

Normally, I am a shy person, and this training has given me the courage and confidence to speak up and amplify the voices of others on gender-related issues, and I am thankful to all of you.

”



# Ma' Mara Sakit Village First Young South Sudanese Feminists' Conference

To create an opportunity for inter-cohort connections and community and, more importantly, define their individual and collective strengths and actions. How they can exercise their voices to contribute to the liberation of women and girls in South Sudan, we held the first-ever two-day feminist conference in South Sudan. The two-day conference under the theme: **“Reclaiming My Voice, Amplifying Echoes Of Our Resistance, And Building A South Sudan That Works For Us.”** Brought together 112 different cohort members. This conference brought such insights and clarity to the purpose of our FTCs; as you can see, the theme inspired our report title for this year; it beautifully summarized our 2023 objective.

## MA' MARA SAKIT VILLAGE FIRST YOUNG SOUTH SUDANESE FEMINISTS' CONFERENCE



The first day of the conference focused on **enabling young women and girls to connect and build community across cohorts**. The day was filled with exercises that enabled them to connect and explore collective passion, strengths, skills, and talents, among other activities. Day two focused on defining collective strength and action. This entailed defining their feminist role, presenting themes for collective action, and engaging with prominent women leaders to draw inspiration and share experiences on leadership. The eight guest speakers included honorable members of parliament, women leaders in business, the security sector, university professors, lawyers, and prominent civil society women leaders.






The conference sparked emotions, provoked thoughts, and restored hope and vision to contribute to creating change for young women and girls. *"This was one of the most educative, inspirational, and practical convenings that have influenced my feelings, emotions, and thoughts toward the impactful contribution of South Sudanese women to society. I felt motivated and inspired meeting different women leaders that I will continue to emulate, and this brought the realization that the future of South Sudan is going to be great if women continue to unite and create spaces such as these that make us see opportunities around us and strength in ourselves."* said one young woman. ***"Self-reflection and awareness from the exercises helped me realize I can use my passion, strengths, and skills to create a positive impact as a feminist tackling women's issues in the health sector in South Sudan."***

Another young woman added. Others described the conference as a mind-blowing and soul-searching space filled with love that helped them find their voice in fighting for gender equality. *"The conference has encouraged me not to turn a blind eye to some of the issues and abuses that women and girls go through in South Sudan."* Said another participant. The women leaders' reflections also showed that they dream of opportunities for young women and building connections with them. ***"When I came in and I saw you and the number is here, I said South Sudan is alive. It is very important to be protecting one another, so I want to encourage us to give ourselves space to express ourselves and to give ourselves an opportunity to learn from one another"***. Said one leader to the young women.

The conference, just like the Feminists' Talking Circles, unearthed the potentials and capabilities of the young women and girls; this is evidenced in the stories shared, poems recited, music and dance performances, paintings and artworks presented, and other different skills, talents, and knowledge shared during the two days of the conference. **No South Sudanese woman or girl is voiceless; we have voices that have been silenced and denied opportunities and platforms.** South Sudanese women and girls fight on different fronts and ways daily; sometimes, all we need are platforms to reaffirm and amplify echoes of our resistance.

You can catch a glimpse of what the two days looked like in this YouTube video: [Ma' Mara Sakit Village First Young South Sudanese Feminists' Conference](#) or experience the conference through one of the participants, Kuei Yai's perspective through her beautifully told story and video title [What it means to be a woman in South Sudan](#) 

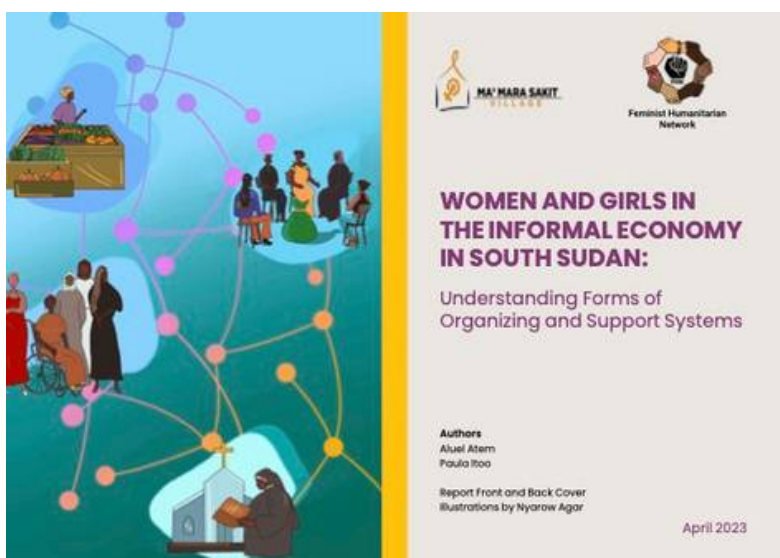






# Theorizing and Documenting Our Experiences

South Sudanese women and girls are the experts of their realities. Our experiences are often theorized by non-South Sudanese, which contributes to the misconception that feminism is a foreign concept when these theories or data are presented back to us by others. Research is a core component of all our programs. To help us understand how women and girls in the informal economy in South Sudan organize, existing systems of support, and the impact of COVID-19 on them, we assessed **seven (7)** state capitals in South Sudan. This report is publicly accessible on our website via this link: [Women and Girls in the Informal Economy in South Sudan: Understanding Forms of Organizing and Support Systems](#).

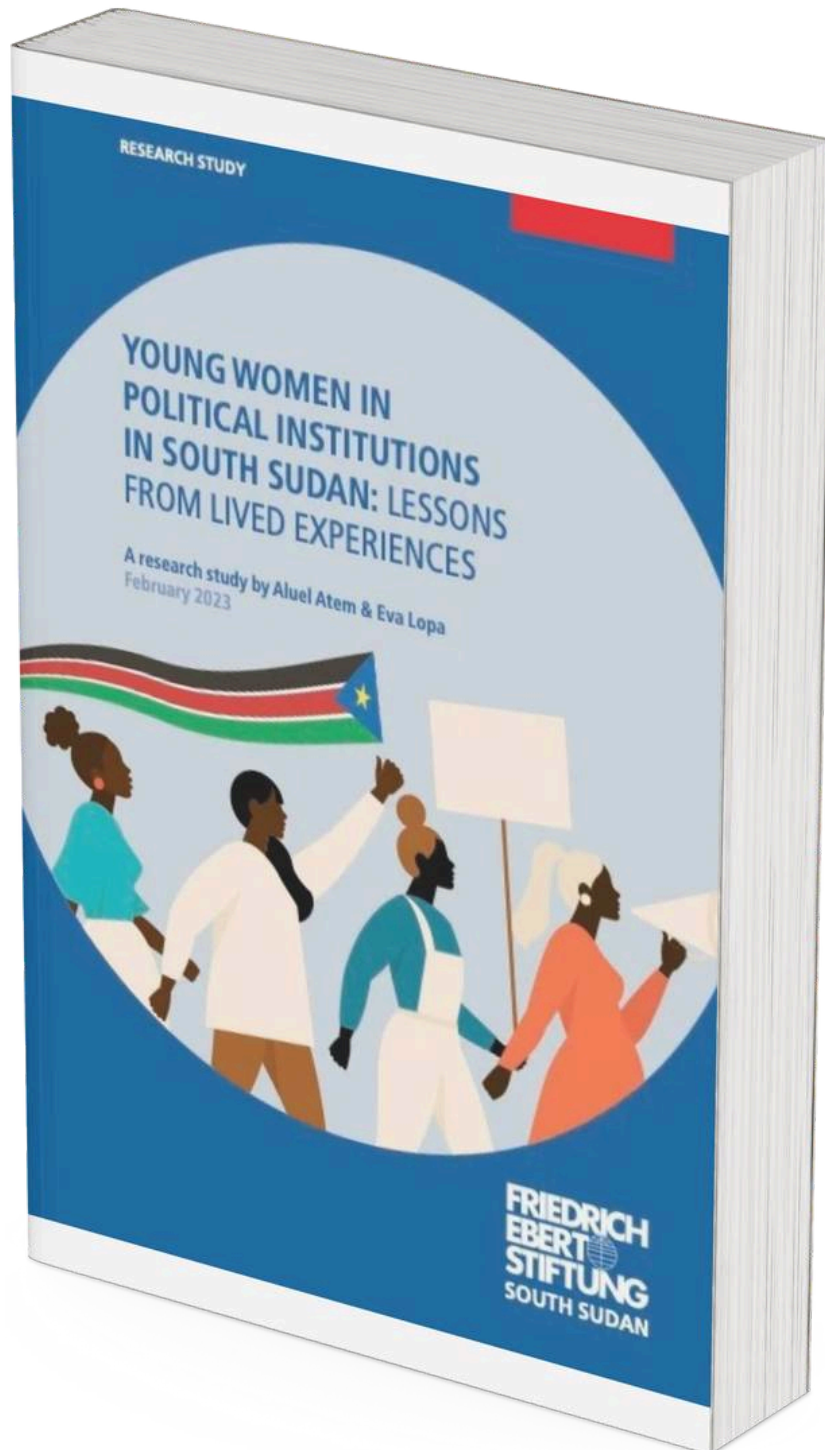


With support from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES-South Sudan), we had an opportunity to launch and deliberate on the findings of this report with **75 participants** from diplomatic missions, UN agencies, international and national governmental organizations, civil society, women-led organizations, faith-based and government institutions, academia, business, women and girls from the informal sectors, and Ma'Mara Sakit Village feminist community of young women. This launch was primarily centered around a fireside chat with women and girls from the informal economy and the report's authors with a moderated Q and A session with the audience. This launch humanized the report by putting faces to the data/findings through shared personal experiences and reflections. It also **proved that South Sudanese women have the expertise to theorize and document their realities**.





Additionally, to strengthen gender justice in all public life and policy in South Sudan, two of our team members (Aluel Atem and Eva Lopa) co-authored a research paper for and by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung- South Sudan (FES-SS) to examine the current state of women's participation in organized politics through the lens of young women's political experiences. This evidence-based paper contextualizes women's participation in party politics in its history and shares findings from conversations with young women about their experiences and challenges in their political work. This report is publicly accessible in the FES library via this link: [Young Women in Political Institutions in South Sudan: Lessons from Lived Experiences.](#)





# Preserving the *Art* of Beading Across Generations and Cultures

## Shared Learning and Accessibility

Finally, we completed training for ten women and girls on the **Otuho**, **Jieng Bor**, and **Yirol** beaded cultural corsets. This beaded corset-making training was initiated in 2020 with just three women and one girl who gained the basic skills but didn't finish the process. Over a four-month training course, the trainees produced 30 beaded traditional Otuho and Jieng Bor/Yirol that are now hired by women and girls for their special events such as cultural dances, weddings, photo shoots, and other events, making these once so rare to find beaded corsets affordable and easily accessible in Juba.

We could not hesitate to document and share this unique and inspiring process. Catch up with this 28-minute [The Suk-Sukna Bead-Making](#) video of the process that gives a historical background of the traditional Otuho and Jieng Bor and Yirol women and girls' beaded corsets and the women and girls share personal experiences, dreams, and aspirations.

**GENDER TALK 211** #GENDERTALK211  
CONVERSATIONS ON GENDER IN SOUTH SUDAN  
**THE SUK-SUKNA INTERGENERATIONAL WOMEN'S CULTURAL SHOWCASE**

**VENUE: THE BAOBAB HOUSE**  
**DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2023**  
**TIME: 3:00-5:00 PM CAT**



Activity supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives  
Activité réalisée avec l'appui du Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales



**MA' MARA SAKIT VILLAGE**





# The Suk-Sukna Intergenerational Women's Cultural Showcase

To wrap up the Suk-Sukna project, we hosted an intergenerational women's showcase to wrap up the project. This event provided the Suk-Sukna women and girls an opportunity to exhibit the beads they made, share insights on the historical and cultural background/origin of what the different corset designs and colors symbolize, showcase different ways the corsets can be worn, and screen the video on the beadmaking process for the first time, giving the audience a glimpse of what the bead making process was like. To build on the conversation beyond the beaded corsets, 16 women and girls' cultural attires from [#ThisIsUs Part-One](#) digital curation by Gender Talk 211 were exhibited. This event brought together 135 people from different backgrounds (South Sudanese and non-South Sudanese) to engage and learn from the Suk-Sukna women and girls.





# Continuous Digital Feminism

## #WhereIsTheAntiGBVBill?

In 2020, the Anti GBV Bill was submitted to the Ministry of Justice & Constitutional Affairs. It has been three years since, and further action has yet to be taken to finalize this bill's formulation and send it to Parliament. **#WhereIsTheAntiGBVBill** is an ongoing campaign by Ma' Mara Sakit Village community of young women. It aims to raise awareness of the draft bill and engage with relevant government institutions to speed up and finalize this bill's formulation and pass it. This campaign started in May and is one of the action points of collective organizing from the First Young South Sudanese Feminists' Conference held in the same month.



For a month, the community ran a digital campaign through Gender Talk 211 social media platforms, using threads, poetry, fine art, digital illustrations, photography, videos, and wrote articles to shed light on the bill using the hashtag **#WhereIsTheAntiGBVBill**. They utilized media outlets such as [Eye Radio](#), some of the young women hosted by [South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation \(SSBC\)](#) after they met with the Hon. Speaker of the National Legislative Assembly and prominent radio stations such as [Advance Digital](#) and Capital FM. At the same time, they held several follow-up meetings with the Hon. Speaker of the National Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, and the Director of Legislations at the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

**GBV Is An Everyday Reality In  
South Sudan!**

**#WhereIsTheAntiGBVBill**



# #THIS IS US PART II





## #ThisIsUs Part-Two

**#ThisIsUs** is a **visual** and **written** digital curation that highlights South Sudanese cultural wear with a focus on women and girls by Gender Talk 211. To build on **#ThisIsUs Part One** that we curated last year (July 2022), Gender Talk 211 did a second edition that entailed nine cultural attires of women and girls, focusing on minority communities in South Sudan. The nine attires were curated on Gender Talk 211 social media platforms, and the whole compilation can be accessed on the Gender Talk 211 website at this link: **#ThisIsUs Part-Two**. This was a special edition; the Gender Talk 211 team worked with five Ma' Mara Sakit Village Community of young women journalists who attended a two-day training by the Gender Talk 211 team on using digital media as a feminist tool for storytelling and cultural preservation and co-created this series with the team. The training included three main elements: Research, Vlogging, Illustration, and Graphic Design.



As in part one, a diverse group of South Sudanese women and girls were identified and took part in the photoshoot. This process was documented, highlighting challenges encountered and the importance of using digital media as a feminist tool for cultural preservation in a short video (click link): **#ThisIsUs Part 2 Highlights** on the **Gender Talk 211 YouTube** channel. At the end of the digital curation, the Gender Talk 211 team organized an intimate conversation with women and girls. This event focused on the role of digital media in promoting and preserving culture through creative methods such as photography, visual art, graphic design, and vlogging, among others. The event also allowed the team to showcase the video highlighting insights into "This Is Us Part 2" production.





## Pride Month (Peace, Love, Revolution)

This year, we commemorated Pride Month, a month dedicated to reminding us globally about the commitment to ensure equal justice for LGBTQ+ communities worldwide, especially in challenging contexts like South Sudan, under the theme **'Peace, Love, Revolution.'** Throughout the month, on our social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), we shared essential online resources and information on the LGBTQ+ community, movements, and everything one needs to know about the community. **Curated threads on the origin of the rainbow flag, facts about the flag and colors, history of pride month, sexual orientation, and gender identity politics, and more importantly, modified the Gender Talk 211 logo with rainbow colors and use that as our profile photo on all our social media platforms.** Twenty-one graphic posters were designed for this digital advocacy.



Despite the *pushback*, we continue to learn that our support and solidarity are essential to the **South Sudanese LGBTQ+ community**. We will always follow their guidance, not try to push the boundaries that might cause more violence and abuse towards them. Someone from the community reached out and said: ***“Every day, you have to pretend and laugh with people at work just to make them not think badly of you. Many talk shit behind my back about my dress code, and it always reaches me, but still, I must always pretend and laugh with them; I sometimes ask myself, God, why me? Why am I this way? This is hell on earth, but I hope one day I will overcome this; thank you for always speaking up on our behalf.”*** This reminded us to move our attention away from all the homophobes and homophobia and focus on what truly matters: how our advocacy extends solidarity and humanity to the community in South Sudan.



We have added permanent rainbow colors to our Gender Talk 211 logo and use that as our profile picture on all our social media platforms throughout, to make it clear that our platform is feminist and that the **liberation and freedom of the LGBTQ+ community in South Sudan and Globally is part of our politics**. We will continue commemorating Pride Month and other important LGBTQ+ international days in South Sudan on our digital platforms. We are patient with the process and hope this will inspire and encourage other **human rights, women, and civil society organizations in South Sudan to be more conscious and inclusive in their human rights work.**





# GenderTalk211

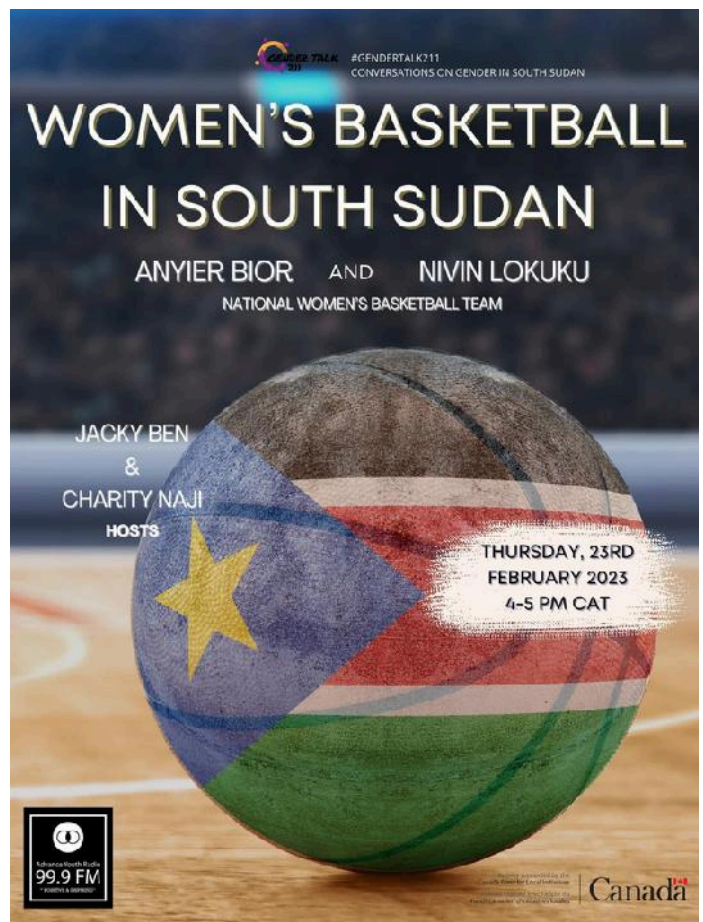
## Radio Shows

### Ten (10) shows produced

Gender Talk 211 radio program produced ten talk shows covering topics, stories, and issues around diplomacy, foreign diplomatic mission’s support for women’s rights, feminism, sports, the power of women writing and telling their stories, purpose, beauty, and women’s bodily autonomy in South Sudan. In our continuous efforts to be more inclusive on the show this year, we added sign language interpretation to our radio shows for the audience that live streams Gender Talk 211 radio conversations on the Advance Digital Facebook page and our YouTube channel. To promote young South Sudanese female artists, in our second season of the year, our shows were started with short performances by various phenomenal young South Sudanese female vocalists and singers.

### 26 Guests Hosted

This year, we focused on giving a platform to sportswomen, adolescent girls, social workers, diplomats, young feminists, youth activists, writers, beauty queens, students, artists, and women of the vintage generation. Gender Talk 211 is a platform dedicated to giving South Sudanese women and girls a platform; out of the 26 guests, 25 were women and girls.





# Literature

## Nine (9) Poems Published

We published **nine (9)** poems by young South Sudanese women that covered various themes such as bodily autonomy, freedom and liberation, the power of voice, humanity, agency, feminist issues of concern in South Sudan, and love, among others.

## Two (2) Articles Published

We published **two** articles by young South Sudanese women that explored **bodily autonomy** and **sexual and gender-based violence** in South Sudan with a focus on the demand for the need for the Anti-Gender Based Violence (Anti-GBV) bill in support of #WhereIsTheAntiGBVBill campaign by Ma' Mara Sakit Village community of young women.

## Five (5) New Writers

Five incredible young South Sudanese women (writers) joined our existing community of writers this year, bringing our community of South Sudanese women writers to 19 writers, including guest writers.





# Gender Talk 211 Online Community and Dialogues



	147,478
	2,265
	226
	1,016
	6,977
	427

	136,059
	123,547
	4,510
	1,041
	386

	444,934
	112,564
	241,340
	23,915



4,297	70,860	85



# Collaborations

## Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Displacement (Refugee Settlement with Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI))

Ma' Mara Sakit Village joined **The Access to Skills & Knowledge Network (#ASKnet)**, a cross-border consortium of community-driven organizations. As part of #ASKnet members' collaborations, Ma' Mara Sakit Village collaborated with **CECI, a refugee-focused organization based in Uganda**, on a cross-cultural dialogue and cultural preservation project in Uganda, targeting the South Sudanese and Congolese refugees and host communities in Koboko district, northern Uganda. This project included a workshop with refugee representative customs and traditions, a cultural exhibition of different traditional tools, arts and crafts, utensils, and traditional medicine, and a cultural gala that entailed cultural dances, games, foods, and drinks, sharing insights on important community rituals such as leadership and naming rituals and their significance among other activities. This project brought together **326 people** from the host community and refugees, including paramount chiefs and their council members, clan leaders, local and national government representatives, South Sudanese Refugees Associations, and Congolese Refugees Associations.



## Feminist Digital Advocacy and Safety With GoGirls ICT Initiative

Ma' Mara Sakit Village joined The Access to Skills & Knowledge Network (#ASKnet), a cross-border consortium of community-driven organizations. We collaborated with the **GoGirls ICT Initiative** (#ASKnet members collaborations) on an ongoing project to further explore feminism and digital safety for women and girls in South Sudan. We hosted a roundtable discussion that brought together **56 young South Sudanese feminists** to share their experiences, knowledge, and existing feminist gaps, as well as online and digital safety in South Sudan. In addition to the roundtable, an online survey was also developed to gather more insights, especially on digital safety for women and girls. This is meant to inform the two institutions' long-term strategy and program on feminist digital advocacy and safety for South Sudanese women and girls in 2024.



## The Jüdische Kulturbund Project and Promised Land Senior Secondary School on a digital storytelling project on hair (hair stories)

We collaborated with [The Jüdische Kulturbund Project](#) and [Promised Land Senior Secondary School](#) on a digital storytelling project on hair on this link: ([hair stories](#)). This project focused on ten (10) female high school students from Promised Land who shared personal stories and experiences around hair over four in-person and virtual sessions. Using poetry, art, drama, photography, video, and music, among other creative and artistic tools, the students created a digital story that beautifully captures their thoughts, feelings, challenges, aspirations, and dreams about their relationship with their hair as a core part of their identity.



# Resources

## Feminist Leadership

Massive gratitude, as always, to the team that makes our work possible in different capabilities at the [board](#), [advisory](#), and [core functioning](#) levels.

## Financial Support

### Contributors

### Amounts (USD)

<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>27,072.73</b>
Autonomous Resourcing	35,778
UNFPA-South Sudan	12,400
#ASKNET/HIVE COLLAB (supported by the German Cooperation through R0g Agency)	6,469.9
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)	3,446.3
Feminist Humanitarian Network (Action Aid International)	1,059

**TOTAL 86,225.93**

## Outflows

### Programs

### Amounts (USD)

Mojtama Al'Mara (Feminist Community Building	31,627.68
The Suk-Sukna	16,910.04
Gender Talk 211	15,003.18
Social Justice Sonduk	840
Administrative Expenses	19,855.55

**TOTAL 84,236.45**



Ensuring rights and choices for all



german cooperation

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT



Our Allies


Activity supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives  
Activité réalisée avec l'appui du Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales




agency for open culture & critical transformation



**MA' MARA SAKIT**  
**VILLAGE**

 [www.mamarasakitvillage.org/](http://www.mamarasakitvillage.org/)

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