



# In it for the long haul?

Lessons on  
peacebuilding in  
South Sudan

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Cover photo: Akobo Women's Association convince leaders to take action on revenge killing, November 2017. Credit: UNMISS

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# Abbreviations

<b>AACC</b>	All Africa Conference of Churches	<b>PSF</b>	Peace and Support Facilitators
<b>AAPA</b>	Addis Ababa Peace Agreement	<b>RPP</b>	Reflecting on Peace Practice Project
<b>AEC</b>	Assessment and Evaluation Commission	<b>SAF</b>	Sudan Armed Forces
<b>AIC</b>	Africa Inland Church	<b>SPF</b>	Sudan Peace Fund
<b>ALF</b>	Abyei Liberation Front	<b>SPLM/A</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
<b>APP</b>	Action Plan for Peace	<b>SPLM-FD</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Former Detainees
<b>ARCISS</b>	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan	<b>SPLM-IO</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organisation	<b>SSCC</b>	South Sudan Council of Churches
<b>CCJP</b>	Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk	<b>SSDF</b>	South Sudan Defence Forces
<b>CPA</b>	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	<b>SSLM</b>	Southern Sudan Liberation Movement
<b>CPPB</b>	Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding	<b>SSTI</b>	South Sudan Transition Initiatives
<b>CSRf</b>	Conflict Sensitivity Research Facility	<b>SSTO</b>	South Sudan Theatre Organisation
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee	<b>TEPS</b>	Towards Enduring Peace in Sudan (USAID project)
<b>EDF</b>	Equatorian Defence Forces	<b>UDSF</b>	United Democratic Salvation Front
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>UNISFA</b>	United Nations Interim Security Forces for Abyei
<b>HTPV</b>	Holy Trinity Peace Village	<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>ICC</b>	Inter Church Committee	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>IGAD</b>	Inter-Governmental Forum for Development	<b>USAID/OTI</b>	USAID Office of Transition Initiatives
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation	<b>VISTAS</b>	Viable Support to Transition and Stability (USAID program)
<b>NCA</b>	Norwegian Church Aid	<b>WCC</b>	World Council of Churches
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation		
<b>NSCC</b>	New Sudan Council of Churches		
<b>OAGs</b>	Other Armed Groups		
<b>OECD</b>	The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development		
<b>OLS</b>	Operation Lifeline Sudan		
<b>OTCM</b>	Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation		

# Executive summary

This report analyses approaches to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in South Sudan. It identifies overarching lessons from outside South Sudan, from the country's own history, and based on the wisdom of local peacebuilders, long-term practitioners and citizens affected by their work. The report outlines ten lessons or principles which provide some guidance to those who wish to understand or support peacebuilding in South Sudan. These are each accompanied by short case studies which explore why these principles can make an important difference. In illuminating the role of 'local' or 'sub-national' peacebuilding, the report also demonstrates the interlinkages between national and local interests, making the case for why analysis which spans multiple levels is critical to inform understanding, strategies and approaches to building national peace in South Sudan.



A policeman in Bentiu. Security actors can make or break peace. Are we connecting high-level strategies with the realities of conflict in South Sudan?

Since 2013, South Sudan has collapsed into multiple resource, power and identity-based conflicts. The failure of the national political leadership and international mediation to halt this process has led to renewed interest in what can be achieved at 'local' levels. This attention should be welcome. In the worst case, greater emphasis on the interactions between each sphere will help mitigate the negative effects of high-level political competition.

At best, it could help change the political, economic and cultural logics of power in the country and help weave together intercommunity fabrics from which a national peace can be more sustainably stitched. Working on grassroots peacebuilding and linking this local work with national level strategies on peace will provide openings for more transformational changes that need to happen in the long run, including creating the conditions in which people can begin to move beyond decades of accumulated grievance. Are we investing enough in understanding and working with sub-national actors? Do we apply the right skills, incentives and entry points? How are we connecting high-level strategies with the realities of multi-level conflict in South Sudan? What can we learn from the local to inform the design of national peace processes?

## Methodology

The research process brings together a review of existing literature with new fieldwork on everyday experiences of peacebuilding in South Sudan to provide guidance for future engagement. Throughout 2017, in-depth interviews were conducted in Lakes State, Akobo County and Juba with over 50 long-term peacebuilding practitioners, as well as many community members affected by, or involved with, their work.

The methodology is influenced by two complementary guidelines: 1) The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines on evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and 2) the McKinsey 7 business management model which stresses both 'hard' elements such as organisational structure and 'soft' elements such as values and style.

## Part I: The starting point

Part I sets out the collective body of experience on peacebuilding from inside and outside South Sudan on which to build. This section offers some core themes of relevance to identifying and supporting peace processes within South Sudan.

Lessons from outside South Sudan include:

- Peace is an ongoing process: conflict never ends, it changes and evolves. The aim is to manage and transform it peacefully over time.
- An 'urban bias' by donors, practitioners and local elites frequently obscures conflict dynamics: analysis tends to focus on political and military elites as the sole authors of violence and peace.
- Violence is 'co-produced': alliances exist between local and national actors, and local variations are important.
- Peacebuilding must be multi-level: building peace in modern conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing support across all levels of society.
- Local leadership and external contributions are both important: peacebuilding should empower the resources for reconciliation from within a society and maximise contribution from outside.
- The inclusion of women in peace processes increases the duration of ceasefires and the chances of sustained peace (see, for example, the global study on implementation of UNSC 1325).<sup>1</sup>
- Local actors can contribute to national peace: strategically linked local peace work can contribute effectively to national peace under certain conditions.

A review of the history of peacebuilding within South Sudan illustrates the importance of taking a multi-level perspective to designing and adapting peace processes, broadly reinforcing some of the key insights from international experience.

Lessons from South Sudan's history include:

- Local peacebuilding is no substitute for a national peace agreement, but the stability of a national process depends on addressing local disputes.

- Indigenous traditions are key to the power of local processes to transform conflict, but these are poorly understood.
- Peace is a process: activity focused on isolated 'peace meetings' misunderstand and undermine the potential of local peacebuilding.
- Theories of change have often not been based on evidence from within South Sudan but tended to be cut and pasted from elsewhere.
- Resources have not been allocated according to local realities but for ease or speed.
- Funding mechanisms have not been sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in political or security dynamics.

In addition to lessons outlined from history and previous research, interviewees in multiple locations and from diverse backgrounds identified common contextual themes from within contemporary South Sudan. Although their relative importance and ascribed causes vary considerably depending on the point of view of the interviewee, there is a shared perception that such fundamental features of the context are too frequently overlooked.

Some selected contextual insights emerging from the research include:

- A sole focus on high-level elite bargaining will not deliver a long-term solution in the current context. There are historic and recent examples of how top-down political processes have caused harm by exacerbating competition.
- Little binds diverse communities together as a nation: a goal of peacebuilding may be to contribute to a situation in which a plural South Sudanese identity reflects and values diversity.
- 'Local' does not mean unimportant: sub-national peacebuilding must engage all influential actors relevant to the local context regardless of their location or the seniority of their position.

<sup>1</sup> Global study on implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, UN Women, 2015.

- Words don't always mean what we think (and sometimes mean the direct opposite): words such as 'peace' and 'mediation' do not map neatly onto how many South Sudanese speak about transforming conflict.
  - South Sudan is in a state of profound transition: peacebuilding must harness and incorporate diverse moral, cultural, ritualistic, technological and administrative approaches to address the need for security in the absence of a high-level political settlement.
  - NGO-led peacebuilding is the tip of an iceberg: peacebuilding which does not expand its horizons beyond standard notions of NGO activity risks missing opportunities and obscuring important elements of the context.
  - The formal and informal role of women is important, but complex and diverse across different sub-national contexts.
  - Widespread trauma: generations of conflict and years of direct and structural violence have deeply impacted emotional, spiritual and mental health of many South Sudanese of all genders, communities or backgrounds.
5. Shared economic interests can create opportunities for peace, but the potential for misuse must be minimised.
  6. Use stories from the past to understand and respond: historic narrative may be used to connect or divide.
  7. Integrate cultural understandings and cultural tools into peacebuilding, but be sure these are context appropriate.
  8. Invest in local capacities, including understanding and building on what already exists.
  9. Peacebuilding is nothing without communication: communication must be both objective and method.
  10. It's not what you do, it's how you do it – integrity is key. 'Soft' skills and commitment are as valuable as technical expertise.

Each of the perceptions presents distinct challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding.

## Part II: Lessons

Part II lists ten principles that illustrate common reflections of over 50 long-term peacebuilding practitioners in South Sudan who were interviewed for this report. They are intended as guiding statements by which to critically assess peacebuilding choices in South Sudan, rather than a technical checklist. The principles are summarised below:

1. Peace is a long-term transformative process: situate initiatives in a long-term perspective.
2. Understand, respond, interact: invest in and respond to multi-level conflict analysis.
3. Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee: be prepared to engage with security actors.
4. Strategically include both 'key' and 'more' people: engage both leaders and citizens in an inclusive approach.

## Part III: Implications

To complement the principles, this section suggests some overarching implications for specific audiences:

Shared implications for all:

- It's not only what you do but how you do it. Donors and practitioners should embody the three mutually reinforcing values of realism, commitment and honesty.

For donors:

- Donors should extend and develop long-term mechanisms to support sub-national peacebuilding. This should focus on promoting sustained local capacity to manage conflict and security and opening up opportunities for social interaction, transitional justice and economic development, whether a functioning high-level peace process exists or not. Funding mechanisms should favour adaptiveness, flexibility, responsiveness and creativity. In return, donors can develop new ways to hold peace practitioners to account linked, for example, to changing conflict and peace dynamics and longer-term theories of change.

- Donors and practitioners should invest in overarching, multi-level strategies to guide engagement in sub-national peace processes.

For high-level processes:

- Strategic approaches to high-level peace processes should look beyond 'who is around the table' to a broader strategy which prioritises understanding and addressing causes of conflict, including decades of grievance felt in the towns and villages across South Sudan.
- Sub-national actors may be strategically important to a national approach to conflict transformation. Diplomats and mediators involved in the high-level peace process should make every effort to conduct the relevant 'elevator diplomacy'<sup>2</sup> required to engage them, build trust, and ensure the high-level process takes account of their practical influence.
- The high-level peace process should explore the integration of elements from South Sudan's diverse customary traditions of peace-making and reconciliation.

For practitioners:

- Practitioners should ensure that they approach support for peacebuilding with a mentality that prioritises integrity, understanding and the strengthening of process – this may mean pushing back against donor or institutionally driven agendas and collective advocacy around the reasons for this.
- The nature of conflict in South Sudan is not a constant, and dynamics are always changing. Practitioners should engage in collective efforts to share analysis and, importantly, lessons and reflections on appropriate practices and methodologies, including on evidence and evaluation.

## Conclusion:

'Local' does not mean unimportant – the layers of conflict in South Sudan are multiple and intertwined. Sub-national conflict can impact national dynamics of peace and war, not least because national leaders

depend upon local constituencies to supply fighting forces and for legitimacy. 'Local peacebuilding' is not a soft issue but a hard security concern that should sit at the heart of overarching strategies to help South Sudanese change the political, economic and cultural logics of power at work in their country.

Although the interaction between levels is frequently opaque to international observers – taking place for example through delivery of money, grain or suits to local leaders – alliances and networks for peace can establish shared institutions that provide security for communities in the absence of high-level agreements.

The design of high-level peace processes can have negative effects locally when not aligned with the realities of multi-level conflict. This is what we currently see taking place in South Sudan.

In this context, sub-national peace work is valuable in at least five ways, which together may help challenge the very logic of power in the country and help create conditions in which a nationwide political transformation is possible:

1. It can help mitigate the divisive effects of elite competition;
2. It can improve lives in the short term and build relationships which reduce opportunities for violence in the future;
3. It can forge a positive accountability between communities and leaders and help connect disparate communities with one another;
4. It can reduce military options available to elites and promote the economic benefits of peace; and
5. It can help inform national level processes with customary and cultural values and practices, so that it also reflects, for example, truth-telling, cultural ritual and performance and public dissemination into their design. This could add meaning to both high-level participants and the wider population.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of 'elevator diplomacy' is used in this report to capture the idea of shuttle diplomacy taking place between actors at local, often rural, locations and those in the national or regional capitals.

A road to peace will require multiple initiatives covering political, economic, social, cultural and psychological needs, but there is an urgent need for every peace actor to ask whether their contribution reflects South Sudan's interlocking, multi-level conflicts, and whether it makes sense when viewed from different centres within South Sudan. This kind of thinking is frequently lacking. To do this, peace actors must engage in meaningful multi-level conflict analysis, be creative in appraising how to work with or complement diverse approaches and existing initiatives (including being willing to hand over power to local agency and capacity when possible) and develop effective ways of sharing their lessons and conclusions. We must also confront some very difficult practical and ethical dilemmas with honesty and integrity to ensure peacebuilding is conflict sensitive and contributes to long-term peace and stability.

It is a daunting task, but peace is being made every day in the towns, villages and cattle camps across South Sudan, offering many entry points. Peacebuilders (with donors playing an important role) have achieved much in South Sudan, but there is a need to modify our approach and change some of the ways we talk about peacebuilding. A good place to start would be greater emphasis on supporting multi-level, inclusive and long-term peace strategies designed in ways that can engage with, and recognise the experience of, all South Sudanese. Ultimately, only South Sudanese can resolve their own issues, therefore peace initiatives and problem solving must belong to them. Peace actors working from the grassroots to the highest level must take this on board and understand their own role as facilitators, especially if within a society and politics that is not their own. Subject to this starting point, external support for local peacebuilding can play a positive and, in many instances, essential role, for example, in providing technical resources, moral or fiduciary support, or a non-partisan perspective.

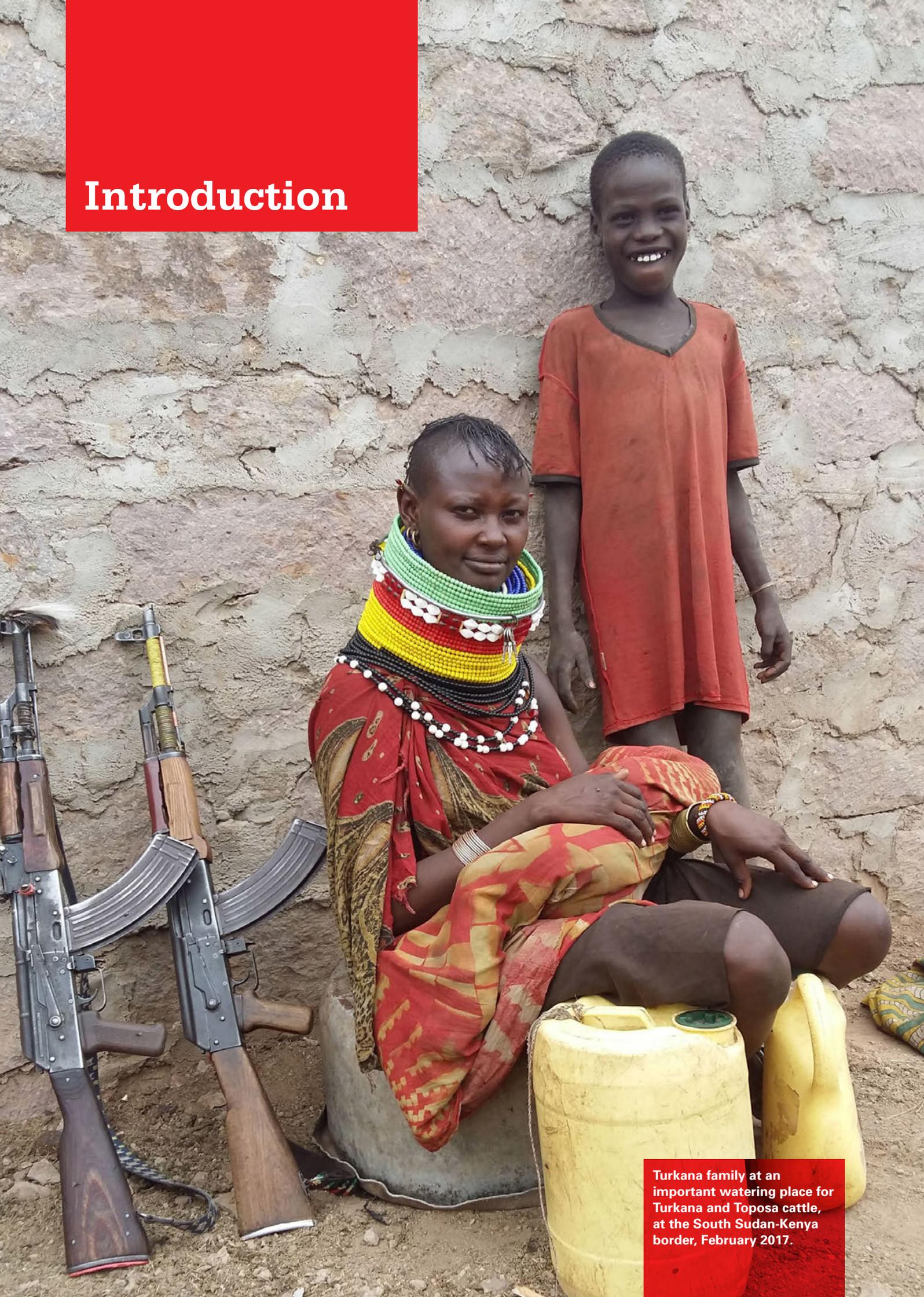
## Purpose of this report

This report analyses approaches to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in South Sudan. The primary aims are to identify overarching lessons which contribute to the effectiveness of peacebuilding, and to illuminate the role of local peacebuilding and actors in the elusive search for a national peace. In doing so, the report aims to provide some guidance for those wishing to understand or support peacebuilding in South Sudan. This is by no means an exhaustive summary. It is necessary to signpost the richness of the material reviewed as part of the research process, much of which can be explored in greater detail via the South Sudan Peace Portal website<sup>3</sup> or the Sudan Open Archive website.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The South Sudan Peace Portal (SSPP) is an online information sharing platform for peacebuilders by peacebuilders ([www.southsudanpeaceportal.com](http://www.southsudanpeaceportal.com)). SSPP also hosts the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) research repository, a wealth of information about South Sudan.

<sup>4</sup> The Sudan Open Archive offers free digital access to knowledge about all regions of Sudan, including a full-text database of documents and agreements (<https://sudanarchive.net>). It is managed by the Rift Valley Institute.

# Introduction



Turkana family at an important watering place for Turkana and Toposa cattle, at the South Sudan-Kenya border, February 2017.

# Introduction

Peace is made and broken every day in South Sudan by chiefs, youth, women and commanders, under trees, in offices, in person or by mobile phone. It is occasionally still facilitated by letter, carried across a boundary by willing hands. Yet, the countless peacemakers at the local level are obscured by the tendency of international and higher-level actors to put themselves towards the centre of analysis, and as a result, opportunities and entry points to address interlocking conflicts and change the logic of high level competition are missed. This report aims to counterbalance this perspective.

Since 2013, South Sudan has collapsed into multiple resource, power and identity-based conflicts. The failure of the national political leadership and international mediation to halt this process has led to renewed interest in what can be achieved at 'local' levels. This attention should be welcomed. Political and military elites are not the sole authors of violence and peace. Instead, local variations in power, history, culture, experience and political economy matter. Mobilisation of communities is not solely a top-down process. Rather, alliances can exist between distinct national and local interests which 'co-produce' violence.<sup>5</sup>

In this report, 'local' or sub-national contexts are defined by geographic zones according to political, economic or security interests, whose porous 'boundaries' are also discerned, often by the 'local' actors themselves, according to specific cultural characteristics and history. Local or sub-national contexts are often overlapping and interact horizontally and vertically, woven together to form the complex fabric of South Sudan. Therefore, when it comes to South Sudan, it can be unhelpful to think in distinct and separate terms of 'local-level conflict' and 'national-level conflict'.

Peacebuilding at the 'local' or sub-national level is not new in South Sudan, and there are decades of experience of working to support peaceful coexistence to learn from. Indeed, this report is valuable in so far as it is a vehicle to reflect the learnings of some of those dedicated local peacebuilders, faith leaders, NGO workers and donor representatives who have dedicated themselves

to this task for many years. Yet the international community has been trapped in an overarching logic of elite-based pacts to try to deliver national-level stability in the wider Sudan. This is understandable if misguided.

Accommodation between high-level political and security actors may be necessary but it is not ultimately sufficient to stop widespread military contestation in South Sudan. Instead, this kind of short term and top-down approach to peace-making has contributed to a process of state formation that has raised the stakes of political and military competition, reinforced cultural, economic and political zero-sum logic, and divided communities in the process.

Working on grassroots peacebuilding and the interlinkages between national and local interests provides openings for the more transformational change that needs to happen in the long run, allowing citizens to move beyond decades of deeply entrenched grievance, and may help weave together intercommunity fabrics from which a national peace can be more sustainably stitched.

In the worst case, greater emphasis on the interactions between each sphere will help mitigate the negative effects of high-level political competition. At best, it could help change the logics of power in the country. Are we investing enough in understanding and working with local actors? Do we apply the right skills, incentives and entry points? How are we connecting high-level strategy with the realities of multi-level conflict in South Sudan? What can we learn from the local to inform the design of a national peace process?

<sup>5</sup> For a full discussion of 'co-production' see: Kalyvas, S. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-85409-1.

## Scope of the report

The report is broken into three sections. Part I outlines important contextual information and summarises some key lessons from literature. Part II identifies ten lessons, or principles, for peacebuilders and for those who wish to engage in peacebuilding in South Sudan, each illustrated by a short case study and discussion. Part III finishes with some overall implications and conclusions.

## Methodology

This research reviewed existing literature and conducted interviews with over 50 long-term peacebuilding practitioners on their everyday experiences of peacebuilding in South Sudan. Throughout 2017, in-depth interviews were conducted in Lakes State, Akobo County, and Juba, as well as with many community members affected by, involved with, or guiding the practitioners' work. The findings also draw on the experiences of the author with high-level and grassroots peacebuilding efforts across the country since 2006.

The interview methodology was heavily influenced by two complementary frameworks: 1) The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines on evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and 2) the McKinsey 7 business management model. The latter was integrated because of its strong emphasis on 'softer' elements such as values, style, staff and skills, largely missing from the DAC guidelines.

## Limitations

The analysis has limitations. First, it was beyond the project scope to conduct in-depth evaluations of peacebuilding initiatives. As a result, case studies are summaries and sometimes rely on sources close to design and implementation, such as a programme manager or lead local facilitator. Where this is the case it is flagged in the text.

Second, despite aiming to illuminate the peacebuilding taking place in everyday South Sudanese communities, many of the case studies and interviews still relate to work with some local or international NGO involvement. This is largely for practical reasons. It takes time to discover and understand the underlying structures and forces at work in complex local societies. It is also a symptom of a problem, whereby the very concept of peacebuilding is inextricably linked with the role of external actors.

Third, many of the dynamics that link local to national levels are sensitive, opaque and often interpersonal. Much more work is required to understand how complex multi-level power dynamics are negotiated in practice. Nevertheless, the findings do reflect learning from a diverse range of peacebuilders, many of whom have decades of experience.

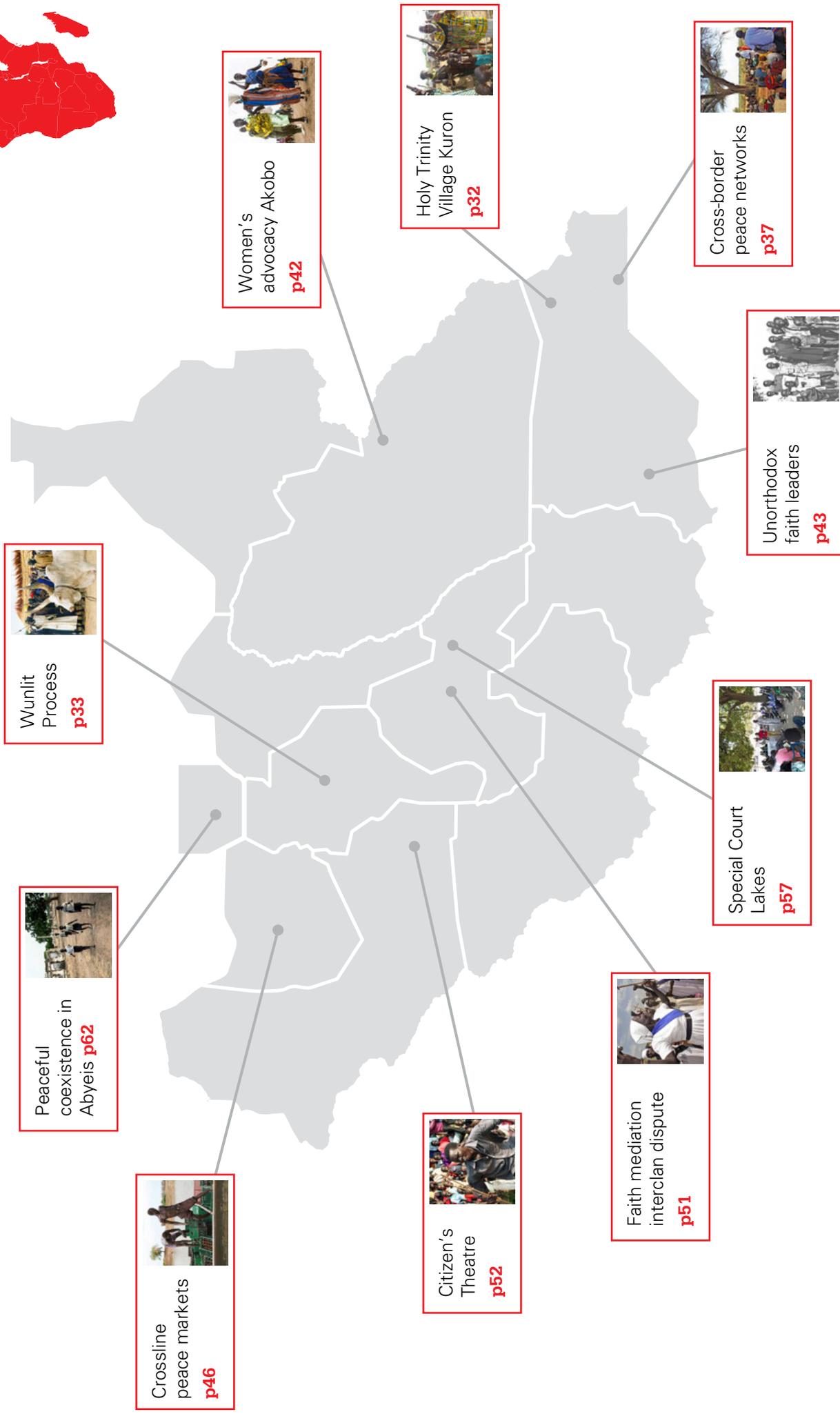
# Peacebuilding glossary

<b>Local or sub-national</b>	<p>Local conflicts and local actors are those that manifest or operate within a discrete sub-national context, defined through discernible boundaries, often by the actors themselves.</p> <p>Sub-national contexts are those defined by specific geographical zones within South Sudan, primarily involving a relatively discrete set of political, economic and security interests among communities and security actors based within them, as well as their various specific cultural characteristics or history.</p> <p>Local or sub-national contexts are often overlapping and interact across boundaries or zones, woven together to form the complex fabric of South Sudan. 'Local' does not imply non-involvement of higher-level actors or interests (though this may be the case), nor a limit to their importance relative to national peace processes. Ultimately, this definition stresses inter-connectivity and blurs the distinction between conflicts and actors across regions and levels.</p>
<b>Age-set</b>	System of social stratification consisting of every male (or female) of comparable age, now practiced to varying degrees by different communities. Named age-sets may pass through a series of stages with distinctive social and political roles, known as grades (e.g. Monyomiji of Lopit-Lotuho-Lokoya in Eastern Equatoria).
<b>Wut</b>	Dinka word describing a section, sub-tribe or sub-section that come together to graze cattle in the same territorial zone, composed of a number of individual lineages not necessarily related to one another. The connection to Wut can be a primary identity for mobilisation to fight. By contrast, the Nuer population tends to group on a lineage basis to fight and graze.
<b>Cattle camp leader</b>	Leader of the cattle camp with overarching authority for court cases and security, even if multiple lineages are present. They are generally elected by the camp community in a deliberative way.
<b>Customary authorities</b>	Elected, appointed or hereditary leaders variously called chiefs, kings and traditional leaders, whose role is to resolve local disputes, maintain judicial processes, and to represent people based on lineage, territory or grazing community.
<b>Clan</b>	A group of families that are related to one another, frequently associated with a sacred totem symbol such as a plant, animal or object.
<b>Community police</b>	Term increasingly being used to describe community defence groups traditionally composed of men between childhood and marriage age, particularly in government-controlled areas. During the wars, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has supported, trained and transformed this local defence capacity into quasi-governmental police and security forces.
<b>Compensation</b>	Provision of cattle, money, or other wealth to an aggrieved party in recognition of loss, suffering or injury.
<b>Transformation</b>	Synonymous with peacebuilding, but used to emphasise the importance of reshaping underlying social structures, dynamics and grievances through, for example, transitional justice or attitudinal change.
<b>Covenant</b>	A formal agreement which brings about a relationship of commitment between God and humanity.
<b>Dialogue</b>	Any exchange of information or perspectives, often to resolve a problem. In some parts of South Sudan, the word has associations with the National Dialogue process.

<b>Diya/Blood payment</b>	A determined amount of goods (typically livestock) or money that must be paid in the case of homicide, or serious injury, committed unjustly against others.
<b>Elevator diplomacy</b>	The concept of “elevator diplomacy” is intended to capture the idea of back and forth shuttle diplomacy taking place between actors at local, often rural, locations and those in the national or regional capitals.
<b>Levels</b>	Peacebuilders commonly think in terms of three levels: the top elite, the middle range and the local. Together, the three levels and their associated approaches form a comprehensive framework for building peace.
<b>Local</b>	Local conflicts and actors occur in a particular sub-national context. This does not imply non-involvement of higher level actors, nor a limit to their importance relative to national peace processes.
<b>Mediation</b>	The term mediation is used with reference to the ways in which IGAD and other international actors assist the parties through high-level negotiation. It can have positive or negative connotations depending upon the user.
<b>National</b>	National refers to the actors, decisions or structures that involve, or intend to involve, the country as a whole and its overarching direction. This does not imply the non-involvement of local actors.
<b>Transhumance</b>	The action or practice of moving livestock from one grazing ground to another in a seasonal cycle, typically to lowlands in dry season and higher land in rainy season.
<b>Peace</b>	Negative peace refers to the absence of violence. Positive peace requires structural violence to also be transformed, involving the restoration of relationships, the reproduction of justice.
<b>Local peace committee</b>	Any inclusive forum operating at sub-national level that provides a platform for collective local leadership to accept joint responsibility for building peace in that community.
<b>Peacebuilding</b>	Broadly describes any strategy designed to promote secure and lasting peace in which the basic human needs of populations are met, violent conflict does not reoccur, and justice transforms relationships.
<b>Regional</b>	Important dynamics that involve countries geographically close to South Sudan.
<b>Spoiler</b>	Groups, individuals or dynamics that intentionally or otherwise work to hinder or undermine sustained peacebuilding.
<b>Toic</b>	Toic are low-lying swampy areas in the rainy season that turn into pasture in the dry season.
<b>Traditional religion</b>	Catch-all term for the diverse religions and spiritual worldviews practiced by many South Sudanese communities, often alongside Christian or Islamic customs.
<b>Trauma</b>	Trauma can be induced by experience of serious threat or harm and have a range of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioural effects on individuals such as memory difficulty, inability to make choices, depression, fear, stomach pains, insomnia or substance abuse.
<b>White Army</b>	Term used to distinguish community fighters from the eastern Nuer from the ‘black army’, or regular forces.

# MAP OF CASE STUDIES

## SOUTH SUDAN



# PART I: The starting point



Famine was declared in parts of South Sudan in early 2017. A man walks by a dead cow in Dong Boma, a Dinka village in South Sudan's Jonglei State in April 2017.



## Our starting point as peacebuilders in South Sudan is theoretical, historical and multiple.

This section sets out the collective body of experience and contextual insights on peace from inside and outside South Sudan on which to build. It offers some core themes of relevance to identifying and supporting peace processes and sets out a brief history of peacebuilding in South Sudan.

It then explores some common contextual insights from within contemporary South Sudan identified across interviewees in multiple locations and from diverse backgrounds. Although their relative importance and ascribed causes vary considerably depending on the point of view of the interviewee, the section is included because of a shared perception that such fundamental features of the context are too frequently overlooked.

Finally, it summarises some South Sudanese definitions of peace and highlights some differences between local ideas and those commonly held by members of international agencies.

# PART I: The starting point

## Peacebuilding lessons from outside South Sudan

Conflict and peace dynamics in South Sudan are particular to South Sudan, so cut and paste interventions from other contexts rarely work. Nevertheless, lessons from outside (*'min barra'*) can help peacebuilders ask the right questions here. Here are some core themes that help frame thinking about peacebuilding in South Sudan.

### Peace is an ongoing process

The term 'peacebuilding' was initially conceived as a follow-up to 'peace-making'.<sup>6</sup> It has since evolved. Today, 'peacebuilding' refers broadly to any ongoing process that aims to "foster and support sustainable structures and processes that strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence".<sup>7</sup> Conflict never ends. It changes and evolves. The aim is to manage and transform it peacefully over time.

### An 'urban bias' obscures conflict dynamics from international and elite actors

Understanding of conflict by outsiders frequently suffers from an 'urban bias'.<sup>8</sup> Studies produced by urban intellectuals "distort data and conceptualizations of civil war dynamics", and analysis tends to focus on political and military elites as the sole authors of violence or peace. Local communities come into focus "only as resources for mobilization or information, as victims, or objects of humanitarian aid".<sup>9</sup> Some peacebuilding agencies work hard to overcome this bias.

### Violence is 'co-produced'

Mobilisation for conflict is not only a top-down process. Local social and political divisions do not simply replicate national division. Instead, alliances exist between local and national actors who 'co-produce' violence. As a result, "the interaction between dynamics in the centre and the periphery are fundamental rather than incidental to civil war".<sup>10</sup> Local variation in the aims and means of power struggle, histories, linkages and political economies are important.

### Peacebuilding must be multi-level

Building peace in modern conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing a supportive peacebuilding system across all levels of society. Advancing political negotiations among elites plays an integral role in the transition to peace. The same is true for consensus building among relevant middle level leaders and practical grassroots efforts. When interlinked, efforts at all levels can form a comprehensive framework for building peace.

### Local leadership and external contributions are important

At all levels, the most sustainable initiatives are based on the efforts of conflict-related persons as opposed to those spearheaded by external actors.<sup>11</sup> This does not necessarily imply the catch-all principle of 'local ownership'. Instead, the peace infrastructure should empower the resources for reconciliation from within a society and maximise the contribution from outside.<sup>12</sup>

### Local actors can and must contribute to national peace

The assumption that local efforts will 'add up' and contribute to a broader peace is misguided.<sup>13</sup> However, strategically linked local peace work can contribute effectively to national peace under certain conditions, including when:

<sup>6</sup> Ghali, B. (1992). *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping*. United Nations Report.

<sup>7</sup> Odendaal, A. (2013). *A Crucial Link: Local Peace Committees and National Peacebuilding*. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Press.

<sup>8</sup> Kalyvas, S. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Kalyvas, S. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Kalyvas, S. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Mitchell, C. and Hancock, L. (2007). *Local Zones of Peace and a Theory of Sanctuary*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

<sup>12</sup> Lederach, J. P. (1998). *Building Peace, Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Press.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, M. Olson L. and Doughty, K. (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

1. Community level conflict is a part of the national conflict equation;
2. There are symbolic effects of local agency on national dynamics; and
3. Community processes are structurally linked, through resistance or political dynamics.<sup>14</sup>

Local Peace Committees (any “inclusive forum operating at the sub-national level that provides a forum for collective local leadership to accept joint responsibility for building peace in that community”) can manage strategically important conflict, open social and economic interaction and catalyse decision making horizontally and vertically.<sup>15</sup> Other peace-interested communities may impact on strategic dynamics by attempting explicitly or implicitly to ‘opt out’ of war. Huge economic and military pressure to participate in war may ultimately force communities to do so, but maintaining internal support structures, cultural cycles and engaging with all armed groups make the outcome less likely.<sup>16</sup>

### **Peace lasts longer when women are included in the process**

There is continually growing research base which recognises the importance of women’s involvement in peace and security issues to achieving long-lasting stability. For example, a 2015 study of 156 peace agreements concluded that when women are included in peace processes there is a 20 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years, and a 35 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.<sup>17</sup> In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged, through the creation of Resolution 1325, the critical role that women can and already do play in peacebuilding efforts. UNSCR 1325 affirms that “peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace”.<sup>18</sup>

## **A ‘top down’ history of South Sudan**

State-formation, development, peace and human rights are uneasy bedfellows in South Sudan. Extending the authority of state control creates winners and losers, exacerbates conflict and undermines local governance structures that have evolved in response to local needs. This is what has happened in South Sudan, making it even more difficult for communities to provide security in the absence of a political settlement today. State-formation strays onto technical and ideological territory beyond the scope of this report. However, strong local institutions invested in stability are critical to managing local conflict peacefully, to hold central government to account and to secure cultural, social, economic and political rights in the longer term. For peacebuilding theories of change to be coherent, they need to be situated within a longer-term and context specific understanding of possibilities in state formation.

Since the 1990s, peacebuilding initiatives have tried hard to identify and support local structures with relatively small resources. In 2010, total government revenue from oil alone was estimated at around \$2.5bn, at least half of which supported the armed forces. In that same year, for example, USAID’s flagship conflict mitigation programme focusing on sub-national conflict mitigation had around \$20m to spend. Such programmes demonstrate a degree of recognition of the importance of bottom-up as well as top-down societal processes, but as the current crisis shows, such efforts have not been sufficient to counter-balance the divisive political and financial forces rooted in the centre.

<sup>14</sup> Walovitch, J. (2016). *Claims and Reality of Linkages between Peace Writ Large and Peace Writ Little*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell, C. and Hancock, L., eds. (2012). *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace*. New York: Continuum.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, M. and Marshall, W. (2012). *Opting Out of War: Strategies to Prevent Violence Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Stone, L. (2015). Quantitative Analysis of Women’s participation in Peace Processes. In *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes*, Annex II (Available at: [www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking-rev.pdf](http://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking-rev.pdf)).

<sup>18</sup> Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on October 31, 2000.

The problem is not a new one. The record and style of successive colonial, Sudanese, rebel and national administrations differ hugely, but each has taken a top-down approach to state-building aimed at increasing the power of central government without recognition of the experience of people in the regions. From the Anglo-Egyptian government's (1899–1956) pacification campaigns to the ongoing efforts by the Inter-Governmental Forum for Development (IGAD) to broker an elusive high level political settlement, the 'top-heavy' approach has frequently multiplied division, occasionally held cease-fires, but has never resulted in conflict transformation addressing lived experience.

### Pre-independence

Today's South Sudan weathered the Turkiya (1821–1881) and Mahdhist periods (1881–1899) as a source of slaves, labour, soldiers and tax. During the first 20 years of Anglo-Egyptian rule (1899–1956) different local administrators experimented according to temperament and conditions, from working alongside existing community authorities to their ruthless suppression; but overall, the government in Khartoum repeatedly prioritised generating wealth through taxation, and military superiority appeared to it the best means to achieve this in the short term. In the end, it was brute displays of armed force which brought a semblance of full authority to a powerful external administrative authority for the first time. Government in South Sudan arrived at the barrel of a gun.

In 1921, the Milner report led to the adoption of principles of 'native administration'. The Anglo-Egyptian government had long relied on local authority figures. However, they now formalised a policy of indirect rule. In theory, this meant administrators sought out people of local influence to act as agents with a level of independence. In practice, they modified, adapted or excluded systems of pre-colonial arbitration and the laws that informed it to serve the increased power of central government and its local economic partners. Chief courts were created and expanded to include intertribal conferences. These also served the economic interests of central government, such as the movement of livestock resources connected to

market supply chains, rather than sustainable local peace and justice. Much of what is referred to as 'the traditional sphere' today is the product of these hybrid models of colonial and indigenous practice.<sup>19</sup>

### Anyanya I, the Addis Ababa Peace Accord and the Second Civil War (1955–1983)

Sudan's first civil war (1955–1972) began even before the British flag was lowered on 1 January 1956. In 1955, members of the Equatorial Corps mutinied in Torit and the insurgents gradually formed into a secessionist movement, Anyanya I, which spread throughout the three southern provinces but was crippled by ideological and ethnic division. It was not until a 1971 internal coup that Joseph Lagu gathered together most of the guerrilla groups under a single banner, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). This unification together with mediation by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) eventually led to the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (AAPA) of March 1972, whose Interim Protocols established a self-governing region within Sudan known as the Southern Region.

Experts writing at the time professed different views as to whether this high-level agreement represented a real chance for peace. On the positive side, there followed at least four years of relative calm and the agreement appeared to be gaining a functional role within the political system of Sudan.<sup>20</sup> Yet, at the time of signing, strong forces were already working against the agreement in southern Sudan. The mandated institutions fed existing competition between southern leaders, which promoted division along increasingly ethnic lines. Other key leaders including Aggrey Jaden and Gordon Muortat had denounced the AAPA from the beginning, predicted its demise, and went on to form the secessionist Anyanya Patriotic Front in 1975.

<sup>19</sup> Bradbury, M., Ryle, J., Medley, M., and Sansculotte, K. (2006). *Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study*. Rift Valley Institute.

<sup>20</sup> Kasfir, N. (1976). *The Shrinking Political Arena*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

In 1974, Mohamed Omer Beshir, a leading authority on north-south relations during the period, warned that “the Addis Ababa Agreement was only the beginning of a much more difficult and complex task – the promotion of economic and social development and the consolidation of political unity”.<sup>21</sup> The high-level peace accord was a dramatic gesture to this end. However, without corresponding focus on local and sub-regional power dynamics, it ultimately accelerated the identity and ideology-based conflicts that had evolved through Anyanya I and laid the foundation for a long period of strife whose memory echoes throughout South Sudan to this day.

### **Anyanya II, the Second Civil War and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (1975–2011)**

Top-down projections of power and continued movement towards winner-takes-all structures continued to define the South Sudanese experience during the Second Civil War (1983–2005) and into the Comprehensive Peace Agreement period (2005–2011). With Ethiopian support, John Garang’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA or SPLM) defeated the Anyanya II (a dissident group informed by, and styled after, Anyanya I), and drove popular secessionist sentiment underground, using force against armed southern groups who rejected his leadership,<sup>22</sup> and adding to wounds that have not healed to this day.<sup>23</sup> In 1991, an SPLA internal power struggle over secession and leadership style exploited ethnicity and led to atrocities perpetrated against civilians on all sides throughout the 1990s. The expansion of the oil industry in the late 1990s changed the logic in both Khartoum and the international community, and by 2002, two of the SPLA factions led by Riek Machar and John Garang respectively had been reconciled to a peace process with the government. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005.

The agreement contained a transformative state-building agenda with some peace and reconciliation architecture, which, though poorly defined, if given due and timely attention, could have helped mitigate the agreement’s worst effects. In practice, and of course with exceptions, the CPA manifested as

an overly technical exercise in zero-sum, top-down state-building without enough ongoing recourse to sub-national dynamics, security realities, historical grievance, identity politics and the expectations of people across the country. We will never know whether the international community could have exerted enough influence over the Government of Sudan and the SPLM to implement genuinely transformative elements of the CPA (including a national reconciliation and healing process, an inclusive constitutional review process, popular consultations, a national land commission and so on) but, after the long period of intense diplomatic engagement that led up to the agreement, it took too long to establish its Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) mandated by the CPA to prioritise them. By the time this happened, it was too late.

The CPA failed to reflect sub-national political complexity within Sudan. First, as an elite power-sharing agreement between the government and a single armed movement, it did not resolve all internal conflicts within the South, let alone in wider Sudan. The South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) was not invited to the negotiations nor named in the framework despite being the largest armed force in South Sudan. Absent also were the Equatorian Defence Forces (EDF). Second, international support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB) activities was based on the flawed premise that “all development contributes to CPPB” and a misreading of the situation as a post-conflict context. This was known not to be the case in South Sudan, where top-down state-building and resource allocation followed lines of political patronage in the presence of scores of so-termed ‘other armed groups’ (OAGs), a divided society, and increased incentives to capture key positions.<sup>24</sup> The focus on national level institutions

<sup>21</sup> Beshir, Mohamed. 1974.

<sup>22</sup> Moro, L., Santschi, M., Gordon R., Dau, P. and Maxwell, D. (2017). *Statebuilding and legitimacy*. Report 15, Secure Livelihoods.

<sup>23</sup> Rolandsen, O. (2005). *Guerilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan During the 1990s*. Nordiska Afrika Institutet.

<sup>24</sup> Bennett, J., Pantuliano, S., Fenton, W., Vaux, A., Barnett, C., and Brusset, E. (2010). *Aiding the Peace: A Multi-Donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005–2010*. ITAD Ltd., United Kingdom.

rewarded elite competition whilst leaving community cleavages unaddressed. Once the shared goal of independence was achieved, the prospects for wide-scale military confrontation were high.<sup>25</sup>

### Glimmers of bottom up

The civil wars did not end the community and condominium practice of holding meetings to prevent conflict.<sup>26</sup> In some cases, communities worked with local commanders to create new mechanisms for interaction and cooperation across conflict lines. During the Second Civil War, prominent examples are the peace markets established in the early 1990s at Rubh Ngai, (Nuer/Dinka/Misseriya communities), Abien Dau (Dinka/Misseriya communities), and joint courts at Warawar and Gok Machar, Northern Bahr al Ghazal (Dinka/Misseriya/Rizeigat communities). In the late 1990s, the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) positioned itself as an interlocutor between community representatives and high-level military leaderships and facilitated a host of initiatives using their 'People-to-People' approach, supported by a number of committed international partners. The best known of these is the Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace Process, commonly called 'Wunlit', which produced immediate local benefits for civilians and impacted South Sudan's national level trajectory to this day.

The People-to-People approach is often misunderstood, and replicated, as facilitating grassroots reconciliation conferences. In fact, the case primarily demonstrates that peace-making is a multi-level, consultative and painstaking process commencing long before any statement of reconciliation and continuing long afterwards. In the case of Wunlit, a high-level mandate was obtained, before shuttle and elevator diplomacy, exchange visits and preparatory negotiations took place over at least eight months before the public reconciliation meeting was considered. This enabled the NSCC to marry the humanitarian, resource and cultural interests of local chiefs with the military and strategic interests of some key SPLA and South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF)/United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) commanders, for whom conditions for a détente had been ripening for some time.

Second, it was inclusive in organisation and 'local' in symbolic, ritual and linguistic arrangement. When it happened, the Reconciliation Conference brought together over 2000 participants from the six Dinka and Nuer counties bordering one another on the West Bank and used the symbology and ritual language known to them including imagery, storytelling, truth-telling, sacrifice and prayer. Third, although the process engaged national leaders, its scope was explicitly sub-national (the Bul Nuer, East Bank communities and the rest of the southern Sudan were not involved). NSCC attempted, with less success, to strategically connect the West Bank to other conflict zones in South Sudan and, with more success, upwards to the middle-level. This led to a combination of grassroots, commanders and intellectuals resolving at Kisumu (2001) that the top-level should reconcile. Wunlit was a sub-national peace process which addressed a limited set of multi-level actors related to a geographic area, but it ultimately helped pave the way for the Machakos Protocol (2002), setting in motion the wheels which drove an independent South Sudan.

The international community did not provide significant assistance to implement the resolutions of the Wunlit Conference, though these had mandated external support. However, the People-to-People approach was adopted by others, notably the Sudan Peace Fund (SPF, 2002–2005) which aimed to facilitate reconciliation and support peace dividends to communities implementing agreements. Indeed, from 2005 to date the United States government continues to commit substantial resources to local conflict mitigation through USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)/ Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation (OTCM) programmes. The independent evaluation of the SPF concluded that its projects had "contributed to establishing a foundation for durable peace by strengthening linkages between communities" and also found:

<sup>25</sup> At least two major rebellions and significant community conflicts had already been ongoing through the CPA period.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, J. (2014). *Local Peace Processes in Sudan and South Sudan*. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Press.



Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Ministers on the 10th anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

- a. peace efforts need longer packages of support;
- b. support should focus on local capacity building;
- c. peace dividends are not a strong contributor to the foundation of peace; and
- d. access to information is an important component of peacebuilding.

Others criticised the fund for “taking over ownership of the concept of People-to-People from the communities themselves” and overseeing a watering down of the approach from long-term process to one-off event management.<sup>27</sup>

### Top down-Top down

Since the high-level power struggle broke down into military confrontation in 2013, international political efforts have focused again almost exclusively on the national leadership level. International actors responded with urgency to attempt to facilitate a rapid reconciliation between the political cleavages in the SPLM by emulating approaches from the CPA, but in doing so missed opportunities to apply a more detailed analysis of what had led to such a dramatic escalation of violent conflict.

When the talks were convened in 2014, they focused on three parties: SPLM, SPLM-IO (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-in-Opposition) and a third group of former political detainees, SPLM-FD (SPLM-Former

Detainees). By the time the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS) was signed, with the reservations of the President, the war had moved on to directly involve others in the country who had been excluded from the process. Although some investment in sub-national peacebuilding has continued, the importance of work at this level is not reflected in the way the parties bargain and compete at the high level, demonstrating a continued top-down obsession. It also hints at some of the ways in which the diplomatic response has failed to capture the mood in different parts of the country, for example by its tacit recognition of President’s Establishment Order No.36/2015 AD (which created 28 states from the existing ten) and to the replacement of the SPLA-IO signatory to the ARCISS.

High-level political processes are central to transforming relationships in South Sudan, but they will continue to promote division and competition unless they can reflect and connect to the very social, security, economic and political realities they are expected to address. South Sudanese people deserve a comprehensive strategy that has at its heart the reality of South Sudan’s multiple interlocking conflicts.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile. September 2017.

**Table 1:** Selected lessons from three historical reviews of peacebuilding activity in South Sudan

Source/Authors	Dates	Subject	Selected value-added lessons/implications
Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study. Rift Valley Institute, (2006)	1957–2006	Analytical survey of literature of local peace processes in Sudan from 1980s–2006.	<p>Local peacebuilding is no substitute for a national peace agreement, but the stability of a national peace process depends on addressing local disputes.</p> <p>Sub-national peacebuilding can build security alliances for conflict against a third party, engagement must be conflict sensitive.</p> <p>The role of indigenous traditions is very important in the power of local peace processes to transform conflict, but this is poorly understood.</p>
Evaluation: The Sudan Peace Fund (2002–2005) and South Sudan Transition Initiatives Program (2003–2005). USAID through Pact. SPF dispensed \$7.9m. SSTI \$6m	2002–2005	SPF aimed to facilitate and support People-to-People; SSTI aimed to link peacebuilding efforts to governance.	<p>Peace is a process. Activity focused on ‘peace meetings’ rather than ‘peace processes’ undermine the potential of local peacebuilding.</p> <p>Resources were not allocated according to local realities but for ease or speed.</p> <p>Key actors to conflict transformation were commonly overlooked in peace work, including youth, women and armed spoilers.</p>
Aiding the Peace: A Multi-Donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan (2005–2010)	2005–2010	Examines international community efforts to support conflict mitigation and peacebuilding following the CPA (2005).	<p>Peace is a process, but peacebuilding activities tended to be isolated events, nor were they linked vertically or horizontally.</p> <p>Theories of change were not based on evidence from within South Sudan but tended to be cut and pasted from elsewhere.</p> <p>Funding mechanisms were not sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in political or security dynamics.</p>

## The starting point

Peace work must be rooted in an understanding of both objective and subjective local realities. The following list of contextual themes from South Sudan is intended to help set the scene within which peacebuilding interacts. The observations reflect common concerns expressed by interviewees in multiple locations and from diverse local to international backgrounds. Although their relative importance and ascribed causes vary considerably depending on the point of view of the interviewee, they are included here because of a shared perception that such fundamental features of the context are too frequently overlooked. They should therefore be read as a collection of common perceptions and insights to help understand everyday perceived experience rather than general truths.

### 1. Words don't always mean what we think

Words such as 'peace' and 'mediation' do not map neatly onto how many South Sudanese speak about transforming conflict. In some cases, words have also become codes to access resources, in others they may carry negative connotations. For example, in some areas 'peace' means 'another kind of domination',<sup>28</sup> 'dialogue' can mean 'partisan propaganda'<sup>29</sup> and 'mediation' the process of 'imposed agreement'.<sup>30</sup> For peacebuilders, a multilingualism is required that bridges both linguistic and socio-cultural worldviews.

### 2. 'Local' does not mean unimportant

The term 'local' obscures vertical and horizontal linkages that have larger strategic importance. "Local conflicts can be orchestrated by big men in Juba, who are also important players in the local context, and communities are also entangled with their local commanders in a two-way negotiation".<sup>31</sup> Conflict may take place in a geographical area, but dynamics, actors and impact extend far beyond it. Sub-national peacebuilding must engage all influential actors relevant to the local context regardless of their location or the seniority of position.

### 3. Political space is severely restricted from 'home' to 'hakuma'

It is important to recognise that day to day life is largely governed by customary mechanisms rather than modern state structures, particularly in rural areas. South Sudanese often refer to this distinction as 'home', loosely meaning rural and/or customary, and 'hakuma', meaning 'external administration' and/or 'state'. For different reasons, space for political and social-cultural debate is restricted in both. As we have seen, 'hakuma' in South Sudan has been associated with military power and authoritarianism since its inception, limiting freedoms of expression and association. In the realm of 'home', says Nichola Lado of the South Sudan Theatre Organisation, "there are also things you cannot say or question, like woman beating, or early marriage, you have to shut up and be told 'this is the tradition'".<sup>32</sup>

### 4. South Sudan is in a state of profound transition

Cosmologies span from the traditional religious worldviews, Christianity and secularism, and often co-exist. The administrative and legal framework includes both customary and modern state structures. Families may have one foot in transhumant pastoralism and another in the wage economy. Models for reconciliation are stuck between spears and guns. "People are working out household by household what this all means".<sup>33</sup> Communities sit between traditional moral codes governing the use of violence and the widespread use of small arms and light weapons with the backdrop of modern warfare. Local conflict "has moved beyond the realm of local spirits (*Jak*)".<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Reverend Joseph Bilal, Episcopal University, Juba. July 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church/Reconcile, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, Jimmy Okumu, UN Civil Affairs, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Interview, Richard King, Concordis International, London. October 2017

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Nichola Lado, Coordinator, South Sudan Theatre Organization. September 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Interviewee wished to remain anonymous, Juba. September 2017.

As a result, applying traditional reconciliation methods is not enough. Peacebuilding must harness and incorporate diverse moral, ritualistic, modern technological and administrative approaches to address the need for security and meaningful reconciliation in the absence of a high-level political settlement.

### 5. Little binds diverse communities together as a nation

South Sudan is home to a beautiful and extreme diversity in livelihoods, social organisation, cultures and ways of seeing. The goal of independence was enough to link many South Sudanese to each other in their imaginations, but following independence, patronage politics, ongoing wars and design of high-level political processes are exacerbating ethnic polarisation to levels not seen before. A goal of peacebuilding may be to contribute to a situation in which a plural South Sudanese identity reflects and values diversity.

### 6. NGO-led peacebuilding is the tip of an iceberg

People make and break peace every day across South Sudan, often far from CBOs, NGOs or external actors. However, “NGOs and agencies cannot see this kind of community peacebuilding, we cannot see them or accept things as they really are”.<sup>35</sup> Peacebuilding which does not expand its horizons beyond standard notions of NGO activity risks missing opportunities and obscuring important elements of the context.

### 7. Youth matter but may be hard to reach

In general, youth are the people who fight, but their options are severely restricted by strong universal, political and cultural factors. These require them to help defend their livelihoods and generate wealth for marriage, status or other lifetime ambitions, as one young CBO director explained, “even if they have awareness of this idea of peace, when our stomachs are empty you forget it and go to fight”.<sup>36</sup> Peacebuilding needs to reach those young people who actually fight or who are at risk of being drawn into violence.

### 8. Women have interests and influence

Women have important interests in both war and peace. They also play decisive roles in conflict resolution and in conflict mobilisation, within mass movements, as office holders and as informal influencers. As with any other category, peacebuilders must go beyond simplistic views of gender and tick-box inclusion to understand, disaggregate and include the specific roles played by organised women’s groups and influential female individuals.

### 9. Widespread trauma

Generations of conflict and years of direct and structural violence have deeply impacted emotional, spiritual and mental health of many South Sudanese of all genders, communities or backgrounds. This contributes to day to day challenges such as alcoholism and domestic violence, which reinforce barriers to positive social, cultural or political change. South Sudan “doesn’t just have a leadership problem but also an awful crisis at a family and communal level”.<sup>37</sup>

### 10. Economic collapse

South Sudan is deep into economic crisis, particularly affecting urban communities dependent on commodities. Some young people in Juba describe the ongoing conflict as “economic war” because its primary impact on them has resulted from the wide-scale economic collapse.<sup>38</sup> One particular implication for public safety is the inability of government to pay salaries, including within the security sector, leading to increased violence and robbery.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Jimmy Okumu.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Director, YOCADO, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>37</sup> For example, interview with Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Conversations in Juba. September and November 2017

## 11. Conflict is large-scale, complex and fast-changing

Traditional methods of reconciliation, restorative justice and compensation cannot address the scale and nature of violence. As Paramount Chief Malice Marial of Pagarou, Yirol East, explained, “it would be impossible to compensate for both sides have lost so many people back to our fathers and grandfathers”.<sup>39</sup> Multiple levels, interlocking conflicts, contested histories, short and long-term interests pull in different directions, and contexts are very unpredictable, “when you organise a conference, two days before a new conflict breaks out and you have to change your plan”.<sup>40</sup> Peacebuilders must help communities move beyond restorative mechanisms to transform their relationships.

## 12. Logistical challenges abound

The lack of roads, communications and services is a reality and a logistical challenge to communities attempting to build peace. Transportation may require planes, tractors and helicopters, and huge amounts of time must be invested on uncertain outcomes, says Audrey Bottjen of the Conflict Sensitivity Research Facility “it’s ungodly how difficult and expensive it is to do the real stuff”.<sup>41</sup> Peacebuilders need to decide how to invest resources and how best to target them.

Each of the perceptions above were frequently stressed by peacebuilders when questioned about overarching context for engaging in sub-national peace processes, and each present distinct challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding. From this starting point, Part II summarises ten principles that experienced local and international peacebuilders argue are particularly valuable in the South Sudanese context.

## Separated by a common language: Peacebuilders and communities

Peace means different things to different people. Interviewees in Akobo and Yirol were asked to define their understanding of the term ‘peace’. In doing so, they offered two kinds of response. Firstly, a list of practical indicators for interactions and transactions; and secondly, the process of understanding and reconciling with the past. Both are important. This box presents a representative sample of quotations capturing these dual priorities. In contrast, educated South Sudanese and external actors tend to stress rights-based ideals including accountability, good governance, economic justice and freedoms of speech, expression and association.

For Isaac Kenyi of the Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk in Juba, the different emphasis is because South Sudanese “do not have the same reference points for ‘peace’ that many international actors enjoy, they are born in war, traumatised in war, now living in war, they don’t know what this thing is we call peace”.<sup>42</sup> Sometimes different priorities generate tensions in programme design, particularly within the dominant paradigm of ‘local leadership’, and there is no consensus amongst the peacebuilding community as to how externally valued parameters should relate to the aims and methods of locally led peacebuilding. The result is a set of challenging questions that need to be confronted head on. Are political rights, economic or gender justice necessary conditions for sustainable peace? How do practical arrangements, transitional justice and rights-based objectives inter-relate and how should they be sequenced? And ultimately, how do local peacebuilding projects sit within long-term theories of state formation in South Sudan?

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Mauro Tadiwe. September 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, Audrey Bottjen, Juba. August 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Isaac Kenyi, Catholic Justice and Peace Desk, Juba. September 2017.

### **Peace is freedom of movement through the other's territory without fear**

"This year there is no peace, this year they will not let us cross [their area]." <sup>43</sup>

"You cannot go from here to Lekongole, you cannot go because there is no peace. If we have peace it means we can move freely with cattle or get goods." <sup>44</sup>

"People were not moving, so I told them, if you do peace you will be able to move freely." <sup>45</sup>

"We will resolve this conflict and people will be moving freely without fear or threat." <sup>46</sup>

"Even in that time, there was peace, people used to move freely but from 1991 they stopped moving. Now they are trying to move, they are trying to have peace." <sup>47</sup>

### **Peace is a security alliance**

"Peace is existing, they cannot let the government attack through their place, nor can IO allow anything from this side." <sup>48</sup>

"What we are saying is if there is no peace, we must make it so we can maintain our border."

### **Peace is maintaining social relations**

"In those days of peace, Murle used to come in dry season to Nyandit, we would spend three months together." (Grazing together)

"Those of Lekongole, we have some intermarriages, we always have peace with them." <sup>49</sup> (Intermarriage)

"You know, we had exactly a peace. They were really here in our town." <sup>50</sup> (Living in the same town)

"In 2015, we had a problem with another clan, my side and another fought and we divided ourselves, we didn't eat in one place." <sup>51</sup> (Eating together)

"Once peace is made, the two parties can eat at the same place, when they eat together with the other person this means we are in peace. If you are in conflict you cannot share food." <sup>52</sup> (Eating together)

"In peace time, Murle youth came to Nuer cattle camps and performed cultural dances and the other way round, there was interaction along the grazing areas." (Dancing together)

### **Peace is trading with each other**

"The absolute main thing is our communities can buy and sell from each other, that does not happen if there is no peace, so now they are chased from the market you can see we are not in peace." <sup>53</sup>

"Before RM defected [sic], they would come and sell cattle and buy cultivation, but that peace ended." <sup>54</sup>

### **Peace is being able to pursue livelihoods**

"Peace means when you get something to support your family." <sup>55</sup>

"Children and mothers who want to go to the forest and cut laloob, they can go. Peace is not bad."

### **Peace is development**

"Peace is part of development for us, hospitals, services, health is improved, these things are indicators of something called peace." <sup>56</sup>

"If there is no peace there is no development, peace is development by the way." <sup>57</sup>

### **Peace is respecting shared justice mechanisms**

"Why are we saying we have peace? Because they follow steps in the laws of the culture to return abductees or compensate killing." <sup>58</sup>

### **Peace is washing away of grievances**

"Even if the pain of the person lost is there, if these reconciliation rituals have been done by elders no one can think of going for revenge." <sup>59</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Interview, Nhial Machar, Leader, Akobo Youth Association. July 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, Bong Deng, Head Chief. July 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Dean of Nyang Diocese, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Interview, Bol Adut, Head, Community Police, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Kooch Bol, Field Liaison Officer, AMA. July 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Mak Choul, Peace Desk, Akobo Administration. July 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Nhial Machar, Leader, Akobo Youth Association. July 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Mak Choul, Peace Desk, Akobo Administration. July 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, Alfred Abolish, Field Liaison Officer, Assistance Mission Africa, July 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Dean of Nyang Diocese, Yirol East. September 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Youth Leader, White Army, Akobo. July 2017

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Alfred Abolish, Field Liaison Officer, Assistance Mission Africa, July 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Interview, Nhial Machar, Leader, Akobo Youth Association. July 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Isaac Kenyi, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk, Juba. July 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel, Director, YOCADO, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Mak Choul, Peace Desk, Akobo Administration. July 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, Dean of Nyang Diocese, Yirol East. July 2017.

## **PART II: Lessons**

Heavy rains destroyed crops in parts of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan. These villagers dance and celebrate the arrival of aid from Christian Aid and its partners.



# PART II: Lessons

Part II contains ten lessons, or principles, that illustrate the common reflections of over 50 long-term peacebuilding practitioners and community peace-makers in South Sudan. They are accompanied by ten short case studies, which illustrate the lessons in practice – each often illustrating more than one principle, as demonstrated by the final case study on peace work in Abyei, which identifies how all ten are important in a single context. Although the list is clearly not exhaustive, a broad consensus exists around these overarching principles. Where significant differences of opinion are present between peacebuilders this is flagged in the text.

Peacebuilding processes require creativity and should not be bound by rules or dogma. This summary list of ten principles are guiding statements by which to critically assess peacebuilding choices in South Sudan, rather than a technical checklist. Technical terms and buzzwords are avoided where possible, instead they are frequently replaced with value-based alternatives that capture the importance of process, rather than discrete activity. In peacebuilding – perhaps even more than in most things – what matters is not just what you do, but also how you do it.

## 1. Peace is a long-term transformative process

*Situate initiatives in a long-term perspective that addresses both insecurity and grievance*

“Peace is a process. It is not a short-term event, it can take three months or five years. You don’t stop, you go on and on, until there is a sense of justice.” – **Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile**<sup>60</sup>

### Situating your programme within a long-term perspective

Does your approach to peacebuilding contribute to a long-term process aimed at transforming self-images, relationships and socio-political structures? This is a question that should guide every initiative whatever the specific programme context, methodology or timeframe. It is the true test of sustainability.

The goal of long-term transformation – that emphasises the importance of reshaping underlying socio-political structures, dynamics and grievances – is not a utopian vision but a practical test, both a hard security concern and a safe pathway for inner and interpersonal reconciliation and healing. It does not deny the presence of conflicts in all human societies, which are never-ending. Instead, it demands from peacebuilders equal consideration to security issues, the imperative of transitional justice and the strengthening of appropriate institutions, so that past experiences can be reconciled, present needs met and future conflicts managed. A comprehensive peacebuilding effort will address this triumvirate of social goods.

Day to day conflict management programmes must take account of the long term, but a project based on accommodating short-term interests can of course be a vital component or entry point if this is kept in mind. For example, facilitating the flow of goods between two communities can improve livelihoods and reduce security risks in the short term, as well as respond to local conceptions of ‘peace’.

This is valuable. However, in addition, peacebuilders must ask in this case whether the mode of economic interaction contributes to a situation where the society and the individuals within it are transforming themselves and their relationships, addressing the legacy of conflict and ensuring future tensions can be managed peacefully. To do this we have to think beyond the short term facilitation of economic interaction to leverage the opportunities it offers for trust-building, truth-telling, and the strengthening of locally relevant, inclusive and resourced institutions. At the same time, risks of rent-capture, market dominance, authoritarian security provision and other unintended consequences that affect long-term transformation should be identified and mitigated.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile, Juba. September 2017.



Panawur community court near Rumbek, Lakes State

## Compensation and justice

Justice matters. It is of central importance to transforming relationships, individual wellbeing and reducing opportunities for leaders to exploit violent strategies to power. Application to a court provides an alternative to revenge for the settlement of restorative compensation claims. Customary reconciliation rituals and truth-telling help to “wash away grievances and ensure that tomorrow, no one can think of going for revenge”.<sup>61</sup> Broader transitional justice processes can fill the gaps left by both.

Interviews with South Sudanese chiefs, armed youth and community members also explained how justice, revenge and compensation are interrelated. For example, a member of the White Army in Akobo described how revenge was in part a mechanism for obtaining compensation, “what does it feel like to go to raid Murle? You run for days but don’t feel tired, it feels good because it is justice. We are taking our things back”.<sup>62</sup> If compensation is revenge by other means, then the emotional leap from recognition to apology is the additional and all-important step reflected in the customary processes. As the Paramount Chief of Pagarou, Malice Marial, explained, “compensation is recognising what you did, and more so, it is saying sorry”.<sup>63</sup>

In the absence of a functioning state, security sector or community-backed institutions, the provision of intercommunity justice is the lynchpin of local

peace work. It prevents escalation, builds trust and, in theory, satisfies grievances as they come about. Customary conflict management in South Sudan typically contains a local-elite negotiation of compensation payment for the crime, followed by transformative and collective reconciliations involving ritual, truth-telling and apology.

This immediate process of restorative compensation, such as the payment of *diya*, as a means to reset relationships is critical. However, it has a major shortcoming, as the Paramount Chief went on to explain, “because the scale of our issues is impossible to compensate. Both sides have lost so many people going back to our fathers and grandfathers, we can’t set the record straight”.<sup>64</sup> Instead, hope for a reconfiguring of society increasingly falls upon the most transformative elements of customary approaches to justice, such as truth-telling, ritual, apology, forgiveness and trust-building. Peacebuilding must help magnify the potential of these elements so they can assist in addressing unresolved historical grievances lying under the surface.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, Dean, Nyang Diocese, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Interview, informal discussions with White Army youth, aged 14–18, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou, Yirol East. July 2017.

# GRIEVANCE ICEBERG

Customary conflict management

Peacebuilding need

Traditional restorative justice e.g. diya payment resets relations

Single incident e.g. cattle raid

Local capacities to manage conflict e.g. special court

Restorative justice cannot address layers of unresolved grievance

Unresolved historical grievances

Transitional justice and reconciliation

Customary peacebuilding practice evolved to address security incidents but cannot alone address layers of grievance

## Peace is a process

Experienced peacebuilders agree that there is no 'before', 'during' and 'after' in making peace. As Reverend Peter Tibi of the Africa Inland Church put it, "Just as conflict is a part of life, peace is a process, it is not a short-term event."<sup>65</sup> An external actor may enter and leave a context, but when they do so, they join in an ongoing story rather than begin a new one.

'Peace is a process' has entered the lexicon of peacebuilding but, just as the evaluation of the Sudan Peace Fund found in 2006, too many peace initiatives still focus on the idea of a peace 'conference' rather than a 'peace process'. Reverend Peter Tibi continued, "peace isn't the day of meeting, it's the preparation and follow up that is the peace process, and this is all too often entirely absent. This is a complete pitfall." Such oversight is a dereliction of duty that goes beyond ineffectiveness. Isolated

'peace' events can do more harm than good; setting up poorly researched, impossible to implement agreements that are subsequently perceived by key actors to be broken by their adversaries. This can result in *additional* layers of grievance and *increased* barriers to peaceful coexistence.

In September 2015, with a view to putting into practice this reflection, the South Sudan Council of Churches launched its Action Plan for Peace (APP) – an ambitious peace framework which perceives its timeframe as multi-generational and which connects across multiple levels. The APP builds on the Council of Churches' historic legacy of peacebuilding in South Sudan, where the church is identified by many as one of the key South Sudanese institutions with the ability

<sup>65</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile, Juba. September 2017.



Children grow up in militarised environments, Yambio

and credibility to address the root causes of conflict, bring warring parties together, ensure that the ‘voices of the voiceless’ is represented in high-level processes, and to reach across the nation through deep local networks. At the time of this research, the APP was still relatively new, but it will be the subject of further in-depth analysis to come.

“Something you have decided to do is in the realm of the possible, but if you haven’t even thought of it, then it is impossible. The scale of the killing is so big and so long, we cannot compensate the old way, the only way to make change now is for each of us to forgive and forget.” – **Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou, Yirol East**<sup>66</sup>

### The mind, trauma and awareness

Time and again during fieldwork conducted for this report, peacebuilders of all backgrounds returned to the theme that the way to assist societal transformation is by assisting individuals to travel the path of inner transformation. One expression of this is the language of mind, for example, Reverend Joseph Bilal, of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, argued that “all peace work is the work of opening up minds, to help free minds to think critically. The tools to do this are trust building, confidence building, critical thinking, trauma healing and reconciliation.”<sup>67</sup> Reverend Peter Tibi, who is

Director of CBO, Reconcile, and facilitator of long term local peace work for over 25 years, also uses the language of mind to talk about the underlying mechanism of community reconciliation, “you find a way of understanding their way of living, their ways of thinking, you give them time to tell their stories, and in this process people come to their senses”.<sup>68</sup>

Jim Long John of the Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk in Juba, dismissed the critique that this analysis denies the most vulnerable their rational agency, saying, “some of these people have never seen peace, they need to actually learn to see that the reality of war is not in their interest, so they can start to think creatively, to deal with the past and thinking about cooperation today and in the future”.<sup>69</sup> In practice, the options available for many people in the South Sudan are deeply limited by political and security context, but trauma healing, improving access to information, helping people encounter the other, telling stories and securing compensation are not only valuable for individuals involved. They can contribute to opening-up societal opportunities for the development of local conflict management institutions, increase trust and build networks for peace.

“Every act of violence is an unhealed trauma.”<sup>70</sup> – **Thor Riek, Master Trainer, Morning Star program**

<sup>66</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou, Yirol East. September 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, Reverend Joseph Bilal, Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Interview, Jim Long John, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Interview, Thor Riek, Akobo. July 2017.

## Case study 1: Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron

**Title:** Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron (HTPV Kuron)

**Principles:** Peace is a long term transformative process; Integrity is key; Integrate cultural tools; Shared economic interests can create opportunities for peace.

**Actors:** Bishop Paride Taban, HTPV Kuron, PAX, NCA

**Location and date:** 2005–ongoing

### Conflict

Primary conflict dynamics revolve around cattle raiding and child abduction between Toposa and Jie, Toposa and Nyamatong, Jie and Murle communities. The Jie and Murle span Eastern Equatoria and Boma, Jonglei State. Following some years of relative stability, clashes resurfaced between August and September 2017, especially between Murle and Jie. Community stereotypes and expectations play into cycles of violence, magnified by the ubiquity of small arms. The Murle are perceived by other communities as abductors of children whilst the Toposa and Jie are considered cattle raiders. In 2016/2017, insecurity forced many residents from the area, weakening local leadership and community support structures, including the churches. Major challenges to facilitating peaceful relations include the remoteness of the region, the complete absence of official administration linked to central government and interference of wider nationally linked conflicts.

### Key actors (background)

Jie, Murle, Toposa, Kachipo, Nyangatom communities: These groups trace their origin to a common ancestor but view themselves as traditional enemies due to cattle raiding and competition over grazing and water.

“For us there is no government, if anything happens we have to do it even if we don’t have the resources.”<sup>71</sup>

“I have already prepared my grave here to show that I’m not going to leave.”<sup>72</sup>

### Action

HTPV Kuron is a home to people from different tribes and faiths who have been in conflict for many years. In 1998, the area was inaccessible by road except between the months of January and March, and the whole Greater Upper Nile region was cut off from Eastern Equatoria by the Kuron River. In 1998, Bishop Paride Taban constructed a bridge over the Kuron River to connect the two regions and 81 families from Toposa, Jie, Murle, Nyangatom and Kachipo decided on their own accord to settle around the bridge to protect it (for it had also provided a new challenge as raiders used the bridge during the rainy season to extend and intensify cattle raiding). This settled community was the genesis of the peace village proper, which grew until by 2007 it included representatives of over eight ethnic communities, as well as a number of Kenyans and Ugandans. The HTPV Kuron now has a stable foundation in Kapoeta East County, Eastern Equatoria, after the commissioner allocated 10km squared of land to the project.

The initial approach was to address broken relationships and build trust by meeting shared livelihood, education and health needs, beginning with a joint agricultural project. This has since broadened to reflect the deeper needs linked to both individual and collective development and reconciliation and now includes programmes of cultural activity, vocational training and chaplaincy. For example, inter-community theatre groups explore social issues and a training centre offers skills in carpentry, maths and writing. The Peace Village also coordinates Joint Peace Teams (comprising seven people from Boma and seven from Kaljok) that monitor security issues between Murle and Jie, respond to incidents and risks and take collective decisions. HTPV Kuron is viewed by some as a laboratory for South Sudan, and while it would not be appropriate to assume that it can simply be replicated across South Sudan as it is so rooted in context and leadership, there are plans to develop a Peace Academy to enable other areas of South Sudan to learn from the approach.

In September 2017, escalation and ethnicisation of the wider war throughout the Equatorias impacted even this safe space for peaceful coexistence. Members of communities other than Toposa returned to their ancestral homelands. Work is ongoing to facilitate their return.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, Lam Orbyn Cosmas, Kuron Coordinator, December 2017.

<sup>72</sup> Bishop Paride Taban, official announcements, various.

**Outcomes**

- Increased intercommunity interaction, respect and appreciation.
- Inter-marriage (for example, between Jie and Toposa).
- Cattle returned between Murle and Jie, high degree of trust and authority of the Joint Peace Team

**Lessons**

- Lessons and location used to strengthen other local peace efforts.
- HTPV Kuron administration providing logistics and peace committees to maintain security in absence of functioning government structures in the region.
- Nationally linked conflict can disrupt even the most positive local initiatives.
- Conflict dynamics do not follow administrative boundaries.
- Twin goals of shared economic cooperation and social transformation built on trust and addressed grievances.

**Case study 2: People-to-People and the Wunlit Process**

**Title:** People-to-People and the Wunlit Process

**Principles:** Peace is a long-term transformative process; Integrate cultural tools and understandings; Strategically include 'key' and 'more' people.

**Actors:** Nuer, Dinka, SPLA, Salva Kiir, New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC)

**Location and date:** 1997–2001

**Action**

The People-to-People process developed out of NSCC facilitated dialogues, including the Akobo Lou-Jikany (1994) conference and SPLA-community Yei Dialogue (1997). It built upon key lessons from Akobo and was made possible by the rapprochement with and within the SPLM/A at Yei. In June 1998, it turned its attention to a core cleavage within South Sudan's painful internecine conflict, that between Dinka and Nuer. The NSCC brought eight Dinka and Nuer chiefs from border areas on the East and West Banks of the Nile to Lokichokio, Kenya. The meeting was the first time in seven years that elders from each community had been able to meet face to face and the initiative resulted in the 'Loki Accord', a concrete statement of intent to end hostilities, conduct community meetings and to work towards grassroots peace conferences on the West and East Banks. Due to the trajectory of the fighting, the NSCC chose to focus on the West Bank first, where the forces of Paulino Matiep and Riek Machar were making advances.

Preparations for the conference took eight months. First, shuttle and elevator diplomacy, exchange visits and preparatory negotiations took place, enabling the NSCC to marry the humanitarian, resource and cultural interests of local chiefs with the military and strategic interests of some key SPLA and South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF)/ United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) commanders, between whom conditions for a détente had been ripening for some time. On the mandate provided by the Loki Accord, the NSCC entered into discussions with the military leadership of SPLA and UDSF and, after stressing the strategic value of southern unity for the mutual interests of wresting greater autonomy or independence from the Government of Sudan based in the north, key leaders from both sides expressed support to the initiative. The Deputy Chairman of SPLM/A Salva Kiir Mayardit – whose home area was being tested by two fronts and famine – offered soldiers, equipment and a security guarantee. Riek Machar sent a surprise special envoy from Khartoum to observe proceedings. A South Sudanese NGO, the Bahr al Ghazal Youth and Development Association (BYDA), organised the event, building an entire village to host up to 1200–1500 people. In the weeks running up to the conference proper, the NSCC arranged a confidence-building exchange visit between Dinka and Nuer chiefs.

Second, Wunlit worked with and ultimately brought together over 2000 participants from the six Dinka and Nuer counties bordering one another on the West Bank and used the symbology and ritual language known and of value for them, including imagery, storytelling, truth-telling, sacrifice and prayer. The Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference took place from 27 February to 8 March 1999 with 360 delegates invited from six counties east and west of the Nile (the remainder of the participants were public observers who felt moved to attend). The only key Nuer group not to participate were the Bul Nuer of Mayom, aligned with Paulino Matiep, although a few Bul chiefs walked to Wunlit to participate despite Matiep's lack of cooperation.

It was bottom-up, though it reached the highest level. The overarching approach was to work through civilians to avoid political and military co-option of the locally expressed interest in peace. Critical components included:

1. Traditional cultural practices including animal sacrifice;
2. Christian prayer;
3. Community-led emphasis on redressing substantive grievances with truth-telling and forgiveness;
4. The presence and influence of women (who reportedly put the meeting back on track after initial arguments including by the threat of abstinence); and
5. The raising up of its final agreement to the level of 'covenant' through further church and traditional ritual.

NSCC followed up with two conferences in 1999. The first attempted to bring donors on board to support and strengthen implementation, but little practical help was provided.<sup>73</sup> The second brought Dinka and Nuer women together to reaffirm their support. A Dinka-Nuer Peace Council was established in September 1999 to monitor and oversee implementation. Its reviews reflected favourably the impact of the Wunlit Process, but also stressed the need to:

- a. address other spoilers within and without the process;
- b. deliver joint institutions such as schools, courts and police; and
- c. deliver practical tangible reconstruction.

Third, although the initiative involved national players, its scope was to address a very important sub-national conflict. As a result, the Bul Nuer, East Bank communities and the rest of the southern Sudan were not involved. Cognisant of this, the NSCC attempted, with less success, to repeat the experience on the East Bank and in other locations, thus undermining the hope of strategically connecting the West Bank to other conflict zones in South Sudan and building a national foundation for peace. It also tried, with more influence, to engage upwards to the middle-level and this exploration led to a combination of grassroots, commanders and intellectuals resolving at Kisumu (2001) that the leadership of the two factions should reconcile, helping to pave the way for the Machakos Protocol (2002), which brought the Riek Machar and John Garang factions together and set in motion the wheels of an independent South Sudan.

### Outcomes

- Intercommunity violence significantly reduced; Nuer participants walked home through Dinka territory; Abducted women, children and cattle were returned; *Toic* reopened for shared grazing.
- Increased moral authority and political influence of Dinka and Nuer traditional religious leaders.
- Contributed to 2002 agreement between Riek Machar and John Garang factions.

### Lessons

- Sub-national peace processes can influence high-level political outcomes.
- Strategic buy-in of local and national security actors critical to success.
- Wunlit was a 'process' and not a 'conference'.
- Local language, symbols, rituals, practices, theories of justice contribute to community ownership of local peace events.
- Peace processes can be motivated by the need to more effectively prosecute war against a third party.
- Women can be critically influential in the direction of a peace process.

## 2. Understand, respond, interact

### *Invest in and respond to multi-level conflict analysis*

“Donors need to be working with the reality, but before any consultation takes place, the die is too often cast and the priorities are foregone conclusions” – **Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches**<sup>74</sup>

### **Invest in and respond to flexible, adaptive and multi-level conflict analysis**

Peacebuilding must respond, adapt and interact with reality. It involves both understanding what is going on through conflict analysis and making changes based on new information. Sounds simple? Long-term peacebuilders say it’s not.

First, “ongoing conflict analysis is too often seen as a tick box, but in fact it’s something you really need to be willing to invest in, in terms of skills, time and commitment” explained Audrey Bottjen, Director of the Conflict Sensitivity Research Facility, which advises donors and NGOs. Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches, agrees, “you can’t do it overnight, it takes years to build up the relationships, years to understand the analysis, years to start connecting the who, how and what”<sup>75</sup>.

The principle of good conflict analysis is well established. The practice less so.

Second, “conflict analysis is not always absent, but it is not being responded to”<sup>76</sup> continued Mr. von Habsburg-Lothringen, a point made strongly in evaluations of the Sudan Peace Fund (2002–2005) and the multi-donor support to CPPB activity during the CPA period. Situations change over time, sometimes quickly, and generic programming that assumes a blueprint is very unlikely to bear fruit. This means that peacebuilders must engage deeply with the process of ongoing conflict analysis, build relationships with local actors, actively practice conflict sensitivity, listen, learn, and yearn to understand. It means being open to that crucial step of adapting a theory of change or amending a

strategic plan in response to the environment with which it interacts to maximise the positives and mitigate harmful effects. Doing this can require changing modes of operation to ensure deeper engagement with community actors, building in uncertainty to project timelines, amending methodologies, pushing for flexibility in budgets and acknowledging failures. Donors and NGOs need to find new ways of working to meet these needs.

Third, the conflict analysis underlying programme design should seek to answer questions at multiple levels and geographic zones. How does the manifestation and trajectory of conflict in a local area link to actors in neighbouring and more distant areas? What national players are relevant to local dynamics? Such questions are important for two interrelated reasons. First, to ensure that local peacebuilding contributes to broader peace. The influential report, ‘Confronting War’, by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, showed in 2003 that an assumption that local peace efforts will ‘add up’ and contribute to a broader peace is misguided, unless linkages are explicitly addressed.<sup>77</sup> Second, they are important to ensure local peace work connects, is nationally coherent, conflict sensitive and will ‘do no harm’. Local peacebuilding in South Sudan nearly always serves military or strategic political and/or economic interests and can sometimes forge new military alliances that could lead to the prosecution of war against a third party.<sup>78</sup> Should local peacebuilding be provided wherever people suffer conflict? What if the provision of support in two different local contexts further entrenches opposing sides in a broader civil war (as is arguably the case today with interventions in Lakes and Akobo)? To what geographical or political scope should we exercise our conflict sensitivity? The importance of situating local peacebuilding in national

<sup>74</sup> Interview, Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches. September 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches. September 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, M., Olson, L., and Doughty, K., (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Bradbury, M., Ryle, J., Medley, M., and Sansculotte, K. (2006). *Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study*. Rift Valley Institute.

context cannot be overstated, but due to the complexity of the situation and an unwillingness of agencies to engage with some of the unpalatable ethical and moral issues that follow, there is presently no clarity to guide an overarching strategy of local peace support.

### 3. Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee

#### *Be prepared to engage with security actors*

“If you end with an agreement and there is no sanction to maintain security except trust, you will have a rod for your own back.” – **Richard King, Chief Executive, Concordis International**<sup>79</sup>

#### **Be prepared to engage with security actors**

Peacebuilding in South Sudan today is in the business of contributing towards providing security in the absence of a functioning high level political settlement. Sub-national peacebuilding is therefore a security issue of strategic importance, and whether led by a grassroots women’s movement or a high-level initiative, it needs a security guarantee. According to Mauro Tadiwe, a long-term peacebuilder in South Sudan, “you have to think beyond chiefs, gender, or youth, or whatever, you have to engage the critical actors, whether military spoilers or armed enablers”.<sup>80</sup> The implications are twofold:

- a. peacebuilders must be willing to engage army, militia, armed community members or criminals; and
- b. peacebuilders must work with the higher-level actors to facilitate security guarantees when their influence needs to be taken into account. In a sector focused on civil society, this kind of work is too frequently seen as outside the scope of a peacebuilder.

Security actors are frequently a critical ingredient in managing conflict, though they bring risks to be managed, such as rewarding patterns of authoritarian government. To offer examples from our case studies, in Northern Bahr al Ghazal the projection of military power by then Governor Paul Malong

ensured the SPLA guaranteed the safety of Sudanese communities seasonally migrating into the area and trading in its markets. In 1999, the Wunlit Process organised its reconciliation dialogue only after Salva Kiir, then SPLA Bahr al Ghazal commander, offered to guarantee security for delegates. In Yirol East, the return of cattle following raiding between Ciec, Atuot and Aliab is only possible with the participation and buy-in of the armed gelweng/community police, a semi-autonomous group who assist in collecting stolen livestock and bringing criminals into the custody of the state. Along the border of Akobo and Ethiopia in early 2017, the establishment of a new Ethiopian Border Force immediately intervened in cross-border cattle raiding between Jikany and Lou Nuer, ending two years of tit-for-tat theft and abductions. And as Richard King, Chief Executive of Concordis International explains in the context of Abyei, where UNISFA has successfully managed security in the absence of a political settlement, “somewhere you need a mechanism from which to enforce your agreement, trust is part of this, but you need sanctions too”.<sup>81</sup>

Designing peace processes that result in the provision of security and the demonstrable management of individuals and dynamics with potential to destabilise agreements is the bread and butter of peacebuilding, just as much as it is empowering women, youth and facilitating genuinely transformative justice mechanisms over time. The challenge is to do both.

<sup>79</sup> Quote refers to the central role of UNISFA in supporting intercommunity peacebuilding in Abyei. From interview with Richard King, Chief Executive, Concordis International, London. October 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Mauro Tadiwe, Director, Concordis International, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>81</sup> Interview, Richard King, Chief Executive, Concordis International, London. October 2017.

### Case study 3: Cross-border peace networks

**Title:** Cross-border peace networks (Ateker Cluster)<sup>82</sup>

**Principle:** Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee; Peace is a long term transformative process; Understand, respond, interact.

**Actors:** PAX, HTPV Kuron, Catholic Church, youth, Kraal leaders, women, elders, diviners, local peace committees, wider partner network of CBOs

**Location and date:** Ateker cluster, 2006–ongoing

#### Conflict (issues, causes)

Four inter-linked factors threaten security and livelihoods among the cattle-rearing communities in the borderlands of Kenya (Turkana County), Uganda (Karamoja province) and South Sudan (Eastern Equatoria):

1. Cycles of intercommunal conflict;
2. Presence of small arms and availability of ammunition;
3. Absence of state protection and response; and
4. Absence of concrete economic programmes or opportunities.

Before 2006, hundreds of people were killed each year in these border zones of South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. Today, the large-scale cattle raids that once characterised the wider region have reduced significantly.

*“Without the involvement of local authorities, and arguably more importantly, the various security agencies such as the military, police, and others, the activities cannot take place. They are key partners.”<sup>83</sup>*

#### Action

In 2006, PAX responded to an initiative of Bishop Paride Taban and began support to a cross-border peace and sports programme for youth warriors. The programme trained young warriors and former combatants in conflict transformation skills, in particular how to use sports for relationship building. The participants subsequently worked as Peace and Support Facilitators (PSFs), linking the programme with the cattle camps (*kraals*) and organising football matches and peace conversations. The network of PSFs evolved into an early warning system, which built confidence until the point at which an important cross-border conference was possible. The conference took place in 2008 in Kapoeta, South Sudan, and brought together 500 people from the pastoralist communities, mainly youth warriors, kraal leaders, elders, women, diviners and local government.

Following the meeting, the cross-border peace network continued to expand. Core actors included the Catholic Diocese of Torit, as well as CBOs including Lokado in Kenya, Dado and Kopein in Uganda and Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron in South Sudan. Peace committees were established at the village level, which coordinate with police, security actors, *kraal* cattle leaders and youth warriors. Together with PAX partners, the peace committees maintain a system of cross-border conflict monitoring, early warning, rapid response. For example, in early 2016, the Jie Peace Committee (Kotido District, Karamoja) decided to address an emerging issue of Jie thefts from Turkana kraals. They approached the Turkana and initiated a joint village-to-village search for criminals and cattle. The move was endorsed by the Uganda Popular Defence Forces (UPDF) Brigade Commander. A public meeting followed where spoilers were reprimanded and cattle returned. If incidents do take place, peace committees and security forces or police work across borders to relocate stolen animals and convince thieves to return them. In Karamoja, for example, the UPDF will identify cattle and suspects, hand them over to the Uganda Police Force (UPF), before the issue passes back to the customary system.

<sup>82</sup> This case study draws heavily on Sustaining Relative Peace, PAX. October 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Sustaining Relative Peace, PAX. October 2017, p.61.

In July 2014, the signing of the Morutit Resolution was a landmark for the cross-border peace network and programme. This was the concrete result of a joint district security meeting between the Jie of Kotido and Dodoth in Kaabong. It was organised by peace actors in collaboration with UPDF and it agreed resolutions aimed at further discouraging cattle theft. One of the key reasons for its subsequent success is that community actors, security agents and local government all committed themselves to the resolution. The agreement has now been expanded to include all the cross-border communities in the Ateker cluster.

Many communities do not trust their state authorities or security forces, so the programme has to strike a tricky balance between involving state and security personnel and ensuring the needs of all communities are met. A third and related component of the programme therefore aims to improve accountability and relations between government and security actors on one hand and communities on the other. Peace partners work with each group to clarify their roles in maintaining security, to bring officials together for cross-border coordination, and to mediate between the community and authorities.

#### Outcomes

- Peace network successfully lobbied authorities to pursue peaceful strategies; Reduced cattle raiding; practical and implementable local agreements.
- Peace committees connect communities and prevent escalation.
- The Jie, Dodoth, Toposa, Nyangatom and Turkana jointly celebrate their shared grandmother (Nayece) in an annual celebration that reaffirms resolutions.
- Opening of roads (for example, Karenga-Bira and Kabong-Kalapata-Koumate).

#### Lessons

- Peace committees, networks and agreements require constant maintenance and reaffirmation and reduced spread of conflict across international borders.
- Long-term programme built trust and accountability among partners, communities and authorities.
- Engaging security actors was critical to success. Cattle recovery and accountability depends on the commitment of state and security actors.
- Combination of methodologies respond to different aspects of context and balance practical peacebuilding with transformative goals.
- Programme responded to cross-border reality of conflict, not constrained by administrative boundaries.



Borderlands peace meeting, Karamoja, Uganda, 2017

## 4. Strategically include both 'key' and 'more' people

### *Engage both leaders and citizens in an inclusive approach*

"You will never be able to include all actors, but you need to find the critical ones, whether a women's group or an army general. When people think about inclusivity they think in terms of women as an afterthought, this is unhelpful." – **Isaac Kenyi, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk**<sup>84</sup>

### **Engage both leaders and citizens**

In the long run, all peacebuilding must be inclusive. This means engaging in some way and at some time both leaders and citizens, 'national' and 'local', peacemakers and warmongers, the elderly and the young, as well as male and female. For example, although the 'local' in local peacebuilding refers to the sub-national context in which violence plays out, it is still necessary to identify the elite and mass interests at work, and therefore to include multi-level actors. For example, and to use the terminology from CDA's remarkable Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP)<sup>85</sup>, a group of 'key people' influential in a conflict may live far away, in the capital, or even abroad, and play a distance-mobilising role via occasional visits or social media. The 'more people' – those masses participating in conflict, affected by it, or capable of influencing it through collective action – are more likely to be 'local', but not necessarily so. Either way, both categories must be included in a coherent overarching peace process for it to be inclusive.

Inclusivity is a strategic concern because it involves sequencing the engagement of 'key people' and 'more people'. Depending on the context, this may involve elite negotiations, shuttle and elevator diplomacy, mass mobilisations, issue-based negotiation, communication campaigns, advocacy, or reconciliation rituals, in appropriate sequence or in parallel. For example, interviewees such as Mak Choul, Akobo Peace Commissioner, typically described stages in a traditional South Sudanese community reconciliation process that swung

between elite discussion and mass participation, in a way that ultimately included all: "The Murle youth ['more people'] will put a white flag at the border, when we see it, it is the Paramount Chiefs who communicate with each other. They sit with the three border chiefs of each side ['key people'] and agree if there will be peace before informing the commissioner ['key people'], then we invite representatives of the community for input and reconciliation ['more people' and 'key people'] before peace is done and communicated to all ['more people']".<sup>86</sup> His snapshot of a process begins with community advocacy by the many, moves to local-elite negotiation and engagement with a security provider, is followed by some form of representative community reconciliation with a strong ritualistic function, and then to a wider dissemination to the entire public. It excludes no one, though of course some people are involved in different ways and to greater or lesser extents.

### **Women and youth**

The involvement of women can make or break peace processes. Isaac Kenyi of the Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk described the impact of women at Wunlit: "one of the things people forget was the women who made it possible for the conference to succeed. The men had become hot-headed after the first days so the groups were split into men and women. When the women brought their resolutions back, they said we will not bear children just for them to be killed, this was a genuine reason for the change in mood. You have to remember some of these women were SPLA commanders of course."<sup>87</sup> The case study of a women's membership organisation shows its impact on intra-clan violence in Akobo. Cattle camp youth and rural youth commonly hold

<sup>84</sup> Interview, Isaac Kenyi, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk. September 2017.

<sup>85</sup> See Anderson, M., Olson, L., and Doughty, K., (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Cambridge, MA: CDA.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Mak Choul, Peace Commissioner, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Interview, Isaac Kenyi, Catholic Church Justice and Peace Desk. September 2017.

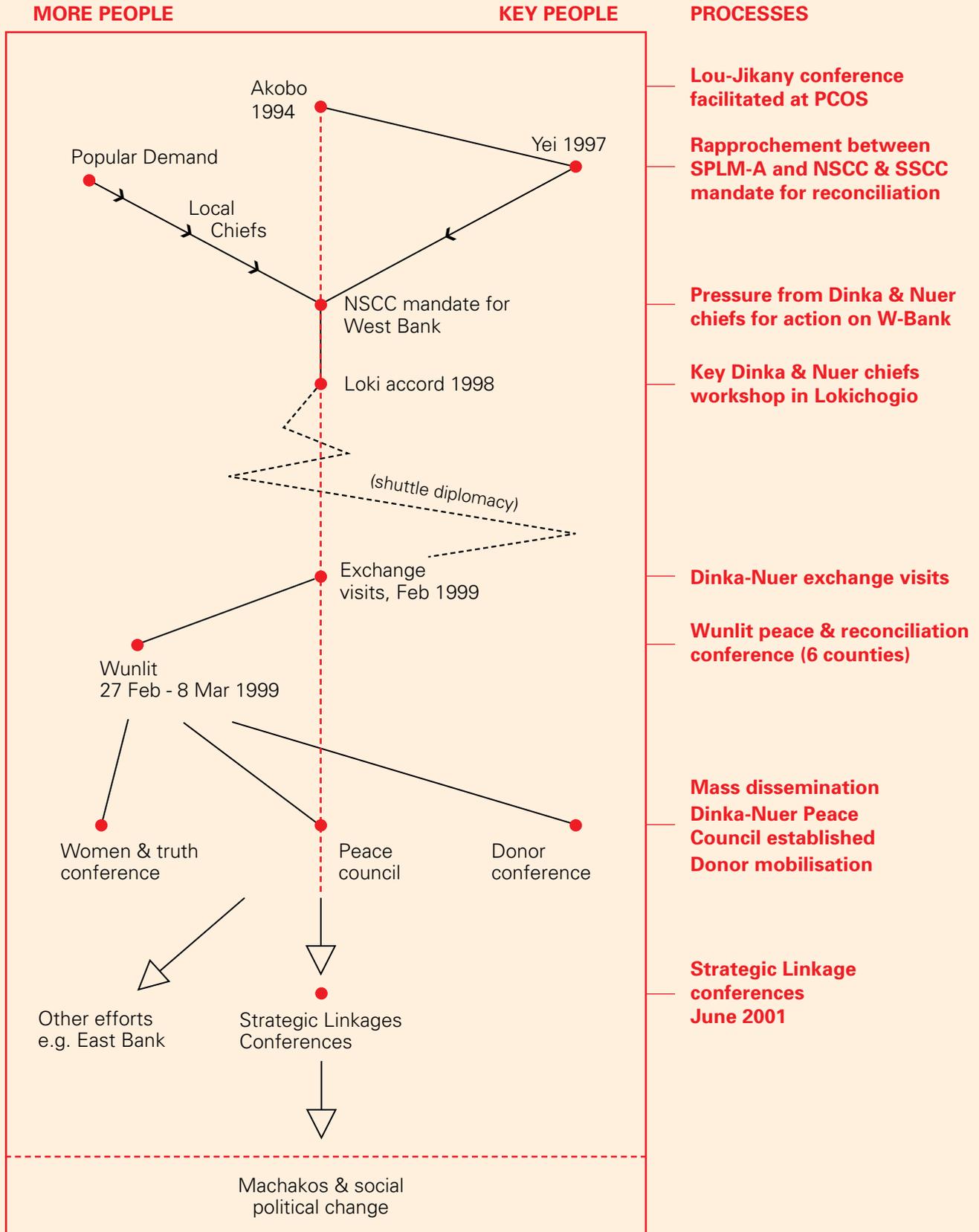
considerable influence due to the active role they often play in different kinds of community defence forces. Yet, youth participating in violence, or at risk of being drawn into violent strategies, are 'hard to reach', especially during the dry season in pastoralist communities where they spend up to six months away from homesteads, and they are nearly always overlooked in peacebuilding in favour of more accessible or intermediate representatives. Similarly, traditional religious leaders have been systematically excluded from political processes, at least since the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, because the authority they represent does not fit with the ideas of the administrative classes. This practice has been continued by peacebuilding NGOs.

If inclusivity is a strategic concern, what happens when conflict analysis shows that some groups have little influence in a context? After all, two strong men can, and do, fully control armed actors for a short time and are able to deliver security without broader participation. Is this a basis for exclusion? Peacebuilders interviewed for this report suggest at least four reasons why not.

1. Some groups have little influence but strong interests, which can be critical to sustainability over time.
2. Inclusion has an inherent fairness value which also reduces the chance of spoilers developing in the future and ensures the process is recognised, and owned, by all.
3. Awareness raising and mass mobilisation of grassroots with little or no direct influence may be the strategic entry point upon which to advocate on the basis of interests.
4. To ensure processes address the needs and grievances of the 'many' is a necessary condition for longer term conflict transformation.

Inclusivity says everyone matters in a transformational peace process. It does not say anything about what to do, how, or when. Answers to these questions must be decided case by case, with a view to the long term, and in context.

# PEACE IS A MULTI-LEVEL INCLUSIVE PROCESS: RE-EXAMINING WUNLIT



## Case study 4: Women's advocacy in Akobo

<b>Title:</b> Women's advocacy in Akobo	
<b>Principles:</b> Strategically include the 'more; and 'key' people' Understand, respond, interact	
<b>Actors:</b> Lou Women Association, female population, youth, chiefs, officials, USAID/VISTAS, commissioner	
<b>Location and date:</b> Jan–May 2016	
<p><b>Conflict (issues, causes)</b></p> <p>Intra-Lou revenge killing accelerated in the first quarter of 2016. Prominent intellectuals were killed, and this raised both the temperature and local awareness of the problem. The opposition-run government was unable to control the situation and public discussion of the issue was extremely limited for cultural and political reasons. The problem of revenge killing is not new and has been a feature of life in and around Akobo for decades at least, however, the situation between January–April 2017 was special because large numbers of armed youth were mobilising around Akobo town for a major assault on Murle instead of moving with their cattle as is usual in the dry season. The situation was beginning to risk degrading morale and undermining unity among Lou communities, conditions essential to the Lou's ability to defend their territory and interests.</p>	
<p><b>Key actors (background)</b></p> <p>The Lou Women Association was established during the second war with Sudan (1983–2005) as a loose network of women choosing to provide support to their husbands at the frontlines. The current name and structure was developed during Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) as a pathway to donor support. Today there are over 4000 registered members who each provide small in-kind donations, such as a cup of sorghum or unneeded clothes, to support its activities.</p>	<p><i>"They did a miracle, you cannot imagine what happened. When the women sang, the song shamed the men, the youth went and put their weapons back and listened. The commissioner fired five head chiefs. So I tell you now it has been almost six months without even a single person killed".<sup>88</sup></i></p>
<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>USAID/VISTAS supported an advocacy capacity building workshop for the Women Association in January 2016 and the participants took the opportunity to launch a concerted effort around their chosen issue, inter-clan revenge killing. The training provided a structured environment for planning and a platform from which to organise public meetings in open air spaces, which were attended by hundreds of people at a time. In addition, a ten-member committee comprising representatives of the nine clans travelled to each payam in Akobo County, where they advocated to officials, chiefs and moved to the youth in cattle camps. They produced posters in Nuer and composed songs, the latter of which were described by several interviewees as critical to the initiative. As the former commissioner of Akobo County explained, "what we know, the only reason the women demonstrations achieved success was, if you saw the rallies and heard the songs, the way it touched people's hearts, you saw people with tears coming out of their eyes, they realised what they have done is wrong".<sup>89</sup></p> <p>The women made two types of appeal to their communities and leaders. Firstly, they argued that revenge killing is against tradition. Second, they tried to convince others that division and loss of life hinders the wider development of the entire community, both in their economic development, national influence within the opposition and as a unit defending their territory. The tools employed were multiple:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emotive songs appealing for reflection and shaming perpetrators and those allowing killing to continue;</li> <li>the threat of abstention from sex;</li> <li>the threat of evacuation (groups of women prepared to travel to Ethiopia). The actions led to public and private meetings with local officials and change in policy and behaviour.</li> </ol>	

<sup>88</sup> Interview, Jo Gatluak, Programme Coordinator, USAID/VISTAS, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Interview, Kon Thon, former commissioner of Akobo. July 2017.

**Outcomes**

- Major and sustained 12 months-plus reduction in the level of inter-clan violence and revenge killing.
- Replacement of five head chiefs by the commissioner, judged by the women to have mismanaged cases of blood compensation.
- Unity of youth to defend cattle and pursue Lou interests.

**Lessons**

- Local peacebuilding within a community can influence the effective prosecution of wider conflict.
- 'More' people can influence key people by aggregating and communicating their social and political influence.
- Emotional appeal by respected members of community, mothers and wives, had a 'shaming' effect on key leaders and perpetrators of violence.
- INGO support can create spaces for local advocacy, if they allow participants to set agenda and design locally relevant approaches.
- Women can have influence on security matters within their communities.
- Community organisations are strengthened when members invest in the activities themselves.

**Case study 5: Excluding 'unorthodox' faith leaders**

**Title:** Excluding 'unorthodox' faith leaders

**Principles:** Strategically include 'key' and 'more' people; Understand, respond, interact; Integrate cultural understanding and tools; Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee.

**Actors:** Nuer prophets, traditional religious leaders, governments

**Location and date:** 1921–2018

This case study tracks the attitude of government towards influential traditional and spiritual leaders from the Anglo-Egyptian period (1899–1956) to today and underlines the importance of strategic inclusivity based on context analysis. It begins with the pacification efforts of the early 1900s, which, although not directly comparable to today's peacebuilding agenda, share the common aim of producing a stable environment without overt violence between peoples or against the state, albeit for different reasons. They also share a second common feature that has persisted through the last century, which is the general exclusion of strategically important traditional spiritual leaders from government and political affairs. The case of the Nuer prophets briefly discussed below stresses the importance of engaging security actors – whoever they may be – understanding the situation and strategic inclusivity.

With little manpower all colonial governments have been dependent upon local partnerships, and in southern Sudan, the Anglo-Egyptian administrators had expected to find the same range of community authorities as they had found in northern Sudan. In fact, "only among the Shilluk and Azande did they find lines of authority of the type that could be co-opted top down".<sup>90</sup> Instead, the prophets and other non-secular leaders they found were considered by the incoming government as aberrations of a natural order of things, unorthodox, and therefore illegitimate, fanatic and therefore anti-government, aliens that had pushed out the legitimate chiefs that would once, without doubt, have held court.

The Native Administration (1921-1956) had the explicit aim to replace all 'kujurs' (a catch-all term deemed to include all such spiritual misfits) with the development of chief's authority. This active marginalisation of so called 'non-orthodox' religious leaders was a common feature of governance across the country, from Agar spear-master Gol Mayen to Lotuko Rainmaker King Lomiluk Lokhide. In Bahr al Ghazal, many such persons were killed and the impact on their influence was profound, if not complete. In others, communities maintained a delicate balance in which the old ways could largely continue to hold sway. Today, traditional religious leaders continue to play important roles in society. The 2012 Pew Research Center on Religion and Public Life estimated that in 2010, there were 3.27 million followers of African Traditional Religion in South Sudan, 32.9 per cent of the population. This is a very prominent feature of life that is very rarely reflected in outside engagement.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Bereketeab, R. (2017). *State Building and National Identity Reconstruction in the Horn of Africa*. Springer.

<sup>91</sup> www.pewforum.org, accessed December 14 2017

During 1902–1927, the policy of Nuer administration varied between use of force to undermine spiritual leaders and efforts to engage them. The first commander of the Anglo-Egyptian military campaign against the Nuer, Major Arthur Blewitt, demanded compliance and on receiving no reply entered the unsuspecting Lou villages and burned them, seizing the cattle and desecrating the shrine of pre-eminent Nuer prophet Ngundeng.<sup>92</sup>

His immediate successor quickly concluded that “the government has undoubtedly lost rather than gained ground, owing to the unfortunate results obtained by the expedition” and embarked on a process of ensuring local justice through a mix of customary law and the Sudan Penal Code. He was successful in establishing working relations with the Gawaar prophet Deng Laka in 1905, though he could not repair relations with Ngundeng, and ushered in a period of stability. Unfortunately, “administrative amnesia had already set in” by 1913, and troops were once again sent in, and the payment of tribute declined. On its own terms, the marginalisation of spiritual authority structures by the government was a missed opportunity for both peace-making and state-building.

The 1922 ‘rising’ of Arianhdit, an Abeim spear-master further illustrates the point of both the peacebuilding role spiritual leaders can play and the strategic loss of exclusion. Arianhdit had become a prophet during turbulent times and made his name as a peacemaker, known to have convinced raiders to return cattle and different sections to resolve their differences where chiefs and sultans had failed. Such was his fame that he was invited to help manage conflict and reconcile peoples as far away as the Rek, Agar and the Shilluk. However, since he was operating outside the realm authorised by the government the activity attracted suspicion, was termed ‘rebellion’, and Arianhdit was arrested and banished to Khartoum.

The Lou prophets remain key to peace and conflict dynamics today. The prophetic output of Ngundeng has influence over powerful decision makers linked to the high-level IO administration, and successive prophets have clearly played major roles in shaping Lou Nuer engagement in local and national conflict since the 1980s. For example, one former White Army fighter described his understanding of the birth of this fighting force, “at that time [1991] there was a prophet, Wernyang, he came from Pangak. We heard he could slaughter a cow and raise it up. It was Wernyang who came up with the White Army, it was Wernyang who saw the future, and Wernyang who told us when and where to raid.”<sup>93</sup> In the same year, the group participated in conflicts, such as the 1991 attack on Bor, that remain at the heart of narratives driving national conflict today.

The White Army, a loose coalition of youth community defence militias, went on to evolve its own traditions and structures chiefly focused on community defence but also participating in national conflict, and it retains a strong association with the Lou prophets. In the post-independence period Dak Kueth, from Waat, Uror County, was the ascendant prophet. During his five-year domination, he is rumoured to have gained great ‘wealth’ including 40 wives and over 3000 cows.<sup>94</sup> His house was equipped with radio communication and a personal bodyguard was employed. Such was his influence that during the 2015 SPLA-IO Pagak Consultations, Dak Kueth demanded, and received, a personal charter to ensure his attendance. He was recently reportedly to have received the rank of Brigadier General in SPLA-IO.

In March 2017, a new prophet emerged in Akobo town. A former youth commander in the White Army, this 17-year-old had returned directly from Khartoum where he was studying in the military training college. As fighters in the White Army made clear during interviews for this report, the prophet has a decisive say on some military issues, “the prophet is our friend, it is normally him to direct us where or when to go. If he tells us to go and get something then we will normally get it. If we bring 100 cows we will pass 20 to the prophet.”<sup>95</sup> Underlining the importance of engaging such actors in peace processes, another fighter described the prophet in terms of relative authority, “if the chief says don’t go and the commissioner says don’t go but the prophet says yes, then we will go.”<sup>96</sup> The White Army Akobo County Commander and the Akobo Peace Commissioner contested the level of influence, but confirmed the prophet’s role as a major player, “in fact the youth are divided, some are close to us and some are with the ‘magician’. The government cannot go and take the prophet in, as his youth will attack us. We cannot afford the youth and SPLA-IO to fight, we are the same, the only way is to convince the prophet.”<sup>97</sup>

Just as for the administration of Akobo, peacebuilders cannot afford to ignore influential actors, whoever they may be.

<sup>92</sup> This and the following paragraph lean heavily on Douglas Johnson’s 1994 seminal study of the Nuer, Johnson, D. (1994). *Nuer Prophets*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>93</sup> Interview, former White Army fighter, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Wives are frequently referred to as synonymous with property in many parts of South Sudan.

<sup>95</sup> Interview, White Army market conversations, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, White Army market conversations, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Interview, Mak Choul, Peace Commissioner, Akobo. July 2017.

## 5. Shared economic interests can create opportunities for peace

*But the potential for misuse must be minimised*

“The root cause of this peace now [between Lou and Jikany] is all about the shortage of food during this crisis, as they have the border [with Ethiopia] at Wanding. So we decided now to go and have peace with our neighbours... what happens in the future? I don't know.” – **Koang Thon, former commissioner, Akobo**<sup>98</sup>

Resource-based tensions (over grazing land, mineral wealth or state coffers), are a driver of conflict in South Sudan. However, mutual economic interest can also help communities and local elites achieve non-violent strategies that meet their needs. Improvements in access to pasture, commodities, markets and labour can bind together the interests of subsistence farmers, cattle keepers, commissioners and governors alike, and generate periods of valuable stability. Market rents can also be used to help sustain the peace structures that make them possible and develop alongside, a holy grail in the pursuit of sustainability and long-term institution building.

The case of cross-border peace markets demonstrates that economic cooperation, under certain conditions, offers at least five valuable and interrelated benefits:

1. Improved day to day security with the buy-in of security actors;
2. Improved livelihoods and associated benefits, such as health;
3. Freedom of movement;
4. Increased levels of interaction across community lines, opening spaces for storytelling, trust-building and mutual understanding; and
5. The development of locally relevant context specific institutions, such as town councils, chambers of commerce or peace committees, that could form a bottom up foundation for holding leaders to account in the future. In its full form, peacebuilding by harnessing economic interaction is a powerful theory of change, but there are risks and limitations.



The status of peaceful relations between Jikany and Lou Nuer facilitates critical river trade between Akobo County in South Sudan and Ethiopia. Akobo, 2017

For example, the case of crossline peace markets highlights the substantial income streams that trade can provide elites through a monopoly on tax collection (see Case study 6). It is important to bear in mind how private income can be a potential driver of political violence, for example by contributing to independent revenue to fund private security forces (as is arguably the case in Northern Bahr al Ghazal), or by contributing to the centralisation of authority in an individual or political party, and thus reinforce an exclusionary, ethnic or patronage-based local political dynamic. The danger is an ‘authoritarian peace’ that does not challenge underlying causes of conflict rather than a transformative one – not a reason to avoid promising local initiatives based on mutual economic interests but something to bear in mind when designing the best way to support them. Peacebuilders turning to economic interest must plan for the long term.

<sup>98</sup> Interview, Koang Thon, former commissioner, Akobo County. July 2017.

## Case study 6: Crossline peace markets

**Title:** Crossline peace markets<sup>99</sup>

**Principles:** Shared economic interests can create opportunities for peace; Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee; Peace is a long term transformational process

**Actors:** Predominantly Baggara, Nuer, Dinka, SPLA, Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)

**Location and date:** 1991–ongoing

### Conflict (issues, causes)

Crossline markets are a recurring feature in periods of conflict in South Sudan. The clearest examples are locations of exchange between Dinka and Nuer in Greater Upper Nile, and between Baggara communities and Dinka and/or Nuer in Bahr al Ghazal and present-day Unity States, though interesting trading solutions have come and gone across the country and its international borders, for example, between garrison towns and surrounding populations. Common features of underlying conflict dynamics may include:

1. Nationally linked strategic interest is a significant driver of local conflict;
2. Synergistic livelihoods that demand a degree of cooperation, such as movement for grazing, water or access to commodities; and
3. The presence of security forces capable of controlling the area and in need of taxable resources.

*“After each attack, the Misseriya and Dinka would scatter far and wide, but we would return eventually to this tree and make peace.”<sup>100</sup>*

From 1986 a ‘peace market’ was established at Rubh Nygai, in Rubkhona, present Greater Unity State, commonly described as an initiative of Riek Machar. It encouraged Baggara, particularly from the Awlad Omran Emirate of Misseriya Ajaira, to mix and trade with Nuer. First and foremost, the market was a zone of community demilitarisation, and all weapons were left at checkpoints some distance from the site. Communities benefited from access to commodities and markets until Rubh Nygai was destroyed following the signature of the Khartoum Peace Agreement in 1997. The accord linked Riek Machar’s SPLA faction to the Government of Sudan and ushered in an intensification of fighting between forces loyal to Paulino Matiep and those with Machar, with the Misseriya fighting alongside the latter in defence of the market. Although the market died, the social, economic and military relationships established between members of Awlad Omran and participating Nuer shape important sub-national conflict dynamics to this day. In the post-independence period, the existing trust between key individuals on both sides enabled new markets and security alliances at a time of increased tension between Sudan and South Sudan.

In 1991, the SPLA commissioner (Garang faction) of Aweil West County, Major General Simon Wol Mawien, worked with communities to establish a committee of Dinka and Rizeigat civilians to administer a market, originally at Maniel, but moved quickly to Manger Ater and now found at Gok Machar. Traders came from South Darfur and South Kordofan, including Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, Habbaniya, Misseriya and Rizeigat. This community committee evolved into a body to solve issues arising from Dinka-Rizeigat interaction. It holds Joint Border Court hearings and heads a system of sub-committees present in Jaac, Rum Aker, Makuei and Achana, across western Northern Bahr al Ghazal. As at Rubh Nygai, the strategic linkage between the community-led mechanism and a viable security provider is critical to success. According to the Joint Peace Committee Chairperson, the ‘Hyena’, who has remained in office since 1991, the “the court is mandated by the communities who know each other since long time from grazing together at the river Kiir, but it is empowered by the county authorities”.<sup>101</sup>

In the same year, the first Misseriya Peace Committee was also formed at the Maniel railway line and a Joint Peace Court was established under the Mahogany tree in Warawar, Aweil East, shortly after, where it still sits today. SPLA administrator Dau Aturjong and SPLA Commander Luca Alyual Diing provided security guarantees. The initial impetus came from a group of Misseriya delegates, who were suffering from drought and hunger and approached the Dinka youth they knew well from joint-grazing along the Kiir in dry season. Since then committee members from both sides have lost lives protecting the peace market in Warawar, including at least three killed under the Mahogany tree, raising its status as a symbol of peace.

<sup>99</sup> This case study draws on interviews conducted with peace committee members in Raja, Warawar, Majok Yinh Thiou, Abyei, Mayom and Renk, between 2009 and 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Interview, Chief Deng Luol, Joint Border Court/Joint Peace Committee Chairperson, Warawar, Aweil East. 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Interview, Hyena, Chair of Rizeigat Peace Committee, Gok Machar. 2012.

Although the impact of national political and military contestation has disrupted work for a year or two at a time, the shared project has bound the Joint Peace Committee together into a strong tradition. It has a life of its own, though it is affected by state and national politics.

In 1991, the Misseriya Peace Committee members comprised 15 individuals. Today, Misseriya describe it more as a pool of people, a network that can help implement decisions of the Joint Peace Court and maintain the conditions for ongoing cooperation. Misseriya participation is predominantly drawn from the Fayareen Emirate of Misseriya Ajaira. And although it represents each Khashm al Bayt (clan) of that sub-tribe, a key challenge is therefore how to guarantee the behaviour of other Misseriya groups, which it does by a mix of persuasion and brute force. On the Dinka Abiem side, there are five members, one elected by each clan. The Chairman, Sultan Deng Luol, in office since 1991 like his counterpart in Aweil West, is a symbol of intercommunity dialogue.

On both sides, the use of armed force backs up the agreement. For example, in 2012–2013, a period when Dinka suspicions of their Misseriya neighbours ran high due to ongoing border clashes, then Governor Paul Malong forced communities to accept the relationship for strategic security reasons. The intercommunity peace meeting was used by him to inform the communities that the cooperation would continue. He also disseminated a policy of death by firing squad for any SPLA involved in crimes against a Misseriya or Rizeigat in South Sudan. On the Misseriya side, armed nomadic communities were required to enforce cattle compensation and their participation was ensured only if cattle migration was guaranteed alongside cooperation around the joint market. In extreme circumstances, these groups would 'kidnap' relatives of suspected criminals until cooperation on *diya* payment was achieved. The 'peace' was ultimately enforced at the barrel of a gun, dependent upon the will of armed actors. To what extent does this challenge systemic drivers of conflict and lay the foundation for sustainable peace?

This said, market rents also provide incentives for local elites to create the very conditions for longer term valuable social interaction, trade and peaceful movement of peoples. Research by the author of this report for USAID OTI/OTCM in the Joint Market of Mayom in 2013 suggested direct monthly revenues to the local administration of some \$700,000. In Aweil East, the figure, collected by the Governor's representatives, was \$800,000 (excluding the additional tax per head levied on livestock migration). On the Misseriya side, the tax office of the Misseriya Peace Committee, dominantly Awlad Omran as at Rubh Nygai, took an estimated \$400,000 per month, of which a considerable part was used to buy-in key spoilers on the Sudanese side. It was clear that state-level leaders on both sides had direct interests in the market such as running shops, as well as indirect benefits through shares of tax revenue. Peacebuilders can work to ensure that some of this income is used to support peace structures and address grievances.

To help ensure the benefits of economic interaction do contribute to security in the short term and prospects for peace in the longer term in Northern Bahr al Ghazal, USAID, the European Union and others have supported migration conferences, migration review conferences, livestock vaccination, dissemination of the resolutions, capacity building for peace committees and chambers of commerce, as well as strategic communications. This ever more sophisticated package of support has been critical in overcoming annual barriers to renewing peaceful coexistence and mitigating its local risks. Exchange visits have been facilitated to help local leaders share their experiences elsewhere along the Sudan-South Sudan border.

### Outcomes

- Long-term relationships allowing peaceful coexistence to be re-established after periods of conflict.
- Increased awareness among communities about the way they have been used as agents of war by national actors, leading to decreased willingness to participate in military campaigns.

### Lessons

- Strategic linkages to security sector or informal security actors are required to guarantee security along the roads and at the market, but this accommodation may involve authoritarian or structural violence.
- Economic mutual interest can bind together an astonishing array of security, economic, pastoralist, sedentary and administrative elites without the need for large-scale physical violence.
- Economic interaction can be the foundation for longer-term transformational change, including the development of locally relevant institutions and space for transitional justice and reconciliation, but this does not necessarily follow.
- A sophisticated package of NGO support based on understanding the situation, commitment and building upon what exists can strengthen local peace efforts.

## 6. Use stories from the past to understand and respond

*Historic narrative may be used to connect or divide*

“Stories are linked to justice. If they are not listened to or recognised, you will never reconcile. To be very honest with you, our problem is that the stories of South Sudan are always told in a different way to how we experience them.”<sup>102</sup> – **Thor Riek, former child soldier, now trauma healer with USAID/VISTAS Morning Star Program**

Historical narratives connect or divide communities, and they shape the way people experience the present. They are resources for outsiders to help recognise, understand and respect the perceptions of communities in conflict. They can also be important tools for opening and facilitating dialogue. And they can help South Sudanese and externals alike understand that there is no single truth when it comes to conflict and peace dynamics. For all three reasons, they can be critically important in both conflict analysis and programme design.

### Narratives that connect

Historical memories and evolving stories of neighbourliness, cooperation and mutual support are resources for peacebuilders. These tend to fall into two categories: 1) shared ancestry; and 2) moments of mutual support and cooperation.

Intermarriage – the union of men and women across community boundaries – is not an unmitigated force for intercommunity cooperation, nor societal and gender justice. However, interviewees for this report frequently cited intermarriage as both a goal and a means of securing good neighbourly relations, as Paramount Chief Malice Marial of Pagarou explained, “our daughters are living there in Panyjjar [over the conflict and community boundary], they are still there, married. This can help bring peace because we have relations, common ancestors, our children are related, intermarriage can bring peace.”<sup>103</sup> Practically, intermarriage ensures a steady supply of interpreters who can understand the language and culture of the other. The family connections also ensure open

channels of communication, which become the first port of call when chiefs, commissioners or military want to diffuse tension or re-establish communication after periods of difficulty. As a symbol and indicator of ‘peace’, Lou and Murle describe the intermarriage between communities at Lekongole (interestingly, a zone in which the Murle community has also largely sided with the Lou with regards national dynamics).

Origin stories matter too, as the following anecdote from Yirol East illustrates, “Two Nuer men were accompanying cattle east of Nyang in mid-2016 and reportedly abducted a Dinka man from Abang County, Yirol Centre, who was collecting forest fruits. The assailants forced the man to carry some heavy luggage until they reached Adiour where they discussed what to do with the him. One man was for killing him immediately. The other argued that he should be released. The latter won the debate. The critical factor? Although the victim was speaking in Dinka, the Atuo language of Yirol Centre has commonalities with Nuer and it is widely known locally that the two communities have common ancestry in the recent past, including sharing clan names.”<sup>104</sup> The knowledge, the language itself and the surrounding narratives were opportunities to overcome a difficult situation for the man in this story from Yirol East. Similar stories abound in other contexts.

More distant knowledge and myth around shared origin also matter, as illustrated by the Moru-Nayece movement within the Ateker Cluster, consisting of Jie, Dodoth, Turkana, Toposa and Nyangatom around the south-eastern borders of the country. On 21 December each year, the Ateker Cluster communities, a group of communities living in the South Sudan-Uganda-Ethiopia borderlands, celebrate their common heritage and commitment to peace by remembering ‘the common great Grandmother’ Nayece and in re-affirming their ‘Moru-Nayece Peace Accord’. The celebrations take place in Kotido District, Uganda and nowadays attract more than 5000 people from the five communities. Countless stories exist

<sup>102</sup> Interview, Thor Riek, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>103</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou. Yirol East, July 2017.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Alfred Abolish, Yirol. July 2017.

around Nayece and her role in guiding Jie, Turkana and others to navigate challenges. Perhaps the most important one tells how before Mother Nayece died, she decreed there be no conflict between the Turkana and Jie, and that should any incident take place, both communities should come to her graveside, reconcile and perform the ceremony of forgiveness. Similar narratives of shared ancestry are found right across South Sudan. In Yirol and Panyijiar, for example, the Dinka and Nuer consider themselves the respective descendants of two sisters 'Nyatoucha' and 'Nyarooba'. Such stories are practical tools which can be starting points to explore alternatives to the divisive components of ethnic identity that so frequently come to dominate.

Periods of past cooperation also provide memories and stories that can bind individuals, networks and communities together across time. Apart from the shared experience of being South Sudanese and all that entails, these include military alliances such as between Awlad Omran and Nuer at Rubh Nygai from 1986, trading networks such as between Fellata Chiefs and SPLA commanders in Pariang during the 1980s and 1990s or the mutual hosting of displaced communities in times of need such as between southern Nuer and Dinka of Lakes State in periods of need from the 1960s onwards.<sup>105</sup> They also include memories and narratives describing formalised social pacts such as blood brother relations established between Zande and Balanda perhaps more than 100 years ago.<sup>106</sup> All of these stories have played tangible and positive roles in modern day local peace processes.

## Dividers

Generations of children have grown up with narratives of conflict, revenge and perceived injustice, and this provides fertile minds for ethnic mobilisation today. As Thor Riek, a former child soldier turned trauma healing expert, explained, "when we heard about the December 2013 killing in Juba, our youth just heard the word 'Dinka' and though, ah, this is a war we have known since. Let's go!"<sup>107</sup>

**"An enemy is someone who you don't know their history." – Interview, Thor Riek, trauma healing trainer, USAID/VISTAS Morning Star Program (paraphrasing Quaker Peace Activist Gene Hoffman)**

There is no single 'truth' about historical violence in South Sudan. For many people within Dinka communities, the 'Bor massacre' of 1991 and subsequent 'Capoth famine' is a rallying cry for animosity towards Nuer today. However, for many members of Lou Nuer communities, the attack on the Bor community was itself considered a revenge project against earlier perceived aggression such as the killing of Samuel Gai Tut and subsequent attacks on Pagak in the mid and late 1980s. Similarly, the announcement of the creation of 28 states by Establishment Order No.36/2015 AD brought to the surface memories of 'Kokora', Nimieri's June 1983 decree splitting the Southern Region into three. This led to deep social and political divisions in the country, particularly between Equatorian and Dinka communities and elites, and its narrative resurrection has contributed to the spread of conflict through Equatoria since 2015.<sup>108</sup>

Specific stories can feed ethnic mobilisation, but for one SPLA-IO soldier interviewed for this report, it is the very perception of how history is being written that contributes to military participation, "I want to change the leadership of South Sudan not because of any benefit I will get but because I want the history of South Sudan to be put right. To be very honest, it is only that the history of South Sudan is always told in different ways. We didn't just attack Dinka in 1991, we actually went first to Malakal, then Mangalla and even up to Gambella. When your stories are not said right, whether you are right or wrong in action, or you are not even in them, you start to realise you are being dominated."<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup> For more on cross-boundary community cooperation and conflict, see for example, *When boundaries become borders*, Rift Valley Institute, 2009; *More than a line*, Concordis International, 2012; and *Transhumance in transition*, Concordis International, 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, Africa Inland Church and Director of CBO, Reconcile, Juba. September 2017

<sup>107</sup> Interview, Thor Riek, Akobo. July 2017.

<sup>108</sup> Interviews with Bari elders, various, Juba. December 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Interview, SPLA-IO soldier, Akobo. July 2017.

## 7. Integrate cultural understandings and cultural tools into peacebuilding

*But be sure these are context appropriate*

“If an NGO brings bulls for sacrifice, it is like soda, it is just some food to eat, the real sacrifice must be an offering from both sides.”<sup>110</sup> – **Dean of Nyang Diocese**

“It is easier when you work within people’s culture rather than suggesting something that may be in books and the like, then a brother will come out to embrace another and they are one people again.”<sup>111</sup> – **Rosa, Coordinator, STEWARD Women**

Economics, politics and violence have little to say about human behaviour without an underlying theory of value, to explain and give rise to meaning. It is our cultural universe that dictates what we value and what we are prepared to give up for a specific end, or to paraphrase Geertz, our decisions are shaped by webs of significance we spin around ourselves and from within which we view the world.<sup>112</sup> Yet the cultural domain is frequently absent from our conflict analyses. This does not mean every peacebuilder need be drawn from the ranks of anthropology, but it is hard to understand conflict dynamics or how an activity will interact with them without the cultural lens. For example, cattle raiding would make little sense without a basic understanding of the social, political and bride-wealth roles of cows in pastoral societies.

### Sacrifice or soda?

For example, local peace processes which reflect spiritual worldviews and rituals (local religion, Christian, other or mixed) understood by relevant communities naturally resonate more fully. In the case study ‘Faith leader facilitation of inter-clan dispute, Rumbek East’, the ritual slaughter of a bull and the sharing of meat was a critical component and elevated the agreement to the status of a covenant, binding for all. However, it was weakened for some participants by NGO provision of the sacrificial animals, which was perceived by some to be outside the bounds of their culture’s definition of the ritual (a

fact which in this instance probably demonstrated the partial understanding on the part of the NGO rather than lack of commitment to the peace process from the communities). And there is not one worldview for NGOs to master, but hundreds of cultural contexts, as Peter Tibi describes, “South Sudan is an extremely diverse place, some they slaughter a chicken, others a bull, others jump over each other or crawl through the legs, others drink blood or water from the same Calabash (bottle gourd), in others they hold or blunt the blade of a spear, but all these things mean we have to reconcile and not go back.”<sup>113</sup>

Culture is a broad term that encompasses shared and ever-changing features of spiritual worldview, customs and rituals, the interaction between generations, the nature, practice and style of leadership, gender roles, the means of livelihood, as well as art and performance. From an external, liberal democratic perspective, cultural practices may be ‘good’, such as valuing hospitality and an emphasis on transitional justice. They can also be ‘bad’, such as the myriad of ways women can be treated akin to property or the celebration of masculinities associated with some revenge culture, as Josephine Chandiru, Programme Director at STEWARD Women described, “if you go and kill the takers of your cows you become a man, if you kill your wife it just shows one of the strengths you have, that you are a big man”.<sup>114</sup> Beyond the analysis of peace and conflict, peacebuilders have no business judging the cultural sphere. But it may be strategically appropriate to help open rare spaces for its discussion. This is what the South Sudan Theatre Organization’s ‘Citizen’s Theatre’ programme is doing, using Forum Theatre to create spaces in which young South Sudanese can collectively examine their own cultures, and enter into dialogue with them on their own terms.

<sup>110</sup> Interview, Dean, Nyang Diocese, Nyang. July 2017.

<sup>111</sup> Interview, Rosa, STEWARD Women Project Assistance. September 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Clifford Geertz used this imagery to describe how meaning is generated and frames our interaction with the world. Geertz, C. (1977). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

<sup>113</sup> Interview, Reverend Peter Tibi, African Inland Church and Director, CBO, Reconcile, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Interview, Josephine Chandline, Programme Director, STEWARD Women, Juba. September 2017.

## Case study 7: Faith leader facilitation of inter-clan dispute, Rumbek East

**Title:** Faith leader facilitation of inter-clan dispute, Rumbek East

**Principles:** Integrate cultural understanding and cultural tools; Integrity is key; Strategically include the 'more' and the 'key' people; Understand, respond, interact.

**Actors:** Nyang Diocese, Panabar and Panayai clans

**Location and date:** Rumbek East, Lakes State, 2016

### Conflict

In January 2016, a family dispute grew into outright conflict between the Dinka Panayai and Panabar clans of Amedji, in Rumbek East, after one man was killed on each side. The situation threatened to draw in neighbouring clans, including those from other counties, and the commissioner imposed a curfew on the area.

### Action

Following an unsuccessful attempt by the commissioner to broker a dialogue between the parties, a delegation from the new Diocese of Nyang was invited to visit the area and propose a solution. Led by the Dean, the team spent a long time discussing the background issues with everyone involved from both sides and delivered its honest assessment of the options facing both communities: a choice between conflict on one hand and cultivation on the other.

The Dean claimed that this honest third-party approach that did not seek to manipulate any side was the reason he could unlock what had otherwise appeared intractable, "when you make peace, it is better to tell the truth than hide it. If you lie they will never accept. I went as a man of peace and it was because I am a man of peace that I succeeded."<sup>115</sup> Private discussions with elders and aggrieved on each side followed and laid the foundation for an agreement between the parties. The church subsequently secured support from World Vision for a peace meeting which was attended by the commissioner and chiefs and succeeded in resolving core issues. World Vision provided budget for transport, water, food and two bulls to be slaughtered.

The wider meeting brought hundreds of community members to bear witness to the agreement and to participate in a traditional reconciliation ritual, involving the slaughter of two bulls and the subsequent sharing of meat and water. A community member explained the value of this approach, "if these things have been done, then tomorrow, even if there is pain you cannot think of going for revenge".<sup>116</sup> The meeting provoked an interesting debate, some community members accepted that an NGO could provide the offering if the communities were unable to do so, but for others, the power of ritual sacrifice was weakened because the animals were donated by the NGO rather than the community, "if an NGO brings the bulls, it is like soda, it is just some food to eat, the real sacrifice must be an offering from both sides, something that says we do not want to repeat, something to eat with one's heart that you cannot go back to fight".<sup>117</sup>

### Outcomes

- Tensions between the two clans significantly reduced and escalation to include wider actors was avoided. The guilty person was taken into custody.
- Curfew lifted and free movement reinstated.

### Lessons

- Commitment, honesty, faith, dedication is a valuable skill that can unlock opportunities for peace and prevent escalation to higher-level actors where power or money cannot.
- Including and understanding cultural practice can strengthen peacebuilding.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, Dean, Nyang Diocese. Yiror East, July 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Interview, marketplace, Nyang. July 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Interview, Alfred Abolish, Nyang. July 2017.

## Case study 8: Citizen's Theatre

**Title:** Citizen's Theatre

**Principle:** Invest in local capacities; Peacebuilding is nothing without communication; Understand, respond and interact.

**Actors:** South Sudan Theatre Organization (SSTO), secondary schools, community theatre groups, youth, wider community

**Location and date:** 2012–ongoing

### Conflict

Citizen's Theatre recognises and responds to at least four deep issues experienced by South Sudanese, each of which relate directly to the causes and logics of conflict:

1. The need for some kind of reconciliation and healing within and between persons;
2. The need to reconcile questions of identity;
3. The need to connect communities to decision makers;
4. The need to address cultural, social and developmental issues.

However, both traditional cultural practice and authoritarian government restricts space for exploration of good and bad aspects of culture and society and makes it very difficult for communities to address the concerns that are important to them. The Citizen's Theatre programme attempts to create the conditions by which genuine dialogue can take place within and between every section of society, beginning with youth and then engaging the wider community and leaders.

### Key actors (background)

SSTO was established by members of Kwoto Cultural Centre, Skylarks Drama Association and the University of Juba College of Arts, Music and Drama. The group first came together on a joint project to perform at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London's Cultural Olympiad 2012. Following this achievement, the multi-ethnic group (over ten ethnic communities were represented in the initial performance) decided to establish an organisation to support long-term peace and reconciliation.

### Action

In 2011, South Sudan Theatre Organization performed Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline' in Juba Arabic in London, UK and Bangalore, India. On their return to South Sudan the group embarked upon an ambitious programme which grew into Citizen's Theatre, christened in Juba on World Theatre Day 2015. Citizen's Theatre is a form of 'Forum Theatre' developed by SSTO for use in South Sudanese contexts, which builds on a rich history of both indigenous theatre tradition and political theatre that took place within southern Sudan, in Khartoum and in the diaspora throughout the wars. It applies techniques first articulated in Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' that aim to create spaces for community-led dialogue and problem-solving around hard-to-discuss cultural, social and political issues. Performances are also recorded for dissemination to wider audiences in local languages via radio, television and SD cards. SSTO also produce radio drama and film content to support the core activity.

Since 2012, the movement has trained around 800 Citizen's Theatre facilitators in community forum theatre in six states and organised inter-school theatre festivals in Juba, Bor and Aweil. As a result there are active theatre groups in secondary schools across the country who regularly engage their communities. Central to the programme is handing over power to participants to select their own issues around which to build dialogue, and SSTO have taken a principled approach to this fundamental methodology, and have refused to engage with prescriptive opportunities despite the economic benefits. The methodology creates a safe space for communities to consider what they feel are the important problems in society that stem from and feed into wider conflict. As a result, the style, subject and emphasis differs from location to location, but typical issues may include cattle raiding, alcoholism, tribalism, hate speech, moral values, early pregnancy, corruption and so on.

**Outcomes**<sup>118</sup>

- Significant increase in social networks of young people involved in the programme, including across ethnic and cultural divides.
- Positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, reduction in fear, increased understanding of the ‘other’.
- Participants more likely to engage in problem solving within the community. For example, a young woman in Bor attributed her ability to secure the release of her unjustly imprisoned brother to skills and confidence developed through Citizen’s Theatre.
- Inclusion of drama in forthcoming Ministry of Education policy framework; number of theatre clubs in secondary schools increasing year on year.

**Lessons**

- Dialogue flourishes and is more meaningful when agenda-setting power is handed over to participants.
- Creative approaches can generate safe spaces for debate, storytelling, truth-telling, cultural introspection that challenge deep-rooted drivers of conflict.
- Building a movement that resonates with people does not require huge resources when achieved within South Sudanese economic and cultural paradigms.
- Confidence, critical thinking and trauma healing can change behaviour and promote problem solving around issues people feel are root causes of conflict.

## 8. Invest in local capacities

*Including understanding and building on what already exists*

“Problems are like fire, you have to put it off quickly before others come in. If people take a long time to respond it will cause another problem.”<sup>119</sup> – **Paramount Chief Malice Marial**

“Following fighting in Pibor, we sat down and developed a log frame, there was no doubt what needed to be done. Donors encouraged us up to that point, but there suddenly a long-sustained radio silence. We pushed to say let’s start, even something small. Six months later the raiding started again.”<sup>120</sup> – **Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches**

## Strengthen initiatives that already exist

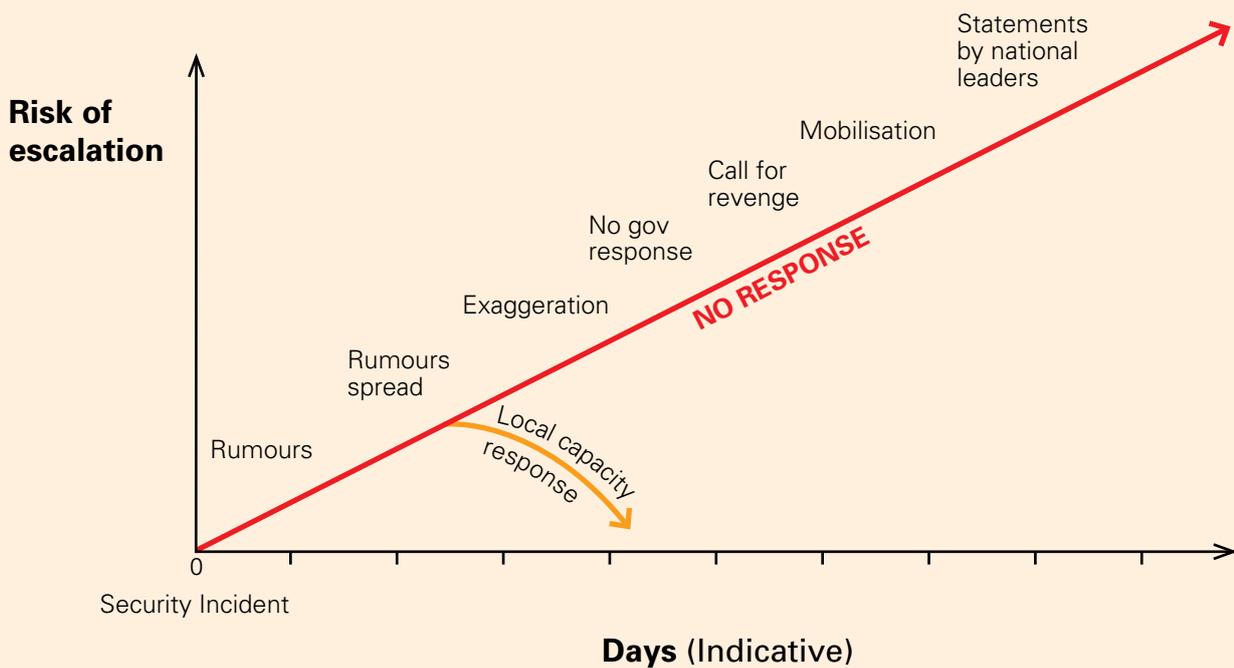
Local peace may involve actors and NGOs based outside the geographic scope of the conflict, but peace must be maintained in situ. Local actors therefore need capacity to respond to local issues as they arise, not just to implement a set of pre-determined activities provided under a grant. This means the local infrastructure for peace needs to respond quickly to incidents (as in the case study of inter-clan violence in Lakes State), to continually inform the community about developments and to support justice processes in an ongoing process. As we have seen, the manifestation of local conflict dynamics can change quickly, and small incidents can escalate, for example due to combinations of conflict memory, the widespread presence of small arms, or synergies with political divisions. In this situation, the facilitation of occasional workshops or peace meetings may help, but it is unlikely to be sufficient.

<sup>118</sup> These outcomes are selected findings from an independent outcome harvesting evaluation conducted July–December 2017, forthcoming.

<sup>119</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou. Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Interview, Ferdinand von Habsburg-Lothringen, Senior Advisor, South Sudan Council of Churches, Juba. September 2017.

## IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL CAPACITY FOR QUICK RESPONSE



Funding mechanisms do not generally reflect this reality. James Makur, Relief and Rehabilitation Coordinator for Nyang, explained how this affects his work in Panyijiar, “we have sent our request to the NGO and been given a promise of support, so we are just waiting, doing nothing, the delay is not with us, it is not with either community, we are just waiting ready for the response”.<sup>121</sup> Even in the most flexible and responsive conflict mitigation programmes, the process of proposal generation, approval, partnership, contractual arrangements and procurement can sometimes take months, by which time the context may have changed, and the fire may have spread.

“There are good signs that donors are taking this on board in funding us INGOs”, says Odd Evjen, “the EU, for example, has been really good at allowing funds to be used flexibly. And there are donor policy documents you can now draw on which outline how important flexibility is, but it still depends upon whether key people in the donor teams understand

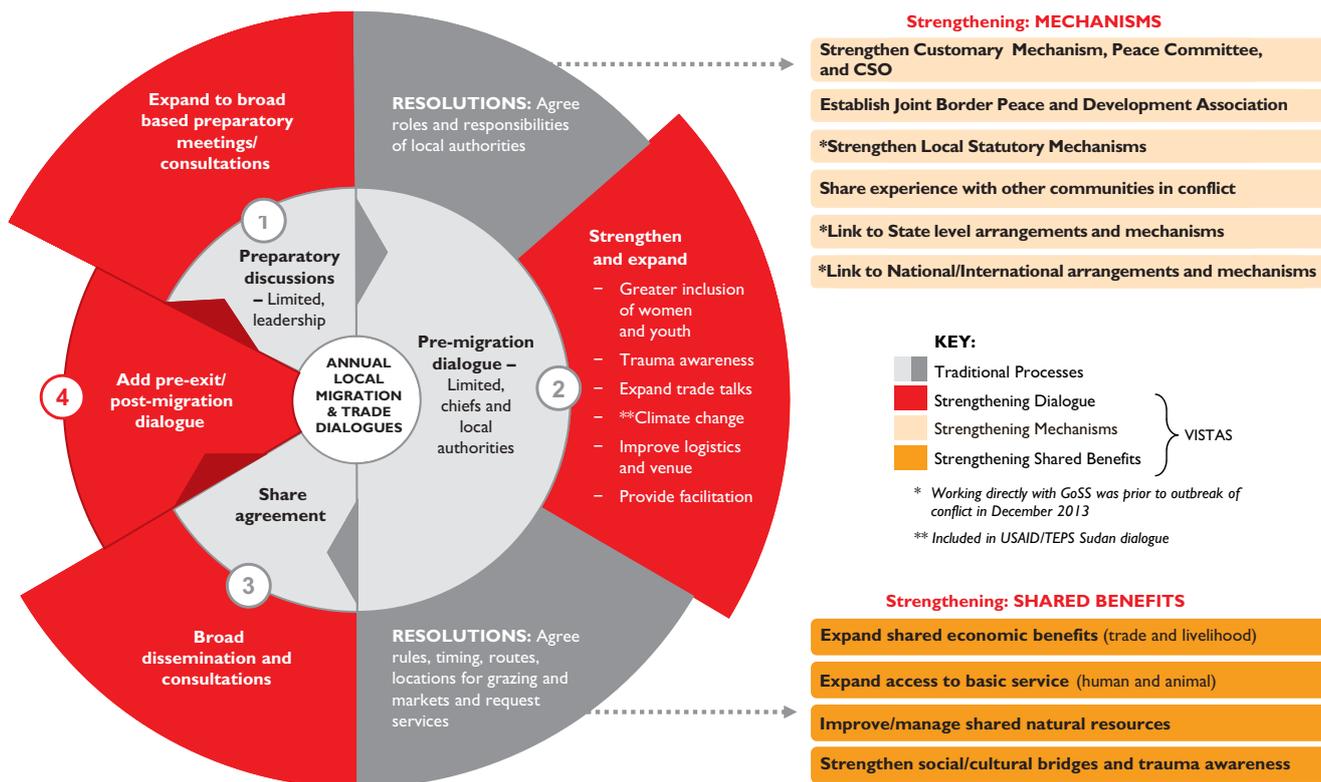
their importance”.<sup>122</sup> This is good news, but it is not necessarily trickling down to local organisations with the knowledge, networks, legitimacy and local presence to act in local contexts. Interviewees such as Josephine Chandiru, from STEWARD Women, a CBO working in Eastern Equatoria, was not alone in saying how difficult it was to access core or flexible funding to provide locally relevant responsive peacebuilding, “with the exception of PAX (which had provided longer term flexible support), we have three months projects, five months projects, we even have one month projects, this is a one month project and you want results? You won’t see any!”<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Interview, James Makur, Relief and Rehabilitation Coordinator, Nyang. July 2017.

<sup>122</sup> Interview, Odd Evjen, Norwegian Church Aid. September 2017.

<sup>123</sup> Interview, Josephine Chandiru, Director, STEWARD Women, Juba. July 2017.

# STRENGTHENING WHAT ALREADY EXISTS IN NORTHERN BAHR AL GHAZAL



The diagram, produced by USAID/MISTAS summarises the ways in which the program, with other peace partners, has worked to strengthen existing local migration and trade dialogues (shown in the centre of the diagram above) developed by communities to facilitate peaceful coexistence in Northern Bahr al Ghazal. The outer rings describe the comprehensive package of support developed to enhance the effectiveness of the core community initiative. Peacebuilding support that strengthens existing mechanisms enjoying broad local support are more likely to succeed than those generating new structures.



Participants in the pre-migration conference between the Misseriya community of North Kordofan, Sudan and the Dinka Malual of South Sudan, hosted in Aweil East State in December 2017.

## Opting out and advocacy

Local capacities for peace can also help maintain resistance to the strong forces that pull individuals and communities into participating in conflict. Mary Anderson and Marshall Wallace's 2012 book *Opting Out of War* provides stories from around the world (but none from South Sudan) about communities who have shown a capacity to opt out of conflict and to survive without taking sides. According to the book, such communities are successful because they act with "intentionality and planning to set themselves apart from the agendas of the war", including in the following ways:

1. Making a decision to opt out as a community;
2. Choosing and promoting an identity that is well known, traditional and incompatible with war;
3. Maintaining normal life as much as possible;
4. Promoting economic activity;
5. Maintaining internal cohesion and justice;
6. Achieving security through engaging with security actors;
7. Celebrating festivals, holidays and sporting events and so on together.

The situation in South Sudan limits individual agency but some of these capacities resonate with findings and possible entry points identified in this report.

It is possible that some communities in South Sudan may have successfully 'opted out' out of mobilisation, at least for short periods of time. For example, on 5 June 2014, Lakes State's military caretaker Governor, Major General Matur Chut Dhuol, ordered the state's eight county commissioners to recruit by any means youth to join SPLA. According to public reporting confirmed with private conversations, commissioners were directed to deliver 800 recruits and mandated to use force if necessary. However, following consultation with their chiefs, seven county commissioners refused to implement the order. Alongside, traditional leaders from Yirol warned pastoralist youth in various cattle camps not to get involved in the political power struggle nor to participate in any internal or external revenge attacks on a tribal basis. For their part, youth responded with their own campaigns, as youth activist Moses Majok explained, "youth were not prepared to engage in

ethnic violence, so we led campaigns under the title 'The Nuer community are our brothers'".<sup>124</sup>

Peacebuilders interviewed for this report are divided as to what degree communities can withstand the imperative to participate in violence. Undoubtedly, the options facing most South Sudanese are extremely limited by their context. However, most, including Audrey Bottjen of the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, say that in the right circumstances, "perception change can be enough to shift behaviour. It may not need a tangible physical change".<sup>125</sup> This is particularly true in South Sudan in the following scenarios. First, when communities come to understand that interests they share with neighbours outweigh the benefits of engaging in conflict. Second, when communities understand that their mobilisation into conflict is a form of exploitation to benefit a third party, as Lucy Kala, a citizen from Yei explained, "the warlords always go to a group of young people and mobilise with all their might and many will be killed. If we have an opened mind we can ask the question: why should I fight? So you can be Prime Minister? Is this really in our interest?"<sup>126</sup>

Third, the tendency to pursue alternatives to violence is also strengthened when communities and at-risk youth are able to imagine, as the Director of Youth Empowerment CBO YOCADO put it, "what this thing called peace actually is, because they may never have experienced anything remotely like it".<sup>127</sup> Lastly, resistance increases when communities understand that the long-term economic and livelihood gains of peace will outweigh short-term dividends of conflict. As Mauro Tadiwe says, this element of peacebuilding "returns somewhat to the mind as well as activity, it is about creating local awareness and capacity, a resilience at the local level to say we don't want to be mobilised".<sup>128</sup>

<sup>124</sup> News reports, various, see for example, South Sudan: Lakes State Caretaker Governor Criticised Over Military Calls, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405040030.html>, accessed 12 Dec 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Interview, Audrey Bottjen, Director, Conflict Sensitivity Research Facility, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>126</sup> Interview, Lucy Kala, Juba. September 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Interview, Director, YOCADO, Juba. December 2017.

<sup>128</sup> Interview, Mauro Tadiwe, Juba, September 2017

## Case study 9: Formation of Special Court, Lakes State

**Title:** Formation of Special Court, Lakes State

**Principles:** Invest in local capacities; Peacebuilding is nothing without communication; Understand, Respond, Interact; Peace is a security concern and needs a security guarantee

**Actors:** youth, gelweng/community police, Ciec, Atuot, Aliab, Governor, Paramount Chief

**Location and date:** June 2017

### Conflict

During the dry season, the Dinka clans of Ciec and Atuot drive their cattle northwards to the salt-rich Barre (Awai) area between Yirol East, in Lakes State, and Panyijiar, in Greater Unity State. In 2016 and 2017, cattle camp leaders feared insecurity in this traditional grazing area (*toic*) and decided to move southeast instead to access the water and salts along the Nile at Awerial, normally the grazing preserve of the Aliab community. Tensions between Ciec and Atuot on the one hand and the Aliab on the other grew throughout May 2017 after the former ignored the direct appeals from Aliab leaders for them to withdraw. A significant clash took place on 29 June 2017 in Qusom cattle camp, near Mingkaman, Awerial. Cows were stolen on both sides and lives were reported lost, though it has proved impossible to verify numbers. All communities considered themselves threatened, MPs and other influential elders in Juba were said to be issuing inflammatory comments, and fear of a major escalation abounded.

### Key actors

'Community police' is the local term for armed cattle keepers/gelweng who have been selected by the government to support implementation of official policy. They are unpaid for the service but will usually receive small donations from those benefitting from their efforts. The Paramount Chiefs in the area have the unique role of interlocutors between the administration and cattle camps, "you can't send police directly to the cattle camps, we have guns too. It is only the Paramount Chiefs who can come, talk to us and we will accept to come and meet the government."<sup>129</sup>

### Action

Following the first reports of armed confrontation made by phone to the commissioner in Yirol, an ad hoc emergency committee immediately moved to the area. This was facilitated by the government, mandated directly by the Governor and was composed of the Commissioners of Nyang and Nyilek Counties, the Executive Director of Yirol Centre and the Paramount Chiefs. The committee worked closely with the Community Police to bring cattle camp leaders from all three communities into custody so that they could support the process of identifying responsible parties. Community Police were quickly "given power by the government to go and collect stolen cattle".<sup>130</sup> The community police and Paramount Chief visits to cattle camps was coordinated simultaneously within both Ciec and Atuot and in Aliab areas and this fact was communicated during the process. Recovered cattle were kept in a prominent and visible location within Yirol Town to help ensure the wider community could see progress, communicate to their network and correct misinformation, as the Paramount Chief Malice Marial put it, "people thought ok, something is happening, let us not fight, let us see what the government is going to lead to".<sup>131</sup>

During this quick response phase, the Governor formed a Special Court to be headed by Paramount Chief Malice Marial, a respected peacebuilder whose services have been put into action to mediate as far afield as Bor and Aweil. In post-CPA Lakes States, Special Courts have become a preferred method when the legal process could take a long time and quick resolution is required. This was particularly true at time of field work in early June 2017 when a nationwide judicial strike was crippling the formal court system.

<sup>129</sup> Interview, Bol Adut, Head, Community Police, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>130</sup> Interview, Bol Adut, Head, Community Police, Yirol East. July 2017.

<sup>131</sup> Interview, Paramount Chief Malice Marial, Pagarou. Yirol East, July 2017.

**Outcomes**

- A high risk of escalation, potentially involving national actors, was mitigated by quick local response.
- Stolen cattle and criminal suspects were quickly and visibly identified, collected or detained.
- A justice mechanism was in place to peacefully resolve grievances (though the case had not been heard at the time of fieldwork).

**Lessons**

- Local capacity is critical to respond to incidents and mitigate escalation.
- Communication networks and strategies were critically important for a number of reasons: a) to coordinate the response; b) to enable widespread knowledge about the response; c) to communicate progress with collection of stolen cattle; d) to dispel rumours and propaganda.

## 9. Peacebuilding is nothing without communication

### *Communication is both objective and method*

“We shared experiences directly from people in the Protection of Civilian (PoC) site on the town radio, it helped change everything.” – **Inter Church Committee, Bentiu Town**<sup>132</sup>

“The thing that has made everything worse is the lack of [mobile] network, everything is falling apart.” – **Bul Dieu, Vice President, Town Council, Tergoli**<sup>133</sup>

Communication is both objective and method. Awareness raising can prevent peace agreements derailing, improve security implementation, address spoilers, strengthen relationships, promote mutual understanding and undermine rumours and hate speech. There is nothing innovative about the emphasis. As we have seen in the crossline market case study, the very function of some peace conferences is much more about communicating the policies of local-elites than problem-solving. Exchange visits, written communications, mobile phones, SD cards, radio and mobile cinema can also be used to strengthen a peace process and manage expectations.

First and foremost, everyone expected to be bound by an agreement needs to know exactly what it says, how it came about and who is providing the sanction, especially those with immediate capacities to disrupt agreements. Audio, photo and video recordings are particularly powerful because communities can have no doubt as to who is backing

up an agreement. But it is not just a question of dissemination. Once communities have entered a relationship, the actions of a single criminal could undermine it unless people are told what happened – quick and timely information flow can help manage grievance, put things in perspective and stop rumour mills. Successes such as completed compensation transactions can also be widely communicated to help build trust and transform relationships. Or peace communications may be a primary entry point to help build grassroots movements for peace.



**Presenter on Spirit FM 99.9, Yei. A network of local radio stations provides local language content across South Sudan.**

<sup>132</sup> Interview, Bentiu Town, Inter Church Committee, Bentiu. December 2017.

<sup>133</sup> Interview, Bul Dieu, Vice President, Town Council, Tergoli. July 2017.



## Communication is key

<p><b>Local Peace Process</b></p> <p><i>e.g. lack of knowledge of agreement</i></p> <p><b>Wider Community</b></p>	<p><b>Local Elites</b></p> <p><i>e.g. financial accountability</i></p> <p><b>Wider Community</b></p>	<p><b>Security Incident</b></p> <p><i>e.g. rumour</i></p> <p><b>Other Armed Actors</b></p>
<p><b>Local Peace Process</b></p> <p><i>e.g. lack of knowledge of legitimate authorities</i></p> <p><b>Wider Community</b></p>	<p><b>Armed Actors</b></p> <p><i>e.g. knowledge of security guarantee</i></p> <p><b>Community</b></p>	<p><b>Local Peace Process</b></p> <p><i>e.g. lack of knowledge of local dynamics</i></p> <p><b>High Level Peacebuilders</b></p>

### TOOLS FOR PEACEBUILDERS

-  Radio
-  Letter
-  Video/Cinema
-  Songs, poetry and music
-  SD Card distribution
-  Theatre
-  Loudspeaker
-  Word of mouth

Peacebuilders can help communities and leaders to bridge ‘communication gaps’.

The challenges are enormous. In many areas, particularly those under opposition control, there is no operational mobile network, which impacts heavily on conflict management, as Bul Dieu, Vice President of Tergoli Town Council on the Ethiopian bank of the Jonglei border, explains, “the thing that has made everything worse is the lack of network, everything is falling apart, Lou and Murle have Thuraya Satellite phone to talk, we have an old telegram machine!”<sup>134</sup> In many places populations live dispersed over huge areas. Transportation may be impossible in the rainy season. Whole sections of the population may be

mobile for periods of the year. Connecting people may involve word of mouth, handwritten notes, radio or satellite imagery, but whatever the challenge or opportunity, creativity is required.

<sup>134</sup> Interview, Bul Dieu, Vice President, Town Council, Tergoli. July 2017.

## 10. It's not what you do, it's how you do it – integrity is key

*'Soft' skills and commitment are as valuable as technical expertise*

“A peacebuilder in our culture is one who tells the truth and is honest, who commits him or herself to what she is doing.”<sup>135</sup> – **Marion Akon, Akobo Women's Association**

### Honesty

Honesty is a necessary skill in peacebuilding. Being honest with oneself helps ensure one's contribution is realistic, relevant to context and responsive to conflict analysis. Being honest with partner organisations builds trust and helps ensure everybody is working towards common goals. Being honest with communities helps manage expectations, which can make or break a peace process. Being honest is a fundamental requirement for evaluation and learning. Reality falls short of this ideal.

Peacebuilders interviewed for this report complained of implicit or explicit agenda setting when none was communicated, INGOs claiming 'local ownership' but controlling decision making and the presentation of success stories when none are justified. Odd Evjen, long term peacebuilder at Norwegian Church Aid, outlines one of the problems, “these words like honesty, and trust, are very important but they sound fuzzy. How do we put these words into use in a way that really provides guidance?”<sup>136</sup>

The other problem is more practical. Communities, INGOs and donors are all trying to balance competing interests and agendas, and it is necessary to create different stories around what is happening to tie an initiative together. Local ownership is proclaimed but not reflected in decision making. “Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks are designed but success stories are sought, and this is a major challenge”, says Gordon Lam Gatluak, Director of the Dialogue Research Initiative.

The answer? More honesty. Partnerships should be developed through open discussion about the relative strengths of each actor, rather than by reference to a catch-all principle such as local ownership

that can leave one side feeling cheated and the other fearing itself hypocritical. Honesty is both a strategic imperative and a basic courtesy to practice in recognition of the severe challenges many South Sudanese face through little or no fault of their own.

### Peacebuilding skills

Peacebuilding NGOs require the full range of organisational skills. However, peacebuilders also need specific strengths, first and foremost among them, according to Odd Evjen, are listening skills, “you can't do anything without them, you can't understand what is going on, you can't build relationships, you can't begin to facilitate anything, it needs to be recognised like any other skill, we should be trained in listening”.<sup>137</sup> The Abyei case study below illustrates this point, in which Reverend Stephen Mou spent so much time sitting with, listening to, and reflecting on local concerns with Dinka Ngok in Abyei Town and Misseriya in Diffra during a conflict analysis process that it opened an opportunity for a slow peace process to begin, and subsequently gather momentum.

Alongside concrete skills and technical knowledge, peacebuilders stress the importance of other qualities that can help peacebuilders build relationships, trust and contribute to facilitating dialogue. For example, Natalia Chan, South Sudan adviser at Christian Aid, argues that it is the very mentality with which peacebuilders approach their work that can be key to success, “it's not about you, it's about something bigger than us as individuals or organisations, we need to avoid placing ourselves at the centre of the narrative but at the same time understand our own role”.<sup>138</sup> Qualities such as humility, generosity, and commitment are absolutely critical if external peacebuilders are to genuinely hand power over to, or avoid grabbing power from, from locally led initiatives.

<sup>135</sup> Interview, Marion Akon, Leader, Women's Association, Akobo County. July 2017

<sup>136</sup> Interview, Odd Evjen, Norwegian Church Aid, Juba. September 2017

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> Interview (email), Natalia Chan, Christian Aid. January 2018.

“Money can spoil things you know, you cannot buy genuine peace with money” – **Kuol Bong Deng, Head Chief, Gabong Payam, Akobo County**

## Money

Money is important. It can facilitate the logistical needs of a local peace process when communities are unable to do so themselves. It can help address local capacity gaps or provide communication tools to local people to ensure events are not left to escalate. However, organisational culture and programme implementation should mitigate against unwelcome possibilities.

First, it should be used efficiently, that is, in response to conflict analysis rather than to conduct a set of pre-determined activities that no longer make sense in a context, or when a similar or better outcome could be expected using less resource intensive methods (for example, by making a sustained series of phone calls rather than a single conference). Part of the existing system is driven in part by results, which brings its own pressure for success stories, and in part by a requirement to spend, as an anonymous manager of an INGO peacebuilding programme explained, “when it comes to the end of the year you just have this pressure to spend, spend, spend. From a project manager’s point of view we have only one problem, getting the money out the door so we don’t report an underspend”.<sup>139</sup>

Second, the expectations of communities engaging in peace processes across the country have been changed by NGO activity. In every location visited in preparation for this report, community members reported important reconciliation meetings, that could not be conducted without external assistance because it would be impossible to procure the necessary t-shirts (t-shirts are not a problem per se. They can play a helpful role, for example, in providing status to those disseminating information to the wider community). In others, NGOs were effectively paying community members to attend events, so that a timetable of pre-planned peacebuilding activity could be implemented as mapped out to donors. Precedents established by one organisation create

expectations that others feel must be followed, setting up unnecessary barriers to the long-term sustainability of local peacebuilding in a place where NGOs come and go over time.

Third, in the spheres of human resources and procurement, NGOs are skewing markets, driving up market prices, draining talent from government or the private sector and reinforcing perceptions of growing inequality. At worst, a former local employee at an international NGO (various locations) described, “a system [that] simply mimics government here in South Sudan, we call us national staff NGO mercenaries, willing to fight for whatever cause the highest bidder will employ us for”.<sup>140</sup> Salaries are typically at least ten times that of a civil servant and can be significantly higher. This situation has probably evolved due to the laudable aim of reducing differential levels of pay between international and locally recruited staff working in the same team. However, more informal and open discussion about the power of money – particularly between local and international staff – might help mitigate some of its negative effects and result in new ways of using it to support peacebuilding objectives.

<sup>139</sup> Interview, anonymous INGO employee, Juba. September 2017. Note that this statement was echoed by a number of peacebuilding actors across different organisations.

<sup>140</sup> Interview, anonymous NGO employee, Rumbek. July 2017.

## Case study 10: Peaceful coexistence in Abyei

**Title:** Peaceful coexistence in Abyei

**Principles:** *All* – This short case study aims to bring together the findings of this report by summarising the importance of the ten principles in a single context.

**Actors:** Dinka Ngok, Misseriya Ajaira, UNISFA, Reverend Stephen Mou, Concordis, USAID/VISTAS, customary authorities, USAID, Pact

**Location and date:** Ongoing

### Key actors (background)

**Misseriya Ajaira:** One of two main groups in the Misseriya Humr. A collection of six Arab pastoralist Emirates that move southwards through the Abyei Area to access grazing and water for their cattle. During the second war (1983–2005) many Misseriya settled in the area until the SPLA entered following CPA signature.

**Dinka Ngok:** Agro-pastoralist Padang Dinka (the Padang include the Alor, Ruweng and Abilang), comprised of nine major sections.

**UNISFA:** United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei is tasked with monitoring and verifying the demilitarised status of the area.

*“Trust is both the goal and the means. To a certain extent, it was down to Stephen’s personality, he was able to gain trust and to build himself as an honest broker.”<sup>141</sup>*

### Background

Relations between transhumant Misseriya Ajaira and Dinka Ngok communities in and around Abyei are defined by complex dynamics of conflict and cooperation involving intra and inter-community politics as well as the relative position of each sub-group towards central state authority and local resources. As a result, it is particularly important to disaggregate actors and to understand historical relationships if one is to understand the challenges and opportunities that exist for peaceful coexistence.

Cooperation and conflict has existed between the two communities since first contact, although each has a different version of when exactly this took place. During the Turko-Egyptian period (1821–1883) groups of Misseriya raided the Dinka Ngok as agents of slave companies while others fought with them to enthrone the Mahdi to power in Omdurman. The Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1898–1956) heralded a period of relative cooperation which continued following the Dinka Ngok’s choice to be administered in Kordofan rather than Bahr al Ghazal, for reasons of economic opportunity, security and ease of administration. Ngok Paramount Chief Arob Biong, his successor Kuol Arob, and later Deng Majok and Misseriya Nazir Babo Nimr – who entered into a blood pact with one another – all navigated intercommunal relations with skill and authority, if not always the unanimous backing of the entire community. During this time, special relationships developed between particular Dinka *wut* and sub-clans of Misseriya, for example, the Misseriya Awlad Kamil enjoyed special relations with the Abior *wut* on the central migration route as did the Alwald Omran and Fadliya with the Mareng and Alei *wut* of the eastern corridor.

The independence period (1956–) put severe strain on community relations as the interplay of local and national strategic interests became more challenging and complex. Paramount Chief Deng Majok tried to balance increasing Ngok activism for the return to Bahr al Ghazal with his view that their strategic interests lay in the status quo. Nevertheless, by the late 1960s Dinka Ngok perceptions that Misseriya had territorial ambitions over Abyei and Misseriya fear that self-determination for the Ngok would mean loss of access to the critical dry-season grazing for their cattle fed each other in a cycle that eventually led to fighting. The first mass displacement of Dinka along the borderland took place at the hands of Misseriya in 1964–5, who for their part say that they were responding to attacks by Anyanya I.

<sup>141</sup> Interview, Richard King, Director, Concordis International, London. October 2017.

The high-level Addis Ababa Accord (1972) failed to deliver a promised referendum to the Ngok on whether they would fall under the new Southern Administration or maintain their position in Kordofan. A number of other factors also interacted to feed local mistrust and undermine local attempts to maintain security:

1. The abolition of Native Administration deprived both Ngok and Misseriya of their leaderships.
2. Mechanised agriculture and abuse at the hands of the newly established southern police increased Misseriya fears around the loss of their dry season routes.
3. Peacetime recovery in Dinka herds placed renewed pressure on grazing areas.
4. The promised development plan moved far too slowly to help make unity attractive.

In 1977, the Ngok refused the Misseriya access and the government responded by providing protection forces, and subsequently Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) ground support. In response to loss of local interests, Ngok formed the Abyei Liberation Front (ALF) that would eventually form a foundation of the SPLA.

The Abyei Area became a “testing ground for a new government strategy combining regular army forces with Arab militias to clear the Ngok Dinka population out of the oil fields and their traditional homes”<sup>142</sup> and by the late-1980s, only a handful of Ngok Dinka remained in the Abyei Area. There was little interaction between the communities off the battlefield for the remainder of the war, though the idea of peace markets that had evolved in Rubh Ngai from 1988, in present day Rubkhona, took root by 2001 in Annet/Agok in the Abyei Area and at Turalei, just south of it. These markets enjoyed support from military commanders on both sides and facilitated safe spaces for trade and confidence building between communities. They increased informal dialogue and normalised relations at the local level.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005) could not resolve the status of the area. The final decision as to its geographic scope was left to experts while its position in Kordofan or in Bahr al Ghazal was to be decided by the ‘Residents of Abyei’ in a referendum. Exacerbated by the presence of oil reserves and infrastructure, the territorial strategic interests of the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan were at loggerheads over Abyei. At the same time, the grievances of both communities mounted following aggressive expulsion of Misseriya from Abyei by SPLA and the ongoing efforts of spoilers to undermine local efforts for peaceful coexistence that would have threatened Abyei’s status in Kordofan – Abyei was destroyed in 2008 and 2011 with SAF support – and the referendum never took place. On 4 May 2013, a group of Misseriya killed Dinka Ngok Paramount Chief Kuol-adol and relations between the two communities hit an all-time low.

Throughout this story, committed local and external peacebuilders have worked to support peaceful coexistence between communities in and around Abyei. This case study focuses on the short window of time during the post-independence period (2011–ongoing) in which a critical mass of Misseriya and Dinka Ngok communities have succeeded in transforming their relationship.

### **Peacebuilding since 2005**

Since the CPA, the high-level political process has failed to provide effective security or administration to Abyei. In this case, local peace initiatives in Abyei such as Concordis International’s Cross Border Relations Project tried to delink intercommunity interaction from strategic national questions of land ownership and strategic resources, while at the same time informing high-level processes about local interests that needed to be taken to account. The theory being that transforming local relationships through the management of migration, trade and social arrangements will be good in the short term by improving quality of life. However, by reducing the importance of a boundary on the pursuit of community interest, it will also contribute to conditions under which an international political settlement could one day be possible. In this case, therefore, far from integrating national actors into a process, the analysis of multi-level conflict dynamics delivered a short to intermediate term strategy that buffered the local from the national.

### **Principles**

***Peace is a long-term transformative process***

*Situate your programme within a long-term perspective*

<sup>142</sup> Why Abyei Matters: The Breaking Point of Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement? Johnson, D, African Affairs, Volume 107, Issue 426, 2008

A major challenge that such efforts attempted to address was the need to include all relevant Misseriya actors and for both communities to disaggregate and understand the limitations of their peace partners. This was critical in the context of weak security provision to ensure that single spoilers or 'non-signatories' could not undermine promising local agreements with relatively minor infringements. A significant development took place in September 2013 at the USAID/MISTAS supported Border Conference in Aweil at which leaders of Misseriya Khashm al Biyut (sub-tribes) with established relations with Ngok insisted to outlying Khashm al Biyut, notably the Awlad Kamil who traditionally use the central corridor, that they must make peace with Ngok rather than seek other solutions. The Awlad Kamil travelled home to consult and organise, and a number were arrested in doing so, but eventually, and following a few months of low level shuttling and meetings in the bush supported by USAID/TEPS, an inclusive group of Misseriya reached an agreement to open trade and migration, and UNISFA agreed to support it<sup>143</sup>. Despite promising statements of intent and growing awareness within both communities of shared mutual interest in peaceful coexistence, an ongoing process was still required to address at least two key problems.

Firstly, trust between the communities was still far below that required to move forward with migration or trading agreements, as the Head of Abyei Youth Union explained in September 2014, "At this time, we don't want any relations with Misseriya at all. I don't think anyone will want to sit and have a meeting with Misseriya at this stage. Dinka Ngok is fed up with Misseriya to the brim",<sup>144</sup> a sentiment echoed by influential Ngok Chief Biong Achuil Bulabek, "there is no trust between Dinka Ngok and Misseriya and it has to be restored before this peace succeeds".<sup>145</sup> On their part, Misseriya leaders also expressed serious reservations about Ngok's commitment to peaceful coexistence, "recently Dinka Ngok have employed their notorious army and arranged an army base on our route to Abyei. When we come with our animals, the army shoots and rapes our women. This is why we have become annoyed with our brothers and sisters of Dinka Ngok".<sup>146</sup>

Second, UNISFA did not enjoy the trust of both communities. For example, Adam Ismael Adam, a Misseriya interviewee, described in July 2014 "UNISFA as a heavily politicized organisation" whilst at the same time Ngok such as Kuol Monyluak, the head of the Abyei administration at the time, reiterated these concerns, arguing that UNISFA did not consult, inform or discuss migration arrangements with them and that —wittingly or not— was aiding the Government of Sudan's efforts to depopulate the north of Abyei. In reality, UNISFA had succeeded in preventing serious outbreaks of conflict, and not only by accompanying nomadic movements. For example, in March 2014, it moved quickly to block the movement of between 4000–5000 armed Misseriya militia entering the Abyei Area from Western Kordofan State, Sudan. In April 2014, it moved quickly to negotiate the withdrawal of over 600 SPLA personnel from the north of Abyei.

### ***Understand, respond, interact***

#### ***Strategic inclusivity of 'more' and 'key' people***

*Key people*

*More people*

*Trust is objective and method*

***Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee***

***Peacebuilding is nothing without communication***

<sup>143</sup> See for example, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon in his November 2013 *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei*.

<sup>144</sup> Nyanchol Chol Miyen, Abyei Youth Union Leader, Agok. 7 July 2014.

<sup>145</sup> Biong Achuil Bulabek, Concordis Interviews with Traditional Authorities, Agok. 11 September 2014.

<sup>146</sup> Adam Ismail Adam, Misseriya leader, Majok Yinh Thiou. 23–28 August 2014

In October 2014, Concordis International began an in-depth conflict assessment in Abyei with a view to complement and build on existing efforts to promote peaceful coexistence. For two months, Concordis field researcher Reverend Stephen Mou spent time living among both Dinka Ngok around Abyei and Misseriya around Diffra. What began as an important information gathering exercise became an important phase in the peacebuilding process. In spending such a long time listening, reflecting local concerns, sharing stories and experiences truthfully, and grieving for losses together, what began as an assessment exercise also opened a window of opportunity for trust-building. The process led a group of Misseriya to offer to return four abducted Ngok children to their families, and brought in UNISFA to facilitate the return. This provided an important symbolic moment in intercommunity relations, as well as perceptions of the peacekeepers. The quiet, patient work of dedicated peacebuilders like Reverend Stephen Mou – and others such as TEPS counterpart Mohamed al-Amin in Sudan – has been critical to success.

In addition to trust-building, the assessment provided a level of rare detail, outlining critical problems with the Ngok and within the Misseriya that were complicating the possibilities for peace. Ten ‘mini-dialogues’ within each community were subsequently organised in response to this information before an ‘intra-community conference’ could take place in March 2015, involving first separate and then joint discussions among groups of women, elders, cattle keepers, traders and youth. A joint ‘intercommunity’ meeting was finally convened in February 2016 and a series of three subsequent meetings took place, one for each of the western, central and eastern migration routes. Seasonal migration has since resumed and migration review meetings took place for each route in June 2016.

***It’s not what you do, it’s how you do it – integrity is key***

***Strategic inclusivity***

*Women and youth*

***Understand, respond, interact***

*“If you end up with an agreement and there is no sanction, no mechanism to enforce it, then you are making a rod for your own back.”<sup>147</sup>*

*“Security is the third party that allows agreements to work.”<sup>148</sup>*

UNISFA has been central and key to peaceful coexistence in Abyei since 2015–2016. It is the third party that allows agreements to work, as Richard King, of Concordis International explains, “if you end up with an agreement and there is no sanction, no mechanism like UNISFA to enforce it, then you are making a rod for your own back”.<sup>149</sup>

In the absence of a conclusive high-level agreement or functioning joint security mechanisms UNISFA’s ability to protect key grazing and trading routes has changed the logic for both communities, removed violent options for securing local interests from the table, and opened space for shared local institutions and therefore a degree of trust-building that could lay a foundation for peace in the longer term. In fulfilling its role, it has displayed flexibility, innovation and commitment, such as in its use of Temporary Operating Bases to expand its presence to where it is really needed.

***Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee***

*Security deterrent*

***Mutual economic interest***

<sup>147</sup> Interview, Richard King, Chief Executive, Concordis International, London. October 2017.

<sup>148</sup> Skype Interview, Jason Matus. March 2018

<sup>149</sup> Interview, Richard King, Chief Executive, Concordis International, London. October 2017.

In parallel and drawing inspiration from grazing and trade arrangements in Northern Bahr al Ghazal as well as other peace markets at Agok/Annet and Turalei, a joint market was established in Abyei March 2016 at Noong (later moved by mutual agreement to Amiet). By June 2016, 50 shops were operating with 25 owned by Misseriya and Dinka respectively, and by mid-2017, this had grown to over 500. A Joint Peace Committee composed of a representative range of extant authorities was formed in February 2016 to monitor implementation of agreements.

The Joint Peace Committee meets every week, initially supported with training and logistical support but now under its own steam, and has demonstrated remarkable solidarity following security incidents such as that on Amiet market in October 2017, when it issued public statements condemning ‘criminals’, helping the public understand that difference between ‘communities’ and the elements who instigate conflict, and working to facilitate compensation payments in line with agreements. Economic mutual interest and the security guarantee are the lynchpins of stability for Abyei today, but importantly, revenue from commodity taxation is now used to support the work of the Peace Committee and open more spaces for community interaction that could help transform relationships in the longer term.

In dialogues that took place in 2015, Dinka Ngok and Misseriya Ajaira controlled location, timing, ritual environment and approaches to dialogue. Christian, Islamic prayer and traditional blessings took place at regular intervals, placing meetings under the witness of God, early delineation of shared histories and family ties like intermarriage highlighted responsibilities to ancestral links. Meetings took place at convenient times for local people that did not interfere with seasonal responsibilities, emphasised the benefits of peace and interdependence, the importance of sharing peaceful outcomes with the wider community, and stressed the importance of truth-telling and forgiveness as the pathway to break cycles of violence.<sup>150</sup>

Participants referred to countless historical narratives of cooperation to enhance the case for peaceful coexistence today. Shared oral histories concerning the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century provided one such example. During the Turko-Egyptian period (1821–1883) the various Baggara groups, including Misseriya, participated in large scale ivory and slave-raiding among the peoples of Bahr al Ghazal in return for position and payment. At the same time, the Dinka Ngok Paramount Chief Arob Biong and a subsection of Misseriya Ajaira leaders formed alliances to reduce their impact. These introduced the Ngok to the Mahdists who they subsequently supported for a time until the Mahdhist state (1883–1898) resumed slaving and raids into Dinka territory. Following the installation of the Mahdi, the wider Misseriya Humr (incorporating the Ajaira at that time) fell into two factions for and against the new regime. Those who took an anti-Mahdhist position returned from Omdurman and received refuge from Dinka Ngok communities under the leadership of Arop Biong.

***Invest in responsive local capacity building on what already exists***

***Peacebuilding is nothing without communication***

*Compensation and Justice*

***Peace is long term transformational process***

***Integrate cultural understanding and cultural tools into peacebuilding***

*Traditional religious input*

***Use stories from the past to understand and respond***

*Narratives that connect*

<sup>150</sup> In a review of 125 peace dialogues, USAID/VISTAS noted that dialogue resolutions tend to start with a preamble recognising these aspects. Jason Matus, shared by personal communication. March 2018.

Note that as a peacebuilding resource, the use of narratives is instrumental. Following the collapse of the Khalifa in 1898, the pro-Mahdhist group of Misseriya Humr – who had remained in Omdurman and engaged in continued raiding of Ngok and Twic under Sheikh Ali Jula – returned to Kordofan and their leader was subsequently recognised by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium as the Nazir of all Humr. The return of these pro-Mahdhist Misseriya led to inter-community tension and was one of the stated reasons behind the decision by all parties to move the Ngok into the administration of Kordofan in 1905, in order that a single governor could deal with complaints.<sup>151</sup> This chapter of the story was selectively left out by participants when describing their histories.

*Narratives that divide (selectively left out of discussion)*

### Outcome

- Resumption of managed seasonal migration and joint market.
- Intra-community discussion on underlying issues opened up possibility of dialogues.
- Misseriya community leaders have reportedly resisted attempts by government officials to disrupt relations in the area.

### Lessons

- The provider of a security guarantee and deterrent is the third partner in a peace process.
- If local interests can be met through peaceful coexistence, then local contexts can be buffered from national contestation.
- Peacebuilding programmes can be complementary, connected and part of a single ‘peace process’.
- Compensation and justice accompanied with forgiveness and truth-telling can provide ways forward when the scale of grievance is high.
- Trust is both a goal and a method, which can deliver results where money can fail.
- Conflict analysis is critical and should be seen not just a technical exercise but also as an active phase in a peace process.

<sup>151</sup> The Condominium government evolved a policy of including hostile or competing neighbours within the same district or province, the better to regulate and resolve their disputes.

## **PART III: Collected implications**



After working together in a community garden, Adhieu Deng Ngewei and her neighbours sing and dance as they walk home along a dyke they constructed to control flooding around Dong Boma, a Dinka village in South Sudan's Jonglei State.



Each of the principles in Part II contains specific implications for policy and practice. This section suggests some overarching implications for specific audiences.

# PART III: Collected implications

## SHARED IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL ACTORS:

- **It's not only what you do but how you do it. Donors and practitioners should embody the three mutually reinforcing values of realism, commitment and honesty.** Being realistic means understanding what is really going on and ensuring that a theory of change engages critical factors, such as security actors or community expectations. But although the primacy of conflict analysis is well established, the practice is too frequently a 'tick box'. Being committed means respecting peace as a long-term and ongoing process, ensuring no stone is left unturned and thinking beyond funding cycles and project timeframes – in building and maintaining relationships, shuttle and elevator diplomacy, preparations for meetings, broadening participation, or supporting an infrastructure to bolster emerging peaceful coexistence. Being honest with oneself helps ensure one's contribution to peace work has integrity and is realistic, relevant and responsive. Being honest with partner organisations builds long-term sustainability and ensures all parties work towards common goals. Being honest with communities experiencing conflict helps to manage expectations and build trust. And trust is both the means and objective of peace work.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR DONORS:

- **Donors should extend and develop long-term mechanisms to support sub-national peacebuilding. This should focus on promoting sustained local capacity to manage conflict and security and open opportunities for social interaction, transitional justice and economic development, whether a functioning high level peace process exists or not.** Funding mechanisms should move away from a sole focus on management by results and an emphasis on success stories to favour good process including adaptiveness, flexibility, responsiveness and creativity. In return, donors can develop new ways to hold peace

practitioners to account, such as mechanisms to demonstrate that ongoing programme activity responds to changes in conflict and peace dynamics and that short-term theories of change really do connect with long-term and national strategies.

- **Donors and practitioners should invest in overarching multi-level strategies to guide engagement in sub-national peace processes.** This should take into account the interaction of sub-national contexts horizontally and vertically i.e. between each other and with the higher-level from the perspective of national political transformation. However, such an approach should not envisage sub-national peace initiatives primarily as a route to unlocking national blockages toward peace – sub-national peacebuilding must be valued as a thing in itself. Mechanisms for improving the sharing and joint-production of conflict analysis should be supported, alongside spaces to encourage an open discussion of lessons to inform good practice and understanding. Donors should be willing to invest in ongoing conflict analysis and staff time, to build relationships with local actors, and continue learning about the situation.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL PEACE PROCESSES:

- **Strategic approaches to high-level peace processes should look beyond 'who is around the table' and engage with a broader strategy which prioritises understanding and addressing root causes of conflict.** The need for immediate sequenced agreements should be balanced with long-term approaches to addressing complex grievances. Efforts to create spaces for honest dialogue about fundamental issues beyond narrow political agendas should not be relegated to an undefined point in the future beyond short-term political fixes. Instead, creative and context-relevant approaches which are led by appropriate actors with the requisite trust and legitimacy should be an

essential complement to political negotiation – approaches which connect the political to the grassroots, build trust and address trauma, and enable an inclusive and transparent approach to transition.

- **High-level peace processes should explore the integration of elements from South Sudan’s diverse customary traditions of peace-making and reconciliation.** For example, this could involve: public or private truth-telling, storytelling or cultural exchange facilitated by mutually respected persons; inclusive sessions that broaden participation; greater focus on public dissemination of the process; or the integration of religious observance or sacred ritual into their design. This could add meaning to both high-level participants and the wider population and have unexpected outcomes that integrate a wider group of actors into the process. But this should also not be viewed as a tick-box, the symbolic meaning embedded in such approaches can quickly lose meaning if deployed as a technical tool without understanding of deep meaning and contextual relevance.
- **Sub-national actors may be strategically important to a national approach to conflict transformation. Diplomats and mediators involved in high-level peace processes should make every effort to conduct the relevant shuttle and elevator diplomacy required to engage them, build trust, and ensure high-level processes take account of their practical influence.** If necessary, security procedures governing travel need to be amended to facilitate such important peace work.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS:

- **Practitioners should ensure that they approach support for peacebuilding with a mentality that prioritises integrity, understanding and the strengthening of process – this may mean pushing back against donor or institutionally driven agendas and collective advocacy around the reasons for this.** Pre-conceived ideas and methods should be set aside, and engagement should be tailored to the context and prioritise local agency and ownership of peacebuilding skills and qualities. Practitioners should carefully appraise the range of approaches available (many of which have been outlined in Part II of this paper) and make sure their role adds value and fits with or supports pre-existing structures and initiatives.
- **The nature of conflict in South Sudan is not a constant, and dynamics are constantly changing. Practitioners should engage in collective efforts to share analysis and, importantly, lessons and reflections on appropriate practice and methodologies, including on evidence and evaluation.** Practitioners should think beyond silos and sectors when considering who to include in these discussions. A strong body of collective evidence and learning will enable stronger and more effective response.

# Conclusion

The layers of conflict in South Sudan are multiple and overlapping, with roots in decades of civil war and marginalisation. Conflict dynamics are constantly shifting, yet the old reasons for fighting still have significant influence – this is not a fixed map, but nothing is completely new. The lessons from the past cannot be forgotten, while at the same time those who work in or around South Sudan must constantly reappraise their understanding of the context and adapt accordingly. There is a wealth of information, knowledge and wisdom available – in research papers and books, on websites, in stories shared every day – yet there is never enough time to absorb and digest it quickly enough to address the urgency of the situation while constantly in crisis mode. This report aims to help signpost some of this information, knowledge, and wisdom and to make the case for some principles which can help us to apply those lessons. In order to make positive steps towards change for the better, committing time and space to reflect and improve on how we do things is essential.

‘Local’ does not mean unimportant. Sub-national actors can impact national dynamics of peace and war, just as national leaders depend upon local constituencies to supply fighting forces and for legitimacy. Many of these interactions take place through complex personal loyalties and informal patronage – such as the delivery of money, grain or suits to local leaders – and may appear relatively opaque to outsiders, but local capacities for peace, increased community awareness, and local political will can help prevent the spread of war into new areas. Alliances and networks for peace based on mutual interest, historical narratives of respect, and cultural ties can establish shared institutions that provide for local security in the absence of high-level agreements.

National processes must take sub-national factors into account and reflect local priorities and interests so that high-level agreements work for communities across the country. The design of high-level peace processes can have negative effects locally if they are not aligned with the realities of multi-level conflict in South Sudan. In this context, sub-national peace work is valuable in at least five ways, which together may help challenge the very logic of power in the country

and help create conditions in which a nationwide political transformation is possible:

1. It can help mitigate the divisive effects of elite competition;
2. It can improve lives in the short term and build relationships which reduce opportunities for violence in the future;
3. It can forge a positive accountability between communities and leaders and help connect disparate communities with one another;
4. It can reduce military options available to elites and promote the economic benefits of peace; and
5. It can help inform national level processes with customary and cultural values and practices, so that it also reflects, for example, truth-telling, cultural ritual and performance and public dissemination into their design. This could add meaning to both high-level participants and the wider population.

A road to peace will require multiple initiatives covering political, economic, social, cultural and psychological needs, but there is an urgent need for every peace actor (including those engaging in support of peacebuilding approaches) to ask whether their contribution reflects South Sudan’s interlocking, multi-level conflicts, and whether it makes sense when viewed from different centres within South Sudan. This kind of thinking is currently lacking. To do this, peace actors must engage in meaningful multi-level conflict analysis, be creative in appraising how to work with or complement diverse approaches and existing initiatives (including being willing to hand over power to local agency and capacity) and develop effective ways of sharing their lessons and conclusions. We must also confront some very difficult practical and ethical dilemmas with honesty and integrity to ensure peacebuilding is conflict sensitive and contributes to long-term peace and stability. In the long run the reality of South Sudan’s multi-level and interdependent conflicts demands overarching peacebuilding strategies that reject the distinction between local and national processes in favour of an approach based on context analysis that captures the ways in which they link and interact, and

the way in which sub-national contexts are woven together.

There are many entry points to engage in sub-national conflicts to strengthen overarching strategies towards peacebuilding in South Sudan – the principles outlined in this report emphasise some key lessons to inform engagement. Peace is made and broken every day in South Sudan by customary leaders, local authorities and even national stakeholders often working through bespoke local institutions that have evolved in context. In different places there are chiefs, church leaders, women’s groups, peace committees who have sought to prevent or transform conflict in their own way and of their own volition. Where such mechanisms do not exist, or the political will is absent, communications work with youth, women, schools or market places, with a view to community advocacy, may provide a starting point. There is a strong potential role for external actors but peace work that builds on existing mechanisms, structures, or individuals has the greatest chance of contributing to social and political change. In order for this peace work to be meaningful, it must be owned by and its development led by South Sudanese.

Donors and peacebuilders have achieved much in South Sudan, but there is a need to modify our approach and change some of the ways we talk about peacebuilding. Existing frameworks such as the DAC Guidelines on Evaluating Conflict Prevention need to incorporate some of the more value-based elements that peacebuilders identify as so critical to success. Donor mechanisms should better reflect the need to be ‘in it for the long haul’, especially when supporting local organisations. Evaluation and monitoring needs to move away from management for results and the collection of success stories to favour flexibility, creativity, trust-building, support to real local capacity for the day to day work of sustaining peace, and the difficult and uncertain work of engaging hard to reach people across multiple levels. And all of this must be put in the context of a long-term theory of state formation in the country, without which peace processes are shots in the dark.

Peace is a security issue that matters primarily because it concerns human beings, many of whom have never seen a ‘peace’ to speak of. And nearly all South Sudanese live in a country defined by seemingly unwieldy contradictions, identifying with both a customary ‘home’ and a military ‘hakuma’, rural villages and sprawling towns, peaceful philosophies and violent strategies, traditional religion and Christian tradition, tribal versus national identities, historical narratives of conflict and of cooperation, extant cultural values and modern influences. The subject of this paper, ‘local’ and ‘national’ conflicts, has been seen in a similar vein. But with all of these contradictions, the reality is that they are inherently intertwined. It is critical that those involved in peace work – at every level – help to understand how they connect and what that means for daily life in South Sudan.

**Table 2: Collected implications for policy and practice**

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Implications for policy and practice</b>
Peace is a long-term transformative process	<p>Donors should develop mechanisms to support peace dynamics in sub-national contexts for the long term.</p> <p>Conflict analysis and programme design should outline short-term and long-term theories of change that are expected to lead to transformational outcomes.</p>
Understand, respond, interact	<p>Invest in ongoing conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity, including how the sub-national peace process interacts horizontally and vertically.</p> <p>Invest in staff time to build relationships with local actors and continue learning about the situation.</p> <p>Build flexibility into funding mechanisms and include accountability to ensure programmes respond to changing conflict and peace dynamics.</p>
Peace is a security issue and needs a security guarantee	Peacebuilders need to go beyond easy to reach civilian stakeholders to directly engage security actors and potential spoilers.
Strategically include both 'key' and 'more' people	<p>Sub-national conflicts may be local but key people need to be part of the process, whether they are very hard to reach, in other parts of South Sudan or elsewhere in the world.</p> <p>Entry points may be top-down 'key people' such as military leaders or bottom-up 'more people' such as women or youth groups, depending on the context.</p> <p>Peacebuilding theories of change must explain the interaction between the 'more' and the 'key' people that is expected to lead to transformational change.</p>
Shared economic interests can create opportunities for peace	Peacebuilders should harness the potential of mutual economic interest with an emphasis on long-term locally relevant institution building, funded by the spoils of peace, to help hold leaders to account.
Use stories from the past to understand and respond	<p>Integrate collection and analysis of narratives into conflict analysis.</p> <p>Use narratives of conflict and cooperation as tools to facilitate increased understanding.</p>
Integrate cultural understandings and cultural tools into peacebuilding	Understand and hand over power to locally relevant actors in the design, language and symbology of peacebuilding.
Invest in local capacities	<p>Donors and peacebuilders should strengthen local institutions and ensure primary responsibility for managing peace is local and sub-national peacebuilding happens quickly and in situ.</p> <p>Avoid restricting local peace work to fixed activities, instead promote a creative local capacity to manage and respond.</p>
Peacebuilding is nothing without communication	Mainstream communication into all peacebuilding processes.
It's not what you do, it's how you do it – integrity is key	<p>Donors, NGOs and communities should reward commitment and honesty.</p> <p>Donors and NGOs should invest in peacebuilding skills such as listening and intercultural communication (e.g. language skills).</p>



