



**COMMUNICATION
IN CRISIS**

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF MAYARDIT
FM FOLLOWING THE MAY 2011 ABYEI
EMERGENCY**

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Cover photo: A women from Abyei stands next to her radio in Majong Kuel IDP camp, Twic County, Warrap State. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews



INTRODUCTION

Fighting in the disputed Sudanese border region of Abyei beginning on May 21, 2011 sent tens of thousands of people fleeing south for their safety. While these internally displaced persons (IDPs) were welcomed by their host communities and have received assistance from international agencies, their arrival *en masse* has put a significant strain on already scarce resources. Warrap State, which borders Abyei, is hosting the majority of the estimated 96,000 IDPs¹, many of whom still lack access to food and basic services.

Since March 2009, Internews has operated an FM radio station in Turalei, the administrative capital of Warrap State's Twic County. The station, known as Mayardit FM, is one of six community radio stations established in South Sudan and Sudan's Three Areas with USAID funding, most recently through a sub-grant from the Mercy Corps' Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan (LINCS) program. Mayardit FM is on air approximately 44 hours per week, from Monday through Saturday, and is staffed by five local reporters. Operating at maximum capacity, the station has a broadcast radius of approximately 60 km, reaching the majority of Twic County, the northern parts of Gogrial East and Gogrial



Families fleeing fighting in Abyei arrive in Turalei on May 25, 2011. Photo: Deng Bol/Internews

West Counties (also in Warrap State), the very western part of Mayom County in Unity State, and areas in the southern part of Abyei. These areas combined have an estimated potential listenership of 273,151.² A map showing Mayardit FM's estimated coverage is included as an addendum to this report.

In humanitarian emergencies, radio is one of the most effective ways of disseminating information to affected communities and promoting two-way information flow between the host community, IDPs, government officials and humanitarian responders. The purpose of this assessment, carried out between June 28 and July 2, 2011 in and around Turalei, was to investigate the impact of Mayardit FM following the May Abyei crisis and the subsequent mass displacement of people, and make recommendations for future improvements.

BACKGROUND

The status of the Abyei region, on the border between Sudan and the newly-independent Republic of South Sudan, has remained unresolved since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended decades of civil war. Under the CPA the people of Abyei were promised a referendum to decide the region's future; whether it would remain part of Southern Kordofan State, part of the north, or become part of Northern Bahr el Ghazal State in the

¹ UN OCHA. "Sudan: Abyei displacement now estimated at 96,000." June 8, 2011. <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/sudan-abyei-displacement-now-estimated-96000>.

²Based on the 2010 Statistical Year Book for Southern Sudan and estimated percentages of coverage in each county. Note that population figures are taken the 2008 census and do not reflect significant population movements that resulted from the May 2011 fighting in Abyei, nor the migration of hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese from the north that began in late 2010.

south. The Abyei vote was to coincide with a referendum in which southern Sudanese would decide whether to remain part of a united Sudan or form their own nation. On January 9, 2011, southern Sudanese voted overwhelmingly for separation and independence. However, disagreements between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) over voter eligibility prevented the Abyei referendum from taking place. At the time of writing, the status of the region remained undecided.

The months following the Southern Sudan Referendum saw regular clashes in Abyei, between the SPLM-aligned Dinka Ngok tribe (who inhabit the area year-round), and Arab cattle-herders, known as the Misseriya, who have historically migrated into Abyei from the north during the dry season to graze their cattle. Both the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) began to increase their presence along the border, further escalating tensions.

On May 21, 2011 armed clashes broke out between SPLA and SAF forces. An attack, allegedly by SPLA elements, on a convoy of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) being escorted by UN troops out of Abyei (in accordance with an agreement signed between the two sides in March) prompted significant retaliation from SAF, which ultimately occupied the town. Virtually the entire civilian population of Abyei town fled, many to the town of Agok in the southern part of the Abyei region, and to areas of southern Sudan. After the initial offensive SAF troops began to push south, causing a second wave of displacement.³ As of June 5, 2011, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) estimated that 96,000 people had been displaced by the fighting.⁴



Mayardit FM is located in Turalei, south of the contested Abyei region. Note that this map is out of date and does not depict the newly independent Republic of South Sudan. Original map: UNEP, 2006

The majority of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) have resettled in neighboring Warrap State.⁵ Many of the IDPs were taken in and assisted by the host community when they first arrived, and began to receive assistance from international NGOs soon thereafter. Nevertheless, the influx of people has put a significant strain on already scarce resources, including food, water, shelter, and health facilities. The blockade for nearly two months of the road from northern Sudan created a shortage of food, fuel and other commodities in the south, with vulnerable households including returnees, IDPs and food insecure host communities the hardest hit.

³ On June 20, 2011, the SPLM and NCP reached an agreement to withdraw troops from Abyei. A week later, the United Nations Security Council voted to deploy 4,200 Ethiopian peacekeeping troops in the region. “UN Security council endorses Abyei peacekeeping force.” Sudan Tribune, June 27, 2011. <http://www.sudantribune.com/UN-Security-Council-votes-in,39354>.

⁴ UN OCHA. “Sudan: Abyei displacement now estimated at 96,000.”

⁵ *Ibid.*

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The two primary objectives of the assessment in Turalei were as follows:

1. **To investigate the role of Mayardit FM following the May 2011 Abyei crisis.** Internews wanted to investigate the station's impact in a systematic way after receiving anecdotal reports from the field suggesting the station helped to facilitate the humanitarian response to the crisis in Turalei and surrounding areas.
2. **To further assess the viability of expanding the coverage of Mayardit FM to reach Abyei or establishing a new station in the Abyei region.** A study conducted by Internews in April 2011 recommended the establishment of a new radio station in Agok, a town in southernmost part of the Abyei region.⁶ Internews wanted to revisit this issue following the events of May 2011 in Abyei and the concomitant impact on security and the IDP and humanitarian situation.

The Internews research team conducted focus group discussions and interviews between June 28 and July 2, 2011 within Turalei town and in nearby Majong Kuel IDP camp.⁷ A total of four focus groups were convened, two with members of the IDP community (men and women) and two with members of the host community (men and women). All either listened regularly or had listened to Mayardit FM. Participants were selected by a locally-hired translator/evaluation assistant not affiliated with Internews or the radio station. Each group included between six and ten people. Furthermore, in-person interviews were conducted in Turalei with IDP and host community leaders, local authorities, civil society leaders, staff of international agencies working in the area, (both expatriate and national), as well as with IDPs in Majong Kuel. Phone interviews were also conducted with NGO staff working in nearby areas outside Turalei town.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted by the Internews Monitoring & Evaluation Officer with assistance from the aforementioned translator/assistant. All respondents were told that neither the interviewer nor the translator worked for Mayardit FM, and were encouraged to give their honest opinions. When Internews was mentioned by name, it was described only as “an international organization that supports community radio and other local media around the world, including in Sudan.”

Names of focus group participants, interviewees in Majong Kuel camp, and international agency staff have been omitted from this report, as Internews did not obtain explicit permission to use them. A full list of interviews and focus groups, which includes names of local government officials, community leaders, and civil society representatives, is included at the end of the report.



Mayardit FM station building, Turalei, Warrap State, June 2011. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews

⁶ De Masi, Sonya. *Information Needs in the Abyei region of Sudan*. Internews, April 12, 2011.

⁷ Ideally, the assessment would also have covered areas of the broadcast range further outside Turalei. However, this was not feasible due to time and transportation constraints.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

IMPACT OF MAYARDIT FM FOLLOWING THE ABYEI CRISIS

Interviews with members of the IDP and host communities, community leaders representing both groups, local government officials, civil society leaders, and international agency representatives revealed that Mayardit FM has helped both the IDP and host communities cope in the aftermath of violent displacement and in the midst of continued instability. In particular, the station has played an important role in the following areas:

Reuniting families separated in the flight from Abyei (and in subsequent insecurity in Turalei). Virtually all respondents praised the radio for its role in reuniting parents and children following the May 2011 fighting in Abyei. As IDPs arrived in Turalei, parents began flooding into the station to give the names of their missing children, and community members brought in lost children to have their names read. In the days that followed, radio station staff began collaborating directly with international NGOs and agencies working in child protection in Turalei and the surrounding areas. Staff of these agencies consistently stated that the radio was the most effective means of carrying out family tracing and reunification.

Facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance. The assessment revealed that Mayardit FM had helped facilitate the provision of assistance in two ways. First, the radio allowed providers of aid to communicate with beneficiaries, directing them to areas where they could receive assistance. Second, reports by Mayardit FM journalists on the situation facing IDPs informed local government (and, through them, international actors) about needs and gaps in assistance, ultimately leading to a more effective response.

Promoting mutual understanding between the IDP and host communities. When IDPs first arrived in Turalei, members of the host community were the first to respond, taking IDPs into their homes and providing them with food and water. Respondents from both the IDP and host communities directly attributed the scale of this assistance to Mayardit FM's broadcast of a message by a Turalei executive chief urging his community to welcome IDPs with open arms. Many respondents also cited broadcasts on the radio that they felt encouraged understanding between the two communities in the weeks following the IDPs' initial arrival – a time when increasing scarcity of resources heightened the potential for conflict.

Reducing panic and confusion by providing the community with up-to-date information about the security situation in and around Turalei. An attack on Turalei just days before the assessment (allegedly by militia elements based in neighboring Unity State) sent most of the town's population running for safety. Two hours after the cessation of hostilities, Mayardit FM was on air, broadcasting a message from the county commissioner that it was safe to return. Almost all respondents considered this broadcast to have been responsible for the return of community members. Without it, many believed people would not have known what had happened, nor that it was safe to come back.

In addition to the significant impact of the radio in and around Turalei following the May 2011 Abyei crisis, the assessment identified three major issues/areas for improvement. First, while the radio proved to be extremely helpful – if not essential – in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, collaboration with international agencies was delayed due to sensitivities within these organizations about engaging with the media. Secondly, most IDPs had only limited access to radio which prevented them from benefitting fully from programming on Mayardit FM. Most IDPs fled Abyei carrying virtually nothing, and did not have radios with them when they arrived in Turalei. While many were able to listen to Mayardit when passing through the market or from neighbors' radios, very few reported having regular access to a radio set. Thirdly, many respondents expressed a desire for more ongoing coverage of the situation in Abyei. Many felt that Mayardit lacked sufficient resources to bring them this

information. Instead, those who were able to understand English or Arabic relied on international sources, such as BBC, or national outlets like Miraya FM or Al-Shrouq (a northern Sudanese station).

BRINGING COMMUNITY RADIO TO ABYEI

Nearly all respondents requested that Mayardit FM be extended to reach communities in Abyei, and beyond, even before they were asked. Respondents viewed the radio as the most important and accessible means of communicating with people far away from them, and felt it would be helpful to extend the signal in order to pass information more effectively. Some mentioned that coverage should be extended for security reasons – i.e. to help inform more people when fighting is taking place.

In contrast to the findings of Internews’ April 2011 feasibility study in Agok/Abyei, most respondents from both the IDP and host communities felt it would be preferable to extend the signal of Mayardit FM to reach Abyei, rather than to establish a new station in the Abyei area. This preference generally stemmed from the perception that a station in Agok/Abyei would be vulnerable to fighting or capture by “enemies.” Respondents also expressed support for the idea of establishing a bureau or basing a correspondent in the Abyei region to ensure that Mayardit FM listeners have access to timely and accurate information about the situation there.

When asked about the need to change programming to accommodate an expanded audience, many respondents requested that Arabic and English be incorporated to the programming, in addition to the local Dinka language. Most felt this would be helpful even within the current broadcast range, allowing returnees (those originally from the Twic community who have recently returned from significant time abroad) and expatriates (including aid workers) to listen as well. Both IDP and host community respondents opposed the idea of including perspectives from the Misseriya tribe, if the station was to be expanded to reach Abyei or if a new station were to be established in Agok. This finding, consistent with Internews’ April 2011 study, suggests that ensuring balanced coverage will be challenging if expansion does occur.

IMPACT OF MAYARDIT FM FOLLOWING THE ABYEI CRISIS

REUNITING FAMILIES

Mayardit FM’s role in reuniting families separated during the flight from Abyei was mentioned by almost every respondent and/or focus group, including host community members, IDPs, local authorities, and international agency staff. “Since we came here,” said one male IDP focus group participant, “all the lost children were found through Mayardit FM...Mayardit is really standing with us. This reunification...it was the role of Mayardit.” A woman interviewed in Majong Kuel IDP agreed, saying “if there was no Mayardit, we could not have found our children.”



This man, interviewed in Majong Kuel IDP camp outside Turalei, reported that Mayardit FM helped him find two of his children who were lost in the flight from Abyei. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews

Immediately after arriving in Turalei from Abyei, parents began flooding into the station to report the names of their missing children, and children separated from their parents were brought to the station to have their names

read over the radio. **In the days and weeks that followed, Mayardit FM staff began a formal collaboration with several international agencies focused on child protection.** A child protection office was set up at the Mercy Corps Civil Society Resource Center adjacent to the radio station building, and children who were brought in were taken to the protection office for registration. International agency staff working in remote areas outside Turalei also collected names and submitted them to the child protection office in Turalei. Each afternoon, agency staff would submit to the station a list of names which would be read over the radio repeatedly throughout the evening shifts and once the next morning. The station would then receive an updated list and repeat the process.

An expatriate staff member of an international NGO working on family tracing and reunification in Mayen Abun, an area approximately 20 km from Turalei where many IDPs from Abyei have settled, reported that the radio had been the “single most effective” means of tracing people.⁸ Without it, she said, the organization would not have the capacity to handle nearly as many cases. Expatriate staff of an international agency that played a coordinating role in reunification efforts in the area reported that, as of July 19, 2011, 197 children had been registered and 51 had been successfully reunited with their families. While it is not clear exactly how many were reunited as a direct result of the radio, Internews staff reported that they were given and read out all the names in the registry.

Respondents reported that the station continued to facilitate the reunification of families in the two days immediately following the June 25 attack on Turalei town. However, the station’s generator broke on June 28 and the radio was not broadcasting at the time of the assessment. According to attendees at an NGO coordination meeting at the Turalei Civil Society Resource Center on Friday, July 1, the silence of the radio during that period proved a significant hindrance to reunification efforts. The generator was repaired the following week, and the radio was back on air on the evening of Tuesday, July 5. Mayardit FM staff reported that the child protection office re-opened hours later and that – as of this writing – efforts to reunite families using the radio were ongoing.

A staff member of an international NGO working in family reunification reported that the radio had been the “single most effective means” of tracing people.

FACILITATING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Mayardit FM was credited by respondents with facilitating the humanitarian response to the Abyei IDP crisis in two important ways. The radio allowed local government entities and international agencies involved in the humanitarian response to pass information to their target beneficiaries about when, where, and how to receive assistance. Furthermore, coverage by the station of the situations of both the IDP and host communities informed local government (and subsequently international NGOs and agencies) about gaps in assistance that needed to be filled. In the aftermath of the May 2011 Abyei crisis, **Mayardit FM facilitated a two-way flow of communication between those administering aid and those receiving it, ultimately leading to a more effective response.**

MAKING AID DELIVERY POSSIBLE

Next to its role in family reunification, the role of the radio in helping government and international agencies coordinate distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs), as well as other assistance (i.e. vaccination campaigns) was consistently cited as one of its most important following the Abyei IDP crisis in Turalei. The radio allowed local

⁸At the request of those interviewed, the names of NGOs and agencies have been omitted.

government and international agencies to inform people about ongoing aid efforts and particularly about locations where beneficiaries could register and receive assistance. As one female host community member explained, “Mayardit is standing with IDPs. There was even a time when there was a certain place being allocated for them...so it was Mayardit FM that was informing the IDPs that they have got a place where they will go and have food distributed to them.” An IDP leader concurred, describing Mayardit as “the main source for [information about] where humanitarian assistance is being given.”



A woman in MajongKuel IDP camp digs post holes to erect a shelter using materials donated by aid agencies. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews

IDPs from Abyei interviewed in Majong Kuel IDP camp outside Turalei said they knew to gather there to receive distributions of food and non-food items (NFIs), including poles and plastic sheets for constructing shelters, because of broadcasts they heard on Mayardit FM. A national staff member from an international agency working in the camp explained the agency had found significant numbers of IDPs gathering in the area and coordinated with local government to set up basic infrastructure (i.e. boreholes, pit latrines) and arrange food and NFI distributions. As the camp began to be established, local officials announced its location to other IDPs over Mayardit FM. “Mayardit FM told us to come here,” said one woman in the camp, “it is through radio that we have received food and plastic sheets.”

In addition to information about the location of distributions, many respondents mentioned that Mayardit FM had delivered assistance in the form of information – particularly information about health and hygiene. With the increased population concentration in and around Turalei after the arrival of the IDPs, respondents from both the IDP and host communities described the spread of disease as a major concern and expressed appreciation to the station for broadcasting messages from government and international agencies about proper hygiene and sanitation practices.

“At the beginning, agencies and the government were all sleeping. Then through Mayardit FM they provided help to the IDPs.”

It is clear that the radio station played a vital role in the provision of assistance to affected communities in and around Turalei, including delivery of information on distribution of food and non-food items, health and hygiene, and family tracing and reunification efforts. However, Internews staff working in Turalei at the time noted that significant hurdles had to be overcome before formal collaboration between the station and relevant agencies could begin. Rob McKee, a journalism trainer with Internews who has been working with Mayardit FM staff in Turalei since late May, said many agencies were initially concerned about having their work mentioned on the radio for fear that they might be discussed in an unfavorable light or that drawing attention to their work might have adverse operational implications. Agencies were also particularly reluctant to authorize local staff to talk to

the media, which was necessary to effectively reach the local population in their language. As a result, field-based staff of these agencies had to obtain approval at multiple levels before they were able to begin (or, in some cases, continue) using the radio in their work. McKee believes the time lost in this process – weeks, in some cases – was critical, especially when it came to reunification. “The longer you wait,” he said, “the higher the chances that the distance between a missing child and his family will increase.”⁹

INFORMING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Aside from its role in informing IDPs about where and how to access humanitarian assistance, Mayardit FM’s coverage of the situation of IDPs did influence – both directly and indirectly – the response from government and international agencies to displacement resulting from the May 2011 Abyei crisis.

In designing their assistance to IDPs from Abyei in and around Turalei, humanitarian agencies gathered relevant information primarily through their own assessments and through communication with local government officials, namely the county Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) office.¹⁰ However, **government officials interviewed reported acquiring information about the situation of IDPs directly from broadcasts on the radio. The information from government was subsequently used to coordinate humanitarian efforts with international actors.** Both the county commissioner and county SSRRC secretary said they regularly hear information on Mayardit FM about problems facing the community (i.e. about locations where IDPs are not receiving food or where an outbreak of disease is occurring), then travel to the relevant location to investigate the situation, and liaise with the relevant humanitarian cluster to develop a response, either through weekly NGO coordination meetings or through meetings called on an *ad hoc* basis. The SSRRC secretary also mentioned having used the radio to call a meeting of chiefs from Abyei to find out which groups of IDPs were not receiving aid.

PERCEPTIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND COVERAGE OF GAPS IN ASSISTANCE

Perceptions differed significantly between host community and some IDP respondents about the role of the radio in informing humanitarian assistance efforts and about the extent to which coverage of community needs was sufficient. Among host community respondents, there was a strong perception that Mayardit FM had focused extensively on the plight of IDPs, and that this coverage had directly influenced the provision of aid. “At the beginning,” said one host community leader, “agencies and the government were all sleeping. Then through Mayardit FM they provided help to the IDPs.” A female host community focus



Women in Majong Kuel IDP camp. Most IDPs – particularly those staying outside of town – have limited access to radio. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews

⁹ It is important to reiterate that use of the radio for family reunification began almost immediately after IDPs began arriving in Turalei. However, McKee reported that the agencies involved required approval to continue submitting registries of lost children over the radio, which stalled the collaboration for some time.

¹⁰ One expatriate INGO staff member said he received valuable information about the context of the operating environment indirectly from the radio (from Sudanese colleagues who are regular listeners) and from direct conversations with station staff. However, he concurred with others that the radio did not directly inform his organization’s programming in the area.

group participant recalled that “during that time [of the Abyei crisis], Mayardit...helped by informing the government and NGOs to help the IDPs...during that situation, Mayardit has [helped] by passing information about the bad situation of the IDPs to both government and NGOs.”¹¹

Some IDP respondents, however, believed coverage of their situation on Mayardit FM was not sufficient. “We have not heard one day that Mayardit FM is informing NGOs or the government about our situation,” said one male IDP focus group participant. Similar sentiments were echoed by female IDP focus group participants. **At the same time, IDP leaders who were interviewed stated strongly that they believed Mayardit FM had sufficiently covered the plight of IDPs and influenced humanitarian efforts.** “All these programs are for us IDPs,” said one IDP leader, referring to Mayardit FM’s coverage. Another explained, “without Mayardit, food distribution would be difficult. IDPs would not have been found...in Pan-nyok and Akoch, organizations did not know that IDPs had settled there. They learned from Mayardit FM and started providing assistance.” **This discrepancy between IDP community members and IDP leaders and host community respondents suggests that IDP perceptions could be attributed to their limited access to radio in combination with frustration about insufficient levels of assistance.**

IDPs’ lack of access to radio was repeatedly cited by both IDP and host community respondents. Most mentioned that they had owned radios in Abyei, but had left carrying almost none of their possessions. While some mentioned listening to radio when passing through the market or at neighbors’ houses, most did not listen on a regular basis. Without regular access to radio, many IDPs had only made a concerted effort to listen when they initially arrived and were searching for their family members, but had largely stopped listening after they were reunited. “When we first came, the radio was very helpful in finding our lost children,” said one female IDP focus group participant, “But now we need food.” Similar responses were given by almost every person interviewed in Majong Kuel IDP camp, which is an approximately 35-minute walk from Turalei town center. IDP leaders interviewed, on the other hand, mentioned that they make a point to listen regularly to neighbors’ radios to make sure they stay informed, and then pass along information to their community via mobile phone.



IDPs wait to be registered at Majak Aheer camp in Turalei, May 2011. Photo: Sammy Muraya/Internews

IDPs and host community members and leaders all recognized that large gaps still existed in the provision of assistance, particularly to IDPs. IDPs, however, seemed more likely to assume that this was or could be due to a lack of coverage about their situation on the radio, and less likely to connect assistance they had received to information broadcast over Mayardit FM. As mentioned above, respondents who listened more regularly to the radio (namely host community respondents and IDP leaders)

¹¹ Participants in the female IDP focus group discussion emphasized that the radio was not the only source of information for government and NGOs, but that the host community had also played an important role in informing them directly about the situation of the IDPs living among them.

considered coverage of IDP issues to be sufficient and to have directly facilitated more effective provision of humanitarian relief. As one civil society leader put it, “Mayardit has been spreading information about the situation of the IDPs and the host communities. Implementation is the problem, not a lack of information.”

For their part, many host community respondents expressed frustration that they were not receiving more assistance, especially after having provided food and shelter to IDPs when they first arrived from Abyei. “Now people are supporting only IDPs and those who are around here have even nothing in the market to buy,” said one female focus group participant from the host community. “Our opinion has been raised to the government and NGOs, but they are still just giving food to IDPs.” When asked if they saw the radio as a means of drawing further attention to their needs, host community respondents answered that they had not done so to date, but felt they could if they wanted to and had discussed nominating a representative to send to the station to pass along information and reinforce their direct discussions with government and international NGOs.¹²

PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN IDPs AND THE HOST COMMUNITY

Respondents from all groups felt Mayardit FM had played an important role in facilitating communication and promoting understanding between the host community and IDPs. This was particularly the case when the IDPs first arrived in Turalei, but also in the following weeks, when competition over a decreasing pool of resources created elevated potential for conflict between the two communities.

The majority of respondents cited a broadcast of a speech by a host community executive chief calling on the Twic community to welcome IDPs from Abyei into their community and provide them with food and shelter.¹³ **Many considered this broadcast to have been directly responsible for the scale of the assistance provided by the host community.** “Mayardit made the link,” explained one civil society leader from Turalei, “without Mayardit there would not have been enough support provided by the host community to the IDPs.” IDP respondents concurred. As one IDP leader, a sub-chief from Abyei, described “The executive chief welcomed IDPs over the radio, and the host community went to bring water to IDPs. IDPs are now staying in host community houses. This would not have happened without the radio.”

In addition to this, several respondents cited broadcasts after the initial arrival that they felt had increased ties between the IDP and host communities. For example, one civil society leader, whose group organizes art, music, and other cultural activities for children, mentioned using the radio to encourage children from the IDP community to join in their activities, and to share songs encouraging people to continue staying in the area. Both host community focus group and civil society respondents mentioned Mayardit’s coverage of peace conferences convened between youth from the IDP and host communities as having encouraged listeners from both groups to live peacefully together. In general, host community respondents reported learning more about the IDPs’ situation from the radio. “We learned from the IDPs that

“IDPs are now staying in host community houses. This would not have happened without the radio.”

¹² Journalism trainer Rob McKee said that the station did make an effort to report on challenges facing the host community, but that the team was careful in their approach on this particular issue in light of reports that some elements within the host community - particularly local officials - had been attempting to exploit the IDP crisis for personal gain (i.e. by convincing INGOs to give them food and NFIs, then immediately selling them in the market at a profit).

¹³ Several respondents attributed this broadcast to Mayardit FM itself, rather than to the executive chief.

many were still sleeping under trees. They spoke about their fears. That touched our hearts and we felt sympathy for them,” said one male host community respondent. “We learned about the constraints of being displaced.”

One IDP leader interviewed cited an example of how Mayardit FM directly averted potential misunderstanding between the IDP and host communities. Fuel prices surged in weeks following the crisis in Abyei, leading to high transport prices. “Many of us wondered why the transport prices were increasing,” he explained. “We wondered, was it because we were IDPs?” He recounted that a reporter from Mayardit FM had interviewed drivers about the cause of high prices and informed the IDP community that the prices were due to increasing fuel costs, and did not indicate discrimination against IDPs.

PROVIDING INFORMATION IN THE MIDST OF UNCERTAINTY AND INSECURITY

Following violent displacement from Abyei and in the midst of ongoing violence along the now-international border between Sudan and South Sudan, security issues were a constant source of concern among both the IDP and host communities in Turalei. In the period since the Abyei crisis, most respondents believed Mayardit FM had helped keep the community safe by informing them about local security issues. “Radio is one of the most useful tools to defend citizens, even more than a soldier with a gun” said one IDP leader. “It tells you where the enemy is and where you can run.”

MAYARDIT FM CALLS CITIZENS BACK AFTER FIGHTING IN TURALEI

Respondents were quick to mention the essential role played by the radio following fighting in Turalei that had taken place just days before. On Saturday, June 25 at around 8 am, Turalei town was attacked allegedly by elements allied to Peter Gadek Yak, a rebel leader based in neighboring Unity State. The attacks, which reportedly left 11 people dead, sent most of the population of Turalei running out of the town.¹⁴ **Within two hours after the cessation of hostilities, Mayardit FM was broadcasting an announcement from the county commissioner that the attackers had been driven back and the town had been secured.** As one civil society leader recalled, “Mayardit FM reporters moved around to find out what was going on. Then [after the fighting] they immediately came back to the station to tell people the situation was calm.” Many respondents expressed their belief that the radio was primarily responsible for community members’ return to the town:

“Mayardit FM played a very good role in Turalei after the attack on Saturday. I ran to MayenAbun, but I learned on Mayardit FM that the rebels had gone and I came back. Without Mayardit FM, most people could have run to far areas and not known that it was safe to come back.”

- ***Male host community focus group participant***

“[Saturday] was a black day. Without Mayardit, people would have run very far away.”

- ***Male host community focus group participant***

“Mayardit helped us when there was confusion [on Saturday]. The violence came unexpectedly, citizens were scattered. We heard gun shots but did not know what was happening. Mayardit informed people [that it was safe to return].”

- ***Civil society leader, female***

“We listened on Saturday through our neighbors, and that is why we came back.”

- ***IDP, MajongKuel camp, male***

¹⁴ AP, “Official: 11 dead in attack on South Sudan town,” June 25, 2011.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/06/25/ap/africa/main20074408.shtml>; Garang, NgorArol, “South Sudan accuses SAF of backing deadly clashes in Warrap State,” June 26, 2011. <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-accuses-SAF-of-backing,39339>.

“With Mayardit FM, we managed to control the situation [on Saturday]. It is very difficult when you run. People might die of hunger and thirst. Without radio, we would send people or write documents –which could not be read by anyone – plus there is a delay.”

- ***Local government official, male***

The importance of the radio in this instance was emphasized by respondents who noted that some without access to radio did not return to the town immediately. “The radio was informing people that day that you have to come back, the enemy has been drawn back...but it was not everybody,” said one female host community respondent. “Those who did not have radio did not come back at the same time. They were running up to the areas of Mayen Abun...but they were lacking radios. But those who had radios, like I had, we came back earlier.” This was particularly a problem for IDPs, most of whom – as noted above – do not own radios. Many learned that it was safe to return from host community members who had heard the commissioner’s broadcast. Others, however, failed to get the message in a timely manner. Participants in the male IDP focus group discussion said they had not listened to radio since the 25th and had therefore not heard the commissioner’s announcement. Unaware of the broadcast, they expressed frustration toward the host community for failing to inform them about the situation.

“Radio is one of the most useful tools to defend citizens, even more than a soldier with a gun.”

Mayardit FM’s importance following June 25 attacks was further highlighted during the week of the assessment, when the station was off-air due to generator problems. A gun shot heard in the market on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 28 sent many people in the town running, fearing that the militia elements had returned. While it turned out that the shot had been fired in an argument between two intoxicated men in the market, some respondents mentioned that they knew people who had not returned two days later because they had not been reached by information of what had actually taken place. “Some have not yet come back,” said an IDP community leader, referencing the incident on the 28th. “The [phone] network is not reaching them. Mayardit FM has become

“If Mayardit isn’t working for one minute or one hour, it is a loss for us. Radio is like a hospital – it cannot be shut off.”

our eyes and ears. We hope someone will fix it soon.” One civil society leader from Turalei echoed this, saying: “The shut down [of the radio] is affecting us. We need information about the security situation. The community is not comfortable. If there is violence, how can we run? How can we come back? As a community leader, many people have asked me what is going on with the radio...If Mayardit isn’t working for one minute or one hour, it is a loss for us. Radio is like a hospital – it cannot be shut off.”¹⁵

COVERAGE OF THE SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATIONS IN ABYEI

While there was a firm consensus about the importance of the Mayardit FM’s coverage of security issues in and around Turalei, responses regarding its coverage of the situation in Abyei were

¹⁵ Internews journalism trainer Rob McKee suggested another correlation between shut-down of the radio and flight from the town. He observed that many people view the radio as an indicator of security, and may decide to leave if it is off for any extended period, fearing that an attack is imminent.

mixed. Respondents did mention specific broadcasts on the radio that had informed them about what was happening in and around Abyei, but most said they wished to see more coverage of the Abyei situation, including both security-related information and information about the political process.

Many host community respondents reported first learning about the fighting in Abyei on Mayardit FM. One civil society leader interviewed recalled that “radio staff divided themselves and talked to different groups of IDPs. They asked them what happened then broadcast it over the radio.” Others mentioned that, **immediately after the Abyei crisis, Mayardit was essential in informing people in remote places with no phone network about what had taken place.** In addition, both IDP and host community members referenced an interview by Mayardit FM reporters with the Abyei chief administrator, during which the administrator informed IDPs that Agok and Anet, both areas south of Abyei center, were relatively secure, and that IDPs who wished to return would be assisted by the government in doing so.¹⁶

Still, many respondents expressed a desire to hear more regular up-to-date news about the security situation in Abyei. “We need to know more because we don’t know if those Arabs are still in Abyei or if they have gone,” said one female host community focus group participant. “Because people are telling us they have disappeared, some people said they have gone...Maybe they have come here. Maybe they have come to kill us, we don’t know. So we need to know more.” IDP leaders echoed this sentiment, emphasizing their need for more information about “where the enemy is.” IDPs were also eager to hear news about progress being made toward a political solution in their home region.



Luka Biong Deng, a minister of the Government of Sudan who resigned in protest of the fighting in Abyei (right), was interviewed on Mayardit FM during a visit to Twic. Photo: Deng Bol/Internews

Many reported that coverage of the situation in Abyei on Mayardit FM had dropped off after the initial incident in May and said that they usually turned to other sources for news about Abyei. Expressing a view shared by many IDP and host community respondents, one female civil society leader from Turalei attributed this to the station’s small reporting staff. “When people fled Abyei, Mayardit talked to IDPs, but now the radio faces a limitation of reporters. There are none in Abyei,” she said. “Now we find out about the fighting from [hearing] the shooting of guns.” Many also felt that Mayardit, as a community radio station, was dealing primarily with local issues, and did not have the capacity to cover international news. “We [follow] these big stations like BBC or Shrouq because they

¹⁶ Internews staff in Turalei and some INGO representatives interviewed recalled that the radio station received criticism during an NGO coordination meeting about this broadcast from agencies who believed Mayardit FM was calling people back to an unsafe area. A recording of the broadcast (in English) shows that officials interviewed – the Abyei Chief Administrator and the Twic County Commissioner – announced that they were providing free transport to the area for those who decided to come back, but did not directly appeal to them to return (nor did the radio station). Internews journalism trainer Rob McKee said the agencies who objected to the broadcast were encouraged on multiple occasions to give their perspectives on the radio, but none took the opportunity to do so.

are very close to the current situation of Abyei,” said one male IDP focus group participant. “They always follow the negotiations considering the Abyei issue...concerning this Mayardit, it is a local radio, so it focuses mainly on...cultural activities, if there is anything concerning the local community.” “We have not heard anything about meetings on Abyei taking place in Addis Ababa,” added another. “Mayardit does not have correspondents in Addis. It focuses on local news. It does not have enough reporters to send to Addis. We get information [about the political process] through Sudan Radio Service and BBC.”

Interviews with local government officials suggested that the lack of coverage of Abyei issues may also be related to a difference in opinion between the community and the local government about what should be covered on local radio. Officials interviewed felt that broadcasts of potentially sensitive information about the political and security situations on community radio should be restricted, subject to government approval. “When you tell people to go one direction or another,” one county official explained, “the enemies will also hear. If you say the situation is calm, maybe the militias will move there.” Another official drew a sharp distinction between information that should be discussed on “community radio” and information that he saw as the purview of the government. “[Mayardit FM] journalists,” he said, “should just say ‘there is a problem in Abyei, people are moving,’ but they should not discuss when it comes to political information.” When asked, he said he did not object to Mayardit airing news that had already been broadcast on other media outlets (i.e. translating BBC or Miraya FM broadcasts into local language), but did not think Mayardit FM journalists should be producing or airing original content related to political issues.

BRINGING COMMUNITY RADIO TO ABYEI

This component of the evaluation intended to determine 1) whether respondents would prefer the extension of Mayardit FM to reach Abyei or the establishment of a separate station in or near Abyei if/when the security situation allowed people to return to the area, and 2) if coverage were extended, whether any changes would need to be made to the program to accommodate the expanded audience.

The feasibility study conducted by Internews in April originally sought to “determine the receptivity of government and the communities of Agok/Abyei to a program produced at a bureau in Agok/Abyei and broadcast from Mayardit FM.” However, it found that almost all respondents in Abyei and Agok preferred to have a station “of their own.”¹⁷ With this finding in mind, questionnaires for the Turalei assessment were designed such that respondents were first asked whether they would want Mayardit FM’s coverage to be extended, and only after about building a new station.

All respondents expressed a desire for the coverage of the station to be extended to cover Abyei and beyond. In fact, the majority of people interviewed requested this even before they were asked. With a phone network that is frequently unreliable, many saw the radio as the most effective means of communicating and staying in touch with friends and relatives in faraway areas.

“Mayardit FM should increase coverage to reach our people from far areas so we can get in contact with them.”
- ***IDP leader, male***

“We need extension to be made of the coverage, not only to Abyei but to other areas like Wau...if somebody is talking to the station, it needs to be heard...in faraway areas.”
- ***Female host community focus group participant***

¹⁷ De Masi, S., *ibid.*



Mayardit FM reporter Christine Akuol in the studio. Photo: Zack Baddorf/Internews

Some viewed the radio as a valuable tool for passing information about insecurity, and felt it should be extended to warn faraway communities when violence is taking place along the north-south border. “[Mayardit] should extend coverage because the enemy is still on the ground,” said one IDP leader. “We need to find out about the enemy coming from [outside].” One female host community focus group participant suggested that the radio should be heard by people from other tribes to promote understanding. She said the radio should even reach to Unity State, to “these Nuer who are always attacking us” (referring to the militias who had attacked the town on June 25). In

addition, there was also a general sense that the programming on Mayardit, including news, music, and cultural programming had been valuable for the community of Twic and should be shared with other communities.

On the question of extending Mayardit’s coverage versus building a new station, the views of those interviewed in Turalei – including IDPs from Abyei – differed from the findings of the April assessment. While the populations interviewed in the two assessments were different (residents of Abyei still in Abyei vs. people displaced from Abyei and residents of Turalei), the contrast between the responses of Abyei residents in the first assessment and IDPs from Abyei in the second suggests that the events of May 2011 and ongoing violence in Abyei may have affected views about the advisability of establishing a separate station there.¹⁸ Some IDP respondents did say they would prefer to have “their own” station in or around Abyei. One female IDP focus group participant expressed concern that listeners in Abyei might not be able to call in to Mayardit FM in Turalei if the phone network were down. Some male IDP focus group participants feared that it might be difficult to deliver news from Abyei to Turalei in a timely manner, but when the idea of establishing a bureau or basing a correspondent in Agok/Abyei was raised, they seemed to agree that this would be a satisfactory solution.¹⁹

Most IDP respondents, however, discouraged the establishment of a new station in Agok, expressing concern that it would be destroyed in the fighting or captured by “enemies” (usually referring to the Misseriya or groups connected with the Khartoum government). Host community respondents consistently agreed with this view, though some did suggest it might be beneficial to establish a separate station if the situation stabilized and resources were available.

¹⁸ It is important to note that most IDP respondents did express a desire to return to Abyei as soon as the security situation allowed.

¹⁹ One male IDP focus group participant mentioned that Bentiu FM had previously employed a correspondent in Abyei, which gave members of his community the opportunity to easily pass information to that station.

When asked about the need to adapt the programming to cater to an expanded audience, many respondents suggested that additional languages be incorporated, particularly English and Arabic. Indeed, the desire to add these languages did not seem to be tied to potential extension of Mayardit FM's coverage – respondents generally believed that the addition of these languages would be beneficial to listeners within the current broadcast range. Several raised the fact that many people had returned to the area recently after growing up, attending school, or otherwise



Mayardit FM reporter Deng Madit interviews IDPs from Abyei. Photo: Sammy Muraya/Internews

spending significant amounts of time in either Khartoum or East Africa. They pointed out that, although these people may originally have come from Twic, many are not particularly familiar with the local language. Others referenced the growing number of people coming to the area who are not from the Dinka tribe, including traders and international NGO and agency staff. Some suggested that adding broadcasts English would help international actors deliver more effective assistance (as mentioned above, staff of international organizations responding to the Abyei IDP crisis in and around Turalei said they did not receive information about community needs from the radio directly). The desire for more exposure to international languages – particularly English – for educational purposes was also apparent.

While a few respondents said they would like to see additional dialects of Dinka added to the radio, respondents from both groups asserted that IDPs (primarily from the Dinka Ngok group) and host community members (primarily Dinka Twic) were essentially part of the same community, and that, while their respective dialects of the Dinka language differed slightly, they had no trouble understanding one another.

In addition to general questions about changes in programming and language, respondents were asked whether they felt it would be important to include voices from northern Sudan (i.e. the Misseriya) if Mayardit FM were expanded to cover Abyei or if a new station were established in Agok/Abyei. All IDP respondents reacted strongly to this question, insisting that they did not see any reason to incorporate perspectives of the Misseriya. As one female IDP focus group participant put it, '[The Misseriya] are the cause of all of our problems. They have killed our husbands and our children and made us live in fear.' Many objected to the question itself. "My best point for you is that you have to cancel Misseriya," said one male IDP focus group participant. "So let's discuss other things. But Misseriya, you have to cancel it. Just, it is a full stop." "The situation we are now in is really very bad," added another. "That means we don't want the name of Misseriya to be remembered for us...so we are trying to tell you that please, if you are with us, avoid the word Misseriya."²⁰

Host community respondents generally agreed, but were slightly less adamant in their answers to the question. When asked, some said they would be fine hearing an interview by a reporter with someone from the Misseriya

²⁰ This finding is consistent with Internews' April 2011 assessment in Agok/Abyei. See De Masi, S., p. 10-11.

tribe, but were not confident that such an interview would be possible given the levels of animosity. There was no sense that radio could help promote dialogue between the Misseriya and Dinka communities in Abyei. “We only need news about the Arabs, whether they are still here or they have gone,” one female host community focus group participant explained. “But we don’t need to discuss anything with them. We don’t want to listen to their voices.” These strong objections to including the perspective of the Misseriya – who would be reached if the broadcast range were expanded – presents an important dilemma in terms ensuring that coverage is as balanced as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is readily apparent that Mayardit FM played a key role in the aftermath of the May 2011 Abyei crisis, helping local government and international agencies respond more effectively, and promoting resilience within the affected communities. In particular, the station was central to the effective provision of assistance, particularly when it came to family tracing and reunification. **The success of this collaboration highlights the potential of formalizing the relationship between the station and international agencies in preparation for future humanitarian response efforts, and of replicating this arrangement in other areas.** Putting in place a mechanism for this type of partnership *in advance* is particularly important given sensitivities and structural constraints that make it difficult for international agencies to initiate engagement with local media in the timeframe required in a crisis situation.²¹ Such an arrangement should establish parameters that address humanitarian actors’ valid concerns about involvement with the media and provide guidance to agency staff and media outlets that will allow them to expedite collaboration at the field level.

IDPs’ lack of access to radio presented a major challenge. While host community and local government were able to identify ways in which the radio had directly facilitated or resulted in assistance to IDPs, IDPs themselves were largely unaware of coverage about their situation and rarely made connections between this coverage and assistance they received (aside from family reunification). With more regular access to radio, IDPs might have been more likely to make their own contributions to coverage about their situation, providing more (and more accurate) information to those involved in the humanitarian response. They would also be more likely to receive important information about security issues in the area and benefit from programs intended to assist them in their new environment (i.e. messages about health and hygiene, programs intended to strengthen understanding between the IDP and host communities). **Particularly if collaboration like that between Mayardit FM staff and international agencies is formalized, the possibility of adding radios to the package of non-food items distributed to IDPs should be explored.**

Feedback from respondents suggests **Mayardit FM should consider increasing its coverage of national and international news, particularly that which is directly relevant to the situation in the surrounding community.** While some people were able to access information about international events on BBC, Miraya, or other stations, these sources are not accessible to community members who do not understand English or Arabic. Even in the absence of capacity to send reporters to cover events abroad, the station could help fill this information gap by broadcasting stories from international media outlets translated into local languages. Increased capacity within Internews at the Juba level to gather, edit, and distribute national and international news to the five (soon to be six) stations supported by Internews in South Sudan and Sudan’s Three Areas, would also contribute greatly. Greater editorial control in Juba will also help address concerns expressed by local government about the coverage of potentially sensitive topics by community radio stations. To this end, Internews has hired a network editor who

²¹ Such collaboration was explored by Internews around the time of the Southern Sudan Referendum, in partnership with Miraya FM. However, this effort ultimately did not lead to a permanent mechanism for collaboration between humanitarian actors and the media,



Mayardit FM signpost outside Internews' country office in Juba. Photo: Nina McMurry/Internews

will begin developing systems to facilitate greater centralization and networking between the various stations when she begins work in August. Internews also plans bring on local staff to supply Arabic, Dinka, and Nuer translations of national and international stories.

Regarding the question of expanding the station, the events of May 2011 in Abyei may have altered opinions about the wisdom of establishing a separate station in Agok/Abyei. However, there is a clear demand for the coverage of Mayardit FM to be extended. Establishing a bureau or basing a correspondent in Agok/Abyei would help provide more up-to-date and accurate information about security issues along the border to communities in the vicinity. The

feasibility of both of these options should be explored further. The possibility of building a new station in Agok/Abyei should also be re-visited as the security situation evolves.

Respondents saw the incorporation of additional languages – particularly English and Arabic – as desirable even within the current broadcast range. This should be explored immediately, regardless of plans for expansion. Aside from the potential for expanding listenership in current areas of coverage, **adding programming in international languages could also help improve effectiveness and accountability in humanitarian response efforts.** NGOs reported they received information about the needs of the community through local government or from their own assessments, but not from the station directly. Coverage of community needs or gaps in assistance in English would provide an additional source of information for international humanitarian actors, potentially making their assistance even more effective in the future.

LIST OF FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

Focus groups

Eight (8) female IDPs from Abyei, ages 20-40 (est.), June 28, 2011

Six (6) male IDPs from Abyei, ages 40-60 (est.), June 28, 2011

Seven (7) female host community members, ages 18-40 (est.), June 29, 2011

Ten (10) male host community members, ages 20-35 (est.), June 29, 2011

Community Leaders

Guot Deng Luang, Sub-chief, MajokHier (Twic County), June 30, 2011

Majok Hier, Sub-chief, Nyie IAbiel (Twic County), June 30, 2011

Deng Mon Deng, Sub-chief, Manyang Anyiel (Abyei), June 30, 2011

Mating Ayei, Sub-chief, Mading Achuang (Abyei), June 30, 2011

Local Authorities

Dominic Deng Kuoch, Twic County Commissioner, June 30, 2011

Yor Abraham, Twic County Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Secretary, July 1, 2011

Civil Society Leaders

Peter Adhar, Director, Mormor Tradition and Modern Culture Organization, Turalei, June 30, 2011

Rebecca Pandak Nual, Director, Promotion of Adult and Girls Education (PAGE) Group, Turalei, July 1, 2011

Mawith Angok, Coordinator, Twic Community Development Team, Turalei, June 29, 2011

Abraham Koor Ring, Member, Turalei Sport Association, Turalei, June 29, 2011

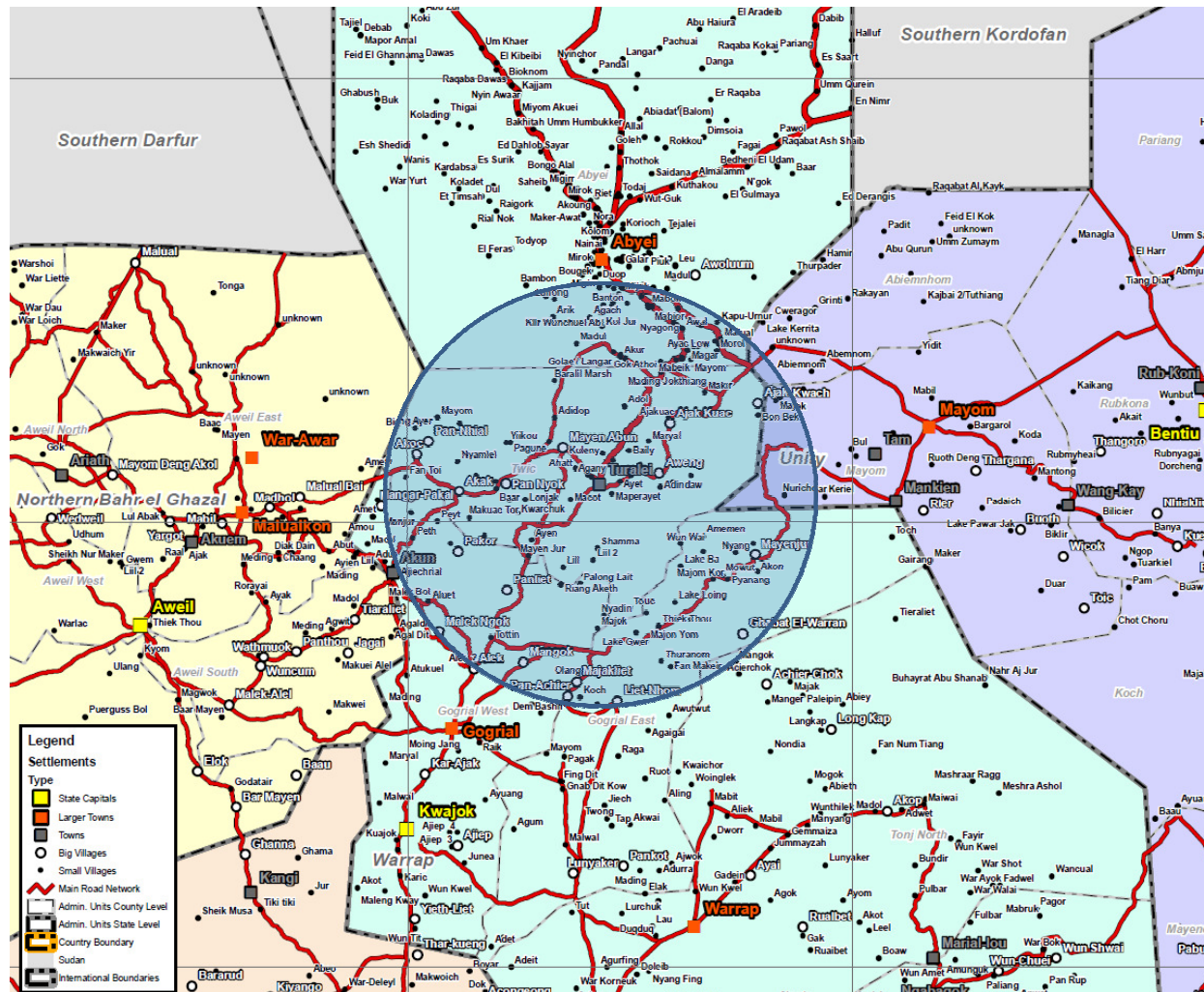
International NGO/Agency Staff

Four (4) expatriate staff from international NGOs and agencies, June 29 – July 2, 2011

One international agency national staff member, June 30, 2011

Impromptu interviews were also conducted with 15 IDPs from Abyei in Majong Kuel camp outside Turalei (5 men and 10 women), June 30, 2011

MAYARDIT FM ESTIMATED COVERAGE



Original map: UN OCHA, 2009