

Peacebuilding Mapping in Unity State, South Sudan

Report



Dr. Nyambura Wambugu
Consultant
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Executive Summary

After some years of relative peace and great optimism following independence from Sudan, conflict once again broke out in South Sudan in 2013. At the political level, the war sees the government's ruling party - the SPLA - pitted against the SPLA-In Opposition, with a strong ethnic dimension of a power struggle between two rival pastoralist groups, Dinka and Nuer. The war has had devastating humanitarian consequences and led to an increase in the number and severity of local, community level conflicts over natural resources, historical grievances and power. In Unity State, such conflicts occur between groups within Unity; between Unity and neighbouring states; and between migrating pastoralists originating from Sudan who travel south in search of pastures for their cattle.

Local conflicts have a long history in Unity, and so do local means of resolving them. Local capacities to address community level conflicts continue to exist, although they are strained by the increased number and severity of local level conflicts. Following 5 years of work supporting local peacebuilding in the Sudanese province of South Kordofan, Peace Direct commissioned a mapping of local peacebuilding capacities in Unity State, across the border in South Sudan. The aim was to map local organisations and other actors, as well as the international organisations supporting local peacebuilding.

Key Findings

- There are 37 formal and informal local organisations, committees, religious groups and other actors working on peacebuilding at the community level in Unity.
- There are 12 international NGOs that include a focus on supporting local peacebuilders in Unity in their work.
- There are more than 40 different local level conflicts in Unity, yet only a very few of these are being addressed by the actors identified at the moment.

There are several different types of local level conflict in Unity

- **Inter-community conflicts:** cattle raids between Dinka and Nuer communities from Unity, Warrap and Lakes States have increased in intensity and levels of violence.
- **Intra-community conflicts:** local disputes within Unity between different clans, for example over early pregnancies or elopement, have become more violent.
- **Cross-border conflicts:** conflicts between Sudanese pastoralists and host communities in Unity have increased since South Sudan's independence now that pastoralists need to cross an international border and pay multiple taxes in South Sudan.

The mapping investigated key challenges and opportunities for local and international peacebuilders in Unity. A workshop in Juba brought together a broader set of actors to discuss such challenges and opportunities to local peacebuilding work more broadly in South Sudan.

Key challenges to local peacebuilding

- Lack of funding for peacebuilding work, in particular longer-term funding for more sustainable initiatives.
- A shift in donor priorities to (almost exclusively) humanitarian assistance has made funding for local peacebuilding work even more scarce. This is compounded by the fact that many international organisations have pulled out their staff from Unity.
- Poor infrastructure (roads and telecommunications) and seasonal rains make local peacebuilding work difficult.
- Nepotism impedes local peacebuilding and efforts to support it. Political and governmental actors are at times actively involved in inciting different groups against each other.
- Corruption and manipulation of youth reinforces tribalism and polarisation between different groups.
- The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons, and lack of success in disarmament efforts, is a major threat to peace.

- Local organisations and actors are looking for support to strengthen their knowledge and capacity in peacebuilding, mediation and community engagement.

Key opportunities for local peacebuilding

- Local organisations and actors can continue to access local communities even during times of conflict.
- Local organisations and actors can draw on local and traditional knowledge and a high degree of local legitimacy, to engage in peacebuilding.
- Local peacebuilding can include a focus on addressing conflict issues in providing alternative livelihoods for youth or natural resources where there is scarcity, and on disarmament.
- Local peacebuilding is supported by a variety of actors at the local level, including specifically established peace committees, traditional leaders, religious leaders and government actors, including law and justice.

How can the international and national mutually reinforce each other?

Local organisations and actors look to international organisations for support in terms of funding, training and capacity development. International organisations can lobby for and access funding and international expertise to support local peacebuilders. They can also play a role in making sure local perspectives are heard and integrated into political peace processes. It is important to include local issues in political peace processes. Doing so would enhance the likelihood of political agreements being implemented.

Conclusion

This mapping exercise shows there are a number of local organisations and actors that engage in peacebuilding. Local peace committees, traditional and religious leaders have played, and can continue to play, a role in helping resolve inter-community, intra-community and cross-border conflicts. But funding has been largely diverted to humanitarian needs. International development actors classify peacebuilding as a 'post-conflict' activity only. But this mapping has

shown a great need for more work at the local level, even whilst the war continues.

Recommendations

Local ownership

Sustained peace can only be achieved when local communities take ownership of local peacebuilding efforts.

Long-term peacebuilding

Local peacebuilding must take a long term approach to successfully engage in complex conflicts and rebuild community relations.

Disarmament

Local peacebuilding efforts should include work on disarmament, but this needs to be well-coordinated and transparent.

Community dialogue and inclusion

Local peacebuilding should include bottom-up and inclusive dialogue processes. This way, local norms and traditions can be built upon, whilst at the same time including groups that are not always included in peacebuilding, such as women and youth.

Strengthening connecting factors

Strengthening activities and relationships that build connections between different groups - like trade and markets - can reinforce peacebuilding efforts.

Create employment opportunities for youth

Supporting alternative livelihood opportunities for youth can help prevent them from being drawn into violence.

Support local NGOs

Local NGOs can be supported to strengthen their capacities to effectively mitigate violent local conflicts.

Background on conflict and peacebuilding in Unity State

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan gained independence, seceding from Sudan. The secession followed a referendum vote for independence held on January 9th 2011 as stipulated in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA ended more than two decades of war between the north and the south of Sudan. After gaining independence, South Sudan embarked on a rocky statebuilding process characterised by a declining economic outlook and numerous internal conflicts.

South Sudan's current conflicts can be traced to its long history of conflict as the southern region of the Sudan. The first civil war in the south of Sudan began before Sudan's independence in 1956. In August 1955, sections of the military in Torit revolted in what came to be known as the Torit mutiny, setting in motion Sudan's first post-independence war (Anyanya 1) which raged on until the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement in 1972. A 10 year period of peace followed the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, until war broke out again in 1983 in what is referred to as Sudan's second civil war (SPLA/M war). This conflict lasted for 21 years until the signing of the CPA in 2005. The CPA guaranteed a referendum on independence for Southern Sudan after an interim period of six years in which both the south and the north were to make the option of remaining a united Sudan attractive. On 9 January 2009 at the end of the six years interim period, the people of southern Sudan overwhelmingly voted for Independence, leading to the secession of Southern Sudan and the birth of the Republic of South Sudan on 9 July 2011.

As an administrative unit, Unity was created following the reorganisation of Sudan's internal boundaries in 1994. This created 10 administrative regions in the south from the previous three regions of Equatoria, Greater Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal. At the end of Sudan's north - south civil war in 2005 and South Sudan's independence in 2011, these 10 administrative units were maintained. However in October 2015 the South Sudan cabinet, in an extraordinary meeting chaired by President Salva Kiir Mayandit, approved the expansion of South Sudan's primary administrative divisions from 10 states to 28. South Sudan's population is estimated to be around 8.2 million people according to the Sudan national housing and population census of 2008. The population of Unity according to the 2008 census was 585,801 with 300,247 of the population

being male, and 285.554 female. Unity State makes up 7.1% of the national population¹.

Because of its long history of conflict, the 2008 census was the first census in which the south was fully included. It indicated high levels of socio-economic underdevelopment in the south. Underdevelopment is central to South Sudan's history of conflict both as a motivation and cause of conflicts but also as a result of conflicts.



Post-independence, South Sudan has been involved in protracted armed conflicts involving militias fighting the government, inter-communal and inter-tribal fighting and cattle raiding, as well as cattle based conflicts. Despite the

¹<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/750842/11453911/1301368226337/Statistical+Year+Book+For+Southern+Sudan+2010+Final.pdf?token=cYqrK6NnhdCKLyTxZi8i5RA5Gk%3D>

high hopes embodied by South Sudanese at independence, present realities are those of squandered opportunities with socially fractured and disenfranchised communities unable to build a peaceful and cohesive society.

Within the context of Unity, confrontations between armed groups and fights amongst tribes and clans have had devastating socio-economic consequences for the communities involved. Although these communities have a long history of conflict with the research process in Unity unveiling cycles of conflicts that have been ongoing for more than four decades, there are indications that the conflicts have gotten worse especially with South Sudan's most recent civil war.

In December 2013, a political party dispute evolved into an armed conflict to become South Sudan's first post-independence civil war, perpetrating divisions not only in Unity but across South Sudan. The civil war and policies that encouraged the polarisation of communities by political players have edged even previously peaceful communities to fight against one another. South Sudan's post-December 2013 civil war entrenched political, social and economic divisions in the country that have permeated local communities.

Conflicts that for decades manifested as inter-tribal feuds have with the 2013 civil war morphed into inter-clan conflicts with ethnic undertones, drawing local communities into the national civil war. Unity has been especially affected with communities taking sides with the warring parties: the Government - Sudan People Liberation Army /Movement (SPLA/M) - and the rebels SPLA/M In Opposition (IO)². This has worsened inter-community violence and existing cycles of violence driven by extreme poverty and cultural practices like the cattle economy and its cultural necessities like dowry and high bride price that continue to provide a basis for the reoccurrence of inter-communal violence.

Apart from the civil war, other historical conflicts like those amongst migrating pastoralists from the north in search of water, pasture and host communities along the south and north border areas also evolved with South Sudan's independence. Before independence from Sudan, Southern Sudan had been involved in two civil wars with the Sudan Government and Sudanese seasonal nomadic pastoralists who often doubled up as government militias. Although the national conflict was resolved with the 2005 CPA, violent conflicts have continued between Sudanese pastoralists and South Sudanese communities. These conflicts have been fuelled by historical mistrust and rivalries, changing political dynamics along the undemarcated border areas and competition over scarce resources like water and pasture. Yet, these communities are mutually dependent and must continue to co-exist. In Unity, Sudanese pastoralists have

² Small Arms Survey - The Conflict in Unity State (<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/facts-figures/south-sudan/conflict-of-2013-14/the-conflict-in-unity.html>)

followed the same migration patterns for generations; migrating South from what is now South Kordofan to Parieng, Abiemnom, Mayom, Guit and other areas in South Sudan.

Local and international actors have offered a mix of local level peacebuilding programmes to lessen conflicts emanating from this migration and other local level conflicts in Unity, since the signing of the CPA in 2005. This mapping exercise set out to map peacebuilding organisations working at the local level in Unity and their capacities, with the aim of providing insights into the opportunities and challenges for local level peacebuilding in Unity, and how these efforts can best be supported. This report summarises that exercise, the research process and the methodology adopted. It also presents key findings from the process whilst drawing conclusions and offering recommendations.

Methodology

The purpose of the mapping was to identify competent and effective local peacebuilders in Greater Unity State, South Sudan and work with them to help understand the obstacles and opportunities for local peacebuilding. We define local 'peacebuilders' as any of the following:

- Registered NGOs or CBOs which are conducting peacebuilding activities or plan to conduct peacebuilding activities.
- Formally or informally constituted committees made up of local people who have a peacebuilding or community cohesion function (such as local peace committees). This should include dormant peace committees that could be re-established or revived.
- Religious groups (Christian, Muslim, Animist and other religious leaders) who are actively working for peace.
- Other civil society actors, including media stakeholders (radio and newspaper journalists) businesses or business associations (such as local chambers of commerce) and traditional leaders (local elders, chiefs etc.) who are active in building peace in their community.

The mapping was carried out in two ways. First, an initial desk review of the existing secondary information with regard to the peacebuilding work in Unity state was done. Second, in-depth interviews with peacebuilders in the communities were conducted through questionnaires. Central to this approach was the involvement of people affected by conflict at the local level. This included participatory approaches to engage conflict-affected people in identifying the criteria of what makes a 'good' peacebuilder/organisation and then identifying the local agents that meet those criteria.

The selection of respondents was based on their role in peacebuilding. After the completion of the survey work, a consultative round table meeting was organised in Juba. The Juba consultation brought together international and local peacebuilding organisations to discuss the state of peacebuilding in South Sudan more broadly and investigate the challenges and opportunities for local peacebuilding, including the role of international actors and how they could best support these initiatives. The consultation helped place the conflicts in Unity within the broader national narrative and identified linkages between the evolving national level conflict and conflicts at the local level. Annex 4 provides more details on the Juba consultations.

Key Findings

- 47 peacebuilding organisations - 37 local and 10 international were identified in Unity state.
- Nearly all local peacebuilding organisations do not have sustainable funding options.
- The post December 2013 civil war in South Sudan has affected the availability of funding for peacebuilding with an international focus and donor priorities have switched to humanitarian assistance.
- Inaccessibility of communities in Unity due to poor road and communication networks has hindered interventions in local conflicts that have developed into complex cycles of violence.
- The national civil war has had a significant impact at the local level in Unity, exaggerating local divisions and conflicts by providing local communities with more sophisticated weapons in an ongoing arms race between the Government of South Sudan and the rebels SPLM-IO.
- Over 40 different conflicts were identified in Unity.

- Despite peacebuilding actors and organisations interviewed indicating they implemented peacebuilding activities, only two of the over 40 different conflicts identified in the mapping process are being addressed by one international actor and three local actors, indicating disparities between peacebuilding activities implemented by peacebuilding organisations and real local peacebuilding needs.
- No international peacebuilding organisation is currently addressing cross-border conflicts involving Sudan-South Sudan pastoralists and host communities. There are local peace committees formed previously with the help of Concordis International. These committees continue to mediate conflicts between nomadic pastoralists from Sudan and host communities in South Sudan. However the committees do not have financial and other logistical resources to further expand their work.
- The presence of small arms and light weapons in the communities has contributed to sustaining cycles of violence. The ongoing civil war in the county is contributing to a remilitarisation of local communities, providing new guns and ammunitions to youth on both sides of the conflict and worsening inter-clan and inter communal fighting in Unity.
- The importance of local peacebuilders cannot be understated. The establishment of local peace committees has worked well in initiating and sustaining local level peace processes. Joint Peace Committees along South Sudan and Sudan border region which were financially and technically supported by organisations such as Concordis International have continued to work independently in the absence of funding. Supporting such peace committees could broaden their efforts.
- Traditional systems operating outside the confines of the state have been especially effective as the primary form of social control, dispute resolution and reconciliation as already weak state based mechanisms have collapsed in the post-2013 political and economic crisis³. Formal law and justice systems are constrained by many financial, technical and logistical factors, rendering them unable to support complex peacebuilding needs at the local level. The slowness of formal state structures to prevent or react to conflicts is a reflection of how fragile and difficult the task is. It means there is a compelling case for the strengthening of localised traditional justice systems as a potential area of investment for peacebuilding work.

³ Although traditional justice mechanisms have become an important component in local peacebuilding efforts, their inclusion in peacebuilding processes without further consideration risks further entrenching and institutionalising existing traditional patriarchal community systems exclusionary to women and youth.

Findings: Peacebuilding organisations in 'Unity State'

A wide range of peacebuilding organisations exist in Unity State. These include community groups such as women's associations; youth networks; locally established peace committees; religious groups (most active are the Catholic Church, Malakal Diocese [Leer and Bentiu parish] and Presbyterian Church of South Sudan); international and local non-profit organisations; local government departments and traditional authorities.

International Peacebuilding Organisations

In the mapping process 12 international peacebuilding organisations were identified as major players in peacebuilding in Unity state. Of these, 10 were interviewed directly in the mapping process in Unity. Concordis International was identified as having worked with and formed local peace committees in Guit, Parieng, Rubkona and Abiemnom but had closed down operations due to lack of funding. AECOM as the sole implementer of the American government peacebuilding programmes under the VISTAS programme have a nationwide presence including in Unity. However, the data collectors were unable to reach any local representatives of the organisation in the mapping process at the county level. The questionnaires yielded detailed information on the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding in Unity. The Juba consultations then added further discussions on such challenges and opportunities. Both the questionnaires and Juba consultations pointed to a reduction in the number of peacebuilding organisations working in Unity due to insecurity, population displacement and a priority shift to humanitarian assistance, resulting in a lack of funding for peacebuilding.

All the international organisations interviewed identified closely related challenges and opportunities in relation to their peacebuilding support efforts. Most common were challenges relating to a change of donor focus from peacebuilding and development to humanitarian assistance in the evolving conflict context in South Sudan. Organisations described how, with the growing emergency crisis, international funding has been diverted to focus solely on the area of humanitarian assistance. Peacebuilding is seen as belonging in a different 'phase' of 'post-conflict', or not viewed as a priority in a context of humanitarian emergency. Another key challenge lies in the area of accessibility, with poor infrastructure - both in terms of roads and telecommunications - and seasonal rains making travel very difficult. Added to this was the ongoing situation of continued insecurity and fighting, conflict and the unpredictability of the security situation. This combination of problems of accessibility and funding has resulted in fewer resources and possibilities for transport, as well as

limited staff to engage with communities and focus on peacebuilding. International organisations also noted a lack of willingness by government actors to facilitate peacebuilding or even basic access for humanitarian assistance. High levels of politicisation, nepotism and corruption obstruct opportunities to work on peacebuilding. At times, political and government actors are actively engaged in inciting communities against each other. Organisations questioned whether the national level peace efforts and agreements - as most recently expressed in the August 2015 agreement - were inclusive enough of local points of view, and able to 'reach' the local level. They also pointed to the strengthening of this connection between the local and national as an opportunity to build more effective peacebuilding efforts.

Other opportunities identified included the fact that communities are asking for longer-term development and peacebuilding assistance, in addition to immediate emergency relief. Supporting communities with local peacebuilding efforts was seen as an opportunity. Existing strengths of international organisations lie in the availability of staff, resources and expertise. International organisations can help train and build capacity in communities and local organisations on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. They have the resources to organise conferences, meetings, transport and training, and can be a link to connect government officials - including those beyond the state level - to local level peacebuilding efforts.

The table below presents a summary SWOT analysis, while more detail can also be found in annexes 4 and 5.

International Actors: SWOT analysis

| STRENGTHS: | WEAKNESSES: |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Office space, experienced staff, vehicles, ICT equipment and financial capacity for the implementation of programmes | Limited communication and transport facilities |
| Teamwork, community mobilisation capacity and building relationships with other stakeholders | Insufficient resources for development of staff capacity and facilitation of transport |
| Capacity and resources for mobilisation and facilitation of training and conferences | Lack of transport facilities for the implementation of programmes |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Actively engage senior government officials to work for peace and reconciliation in South Sudan | Fewer staff for programmes due to lack of funding |
| OPPORTUNITY: | THREATS: |
| Support to Communities | Politicians incite communities against one another |
| Training of South Sudanese politicians to denounce violence | Insecurity due to ongoing civil war obstructs delivery of humanitarian services and products |
| There are humanitarian gaps which require intervention | Lack of political will to support peacebuilding and Peace |
| Available funding sources | Government hindering humanitarian access |
| Cooperation with local authorities | Collapse of August 2015 peace agreement (ARCISS) and renewed fighting |
| Full implementation of the Peace Agreement and the better integration of local level and national level peacebuilding efforts | Poor infrastructure and road network create limited accessibility |
| Communities are receptive and supportive of development work | Prioritisation of emergency, lack of funding for peacebuilding |

Local Peacebuilding Organisations

The mapping process identifies 47 actors in peacebuilding in Unity state. These included formal and informal actors such as local non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, local government, traditional authorities, women and youth groups and trader organisations. The questionnaires yielded detailed information on the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding in Unity. The Juba consultations then added further discussions on such challenges and opportunities, also adding a national perspective of local and national level peace processes.

Some of the challenges identified by local organisations reflected the same difficulties as those pointed to by INGOs. The redirection of funding away from any kind of developmental activities towards an almost exclusive focus on humanitarian assistance is having an effect on local organisations as well, with few funds available for work on peacebuilding, and fewer INGOs with international expertise in this area able to continue supporting them. Other challenges related to accessibility are similar. For local organisations a lack of communications and transport translates into problems of “walking long distances” to reach communities.

But local organisations also identified a series of challenges unique to them. The need to learn more, build capacity and strengthen the ability of local actors to engage in peacebuilding, mediation and conflict resolution was a recurrent theme. A lack of skilled personnel and limited opportunities for training to increase their skills and engagement in peacebuilding was identified as a core weakness.

In terms of threats, local organisations are well aware of the key constraints to successful local peacebuilding efforts. Nepotism and corruption at various levels - including at times local community leaders - reinforce, and are reinforced by, tribalism and polarisation between the different parties to the war. The wide spread of weapons is also a major challenge, in particular where it concerns cattle rustling involving youth.

But for local organisations, insecurity and ongoing conflict are less of a challenge in terms of accessibility. In fact, their ability to continue to reach communities, even when they are displaced or in Protection of Civilians (POC) sites, is one of their major strengths. They have the access, local connections and local knowledge that enables them to engage in local level peacebuilding. They are trusted by local communities and knowledgeable about traditional peacebuilding methods, including relevant local actors and customary processes. This gives local organisations a high degree of legitimacy when it comes to engaging in peacebuilding.

Local actors and organisations listed a number of opportunities for specific engagement. These included a focus on youth, for example providing life skills and more mobile schools to help decrease cattle rustling and engage in locally-led disarmament efforts. With additional resources and training, local organisations feel they can expand peace campaigns, help build better relationships between people and engage government at the local level.

The strengthening of courts, or the establishment of courts or peace committees in specific border locations can help to reinforce and re-establish

past or existing agreements between nomadic pastoralists and host communities.

Addressing conflict issues, such as water scarcity or other livelihood issues, is an important part of local peacebuilding work. Traditional leaders, religious leaders, government actors and the justice system all have roles to play. As with the international organisations, local organisations also see their work as part of the bigger picture, in that it is needed to help implement higher level political peace agreements.

More details can be found in the SWOT table below and in annexes 4 and 5.

Local Peacebuilding Organisations SWOT analysis

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local knowledge and experience in mediating intra/inter-community conflicts | Lack of skilled personnel and limited training opportunities in implementation of peacebuilding programmes |
| Trusted by the communities and legitimacy in conflict intervention | Lack of transport and communication facilities |
| Ability to operate without restrictions as local organisations, not subject to evacuations | Lack of capacity and financial resources |
| Knowledge of traditional justice mechanism which is a vital component of settlement of disputes | Operational difficulties in paying staff and volunteers |
| Capacity to implement peacebuilding programmes | Staff capacity shortcomings in conflict sensitivity in peacebuilding, impartiality, mediation and community engagement |
| Experienced and committed team with available volunteers | Limited understanding of inter-community conflicts |
| Fully functional offices in Juba and locally in the counties and payams | Inaccessibility of communities due to poor roads |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ability to reach local communities, even when displaced or in the POC sites | |
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| Sustain existing agreements signed between nomadic pastoralists and host communities | Obstruction of free movement of people by the government, lack of political will from the parties to stop war |
| Implementation of the Peace Agreement | No donor support, change of priorities from peacebuilding / development to emergency, lack of funding to address conflicts at local level |
| Encourage youth to abandon cattle raiding, and establishment of joint courts at counties and border areas to handle resulting conflicts | Inaccessibility: poor road network and rainy season hinder monitoring of service delivery, no mobile network |
| Support from international community and funding from international organisations | Change in governance system (creation of more states and counties) |
| Disarmament of youth with firearms and provide alternative activities like youth centres for peacebuilding activities | Political instability due to rampant corruption, poor governance, tribalism, nepotism, poor management of resources |
| Expand community outreach and involve them in campaigns to stop violence | Ongoing civil war, firearms in the hands of civilians |
| Construction of peace centres and police posts to support peacebuilding and crime prevention | Lack of International peacebuilders to support peacebuilding activities by informal peace actors |
| Expand number of staff and volunteers involved in peacebuilding | Lack of functional judicial system in the county |
| | Support from international community and funding from international organisations |

Findings: Types of conflict in Unity

The mapping also assessed causes, actors and the status of local level conflicts in Unity. We found that several violent conflicts in Unity exist and continue to have devastating effects on the communities. These conflicts involve families, clans, tribes and cross-border dynamics. We have categorised them into three categories: between communities from Unity and communities from different states of South Sudan (inter-community conflicts); between different clans or sections within Unity (intra-community conflicts); and cross-border conflicts. We have presented a brief narrative about each of these categories of local level conflict below.

Inter-community conflicts between communities in Unity State, Warrap and Lakes States

This conflict category has been ongoing for many years and can be dated back to the 1900s. It occurs along the swamps (toch) in Wunlit triangle which is a convergence of grazing corridors between Unity, Warrap and Lakes States. There are two major ethnic groups involved in this conflict; Dinka of Warrap and Lakes States; and Nuer of Unity State. Nuer and Dinka have a common history and follow similar norms, celebrations and community practices due to a shared ancestry and various aspects of their similar agro-pastoralist ways of life. The two groups have for generations lived side by side as neighbours and shared common grazing grounds and water points, and have even inter-married.

For many Nilotic people cattle is everything. It provides food, pays dowry and compensation, is slaughtered as offerings to gods and used for the performance of rituals for forgiveness and reconciliation. While cattle are an important source of wealth among the many Nilotic people, they have unfortunately been a source of deadly violence as well. The practice of cattle raiding has evolved from traditional methods of raiding using primitive weapons, usually done under camouflage and in ways that do not harm people, to more sophisticated cattle raiding which involves the use of firearms, massive killing of people and the burning of homes. Even the frequency of raids has increased exponentially. Factors fuelling this escalation of the violence in cattle raiding include high bride prices, poverty and proliferations of firearms.

There have been some well-known peacebuilding initiatives such as the 'people to people' peace process which is sometimes referred to as the 'Wunlit peace covenant'. This was facilitated in 1998 by Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) in Wunlit, a small rural village in Warrap State, to mitigate or resolve conflicts in Wunlit triangle. In recent years AECOM has been receiving funding from USAID to build capacity of traditional authority in Panyjiar, Rumbek and Mayom so as

to enable the traditional authority to address conflicts in Wunlit area. However, instances of cattle raiding have continued to occur.

Intra-community conflicts between different sections and clans in Unity State

Conflict between clans in Unity are not new. What is new is how it has developed to a more dangerous level. In the past, up to five years ago, girl elopement or early girl-child pregnancy used to be a common trigger for fighting between youth, but elders could intervene and resolve the dispute using existing traditional conflict management mechanisms. In those days, fighting involved non-lethal weapons such as sticks or the occasionally limited use of less-lethal weapons like spears.

Nowadays, fighting between clans seems to have taken a dramatic turn. It has now evolved to include cattle raiding, the raping of women and abduction of children. It has also involved the use of heavy modern weapons against clans. Arguably, the fighting in Unity has been encouraged by the national government which perceives the region as a rebel SPLA- IO stronghold due to its ethnic composition. That the government has used undue tactics in Unity to create fear among the civil population perceived to be sympathising with the SPLAM-IO is documented in numerous reports⁴, including UN accounts.

In South Sudan's ongoing civil war, age old clan conflicts have been drawn into the national conflict. For example, in April 2015, youth from Mayom County (which is a Government controlled territory) with backing from the Government of South Sudan were armed with modern weapons and tanks to fight alongside the army. They were ordered to march to Rubkona, Guit, Koch, Mayiendit and Leer, all SPLM-IO territories. Combined forces of armed youth and army successfully dislodged the SPLM-IO with reports of forced killings, raping, looting and burning down villages to the ground⁵.

Yet, local populations in the affected counties viewed the destruction of their properties and displacement of their populations not as part of the national civil war conducted by the government's fighting against SPLM-IO but as inter-clan fighting perpetrated by people of Mayom. Subsequently, youth from Rubkona attempted to launch revenge attacks against Mayom but were repulsed by the Government. There is now a collective bitterness shared by the affected populations, creating the risk of a revenge attack in the future.

⁴<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/21/south-sudan-widespread-atrocities-government-offensive>

⁵Flash Human Rights Report on the Escalation of Fighting in Greater Upper Nile. (UNMISS, April/May 2015)

These types of incidents have recurred throughout Unity. In April 2015 Koch youth joined the government which again armed them with modern weapons in an offensive that attacked Mayiendit and Leer. As a result, more cattle were raided, women raped and children abducted. This has now developed into bitter inter-clan fights between the three communities⁶.

In the current climate intra-community violence has become more complex, to the extent that it has involved both state and non-state actors. This also indicates that the conflict cycles now require rigorous and longer-term peacebuilding approaches. Although every peacebuilder interviewed did indicate that they intended to address some aspects of the intra-community conflicts, only a few of them had the capacity or funding to address them fully. The rest have taken on work in areas where funding opportunities remain open, in particular projects that fit with humanitarian assistance, including projects on gender-based violence, livelihoods, water, hygiene, nutrition and sanitation.

Cross-border conflicts

Cross-border conflict between Sudan and South Sudan is both resource-based and political. South Sudan shares one of its longest borders with Sudan - stretching to approximately 2,000 km. The area holds many natural resources such as water and pastures, minerals and oil. Conflict at the political level negatively impacts on the development of the border regions and peaceful community relations. Parts of the border remain undemarcated and disputed. Mineral rich areas like Kafi-Kenji enclave, Mengenis, Heglij and Mile 14 are some of the bitterly contested areas. The two states fought a bitter war over Heglij in April 2012. As a result, Sudan closed its border with South Sudan while at the same time South Sudan ceased oil flows through Sudan.

Concerted efforts by the African Union High Level Implementation panel (AUHIP) led to the signing of a cooperation agreement (with 9 sub-agreements) by both countries in Addis Ababa in September 2012. These agreements include: reopening of the border for trade; reopening of oil flows; freedom of movement, residency, owning or disposing properties for citizen of both States; demilitarisation of the border and support of economic development for each state. So far, oil is flowing through Sudan but none of the remaining eight agreements have been implemented. A lack of political will combined with accusations of harbouring or supporting rebel groups by both governments remain stumbling blocks for a peaceful implementation of the 8 remaining agreements.

⁶The State of Human Rights in the Protracted Conflict in South Sudan (UNMISS, December 2015)

On the other hand, the migration of Sudanese nomadic pastoralists into South Sudan plays an important role in the relationship between the two countries. Traditionally, Sudanese pastoralists move south to what are now counties of South Sudan, in search for better pastures for their animals. The seasonal migration ensures the survival of approximately 12 million animals which include cattle, sheep and camels crossing the border to South Sudan. About 8 million of these cross to Upper Nile States, 2 million to Unity and 2 million to Northern Bahr el Gazal and Western Bahr el Gazal States⁷. On average, migration begins in December and ends in July, but it could start as early as October and end as early as May or as late as August depending on changes in climatic conditions. These nomads stay longer in South Sudan than Sudan, usually 8 months of each year.



Traders in South Sudan

There are pros and cons with regard to this massive seasonal migration. It is argued that around half of South Sudan's population lives along the border with Sudan⁸. This is a long way from the capital of Juba which is closer to the borders of Uganda and Kenya where most of the goods that come to South Sudan originate. The poor road network in the county makes it difficult for goods from the capital to reach communities along the Sudan border. Where this is possible, the cost of such goods is reported to be ten times more than the price in Juba.

⁷ More Than A Line: Sudan's North - South Border September 2010 (USIP-Concordis Report)

⁸ A Study of the Potential of the Border Region of South Sudan & Sudan in Light Manufacturing. <http://concordis.international/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/4237-EGAT-Final-Report-WEB.pdf>

Nomads from Sudan however come to South Sudan with goods from Kordofan or Darfur. This fills in a vital trade gap which not only creates an availability of goods but also provides goods that are cheaper than those from neighbouring East Africa (Kenya and Uganda).

Notwithstanding, nomads bring along animal diseases, destroy farms, create overgrazing and add stress on limited water resources. This results in deadly conflicts between the two communities. Before the independence of South Sudan, these conflicts were easily handled by traditional authorities from both sides. However, after independence, these animals had to cross over an international border that became highly militarised after South Sudan's independence. Hostilities between Sudan and South Sudan as well as multiple taxation of Sudanese pastoralists by authorities in South Sudan have had a negative impact on the relations between communities living along the border and the Sudanese pastoralists. With no alternative grazing options but to migrate south, cycles of conflict between southern host communities and migrating Sudanese pastoralists continue.

An improvement of relationships between Sudanese pastoralists with host communities in South Sudan was visible following intervention from development organisations such as Concordis International. Concordis facilitated a number of migration agreements in Upper Nile, Unity and Northern Bahr el Gazal. There is an increase in interaction and more peaceful management of migration. AECOM is facilitating peaceful migration dialogue between Dinka Malual and Sudanese nomadic pastoralists in Northern Bahr el Gazal. Meanwhile Concordis' programmes in Upper Nile and Unity have come to an end as a result of insufficient funding. However, local peace committees are working to mitigate violence between communities and nomadic pastoralists in Unity and Upper Nile, but logistical and financial challenges obstruct the efforts of the committees. Further analysis of the conflicts in Unity State is presented in the table in Annex 3.

Conclusion

The conflicts in Unity must be addressed at different levels. The war between the government and the SPLA-IO has caused untold destruction in Unity and especially the south of Unity. There is an existing peacebuilding infrastructure with a good network of local and international organisations working in Unity state. The ongoing conflicts in Unity and across South Sudan however continue to have a big impact on the capacities of peacebuilding organisation to carry out

their work. Funding priorities have moved from development to humanitarian response. The sustained state of emergency in South Sudan has resulted in an uncertain operating environment for local and international peacebuilding actors. The impact of dwindling funding opportunities for peacebuilding actors was made clear from the research.

Local informal actors like peace committees and traditional authorities have found new relevance in peacebuilding as a result of shrinking funding opportunities for peacebuilding work. As funding opportunities have shrunk in Unity and local and international organisations have withdrawn from the area, local peace committees have filled the peacebuilding gap left on the local level. They have been most effective along the border areas and along seasonal migration routes, working to resolve conflicts related to the annual seasonal migration of Sudan pastoralists and South Sudanese host communities in Unity. This sums up the importance of local peacebuilders in sustaining local level peace processes.

Despite the current challenges faced by changes to international and regional priorities, with funding for peacebuilding diverted to emergency post December 2013, this enquiry suggested there was lower levels of peacebuilding activity in Unity previously. This was visible in the complex web of conflicts identified, with over 40 different types of conflicts mapped. The inaccessibility of Unity due to poor road and telecommunications networks made intervention difficult before the December 2013 conflict.

Failures in the implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement to end the civil war continue to add to the complexity of local conflict dynamics. The arming of local youth by actors on both sides of the local conflict has exacerbated the intensity of local conflicts in Unity⁹. This is likely to make any future peacebuilding intervention more difficult as the complexities of inter-clan and inter-communal fighting in Unity deepen.

⁹The Conflict in Unity State <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/south-sudan/HSBA-Conflict-Unity-March-2016.pdf>

Recommendations

To better support local peacebuilding and the delivery of more peacebuilding activities in Unity, this research makes the following recommendations to the international community and international and local organisations working to support local peacebuilding:

- ***Local Ownership of Peacebuilding***

Sustained peace can only be achieved by local communities taking ownership of local peacebuilding efforts. Lack of funding was identified as a key challenge in the research process; this was discussed at greater lengths in the Juba consultations. Local organisations were challenged to look at peacebuilding as a tool towards a shared public good of 'peace'. That way the efforts of local actors in peacebuilding are not solely attached to how much money they can get from donors but what they as citizens stand to gain if peace is achieved. This is a hard sell in communities accustomed to donor projects as the only viable interventions. However, for peacebuilding to succeed in South Sudan there must be local ownership of the processes. The involvement of informal local actors should be encouraged to make sure peace efforts are sustained even in the absence of international funding.

- ***Investment in Long Term Peacebuilding***

Sustained and coordinated peacebuilding efforts at local and higher levels could certainly de-escalate tensions, build trust, confidence and cohesion. Peacebuilding in Unity must take a long term approach to successfully disentangle the complex web of conflicts and invest in rebuilding community relations fractured over long periods of conflict, revenge killings and inter-communal animosities.

- ***Disarmament Programme***

The availability of small arms and light weapons and the remilitarisation of youth in Unity in the current civil war, with both the government and the rebels providing a new generation with arms, has worsened inter-clan and inter-communal violence not only in Unity but across the county. Proliferation of firearms in Unity and surrounding areas provide a recipe for continuous violence. Removing arms from communities could reduce the frequency of

inter-clan and inter-communal attacks and the magnitude of losses. It could also gradually lead to less violence and the promotion of stability and development.

Past disarmament initiatives in 2005 through 2008 in South Sudan have not been entirely successful. To a large extent, they have failed to remove guns from the civil population, particularly along the Wunlit triangle. This should not be used as reason not to try again. Rather, future disarmaments should learn from mistakes of the past. Arguably, previous disarmament efforts were done haphazardly and were seen to target some communities whilst leaving others armed. It is inefficient to continue investments in peacebuilding whilst civilian populations and communities continue to acquire arms in a new arms race between the government, the rebels and their perceived affiliate communities. As such, disarming communities is an essential part of sustaining peace but must be carried out within clear guidelines, with adequate overarching policies and clear legal frameworks as well as pragmatic implementation strategies.

- ***Community Dialogue and Inclusion***

An environment which enables parties to conflicts to make decisions in favour of peace and stability can be created through a more bottom-up community dialogue. This can be time consuming, but could reinforce trust and confidence thereby leading to long lasting solutions for violent conflict. Community dialogue can also form the basis for harmonious and community-led disarmament programmes. They could also be used as bottom up entry points for the inclusion of alternative approaches to peacebuilding based on local norms and traditions and including groups otherwise excluded by a highly patriarchal system, such as women and youth.

- ***Strengthen Connecting Factors like Trade and Markets***

In the absence of formal peacebuilding processes, emphasising and expanding on existing connecting factors may provide an incentive for peace within and amongst communities. Trade and markets are a particular area of co-dependency identified in conflicts between South Sudanese host communities and Sudan's pastoralists migrating seasonally to South Sudan.

Previously, the seasonal migration was characterised by cattle raids between the Sudanese and South Sudanese youth, violent clashes and looting. Peacebuilding activities and actors have focused on creating an understanding of the interdependency between Sudan's nomadic pastoralists and host communities in South Sudan. In Mayom and Parieng local peace committees have brokered peace using these interdependencies as the central point. Peace Committees have emphasised the need of South Sudanese to access goods from

Sudan (i.e. salt, soap, oil and flour) versus the need of migrating pastoralists to secure safe passage of their livestock into South Sudan.

The other conflicts identified in this research could also benefit from emphasising areas of co-dependency. Trade and other socio-economic activities could be viable entry points in resolving some of the conflicts identified in the conflict assessment in Annex 3.

- ***Create Employment Opportunities for Youth***

Cattle raiding and other forms of violence are perpetrated by the youth. Vocational training for youth in areas of agriculture, manufacturing of hides and skins, blacksmithing and carpentry works combined with subsequent provisions of small grants to successful trainees could provide sustainable livelihoods for the youth and their families.

- ***Support to Local NGOs***

Many of the local organisations lack capacities to effectively mitigate violent conflicts between communities. They do however have the local knowledge and presence which can be tapped and strengthened with funding from international donors. The changing conflict context in South Sudan has reduced development and peacebuilding funding with a focus on emergency response instead.

For further information or supporting annexes to this report, please contact Peace Direct at info@peacedirect.org