

IWPR to Launch Radio Programme for South Sudan

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Training programme in Juba ahead of new series addressing women's rights in areas bordering Sudan.

A ten-day training and mentoring course for broadcast journalists held in Juba has paved the way for IWPR's new radio programme covering women's rights in South Sudan.

The weekly programme will be produced in partnership with the Catholic Radio Network, CRN. The content will be gathered and recorded by IWPR and CRN's team of female reporters.

The goal of the project is to provide women with a platform to access independent news about the rule of law and women's rights, and to stimulate debate through local radio in South Sudan's northern region, bordering Sudan.

The training programme was held from April 16 to 26 at the Association for Media Development in South Sudan in Juba.

The programme, *Nadhrat al-Shafafa*, is a 15-minute weekly radio magazine featuring news, interviews and analysis, with an emphasis on women's rights. It follows South Sudan's secession in July 2011 and will air on CRN stations in the South Sudan towns of Wau, Malakal, and north of the border in Gidel.

The new radio project, IWPR's first in South Sudan, has been welcomed by station managers at IWPR's local partner, CRN.

"We are looking forward to producing programmes that will contribute to improving the condition of women in South Sudan, particularly by making themselves and the general public more aware of women's rights," Sister Elena Balatti, director of Radio Saut al-Mahabba in Malakal, said.

A second phase of the training programme will be held in the town of Malakal in the coming weeks.

The training workshop taught the reporters the basic skills of broadcast journalism, including research, interviewing and production techniques. The course also covered a variety of presentation formats, so that participants will be able to reach out to their audience and interact with it on complex issues via news bulletins, special reports, radio documentaries, public debates and phone-in talk shows.

The journalists trained by IWPR welcomed the chance to acquire new skills.

"The best item in the training was learning a method to plan the radio programmes, especially who to interview," said James Pakwan, a senior editor at Radio Saut al-Mahabba who will work alongside the reporters as they produce the programme.

The intensive training schedule also included specialist tuition on human rights issues, with a particular focus on the role of the media in reporting rights and justice issues in the region. Reporters learned how to research and provide in-depth coverage on issues such as sexual violence, local judicial mechanisms and female empowerment.

Nadhrat al Shafafa provides an opportunity for people living in the border areas to become better informed about crucial issues in the volatile border region with Sudan, and contribute their own views on them as well.

Radio Voice of Hope in Wau, and Radio Voice of Peace in Gidel and Radio Saut al-Mahabba in Malakal will broadcast the programme in Arabic and local languages – Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk and Tira.

Topics to be explored in upcoming episodes of *Nadhrat al Shafafa* include widows' rights, early marriage and the value of female education.

The discussions that took place during training focused on the legal complications arising from the interplay between traditional law and common-law systems, and their effects on women's rights in the region.

"Our training helped to build a picture of the situation facing women in South Sudan, especially to focus on areas where their rights are not yet fully recognised," Jina Awini, a reporter at Radio Saut al-Mahabba, said.

Other participants were enthusiastic about the objectives of the programmes that will be aired through CRN's network over the coming months.

“To be aware that a problem [concerning women’s rights] is there is not the end of the task,” Pakwan said. “The radio programme should give clues as to who can address [women’s rights issues] or possibly solve them.”

Simon Jennings is IWPR’s Africa Editor.



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