



Alikhook Arieu Akec, Warrap State's first woman Community Action Group chairperson, leads her fellow CAG members in a meeting.

**“Before BRIDGE, we didn’t know that we could do something to help ourselves. We now know that we can rebuild this town on our own.”**

**- Alikhook Arieu Akec, CAG Chairperson**

**A**likhook Arieu Akec cares for her family of nine, tends her small farm, and serves her community in Anwei Boma, Warrap State as the Community Action Group (CAG) Chairperson. As Chairperson, she serves as a role model, not only within her own small community, but on a much greater scale. She is the first woman to be elected as a CAG Chairperson across the entire State.

“Before, women weren’t given a chance. I am thankful that the community elected me and I have had a chance to learn that the chance is possible,” she proudly states.

Alikhook knows that her role comes with big responsibilities. She is ready to take them on, alongside her fellow CAG members. “We need changes,” she asserts. And she is learning that the solutions can be found through

collaboration, commitment, and determination within the community itself.

The USAID-funded Sudan BRIDGE program is working with community members like Alikhook to form self-sustaining CAGs across three states of Southern Sudan –Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Unity. The CAGs are comprised of community representatives and elected leaders who work together to enhance community participation and ownership in development projects and to serve as a voice to local government. Across the three states, Sudan BRIDGE has witnessed several impacts and accomplishments from the CAGs in a short period of time. More communities are embracing the role of women leaders; CAGs are initiating development projects –such as school rehabilitation and construction of community centers– on their own; and linkages between communities and local government are strengthened, as local government increasingly participates in dialog and activities with the CAGs and wider community.

Perhaps most importantly, the CAGs are building hope and fostering a strong sense of ownership within the communities they serve. As Alikhook states, “Before BRIDGE, we didn’t know that we could do something to help ourselves. The program has shown us how to work hard. We now know that we can rebuild this town on our own.” She is proud that this sense of ownership is changing the community’s historical dependence on relief, moving from “what can you do for us?” to “we can do this together.”