

Report Part Title: Gender and Peacebuilding

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5. Gender and Peacebuilding

Even before the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, women in South Sudan suffered more than men from inadequate access to services such as education, justice, and maternal and child healthcare.⁵⁶ As of January 2012, for example, only 37 percent of girls between the ages of six and 13 were attending school.⁵⁷

South Sudan's 2011 transitional constitution accords women full and equal dignity, and provides for "affirmative action" through a quota of at least 25 percent representation in the country's legislative and executive organs. At the same time, the constitution includes "customs and traditions of the people" as a source of legislation.⁵⁸ Furthermore, customary laws and courts are the primary means through which the vast majority of South Sudanese access justice. However, in a deeply patriarchal society, these have the "potential to reinforce practices that perpetuate gender inequality."⁵⁹ Translating constitutional principles on gender equality into practice thus remains a formidable challenge that has been exacerbated by the country's ongoing conflict. A recent study, conducted in Unity in November–December 2015, demonstrates how gender analysis can be used as a powerful tool for understanding the full range of gendered vulnerability in South Sudan. It found an increase in female-headed households since the end of the rainy season in 2014, with males suffering the most number of deaths overall, especially violent deaths. It also found that females were more likely than males to be abducted; and that most child-headed households were led by girls.⁶⁰

Patriarchal gender norms are deeply implicated as drivers of conflict in South Sudan, where they afford men power and privileges over women (as they do elsewhere in the world). Yet men, as much as women, are affected by rigid societal norms that exert pressure on them to conform to their gender identity; and it is vital to address notions of masculinity – particularly those that encourage violence – as much as women's issues, in peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions in South Sudan. Cattle-raiding, for example, is a major driver of conflict and insecurity among pastoral communities in the country. Participating in such raids is seen as a rite of passage for young men and a symbol of manhood, as is owning a gun, with raids often turning deadly in a country awash with small arms, generating cycles of revenge and perpetuating violent conflict. Rising bride prices – customarily paid in livestock – have also made it difficult for men to marry and to achieve manhood, as defined in their local communities. In this context, joining the SPLA or a militia can provide not only a source of income, but also a sense of belonging and self-worth, with many young men continuing to join these groups even when salaries have not been paid. At the same time, it is important to note that women, too, play a role in reinforcing gender identities by, for example, singing songs of praise or shame for men, depending on their success or failure on cattle-raids. Similarly, young girls, by virtue of socialisation, derive self-worth and value from traditions such as bride price.⁶¹ This only underlines the need to address masculinities and women's issues together, as part of a holistic approach to gender, conflict, and peacebuilding in South Sudan.

56 Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern (eds.), *Hope, Pain, and Patience: The Lives of Women in South Sudan* (Sunnyside/Auckland Park: Fanele, 2011).

57 Siddhartha Shrestha, "Prioritising Education and Promoting Gender Equality in South Sudan", UNICEF South Sudan, 17 January 2012 (available at http://www.unicef.org/education/southsudan_61320.html).

58 See Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011, arts. 16, 5.

59 Friederike Bubenzer and Elizabeth Lacey, *Opportunities for Gender Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan*, Policy Brief no. 12 (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation [IJR], July 2013), p. 6.

60 "Crisis Impacts on Households in Unity State, South Sudan, 2014–2015: Initial Results of a Survey" (Juba: Office of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, January 2016).

61 Saferworld, *Masculinities, Conflict, and Peacebuilding: Perspectives on Men Through a Gender Lens* (London, October 2014).

Upon attaining independence in 2011, South Sudan agreed to the AU's 2006 Post-Conflict, Reconstruction, and Development (PCRD) strategy,⁶² which calls for gender mainstreaming to inform nation- and state-building; and Juba ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in September 2014. In addition, the South Sudanese government and the UN signed a joint communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence in October 2014. Accurate data on sexual and gender-based violence are difficult to find, but such violence was widespread in South Sudan before renewed conflict in December 2013.⁶³ The challenges of translating avowed principles on gender equality into practice were formidable even then, but are even greater now that they have been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, in which sexual and gender-based violence have become a weapon of war, with the UN describing women and children “being deliberately targeted, with countless incidents of sexual violence”.⁶⁴ The report of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan only further exposed the extent of such violence.⁶⁵ Moreover, women and children compose a majority of those displaced by the conflict since December 2013, including the more than 214,000 people sheltering in UN protection-of-civilian sites across South Sudan,⁶⁶ and have been disproportionately affected due, among other things, to their risk of exposure to gender-based violence, their childcare burden, and the low priority attached to addressing their particular needs by governmental and humanitarian actors. According to a UN survey, 70 percent of women in the PoC sites had been raped, mainly by police and soldiers.⁶⁷

In this context, the country's women have tended mainly to be seen as victims, with less attention paid to their role as actual and potential agents of peacebuilding. Yet women in South Sudan have continually called for the cessation of hostilities and for both sides to abide by signed agreements, campaigned vocally for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes, and engaged in persistent advocacy for the incorporation of gender-based perspectives in the August 2015 Addis Ababa peace agreement. Notably, the IGAD-led peace process, when it was initiated, had little to no participation by women, with no women included in the South Sudanese government delegation, and only three women included in the SPLM-IO delegation, to the first high-level roundtable discussion held in Addis Ababa in January 2014.⁶⁸ Women mobilised, though, campaigning actively to strengthen their voices in the peace process. Subsequent negotiation rounds saw women delegates included in the negotiating teams from both the main warring parties, due in large part to these advocacy efforts. Furthermore, the South Sudan Women's Peace Network – with support from UN Women – developed an agenda for peace and sustainable development early on, which sought to define women's priorities in the negotiation process and called, among other things, for a national dialogue to promote national reconciliation, healing, unity, and cohesion. The subsequent Addis Ababa agreement provides for the inclusion of women in the transitional government, as well as their continued involvement in its implementation. It further mandates the Transitional Government of National Unity to review the ongoing constitution-making process and to reconstitute the National Constitutional Review Commission, so as to ensure the inclusion of diverse stakeholders including women.

62 Gilbert Khadiagala, “The Role of the African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development, and African Development Bank in Postconflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding”, in Devon Curtis and Gwinyayi A. Dzinesa (eds.), *Peacebuilding, Power, and Politics in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press; and Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), pp. 107–120.

63 Jok Madut Jok, “Militarization and Gender Violence in South Sudan”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 34, no. 4 (1999), pp. 427–442.

64 Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (Covering the Period from 14 April to 19 August 2015), UN doc. S/2015/655, 21 August 2015, p. 15.

65 “Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan”, especially pp. 296–297, para. 1125.

66 UNMISS, “PoC Update”, 3 April 2017 (available at https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/170403_poc_update_-_159.pdf).

67 UNifeed, “Geneva/South Sudan Emergency Session”, 14 December 2016 (available at <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/asset/1796/1796878>).

68 Marthe van der Wolf, “Women Take Role in South Sudan Peace Talks”, *Voice of America*, 16 January 2014 (available at <http://www.voanews.com/a/women-take-role-in-south-sudan-peace-talks/1831552.html>).

However, challenges remain. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that the participation of South Sudanese women in the peace process is meaningful, and that their involvement in decision-making structures and processes is adequate as well as substantive. For example, the Addis Ababa agreement includes clear provisions to ensure the representation of women in the executive, various independent commissions, and monitoring bodies (including JMEC), but the women appointed to such positions are often political nominees who are neither representative nor part of the broader women's movement in the country. With men occupying the positions of president, first vice-president, and vice-president, there were calls for a woman to be appointed speaker of the South Sudanese Transitional National Assembly, but these went unheeded, with Anthony Lino Makana assuming the office in August 2016. For peacebuilding to be inclusive and sustainable, South Sudanese women need to have greater representation in government institutions, including senior leadership, and for this to be representative of their views. As a 2015 global study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 on women, peace, and security showed, gender inclusiveness has positive effects on the signing, implementation, and sustainability of peace agreements, with the participation of women contributing to a 20 percent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years.⁶⁹ As part of its efforts to increase the involvement of women in national decision-making, the South Sudan Women's Peace Network is establishing a database of qualified South Sudanese women (including those in the Diaspora) to serve as an advocacy tool. UN Women, meanwhile, has supported the establishment of the National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI) at the University of Juba, with the aim of building the capacity of South Sudanese women to influence policy- and decision-making and transform their communities in positive and effective ways.

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Disconnect between women's representatives and local communities, though, is another key challenge. Women at the grassroots level (including those in IDP camps) are often unaware of women in government and leadership positions who could help them in getting their voices heard at the state and national levels. As part of its efforts to support gender equality and inclusive peacebuilding in South Sudan, UN Women has supported the creation of rural empowerment centres. Several national women's organisations, such as Eve Organisation for Women Development, have also sought to increase their engagement with rural women, with a view to promoting the inclusion of the diversity of women's experiences and interests in peacebuilding processes. Even so, greater and more sustained efforts are needed to bridge the gap between the country's female elite and women at the grassroots level, to promote a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, and to strengthen local ownership of peace processes at all levels in South Sudan.

Following the events of, and since, July 2016, gender, conflict, and peacebuilding remain important issues in South Sudan, as Zainab Hawa Bangura, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, emphasised after visiting the country in August 2016. The issue is rendered even more complicated by the breakdown of social norms surrounding such violence and the lasting legacy suffered by survivors and communities.⁷⁰ The AUCISS report recommended that any structured process around healing and

69 Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN Women, 2015), pp. 36–63.

70 See David Deng and Rens Willems, “Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Unity State, South Sudan” (The Hague: University of Peace, March 2016).

reconciliation be gender-sensitive and involve women as key stakeholders.⁷¹ The Addis Ababa agreement provides for the creation – as mentioned earlier – of three transitional justice institutions: a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing; a Hybrid Court; and a Compensation and Reparation Authority. These mechanisms provide an opportunity to address women’s rights, while promoting a more gender-sensitive South Sudanese state, but are yet to be established. Civil society in South Sudan, as well as external humanitarian actors, need to continue to actively explore ways of strengthening and promoting understanding of the Addis Ababa agreement’s provisions on transitional justice, in support of victims’ rights, but also of gender equality, women’s empowerment, and inclusive peacebuilding.



From left: Ms Salome Zuriel, Conflict Thematic Manager, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), Nairobi, Kenya; and Mr Lansana Wonneh, Deputy Country Representative for South Sudan, UN Women, Juba.

71 “Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan”, p. 243, para. 876; p. 303, para. 1164.