

FEMINISM: Connecting The Dots

2020-2021 Report



MA' MARA SAKIT
VILLAGE

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OUR VISION

A South Sudan where every person feels valued and dignified with the utmost autonomy and control over their lives.

OUR MISSION

To establish multi-purpose, viable, and self-sustainable women's spaces, enhance the knowledge and skills of individuals, feminist groups, networks, and organizations to raise feminist consciousness and organize to build a feminist movement in South Sudan.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Social Justice
- Economic Liberty and Sustainability
- Research, Education, and Learning.
- Organizing and Movement Building

OUR VALUES

Commitment, Community, Accountability, Reflective, Integrity, and Rest.



“

You contributed to building an online South Sudanese feminist movement. This pilot period's experiences were definitive moments of who we are. You made us believe that we are the experts of our realities by showing us the value of grounding our feminism in our narratives.

”

THANK YOU

What a milestone to finally piece together our reflections and the summary of the foundational phases of Gender Talk 211 (GT211). As a curative digital platform focused on women, girls, and non-binary South Sudanese, their history, realities, challenges, achievements, and beyond, many of you, in different ways, have accompanied us on this journey.

The curators who led and facilitated difficult conversations, especially on Twitter and Facebook, through written words, Facebook Live, and voices in the recently added Twitter Spaces voice conversations. The individuals and women groups who participated as guests who shaped the on-air discussions, which developed into one of the platform's overall core pillars in 2020. Our phenomenal writers and contributors to the GT211 website, a space that is slowly becoming home to South Sudanese feminist writers and voices.

Thank you for sharing your knowledge, experiences, and expertise. All your insights enabled us to explore a variety of media tools, including videography, photography, digital and traditional forms of expression. You contributed to building an online South Sudanese feminist movement. This pilot period's experiences were definitive moments of who we are. You made us believe that we are the experts of our realities by showing us the value of grounding our feminism in our narratives.

With the utmost humility, I express my appreciation and gratitude to all our contributors, readers, viewers, and listeners. You have provided us with the most valuable experiences in the past two years, and I look forward to continuing to build this village with you all.

From

Eva Lopa,
Gender Talk 211 Program Lead

BUILDING A FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN A PANDEMIC

Ma' Mara Sakit Village was founded in January 2020 and officially registered in August 2020 during COVID 19 pandemic. Despite the pandemic, Ma' Mara Sakit Village was still able to start primarily because of Gender Talk 211 (GT211). A program that uses storytelling, narrative photography, research, creative art, and traditional and digital multimedia to tell, document, and digitize the past and present experiences and narratives of women, girls, and non-binary South Sudanese. Although this program was designed without any anticipation of the pandemic, the establishment of GT211 digital, traditional, and multimedia platforms was timely.

Risk mitigation measures to prevent the spread of COVID 19, including lockdown, restrictions of movement, and social gatherings, which heavily impacted women's rights work in South Sudan, GT211 quickly grew and gained momentum. It created platforms where South Sudanese explored and shared resources, experience, knowledge, and skills that facilitated holistic conversations on gender and sexuality amongst South Sudanese globally. More importantly, GT211 became one of the leading platforms countering anti-feminism and online violence against women, girls, and non-binary South Sudanese. Publicly identifying as an African Feminist platform, curating and hosting conversations on feminism, opening spaces to discuss issues such as abortion rights, and celebrating Pride Month were GT211's first radical steps in laying its feminist footing in South Sudan.

Suk-Sukna Project

The second program Ma' Mara Sakit Village Suk-Sukna project was able to start in the middle of a pandemic was the Suk-Sukna project. This project later became one of the primary sources of income for Ma' Mara Sakit Village. The Suk-Sukna Project is a bead-making project that aims to create sustainable job opportunities for South Sudanese women and girls by enhancing their knowledge and skills. To design and recreate South Sudanese traditional beads to promote unique, beautiful, and creative South Sudanese and Pan-African cultures. 'Suk-Sukna' is a South Sudanese Arabic phrase that loosely translates to "our beads."



The project enhanced the skills of three (3) women and one (1) girl on how to make the Dinka/Mundari beaded corset and provided 17 other women an opportunity to work in the comfort of their homes and produce beads for sale in 2020. Self-sustainability is the core of Ma Mara Sakit Village. Not only did the Suk-Sukna project create job opportunities for 21 South Sudanese women to sustain their families during the pandemic, resources from the sale of the beads financially facilitated the implementation of various activities under GT211.

Research

To inform GT211 program design in 2020, Ma' Mara Sakit Village commissioned the Institute of Social Policy and Research (ISPR) to assess Gender Perspectives: Exploring Social and Cultural Dynamics of Gender Roles and Social Behaviours in Communities. The study was conducted in Juba, covering 20 ethnic groups from

20 residential suburbs. Three hundred seventy-eight respondents were consulted, including 230 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 26 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 148 respondents. This research focused on gender norms, perceptions of emotional behaviours, toxic masculinity attitudes, and their implications for women and girls' social life, participation in the private sector, and decision-making ability on critical services, including healthy choices. The research also aimed to inform the growing literature on gender roles and responsibilities with an in-depth understanding of the socially constructed attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours amongst communities in South Sudan. It further explored the underlying social stereotypes on gender roles and responsibilities attributed to men and boys and women and girls and how such social constructs influence people's daily way of life in different communities.



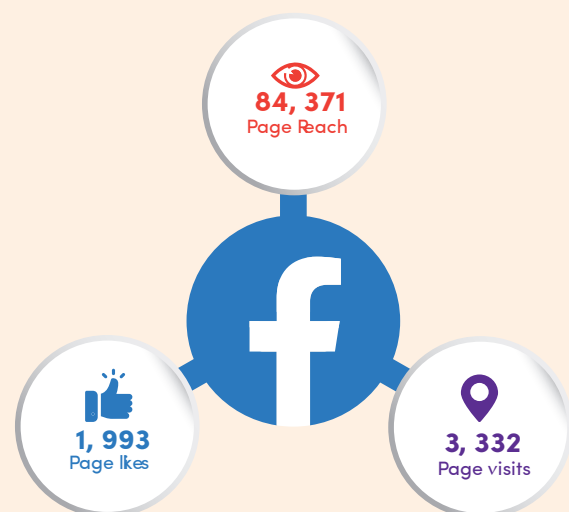
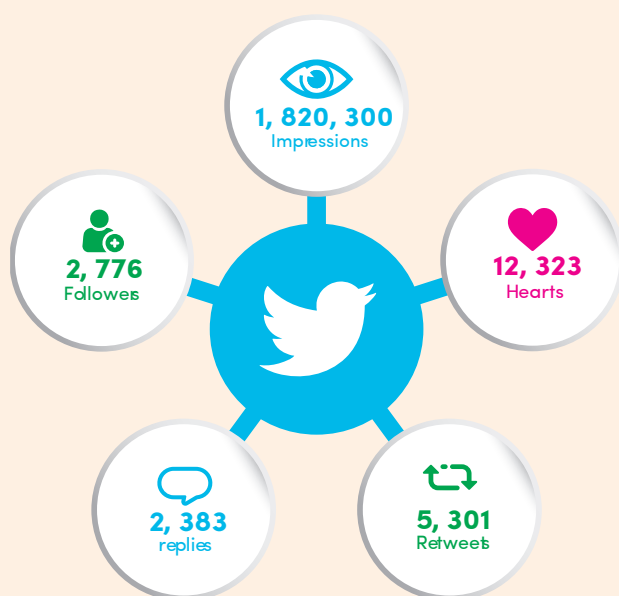
RESEARCH REPORT

Gender Perspectives: Exploring Social and Cultural Dynamics of Gender Roles and Social Behaviors in Communities

JUNE 2020

DIGITAL FEMINISM: CREATING PLATFORMS AND AMPLIFYING VOICES

2020-2021 Social media Reach and Engagement





28 Gender Talk 211 Episodes Produced

Between 2020 and 2021, GT211 bi-weekly one-hour radio program held 28 Radio Talk shows through Advance youth Radio. The conversations were live streamed on Facebook, and some videos were uploaded to GT211 YouTube Channel. The 28 episodes covered a wide range of issues and topics. These included women's contributions to the South Sudan liberation and the intersections between masculinities and mental health. Women and girls in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), women's political participation, gender roles, and expectations focus on ways society stigmatizes women and girls who defy such norms. The discussions also explored the power of language and how it shapes how people see the world, sexual and reproductive health, and rights, and unpacked different forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). GT211 pushed boundaries to introduce critical matters many South Sudanese often shy away from discussing, such as feminism, relationships, and sex.

44 Guests Hosted

GT211 radio program facilitated a platform for 29 women from different professions and walks of life, women with disabilities, women defying patriarchal norms, and boldly re-imagine a feminist future both in and outside South Sudan. Nine (9) male allies who are openly questioning patriarchal norms and Gendered violence. The program also hosted six (6) young girls and centered their voices on all issues and discussions that focused on girls' rights.



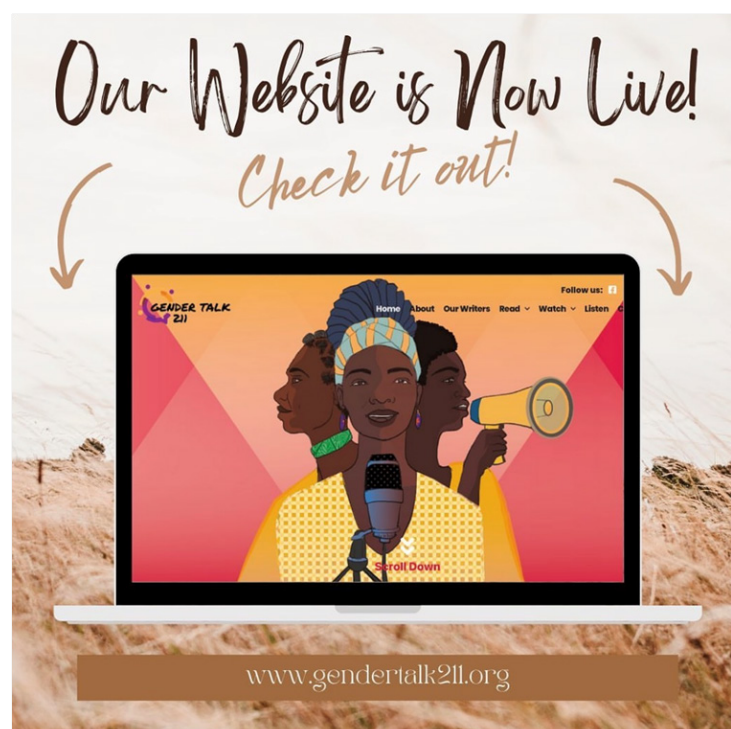
16 Curators on Gender talk 211 Social media Platforms (Twitter and Facebook)

The impact of online GBV, especially on social media platforms, against women, girls, and non-binary South Sudanese is often overlooked. Abusers are not less of abusers simply because they are abusing their victims online. GT211 became one of the primary platforms countering anti-feminism and online violence against women, girls, and LGBTQ+ South Sudanese on social media. Provided platform to nine (9) women and seven (7) male allies between 2020 and 2021 who curated discussions to challenge dominant and harmful narratives, which contributed to building online solidarity amongst South Sudanese feminists and other African Feminists across the globe.



10 Articles and poems published

GT211 website was developed and launched in 2021 to counter neocolonial knowledge production, credibility, and legitimization processes. South Sudanese women and girls' experiences and narratives are valuable resources enabling us to theorize our resistance to guide the work of organizers, activists, and NGOs invested in women's rights in South Sudan. GT211 supported and published Six (6) articles and four (4) poems written by remarkable South Sudanese women and girls.

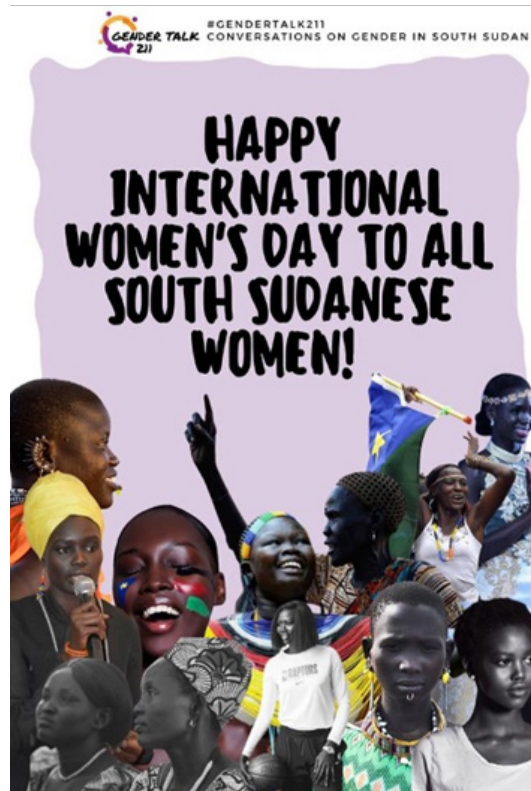


14 Phenomenal Writers and Poets

Slowly growing a community of writers willing to tell and document past and present experiences, thoughts, dreams, and visions to contribute to South Sudanese feminist knowledge acquisition, sharing, and production to establish a digital South Sudanese feminist archive. So far, GT211 has 14 incredible writers/contributors who submit at least two pieces a year.

Women's Month 30

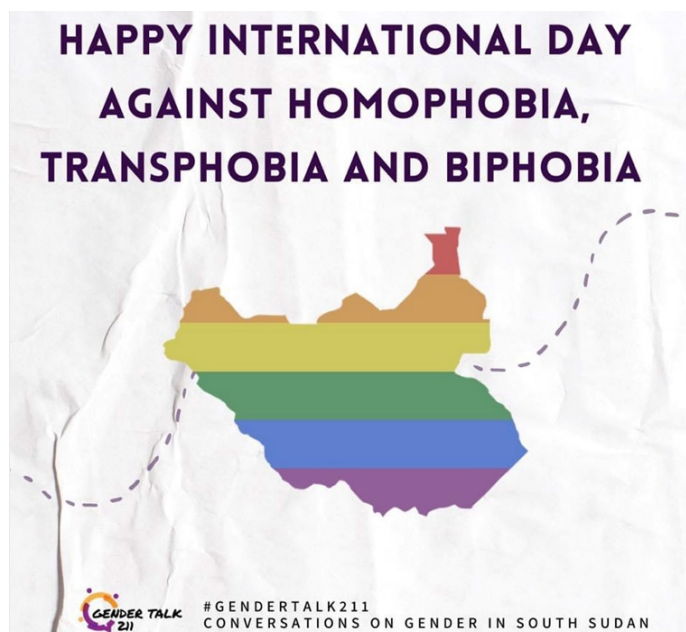
GT211 dedicated the month of March 2021 to honor 30 South Sudanese women and girls challenging gender norms and contributing to creating change globally. The commemoration was under the theme 'Women's Month 30' using the hashtag #ChooseToChallenge. The campaign kicked off at the beginning of the month, leading to International Women's Day on March 8th through the end of the month. The 30 women and girls featured were from different backgrounds and fields such as media, academia, entrepreneurship, the creative arts, and sports and athletics, among others.



Pride month 2021

For the first time in South Sudan history, GT211 curated and hosted a Twitter Space to celebrate Pride Month. Being the first time to talk about LGBTQ+ rights in South Sudan openly, the curation was focused on sharing information throughout the month. The curator started the conversation with foundational concepts such as sexual orientation and gender identities, homophobia and types of homophobias, Pride Month History, and what Rainbow Capitalism means. The discussion then slowly transitioned to a historical analysis of African homophobia with a close examination of colonialism and the introduction of African customary law.

GT211 wrapped up Pride Month 2021 with a Twitter Space that brought together over 30 South Sudanese people in a conversation on African Sexualities, Gender, and Homophobia. We applauded the curator for the bravery to open space and discuss the rights of South Sudanese whose identities are criminalized. GT211 remains fully committed to the fight for inclusivity, diversity, equality, and empowerment of all LGBTQIA+ in South Sudan and the world. Furthermore, the quest to dismantle patriarchal societal structures remains our core goal. We denounce all forms of homophobia, discrimination, harassment, and assault on the LGBTQIA+ community.



South Sudan women at 10

#SouthSudanWomenAt10 was a visual documentation series of reflections of South Sudanese women and girls from different walks of life within and outside South Sudan to give platform and amplify women's versatile roles, struggles, and perspectives on the first decade of South Sudan independence in July 2021. The two-minute video clips featured the voices of 30 women and girls in communities, refugee camps, and within multiple sectors and spaces. Women whose existence might have been heard of, but stories remain untold. Listening to the circumstances these women and girls live through was heartbreaking, but their hopes and dreams for South Sudan are worth the fight. The focus on telling women's stories throughout Independence month was to bring women and girls' voices to the forefront of the larger conversation on South Sudan's 10th Independence anniversary.



Narrative Photography

To get a sense of South Sudanese attitudes towards gender roles, GT211 curated discussions using images online in 2020. A photoshoot that produced 11 photos showcasing women and men defying gender roles provoked thoughts and online debates amongst South Sudanese. The photos touched on domestic and care work in-home or cattle camp settings, masculinities, and career expectations, especially for women. In 2021, as part of the 'Gender Talk 211: Orange South Sudan' event, another themed photoshoot that produced ten powerful narrative images was conducted. The printed photos visualized different forms of SGBV and furthered conversations at the event held at the start of 2021 as part of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

NAVIGATING A PANDEMIC TO COMMUNE IN-PERSON

Gender Talk 211 Talking Circles

To commemorate 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2021, Ma' Mara Sakit Village partnered with Paranet Media to facilitate Talking Circles at the 'Noor-le-humon Art exhibition' curated by Paranet Media. Paranet Media is one of the leading art and design firms in South Sudan that focuses on conceptualization, design, and production of all forms of art and design work for both private and public use. The Noor-le-humon Art exhibition was a culmination of Busiri Julius Korsuk, the curator's many years of work experience in GBV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

The Talking Circles aimed to create safe and non-judgmental spaces for people to discuss the messages behind the various works of art to the social realities, focusing on GBV. Throughout the 16 days, GT211 facilitators engaged with 68 boys, 79 girls, 132 women, and 131 men in conversations that explored various themes. These included the scourge of GBV in South Sudan, prevention and response mechanisms, unrecognized works of women, and the great women in our lives. Examining gender and religion, masculinities, male involvement, multiple discrimination, intersectionality, GBV and children, feminism, women's rights movement, and the journey of Equality in South Sudan.

Orange South Sudan was an interactive in-personal panel discussion organized as part of the commemoration of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2021. The event brought together 65 people, including GBV survivors, practitioners, activists, donors, and high school and university students, to share experiences on different forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), actions being taken, and where efforts need to be doubled. A photo exhibition to virtualize forms of GBV to provoke emotions and thoughts and create conversations before and after the event as people socialized.



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MAJOR HURDLES AND ATTEMPTED MITIGATIONS

Backlash: Anti-Feminism and Online Violence Against Women.

As South Sudanese young women's voices grew online, so did the harassment and abuse in attempts to silence them, especially on platforms such as Twitter. The online abuse was worst for queer or feminist identifying South Sudanese. GT211 offered an opportunity to connect and build solidarity amongst South Sudanese feminists across the globe. Unlike other discussions where the curator was revealed and introduced to the online audience, the first time GT211 curated a conversation on feminism, "the back to basics: Feminism 101" series, the curator's identity was kept anonymous to reduce targeted harassment toward the individual. In 2022, Ma' Mara Sakit Village will explore online safely for women and girls to develop structural mechanisms to best contribute to the online protection of women, girls, and non-binary South Sudanese.

Anti-Abortion Laws and The Criminalization Of LGBTQIA+ Rights in South Sudan

As a traditional and digital multimedia platform, GT211 conversations are structured using radio and social media platforms. GT211 partners with a local youth-led Radio that has to vet and authorize GT211 radio content before it is aired. Due to illegality of abortion and LGBTQ+ rights in South Sudan, GT211 could not host radio talk shows on these rights. Fortunately, no law limits South Sudanese from having these conversations on their digital or multimedia platforms, an opportunity GT211 seized. For the first time in South Sudan, GT211 observed pride month, curated about LGBTQIA+ rights throughout June on both Twitter and Facebook, and hosted a Twitter on "African Sexualities, Gender, and Homophobia." GT211 also curated a series of conversations on abortion rights. It hosted Twitter spaces where young South Sudanese women shared experiences and ways they can navigate anti-abortion laws, especially for young women living in South Sudan, while continuing to advocate for the decriminalization of abortion.

Poor telecommunication infrastructures

South Sudan has one of the poorest networks and internet services. The limited access to electricity, internet connectivity, and high cost associated with both has been a big challenge. Difficulties uploading content online, rescheduling online conversations or team meetings, and some radio discussions couldn't be live streamed, among other significant challenges due to internet connectivity issues. Partnership with DefyHateNow-South Sudan enabled the team to utilize Scenius Hub as a co-working space, which was very helpful in navigating this struggle.



COVID 19

The world went on lockdown due to Covid 19 just a month after Ma' Mara Sakit Village was founded. Only two programs out of four were able to be started in 2020 and sustained throughout the pandemic. It was also challenging for the team as people lost loved ones or their social lives due to the virus.



**Abortion is
healthcare**



#GENDERTALK211
CONVERSATIONS ON GENDER IN SOUTH SUDAN

Identity and Registration Challenges

Ma' Mara Sakit Village is a social enterprise, a new concept in South Sudan. It was a bit of a challenge, especially in defining the legal status of the entity. Only two registration options existed. To be registered as a profits company or a non-profit organization, yet it was neither of the two. The entity was later registered as a "company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital." That was the closest option to a social enterprise. In many instances, Ma' Mara Sakit Village is forced to identify as a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) as it is the category that is widely legally known and embraced in South Sudan.

Resource Constraints

Ma' Mara Sakit Village is a start-up that is yet to actualize the vision of its social entrepreneurship status to enable it to sustain all its programs financially. More importantly, adequately facilitate the knowledgeable and skilled team deeply invested in all the feminist movement building work.

RESOURCES

Astonishing Feminist Team

Passion, skills, knowledge, expertise, and time dedicated by Ma' Mara Sakit Village core team members have been the primary resources that enabled everything we have achieved between 2020 and 2021. None of the accomplishments would have been possible without the immeasurable, voluntary, and devoted efforts put in by Ajak Ibrahim, Eva Lopa, Agau Bul, Aluel Atem, Nyamal Kur, and Nyandeng Kiir.

Financial

From the time of its establishment in January 2020, Ma Mara Sakit Village has been mostly self-sustainable, with most of the resources contributed by the guarantors and from the sale of beads from the Suk-Sukna Project. However, In November 2021, Gender Talk 211 program received four-month funding support from the Embassy of Canada in South Sudan through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

Contributors	Funds in USD (\$)
Ma' Mara Sakit Village Guarantors	39, 392.50
Suk-Sukna Project	5,500.00
The Embassy of Canada in South Sudan	28, 457.00
Total	\$ 63, 349.50

2020-2021 Expenditures

Gender Talk 211 Program	16, 177.00
Suk-Sukna Program	10,942.50
Team Facilitation	21,200.00
Total	\$ 48, 319.50



DOCUMENT AND DIGITIZE WOMEN'S NARRATIVES

OUR 2020-2021 MAIN ALLIES



DefyHateNow
- South Sudan



Advance Youth Radio

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

Canada

**The Embassy of Canada in South Sudan
through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
(CFLI).**

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