

National roundtable on peace and stability in South Sudan

The way forward: challenges and recommendations



Introduction

A cattle keeper moves his herd
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The civil war that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 has had a devastating impact on the population. While an agreement to resolve the conflict – called the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, or ARCSS – was signed in August 2015, there was renewed fighting in Juba in July 2016, followed by a rapid spread of conflict to hitherto relatively peaceful parts of the country. Since then, Saferworld and its partners have been working with communities affected by conflict and with authorities and civil society on reconciliation and healing.

Between July 2017 and February 2019, Saferworld facilitated eight state-level roundtable discussions with civil society platforms focused on issues around peace and safety. Based on these discussions, and drawing on our regular community assessments across the country, we synthesised the issues identified by the communities and outlined a series of recommendations in a national briefing paper released publicly in June 2019.

On 5 July 2019, Saferworld and partners organised a roundtable event in Juba for over a hundred

representatives of the national government, state authorities, communities, civil society, non-governmental organisations and the UN. The one-day event provided space and time for delegates to discuss the findings from our programming and research and suggest how to best implement the recommendations coming out of the analysis. The two keynote speakers at the event were the Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, Rt Hon Anthony Lino Makana; and Jeroen Kelderhuis, Deputy Ambassador and Head of Cooperation of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in South Sudan.

At the event, Saferworld staff gave an overview of our community security and peacebuilding programming in South Sudan and talked through the community security issues and recommendations highlighted in the briefing paper. The participants were then divided into eight groups and asked to discuss one issue in the briefing paper, and were tasked with coming up with ways for implementing the recommendations in light of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) of September 2018.

The following suggestions were made by the eight groups to address each of the issues outlined in the briefing paper:

Ineffective law enforcement and justice delivery at state and local levels

- Accountability was seen as an important part of improving security and justice services. Members of the group suggested that there are steps that can be taken to ensure that law enforcement and justice institutions answer for their actions, decisions and ways of working. Members of the group suggested that civilians should also be informed of how they could access these accountability mechanisms.
- Establish specialised training centres for police and offer opportunities for their further education. This will help build their capacity and increase their knowledge and understanding of both the law and the responsibilities they have to serve and protect communities.
- The national government and states should allocate adequate resources to security and justice institutions to address the constant funding challenges the security and justice institutions face.
- Equip law enforcement and justice actors with the necessary tools and equipment, especially vehicles and communication equipment, to help them perform their duties professionally and responsibly.
- Involve civil society, faith-based leaders and community-based organisations in raising awareness about citizen rights and access to justice.
- Coordinate justice and security provision at state or county levels through meetings and exchange visits.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the work of law enforcement and justice institutions.
- Revise salaries of justice and law enforcement personnel so that security forces do not rely on civilian populations for sustenance.

Spread of small arms and light weapons

- Ensure that disarmament is informed by community views of what an effective disarmament process looks like.
- Undertake civilian disarmament efforts and ensure that weapons are collected from the civilian population in a way that is sensitive to local contexts and tensions. These initiatives should be sequenced so they do not increase insecurity or fuel violence.
- Have in place a broader conflict mitigation strategy which includes long-term provision of security, justice and a widely disseminated peacebuilding strategy to build citizen confidence ahead of disarmament.
- Ensure that civilian disarmament is carried out simultaneously among all communities. Security forces should provide security along the borders between communities to ensure that they are not vulnerable to attacks from neighbouring communities that have not yet been disarmed.
- Disseminate and implement South Sudan's national policy on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control and the Firearm Act 2016.
- A civilian disarmament strategy should include provisions for alternative livelihoods for those affected by disarmament as well as incentives for surrendering firearms.
- authorities should mark all firearms that are used by organised forces. These marks should be unique for ease of identification. All firearms should be properly stored and monitored.

A man guards his cattle with an AK-47.
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Land and border disputes

- Relevant land usage and governance institutions should develop appropriate land allocation and usage policies. These policies should aim to minimise disputes over land and administrative borders.
- Advocate with relevant institutions and individuals to ensure that the South Sudan Land Act 2009 and other policies are fully implemented to protect lawful property ownership. Disseminate the Saferworld roundtable briefing paper and its recommendations to various institutions at different levels, including: the Land Commission, Judiciary, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure, Ministry of Interior, civil society, media outlets and communities.
- Strengthen or re-invigorate existing land laws, or enact new ones to protect people's property.
- Set up special mobile courts to handle land and border disputes. These courts should be staffed by competent and qualified legal practitioners.
- Work to resolve disputes over administrative and tribal boundaries in line with the provisions of the R-ARCSS.

Cattle raiding

- Provide technical expertise to the Ministry of Interior and other major institutions to enact laws on cattle raids and related issues. Traditional leaders, civil society, youth and women should be involved in the consultations.
- Consider setting up a commission on livestock to provide leadership on the management of cattle theft and handle the resulting negative social impacts.
- Develop local by-laws that deter cattle raiding. For example, require cattle thieves to return two animals for each animal they steal.
- Attempt to regulate bride prices, which are major reasons for cattle theft in pastoralist communities, so they can be brought to affordable levels. Seek to challenge the gender norms that perpetuate harmful practices.



Women and children in Agok, Wau
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Economic hardship

- Advocate with the government and international community to support the full implementation of the R-ARCSS commitments on security and stability.
- Eliminate multiple taxation and centralise revenue collection.
- The government should set up industries and vocational training centres in major towns to provide employment opportunities for young men and women.
- Reduce the number of roadblocks at the state level.
- Deploy police along major highways to provide security to business people.
- Empower women economically and support them to sell and buy goods at local markets. For instance, this support could be provided through the establishment of a national women's chamber of commerce or women entrepreneurs' associations.
- The government should consider subsidising basic commodities.

High levels of crime

- Strengthen the capacity of police, particularly the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), to carry out thorough investigations of crimes on highways and in towns.
- Set up well-equipped information technology centre(s) to aid special police units in their investigations and improving capabilities.
- Pay decent salaries and provide other incentives to security forces so they are more motivated in their work, and less inclined to get involved in unlawful practices.

Gender-based violence and gender inequality

- Disseminate existing policies and other legal frameworks on gender and child welfare more widely and comprehensively. For example, this should include the South Sudan Penal Code Act, 2008; South Sudan Child Act, 2008; the Transitional Constitution, 2011; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); UNSCR 1325 and the Maputo Protocol.
- Work to abolish harmful and degrading cultural practices that violate people's human rights, such as the practice of girl child compensation for cases of homicide.
- Enforce the implementation of affirmative action on gender parity across South Sudan as committed to in the National Action Plan 2015-2020, the Transitional National Constitution 2011, and the R-ARCSS.
- Build the capacity of women leaders at all levels, including at national and state legislative assemblies.
- Implement the commitments made by the government of South Sudan in its South Sudan National Action Plan (SSNAP) 2015-2020 on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.
- Support women-led organisations and associations with resources to enable them to deliver on their existing mandates and raise awareness about women's and girls' rights in the country.
- Set up victim protection programmes and incorporate this issue into the major national gender policies, including the SSNAP Protection Pillar, so that survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) feel safe and secure.
- Create and support networks and forums for women-led organisations to address shared concerns and issues.
- Enhance women's and girls' economic empowerment to reduce their vulnerability to GBV and other harmful practices.

Breakdown of social cohesion

- All levels of government should discourage hate speech and support activities that encourage peaceful co-existence and social cohesion.
- Enforce existing laws on hate speech, while ensuring enforcement does not silence dissent or target people with different opinions.
- Raise awareness among legislators and communities on the negative effects of hate speech. Sensitise communities on the detrimental effects of ethnic divisions and tribal politics.
- Form a national healing and reconciliation commission.
- The government should promote and demonstrate its commitment to social cohesion and ethnic tolerance at all levels.
- Multilateral donors should support trauma healing and reconciliation initiatives.
- The government, civil society and non-governmental organisations should organise intra- and inter-state peace conferences.
- Provide psycho-social support to victims of hate speech.

Women wait for their cases to be heard outside a traditional court.
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About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. With programmes in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, we work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace.

Saferworld has been working in South Sudan since 2002. We work on community safety and security, peacebuilding, small arms and light weapons control, and conflict-sensitive development. Since 2012, we have implemented community security programmes with eight civil society partners. These programmes have taken place in sixteen locations across eight of the country's former ten states: Central, Western, and Eastern Equatoria; Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal; Warrap; Lakes and Jonglei.

Since the outbreaks of conflict in December 2013 and July 2016, Saferworld has included peacebuilding and reconciliation programming in its work. Recently, with funds from the United Nations Mine Action Service, we implemented a project on small arms and light weapons management and control in three locations, working with the South Sudan Bureau of Community Security and Small Arms Control, as well as civil society partners. We have started a new project to expand our overall programme to the two remaining former states (Unity and Upper Nile) and to address intra- and intercommunity conflict and gender-based violence.

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