



**Report**

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# Youth perspectives on peace and security: South Sudan

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Cover image: Young artists are painting pictures and peace messages on murals on the streets of Yei town.  
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## Executive summary

Conciliation Resources carried out a study to capture the voices of youth in the context of on-going civil war in South Sudan, in order to contribute to UN Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security. Over 100 young people, which included 32 women and 78 men in focus group discussions and workshops, discussed challenges to their peace and security, what inhibits them from getting involved in peacebuilding, their ideas for building peace and the support and changes needed to enable them to meaningfully participate in peace processes. Participants included both individuals that live in towns, as well as rural areas. They were from cattle camps and locations controlled by the government, or the opposition. Some of the youth were associated to armed groups. This report presents the voices of the individuals who participated in the study.

Young people identified the significant roles they played at the end of the struggle with the North, and subsequent elections; "The South Sudanese youth led the campaign for self-determination for South Sudan in 2011, and their effort contributed to 98% of the population voting for separation." Since then, their participation in high level peace talks has been nominal, and those who went to Addis Ababa for the Agreement on Resolution of Conflicts in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCISS) peace talks "were just handpicked to speak in the political tone of government rather than represent true youth interests."

There is need for credible, organised platforms for youth that cut across ethnic and political boundaries. Progress has been inhibited through the lack of resources and the extension of the number of states from 10 to 32. "The changes in the state structure through the promulgation of new states/ counties has resulted in many youths in new states/ counties not having platforms on which to express their concerns, needs and contributions." Additionally, there is no formal law, as there is for women, requiring the inclusion of youth in political and governance processes and roles. "Youth institutions can also contribute greatly to the achievement of peace in the country. At grass root levels youth were organised in parties, civil society groups and youth leagues and were able to help implement peace resolutions. Also, they are the ones behind the guns and so able to control conflict in cattle camps." As a means

of moving forward, youth from Juba University propose to, "create forums of engagement- for example, between parliament and youth; and for youth to call for the finalisation of the youth policy and its resourcing; there is need for facilitated dialogue - with security agencies; inclusion of peace education and psycho- social support in schools - for example peace clubs."

Tribalism, and the lack of unity between youth from different ethnicities, is preventing the development of collective youth groups. "In the University of Juba, youth are forced to align their views with youth from the same ethnic group", said a female student from the Juba University. A cattle minding youth said, "my gun is my salary, and I have to raid to get something." Furthermore, youth can easily be mobilised into carrying out acts of violence: "I got three guns in 2014 after killing the owners, and I bought some cows and used them in paying dowry." The lack of legitimate employment opportunities, services provided by the government, and external support leaves youth unemployed and living in fear. "Daily life for young people and communities is dominated by the fear of attacks by either other armed groups, government forces or the cattle raiders, we have lost our dignity and freedom."

Small arms proliferation and lawlessness result in increased criminality in the context of high unemployment, "Youth are armed and more powerful than police. So, the police cannot control the rampant youth criminality in the country [...] Excessive small arms sustains destructive conflicts and reduces youth productivity." The absence of an effective government, and policing works to encourage elders to provide arms for youths: "There is no effective governance either by the Interim government or the opposition. Elders have become part of the problem, women too in that they encourage cattle raiding both to support livelihoods and to collect dowries." The tribal forces such as the White Army, Gel-Weng, and Arrow Boys are manipulated by higher level political actors who have turned those governance structures into instruments of war, based on ethnicity, in their quest for power and control over land and resources.

Rape and other violence against women and girls has become an instrument of war, and has caused an upsurge in violence due to men seeking vengeance: "If my sister is raped by a young man, and I have not revenged her, I

will live in shame forever.” At the same time, high bride prices and competition over girls for marriage stimulates cattle raiding. With no regard for the girl’s right to marry a partner of her choice, families tend to accept a man that pays a higher bride price or dowry.

As well as forming platforms for youth action, youth call for the building of skills in peacebuilding, “without proper training in peacebuilding, youth may contribute negatively rather than helping the situation.” “In the era of fast social evolution, youth understand their problems better, and therefore any decisions that affect youth need their participation to a greater degree.” For this, and other initiatives, most youth doubt the capability or will of the government to support them: “Support therefore is needed from the international community for youth initiatives to be effective.” The civil war needs to end: “The insecurity does not allow young people to concentrate on farming, trade, fishing and related activities.” Youth platforms can play a key role in advocating for the implementation of ARCISS through pressure at local and national levels, and insistence on their inclusion in peace dialogues.

The youth also highlight some successful peace dialogues, but it should be noted that their contributions were in implementation and not decision making. From a five-day conference to resolve a conflict in Eastern Equatoria: “One of the main actions is to compensate a victim’s family for their loss: 25 cows, and 120 goats were collected for one soul lost. After the



*Youth call for capacity building in peacebuilding and conflict resolution: “Without proper training in peacebuilding, youth may contribute negatively rather than helping the situation”. © UNICEF Ethiopia/2016/Meklit Mersha*

compensation, elders organised reconciliation and healing in which young people were made to drink the blood of slaughtered animals as a sign of oneness.”

The destitution of women in protected areas results in “most young girls and women practicing prostitution due to lack of finance.” This violence against women, and their near-exclusion from education, and early marriage, is removing most women from any possibility of participating in peacebuilding. “Illiteracy among young women is so high that most women do not know their rights, and cannot claim them.” A teacher in a Protection of Civilians (PoC) camp proposed: “Youth in PoC should have some skill, which can help them get a job when they come out. One of the ways is computer training.”

On a practical level, youth value opportunities to promote social cohesion through non-political activities and the promotion of livelihood opportunities. “Promoting social events such as cultural dances, wrestling, games and other activities to engage youth, are the best way to keep youth together and create friendships.” A programme turning cattle raiders into fishermen needs replication and extension to other livelihood activities: “Evaluation reports indicated that the known raiders targeted became the best fishermen and good law-abiding citizens”. Also, “market development is important: if youth products have markets, youth will be motivated to produce more.”

Going forward, the following recommendations are made: identify and connect youth structures across the country; press for the implementation of ARCISS, or similar peace agreements to end civil war; promote and engage in income-earning activities so youth can turn from illegal to state-building activities; train youth as ambassadors and advocates for peace; disarm and reduce cattle raiding; stimulate public debate on bride price and early marriage; organise pre-cattle migration meetings to agree rights and avoid conflicts; start youth centres to build and share information; advocate for youth and other policies to enable them to participate in governance. All the actions to be undertaken should tackle the abuse of women and promote their rights as a cross-cutting and fundamental issue to achieve their contribution in peacebuilding.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the study

In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). The SCR2250 requested the Secretary General “to carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national and international levels”<sup>1</sup>.

South Sudan is one of the country’s selected for the progress study on youth. This report records the voices and ideas of young people as a contribution to the Secretary General’s task. A cross section of youth living in towns and rural areas, government and opposition controlled areas, and those in camps for the displaced under the protection of the UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites participated.

To begin with, there is a need to define who the youth are in the South Sudanese context. Across the world, there is no universally accepted definition for the term youth: it depends on the social institutions, culture, and country. The 2008 South Sudan Housing and Population Census, and CIA fact sheet considers youth to be in the age bracket of 15-35 years. The United Nations, defines youth as individuals between 15-24<sup>2</sup>. The World Bank considers those aged between 12-24 years as youth but emphasises this can vary by country<sup>3</sup>, Box 1.

In cattle camps of South Sudan where little is known about birth date, members of the Akobo Youth Association define youth as “those who are physically fit and able to participate in organised violence such as cattle raids, engage in communal fights, and are in charge of protecting villages.”

Even though there is little literature on youth participation in peace and security in South Sudan, youth are sometimes represented in peace meetings, and particularly in local peace initiatives. During the peace negotiations in South Sudan that culminated in the adoption of ARCISS in August 2015<sup>4</sup>, a youth participant attending the negotiations reported that “two youth participated on the government side, and another two on the opposition side.” However, members of the South Sudanese Youth Union said, “the two youth from government were just handpicked to speak in the political tone of government rather than represent true youth interests. The Youth Union was not asked to nominate any representatives to the peace talks.”

At local, rural levels, youth are included in inter community dialogues because elders know that if they are not, they may disrupt peace efforts through their armed presence in cattle camps. Most decisions are taken by chiefs, and local authority elders and leaders. Thus, while youth may not make decisions, their active participation is often seen to increase the likelihood of sustained peace. Furthermore, because youth are both actors and victims in

### Box 1: Defining youth

Qualitatively, youth is generally defined as the stage during which a person moves from dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood). This transition involves several shifts, which present unique challenges:

- moving from attending school to seeking work and independent sources of income;
- moving from parental home to new living arrangements;
- forming close relationships outside the family, often resulting in marriage and children.

1 UN SCR2250(2015) <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

2 <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

3 The World Bank Youth Development: Children & Youth: A Resource Guide for World Bank Staff. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCY/Publications/20540811/WB-C&Y%20Resource%20Guide%20complete.pdf> Page 35.

4 [https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/final\\_proposed\\_compromise\\_agreement\\_for\\_south\\_sudan\\_conflict.pdf](https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/final_proposed_compromise_agreement_for_south_sudan_conflict.pdf)

South Sudan conflicts, they are the only capable force to implement the peace agreements. In urban areas youth are poorly represented in peace discussions, or not present at all. That young people attend peace talks, even if not as decision makers, shows recognition of their roles and provides opportunities to find out how decisions are made. Young people in this study recognise the need to form and strengthen their organisations so they can participate with more authority.

Historically, South Sudan youth played key roles in the liberation struggle. "For instance, most of the high-ranking governments officials of ruling party Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) joined the liberation struggle before completing their high school. Youth have contributed to the achievement of South Sudan's independence."<sup>5</sup> While an ambitious claim, youth in Juba expressed the view that "the South Sudanese youth led the campaign for self-determination for South Sudan in 2011, and their efforts contributed significantly to 98% vote for separation." In fact, the international community's strong support to the referendum was largely through training and deploying youth in technical and information roles, which increased their influence on voters, even though they were not in political decision-making positions. Juba youth also claimed that "other milestone events in the country, such as the 2008 population and housing census and 2010 general elections were mostly facilitated by youth."

Currently, in the country there are many youth-led civil society organisations. Through supporting these organisations there is potential to increase opportunities and avenues for youth participation in governance. Youth civil society organisations are close to communities and know how to fill the gaps in development, which are less well understood by political leaders.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 was based on 10 states and the 2015 ARCISS peace agreement followed the same 10-state constitution. The government has now promulgated division of the country into a total of 32 states. In reality, budget limitations prevent

full operation across 32 states. The South Sudan Youth Union is present in all 10 states and counties, but not across the states of the new structure, also due to limitations in resources. "There are party and religion affiliated youth groups, and also organisations such as trade unions that are dominated by youth across the country, though not represented formally in all but the 10 former states" a youth leader in Awerial reported.

## 1.2 Methodology

**Area for study and participants:** In addition to the national capital Juba, three locations were chosen in rural areas to meet with, and collect the views of, youth. The locations are Mingkaman in the former Lakes State, and Akobo in the former Jonglei State, representing government and opposition controlled areas respectively. Additional discussions with youth were held in Yambio, former Western Equatorial State. Akobo and Mingkaman are similar, in that youth in both are engaged in cattle rustling with neighbouring communities. The youth are armed, posing a threat to law enforcement agencies, which are generally perceived to be weak and under equipped. There are also far more youth than government or opposition forces in those locations. In Yambio, a crop farming community, the youth are seen as protectors of the community from external aggression, including pastoralist communities that migrate to their community in search of water and pasture for the cattle. In Juba city, the participants of the focus groups were from all greater regions: Bhar El Ghazel, Equatoria and Upper Nile. In Akobo, and the Juba PoC camps, most participants were of Nuer origin. In Mingkaman, Dinka youth predominated while in Yambio all the participants were Zande. In Yambio, current Gbudwe state<sup>6</sup>, discussions with local youth associated with armed groups added further insights.

In addition, the national NGO, Totto Chan Centre for Child Trauma, organised workshops with youth<sup>7</sup> and political leaders across parties<sup>8</sup> concerned with the promotion of peace. The research also benefited from these workshops.

5 Some of the SPLM leaders who joined movement as students are: Ex-chief of Staff General Oyai Deng Ajak, Ex chief of General Staff Gen. James Hoth Mai, Ex-Interior Minister Gier Chuang Aluong, Ex-Deputy Defence Minister Dr. Majak Ago, among others.

6 Before subdivision of the country into 32 state, Yambio town , was the headquarters of Western Equatoria state

7 Totto Chan Centre for Child Trauma in Collaboration with Conciliation Resources: Peace Building Workshop. Juba, 12-14 July 2017.

8 Human Rights Consultative Workshop, 21-22 June 2017

The July workshop included youth from faith groups (Episcopal Church of South Sudan, Catholic church and the Islamic Council), and political parties (for example, SPLM, SPLM-In Opposition, Labour party; United Salvation Democratic Front-Mainstream party), where participants reviewed the South Sudan Interim Constitution and Draft Youth policy. One participant summed up the discussions: "All members who attended the workshop pray to disseminate and spread the gospel of peacebuilding." Participants of the June workshop, attended by 12 political leaders from all main parties, agreed on the importance of rolling out human rights laws nationwide, including to armed groups, and to include them in school curricula.

**Data collection:** Focus group discussions (FGD) were the main method used for primary data collection. Each focus group constituted between eight and 10 people to help ensure good participation and effective management of the discussions. A total of 106 youth from town, cattle camps, and youth associated with armed groups, participated in FGDs, of which 72 were male and 34 were female. Separate FGDs were arranged for female youth to ensure their active participation and contributions because their opinions were suppressed when in male dominated groups.

### 1.3 Challenges to the research

At the beginning of the study, FGDs tended to be mainly attended and dominated by male participants. Most female participants, especially in rural areas, felt restricted by culture to speak in the presence of men, it being considered disrespectful to do so. They were therefore reluctant to attend mixed groups. As a consequence, separate FGDs were organised to improve female attendance and ensure the participation of women. Permission first had to be sought from parents of girls for them to attend meetings.

Another challenge was to determine who constituted the youth. Membership of youth organisations of South Sudan (for example, South Sudan Youth Forum, University Student Youth Union, SPLM Youth League, Nuer Youth Union, etc) usually ranges between 15-45. But South Sudan law is silent on a legal definition of youth. However, other institutions and documents, as mentioned above, define youth as being between 15-35 years old, and state that

youth represent 70% of the total population of the country.

In each location, the approach was to locate the youth office and youth leaders, and request for FGDs with the youth. Some of those who attended FGDs appeared to be outside the age bracket of the UN definition (up to 24) but fell within the South Sudan definition, which is 15 to 35 years. However, some participants fit within both the UN and South Sudan defined age ranges for youth. In fact, 75% of those who participated in the FGDs were in the age range of 15-24, which is within the UN definition.

Sociologically, youth attending the FGDs and other discussions were drawn from towns, and cattle camps. Youth associated with armed groups also participated. Youth in South Sudan communities are considered protectors of communities and properties from external threats. They often herd cattle during the grazing time and protect them from raiders, and/or rescue the raided cattle once raiding has happened. Furthermore, where there is no transport to health facilities; youth carry the sick, and bury the dead. In the communities studied, all these protection and service roles are voluntary because they are believed to be part of a youth's duty and responsibility.

In the case of Nuer and Dinka youth, the responsibility to defend members of their tribe has been extended to fighting for politicians. This is based on the assumption that politicians' agendas are in the interest of the community, however, in reality, the agendas are rather towards seeking political power. FGD participants in Juba expressed this view.

These varied sociological underpinnings of the values and motivations of youth are difficult to unravel in the context of a study aimed at determining the aspirations of youth towards peacebuilding in the country.

## 2. Findings: main peace and security challenges faced by youth in South Sudan

The findings put the youth of South Sudan at the centre of the security of society, because youth are the ones carrying out the farming and hunting duties, as well as protecting villages from external threats - without them it is hard to imagine the existence of community in the conflict-ridden nation.

There is a Nuer proverb which says, '*la wech e rom nguet cuong*' that translates as '*Community holds together because of youth*'. The Nuer also adopted the name White Army to refer to contemporary armed youth whose main function is protecting communities from any outside aggression. The Dinka of South Sudan call the cattle camp youth '*Gel-weng*', directly translated as cattle protectors to depict their main function in the community. For the Otuho tribe of South Sudan youth are called '*Monye Miji*'. The *Otuho* words *Monye* means owner, and *Miji* means village. *Monye Miji* is directly translated as owners of the villages or the ruling class whose function is to protect the integrity of a village and community. The Azade term the youth 'Arrow Boys' after the arrow weapons that are traditionally used in fighting, and protecting and guarding of the community. These roles have been translated

into contributions to peacebuilding and the maintenance of security. This is, for example, the case in peace meetings between Murle and Lou Nuer in which long standing conflicts were resolved through the return of abducted children and captured cattle.

In Yambio a group of three young people expressed views on their lives and roles in conflict and the potential to help build peace, see Box 2.

Some of the peace and security challenges faced by young men and women of South Sudan follow in the sections below.

### 2.1 Lack of formal structures for the inclusion of youth in peace processes

While there are youth structures and organisations, many are politicised or organised along ethnic lines, limiting their potential to help build peace.

Unlike women's inclusion, which by law<sup>9</sup> requires at least 25% of women representation in political institutions and related activities, "the South Sudan laws do not specify youth representation in programmes / activities. Hence, they are always under represented and their needs ignored, with decisions being made

<sup>9</sup> The transitional Constitution of South Sudan requires that all levels of the government in Southern Sudan shall promote women's participation in public life and their representation in the legislative and executive organs by at least 25%. <http://www.genderconcerns.org/images/gal/Women%20in%20South%20Sudan.pdf>

#### Box 2: Yambio youth roles and peacebuilding

"Unlike other societies, where society protects youth, here in South Sudan, the youth are expected to protect society. Most of the time, we find ourselves playing roles we have not been trained to do." Another young person added "We find ourselves fighting wars whose causes we do not understand. The sad thing is that we do not understand why we are fighting." Asked whether they have power to stop fighting: "we neither make decisions to wage war or peace. We are just instruments." "Young people in South Sudan have a visionary outlook and can imagine a future where change is possible. Thanks to the social media, young people are connected to other young people within and outside of South Sudan. We have a will and energy to make change happen." "We have the potential to mobilise and influence one another... we should use this potential to build peace in South Sudan."

Warlords, Government and politicians look to young people to help them achieve their aims. "If we can become organised, we have the power to place ourselves at the nexus between good governance, peacebuilding, and development in South Sudan. The positive thing is that youth are embracing education and learning...our outlook to the world is different. We need a good life just like any other youth from peaceful societies. The sad thing is that there is a huge imbalance in education attainment. Girls are disproportionately disadvantaged. My sister had to be pulled out of school so that I can continue with education (due to financial constraints)."



on their behalf”, according to a female Youth Forum member in Juba.

The South Sudan Youth Forum (SSYF) is the platform of the national youth councils and non-governmental youth organisations in South Sudan. It strives for youth rights in national institutions in South Sudan. The Forum works in the fields of youth policy and youth work development. It focuses on South Sudanese youth policy matters, whilst through engagement on the national level it is enhancing the capacities of its members and promoting national interdependence.

The current Youth Inclusive Forum is based in the 10 former states, though there are now 32 states<sup>10</sup>. “So, unless the Youth Forum structure is adapted to 32, most of the youth are left out of formal youth organisation and participation,” one Juba Youth Forum member asserted. “Even on the government side where transportation is assumed to be better organised, youth are still operating within the 10 states system.” “Therefore the youth who are in the new states and fall outside the original 10 states and the capital are left behind”, added a youth in a FGD in Awerial. “Currently there is also no capacity for youth to visit all the 32 states to organise fellow youth due to logistical challenges” said a member of Youth Forum in Juba. For example, Youth Forum leaders based in Juba explained: “the changes in the state structure through the promulgation of new states has resulted in many youths in new states/ counties not having platforms on which to express their concerns, needs and contributions.” Furthermore, citizens and agencies, especially those working on humanitarian support, still work within the framework of 10 state structures even though the Kiir-led government has adopted 32 states, and Riek Machar, in opposition, and his supporters are working with 21 states. “All this has created confusion and new conflicts among the citizens”, said a youth leader from a PoC camp in Juba. In the view of one youth leader from Awerial, “government has decided to create 32 states, which are political formations designed to provide employment for individuals and politicians, without delivering any services to people.” Box 3 provides more detail on the

<sup>10</sup> The Government recently re-drew the boundaries of states and increased them from 10 to 32. The armed opposition, SPLA in Opposition re-drew the boundaries and considers 21 states.



*A young men at the Juba Basketball stadium. Sports and cultural activities provide opportunities for young people to meet and build trusting relationships. © UNMISS*

challenges and confusion caused by the creation of additional states.

The lack of self-confidence of youth in their abilities to participate in society is expressed by a young man in Yambio: “Our society has made us believe that we lack knowledge, are ignorant of political processes, and cannot engage in constructive peace making without the involvement of older people or politicians. We are excluded from local decision making. We are always struggling to find an avenue where we can prove our worth, experiment with new ideas or participate in the wider political process. Lack of space to contribute to peacebuilding makes us more likely to approve of and engage in violence. Violence is the only avenue more or less left for young people.”

## **2.2 Tribalism, lack of unity, unemployment**

Ethnic and political divisions are seen to be dividing youth and preventing them associating and working with each other to help achieve peace. Their lack of livelihood opportunities pre-occupies them and forces them into illegal activities, including violent raiding and other criminal and immoral acts.

Youth are divided along ethnic lines due to perceived inequality in accessing opportunities

### Box 3: Impact of creation of additional states

The redrawing of state boundaries in October 2015 and January 2017 by the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) increased the number of states from 10 to 32. This may meet the hopes and aspirations of minorities who felt marginalised within larger states to develop their governance structures and be closer to services. On the other hand, dividing South Sudan into numerous states alters the ARCISS-defined basis for interim power sharing. This had been set on the former ten-state structure and identified the proportions of political representation during the transition period for the three most contentious pre-October 2015 states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity.

Thus, instead of engendering respect for boundaries and peace between neighbouring communities, redefining counties, payams, and their boundaries has now become politicised and is exacerbating ethnic tensions. Moreover, fragmentation of the country may harden social identities and further undermine the prospects for national reconciliation.

- *Conciliation Resources policy brief, Linking local and national processes in South Sudan: a missing link. March 2017.*

to control resources. Youth from ruling ethnic groups are believed to have more access to employment and education than the rest. Lack of communication among youth, parental negative influence against other tribes, and manipulation by politicians is contributing to lack of unity among youth. "In the University of Juba youth are forced to align their views with youth from the same ethnic group", said one female student. "For example, I can only speak with those from Gogrial because other youth do not trust me. If I approach them, they think I am there to collect and report information to the government. But walking only with my tribe members is completely against my upbringing in Khartoum, where I had friends from different ethnic groups and we could easily get along". She appreciated attending the FGD that brought together girls from different tribes, and wished she could meet them regularly and build some confident and trusting friendships.

Even when South Sudan was peaceful (before 2013), youth in rural areas did not have a positive outlook. Conflict is perceived to be beneficial. One participant in the FGD said "war with benefit is better than peace without benefit." Another young cattle raider said, "my gun is my salary, and I have to raid to get something." Most youth are easily mobilised when they perceive that they would get something from conflict. For example, a youth from Akobo cattle camp, said, "I got three guns in 2014 after killing the owners, and I bought some cows and used them in paying dowry in my recently concluded marriage." "Cattle raids in South Sudan are devastating in nature

whereby herds of cattle are taken from their rightful owners, rendering people vulnerable to starvation, as agro-pastoralist communities in South Sudan largely depend on cattle for milk, medication, and as storage of wealth", said an IDP youth from Awerial. See also Box 4.

Traditionally Nuer women play a significant role in promoting peace and stability within an area, and also with immediate neighbours; young women are bridges and a means for communication during intra-conflicts, partly because they are permitted to visit relatives and carry messages to other sides of the conflict. Women are not targeted in communal disputes.

As much as they have a potential role in bringing stability in the area, Lou Nuer young women in Akobo have been implicated in perpetuation of violence. It has been observed that "young people who do not want to participate in raiding are mocked as cowards by girls and are less likely to win a completion for marriage to raiders". Raiding is undertaken mainly for prestige, dowry, to prove one's manhood, revenge and cultural belief: it is believed among Murle that all cattle belong to them, while the Nuer believe that they are blessed to own cattle.

Although there are no statistics on youth unemployment in the country, "youth idleness is very visible throughout South Sudan, and youth are found most of the time playing cards, and other games. Young people also depend on the government for employment, but the system is near collapse if it has not already collapsed", said a female youth from Awerial. In Juba, many unskilled and semi-skilled jobs are being



*A Dinka cattle camp in Bahr el Ghazal. © 2015 Trevor Blackburn Award/Bryony Jones*

done by migrant labour from other countries in East Africa (Ugandans, Kenyans, Ethiopians). It is not clear from youth participants in this study if this is due to lack of knowledge and skills, or a negative attitude among South Sudan youth towards low paid jobs. The former should be addressed through training and positive discrimination, if there is political will to address the issue. If low pay is the problem then it is difficult, though not impossible, for the Government to implement and enforce wage polices. Sudanese youth who have been to school or college are reluctant to take jobs they consider menial. See Box 5.

In Yambio, three young men argued that unemployment was caused by chronic insecurity and inadequate responses by the government and the international community. "Daily life for young people and communities is dominated by the fear of attacks by either other armed groups, government forces or the cattle raiders" said one. The Government and international community is failing to provide basic social services - education, health, security - and

meet the protection needs of young people and communities. As a consequence, "young people are not able to go to school, trade, farm, hunt or fish, all of which require freedom of movement." The youth and communities "have lost their dignity and their freedom."

### **2.3 Lawlessness, proliferation of small arms**

Youth participants saw the lack of effective law enforcement and the civil war as making essential their holding of weapons to protect and defend themselves and their communities.

"Youth are armed and more powerful than police. So, the police cannot control the rampant youth criminality in the country. Youth criminals move around with their guns and there is no attempt to apprehend them due to their violent reaction, criminals are also supported by their sub-clan", a youth from Awerial said.

Small arms and light weapon proliferation across the country is linked to cattle raiding.

#### **Box 4: Cattle raiding and child abduction**

Children and women are abducted and or killed during the raids when they refuse to cooperate with abductees. Properties such as Tuglus, local houses made of wood and grass, are sometimes destroyed or burned. Rape cases were also reported during the raiding. "Violent cattle raiding and child abduction are the major causes of death in Jonglei" said a youth leader from Akobo. "In a single raid in June/ July 2013, combined Nuer and Dinka were believed to have raided over 10,000 herds of cattle, killed more than 2000 people and abducted hundreds of children - it all happened in less than three weeks" he added.

### Box 5: Why an educated youth will not fish...

A jobless young man in Awerial/Mingakman who said that he is seriously looking for a job was asked why he would not fish, there being plenty of fish in Awerial. He replied that he “cannot do that because he went to school. People will laugh at me.” In Akobo, youth that never went to school are traders while those with university degrees mostly seek and wait for jobs with NGOs, UN or the government. In towns like Juba young men play cards or dominos all day. When asked to explain, one youth said, “it is to pass the time before I go home in the evening.”

Even before the on-going civil war that started in December 2013, a small arms survey estimated the circulation of small arms and light weapons to be from 1.9 to 3.2 million in South Sudan<sup>11</sup>. That means the circulation must be higher now than ever before because the war has witnessed the influx of more weapons through the government and oppositions. “Excessive small arms sustain destructive conflicts and reduce youth productivity”, said one youth from the University of Juba.

“In some Dinka communities, youth are advised not to move around with guns to prevent unplanned incidents between themselves or with other groups,” Awerial cattle camp youth declared. In an FGD with female youth from Awerial, they concluded: “small conflicts that could easily be solved turn deadly because guns are carried by untrained civilians who easily turn violent.”

Nevertheless, some youth oppose gun control. One of the youth leaders from Akobo said, “I am safer and protected when my gun is with me” and added, “if the gun is not with me the enemy may take advantage and attack me. The presence of the gun deters enemies.”

“It is only that South Sudan is not declared a failed state. There is no functional governance by either the interim government or the Opposition. It is almost impossible to talk about good governance when there is no functioning government” said a student from Juba University. “The absence of effective government and policing encourages elders to provide arms for youths so they can protect the community from raiders and other lawlessness”, he added. A female youth from PoC Juba added, “South Sudanese in various capacities have talked to the international community about how to solve the problem, but nobody is willing to help us. It seems people have no interest in our suffering.”

<sup>11</sup> Small arms survey South Sudan, Small Arms Control Bureau. <http://www.un-arm.org/PoAISS/CountryProfile.aspx?CountryId=237>

The traditional structures that organise and regulate society, with youth providing the protective strength in forces such as the White Army, Monye Miji, Gel-weng and Arrow Boys, described earlier, are failing to operate effectively. Their manipulation by higher level political actors turn these governance structures into instruments of war, based on ethnicity, in their quest for power and control over land and resources.

### 2.4 Isolation of youth and lack of protection of females

Young people find themselves excluded from decision making at all levels, and lack exposure to the experiences that would enable them to participate, even when permitted. Young women are doubly discriminated against, excluded as they are from political engagement and expected to marry at or near puberty.

Most South Sudanese youth have been living in their own small world with limited access to information either within the country or with neighbours. “Most of us were born during war time and have never seen a better life”, said a young man from Juba PoC. “There is a need to expose youth and take them to other parts of the world so that they can see and understand life without violent conflict.”

“Traditionally, local youth from disputed villages were relocated to avoid contact and friction for some considerable time until elders diffuse tension through dialogue” a cattle camp youth in Akobo said, and added “youth are represented in these dialogues but do not play active roles as they are few in number.” At the national level, youth are excluded in dialogues either because their role is undermined by politicians, or the politicians see dialogues as money making projects. Youth believe that sustainable peace cannot be achieved in South Sudan unless they are included in the whole process because they have “major roles to implement key elements of agreements, such as security arrangements” said a group in a Juba FGD with male youth.



It is acknowledged that during wars, violence against women increases, and South Sudan is no exception. In the immediate aftermath of deadly clashes earlier in July 2016 between government and opposition forces in Juba, dozens of women were reportedly raped in close proximity to the UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, home to more than 30,000 displaced people.

“The contradiction, though, is that United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) soldiers escort women to protect them from rape and related abuses” said a young woman from a PoC site. A UN report (28 July 2016) said that “at least 120 cases of sexual violence and rape against civilians in South Sudan’s capital Juba were recorded within three weeks from July 8” as reported in The Guardian. See Box 6.

“Rape cases are among the most serious, and if not addressed, they can ignite a big fire in concerned communities”, said armed youth from Awerial. “If my sister is raped by a young man, and I have not revenged her, I will live in shame forever.” So, “a girl with brothers feels more protected because any attempt to harm her does not go un-revenged”, said one of the women attending an FGD in Awerial. In the Dinka and Nuer culture, if another young man provokes a sister, rapes and/or beats her, it is always considered a challenge against her brother, and it is always a duty and responsibility of a brother to avenge her by fighting the culprit. Sometimes the conflict between individuals escalates into a fight between groups and creates long lasting animosity between them.

Forced and early marriage is mentioned as one of the biggest threats facing girls in rural areas.

The girl child is seen as the source of income and auctioned in local markets. “Wealthy young people always compete over a girl, and a man with the highest number of cattle takes the girl”, said a young teacher in Awerial Primary School. “Not much can be done about it because parents need dowry. Girls get married as young as 14 and a mature girl of 18 years and above is perceived to be in less demand and of less value.”

The most common way to protect civilians is to inform them to move out from a potential conflict zone. The government of South Sudan is a bit different in that they tend to use civilians as a human shield. “I was in Jebel (a district of Juba) when the July conflict broke out, and the government wanted to come near us to shield themselves”, said one female student from the University of Juba.

Protection of Civilian sites (PoCs) were created from 16 December 2013 when civilians, mostly from Nuer ethnic groups, were fleeing target killing in Juba. PoCs shelter 200,000 people across the country in the UN/UNMISS bases. One Internally Displaced Person (IDP) said “they cannot come out from the PoC because they do not trust the government; moreover, most of their houses have been occupied by soldiers mainly from ruling ethnic Dinkas” and government soldiers are raping women. “We need protection by the UN because the government is not helping us” said one of the female IDPs from Jebel. “UNMISS soldiers are the ones that protect us from our so-called government”, she explained, see Box 7.

### Box 6: PoC camp woman raped by soldiers

It was just before noon on 18 July when the soldiers grabbed Theresa\*. She was only metres away from safety, a short dash from the UN gate that marked the entrance to her home, a camp for internally displaced people in Juba, the South Sudanese capital.

Even though they were in plain sight, the soldiers took their time, discussing Theresa’s fate before offering her a choice between two cruel options. “I could choose the one who would rape me, or they all would,” Theresa recalled. “I begged them to kill me instead.”

The five men, all wearing camouflage similar to that worn by Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), the national military force, dragged her a few metres to the side of the road. Then they raped her – in broad daylight, right there on the side of the road. *\*not her real name.*

The Guardian, (29.07.2016), “I begged them to kill me instead: Women in South Sudan raped under nose of UN” <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jul/29/women-south-sudan-raped-un-compound-juba-kill-me-instead>

### 3. Young people's involvement in the peace process

Youth have illustrated some of the factors that could enable their involvement in building peace and contributing to security. They are:

#### 3.1 Platforms for youth to access and discuss information

The absence of youth platforms across ethnic and political divides is raised as one of the factors that inhibits youth involvement in peacebuilding and contributing to security. One of the young men from SPLM party said, "only by coming together can youth understand and solve their common problems, and there have been no initiatives to that end so far. Creating a platform is recommended as one of the effective ways of addressing youth problems in the country". Town youth are demanding forums, youth centres, and social events to bring them together so as to interact and discuss their problems while in rural areas: "it's all about outreach to their neighbours, especially with a history of cattle raiding. In order to have access to reliable and accurate information." Youth from Juba University recommended "translating peace building documents in the language the rural youth understand; create forums of engagement- for example, between parliament and youth; and for youth to call for the finalisation of the youth policy and its resourcing. There is need for facilitated dialogue with security agencies; inclusion of peace

education and psycho-social support in schools - for example peace clubs."

#### 3.2 Build skills and knowledge in peacebuilding

Youth lack basic skills in peacebuilding and "without proper training in building peace youth may contribute negatively rather than helping the situation". Hence "youth need to be trained so as to handle the fragile situation of South Sudan", said one of the youth leaders from Juba PoC. "In the era of fast social evolution, youth understand their problems better, and therefore any decisions that affect youth need their participation to a greater degree", said one of the members from an Akobo FGD. Thus, steps are needed to recognise the importance and value of including informed youth in peace making dialogues and processes.

#### 3.3 Support from stakeholders (UN agencies, INGO, government)

The South Sudanese government has no operating youth support programme or initiatives. A youth leader from Awerial said "if something exists about youth, it must be on paper only", but he doubts that is the case because he has been a youth leader for the last five years. "Youth contributions can be enhanced only with support from those holding resources such as the government, NGOs, and UN agencies, but I do not trust the government of South Sudan to provide anything because of the high level of corruption", said a young female from a Juba PoC camp. "Support therefore is

#### Box 7: Women's situation

*"The women are very poor and cannot afford to buy firewood. Sometimes women are forced to go to nearby forest outside the camp to collect firewood. Some women meet their fate either by being killed or gang raped. Our so-called government soldiers in uniform are doing this in the eye of international community".*

*"Illiteracy among young women is so high that women do not know their rights, and cannot claim them".*

*"Due to lack of finance, most young girls and women practice prostitution. They risk going to town for this. Two ladies disappeared as a result".*

*- A woman in a PoC camp.*

needed from the international community for youth initiatives to be effective.”

### 3.4 Reduce insecurity

Without an end to the civil war and steps made to return to some level of security across the country youth find themselves unable to move around with any degree of safety. Therefore, they are unable to build the alliances needed to work together towards state building.

From Mid-December 2013 conflict erupted in the capital Juba and quickly spread to Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. However, “after the signing of the Addis Ababa agreement in August 2015 and subsequent formation of a National Unity Government in April 2016, a short-lasting peace was observed, but it was violated on 8 July 2016. The renewed conflict is worse than the first one because it has now spread throughout the country including Greater Equatoria, and Greater Bar El Ghazel. Almost all roads leading outside the capital Juba are affected, and movement is restricted due to physical insecurity including the ambush of cars and targeted killing by unknown gunmen,” said a female member of the youth forum in Juba. “The insecurity does not allow young people to concentrate on farming, trade, fishing and related activities”. As a result, youth have got limited options for their livelihoods, and some of them have resorted to fighting as a means to get income.

It is necessary to implement key security elements of the ARCISS agreement to establish a stable environment in which youth, and others, can pursue economic activities. Youth platforms can play key roles in urging for ARCISS implementation through pressure at local and national levels and insistence on their inclusion in peace dialogues.

### 3.5 Resourcing youth development and rights and clarifying an agenda for youth

Repeatedly, youth lamented the lack of services and support for youth to acquire knowledge and skills through training and education.

In addition, “in the country, there is no policy by government other than in draft to support youth development. The initiatives are there but yet to be passed into law, the implementation of which must be resourced. It is also doubted that resources will reach young people given the

level of corruption in the country” stated youth in a FGD in Awerial. As well as funds, there is a need to strengthen all areas of service provision: education and training for youth are key areas for investment if young people are to move from use of violent conflict as a means to solve their problems. “Agenda and goal setting clearly is what binds a group together. Youth cannot have a unified agenda if they do not come together”, said an Akobo youth association member. This requires youth to have the skills and knowledge to value peaceful means to pursue livelihood opportunities. Where capital is needed for livelihood activities, support in the form of grants and loans is needed from government or external sources.

“Market development is important: if youth products have markets, youth will be motivated to produce more. Also, there is need to link production to markets by constructing roads and bridges”, a youth from South Sudan Traders Union contributed, and added “there is no incentive for production if there is no market for sale”.

“Youth in PoC should have some skill, which can help them get a job when they come out. One of the ways is computer training”, said a teacher from PoC, advocating for the introduction of information technology training centres.

### 3.6 Social cohesion promoting activities

Several ideas emerged to improve social cohesion and underpin livelihood opportunities.

“Promoting social events such as cultural dances, wrestling, games etc to engage youth, are the best way to keep youth together and create friendships. These activities have worked in Awerial and Juba, they can also work in those areas of South Sudan with similar social cultures”, said one young man in Awerial during a FGD.

Due to the lack of road networks and language barriers, youth in South Sudan do not travel beyond their immediate surroundings. “There is a need for a cultural exhibition for the 64 tribes that make up the country under the theme: ‘Let’s celebrate diversity in South Sudan’. The exhibition will give chances for youth to know one another and appreciate the cultures of other groups”, a university of Juba member of the Students Union Board proposed.

Others advised “the creation of youth centres around which to build activities so that youth are



A displaced youth residing at the UNMISS PoC Site in Juba helps erect a temporary shelter. © UN/Isaac Billy

fully engaged and have no idle time”.

A young man working for the organisation Nile Hope suggested creating “peace messages that aim to promote peaceful co-existence beyond the current conflict: peace messaging under title ‘youth voice for peace’ can be developed and disseminated using radio talk shows, leaflets, dramas, etc. The programme can increase youth participation in peacebuilding processes in South Sudan.”

Youth during a FGD in Akobo argued that “compensation is needed for wrong done in local and national conflicts to prevent a victim’s family taking the law into their own hands, and also to deter people who think they can walk away with impunity. In addition to compensation, perpetrators of crimes should be arrested.”

## 4. Peacebuilding and violence prevention

Although many youth participants in the study talked about lack of support to youth initiatives, particularly peace sensitive ones, youth have knowledge of some success stories, and believe that they can build on them.

### 4.1 Construction of a wrestling centre in Awerial

UNDP and a local partner, Solidarity Ministries Africa for Reconciliation & Development (SMARD) constructed the wrestling center for youth in Awerial and neighbouring youth from Bor and Yiro<sup>12</sup>. Wrestling is one of the sports admired by some South Sudanese rural communities. “The occasion brings together rural, urban and youth from neighbouring communities. The events enable youth to establish good communication and friendship among themselves thereby reducing tensions and conflicts”, described a youth leader from Awerial. Events also engage youth during their idle time. “Similarly, in 2016 a wrestling event supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Viable Support for Transition and Stability (VISTAS) programme was organised in Juba between Bor and Mundari of Terrekeka. The

12 Wrestling for Peace Competition Unites Yiro and Awerial Communities. Solidarity Ministries Africa for Reconciliation & Development (SMARD). [http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south\\_sudan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2016/11/25/wrestling-for-peace-competition-unites-yiro-and-awerial-communities.html](http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2016/11/25/wrestling-for-peace-competition-unites-yiro-and-awerial-communities.html)



event aimed to create friendship and stop the cycle of violence between the two communities. “The outcome was the temporary cessation of violent conflict between the two communities”, said one young man from Bor who was part of the mobilisation team.

“Wrestling occasions are also used by stockholders to pass vital information for youth such as peace messages and HIV/AIDS awareness. However, youth have complained of lack of funding for the programme in 2017, and as a result, youth from Bor and Yirol have not come this year due to lack of funding for transport and accommodation”, said a youth leader from Awerial.

Before the construction of the center in Mingkaman, wrestling used to be conducted randomly in remote villages which urban youth could not access. “Awerial is the only constructed wrestling centre in the country, and represents only a fraction of young people. There is a high demand to expand the practice to areas with similar culture”, a member of the Awerial youth Association said.

#### 4.2 Peace dialogues

In 2016 youth in Eastern Equatoria held a five-day conference to resolve a conflict that killed 30 people. “The conference discussed the root causes and recommended measures to resolve the disputes. One of the main actions is to compensate a victim’s family for their loss: 25 cows, and 120 goats were collected for

one soul lost. After the compensation, elders organised reconciliation and healing in which young people were made to drink the blood of slaughtered animals as a sign of oneness”, described a youth member from Torit who participated in the conference, but is now living in Juba.

There are different practices across the country, which are strongly respected by communities and help sustain peace if implemented. Two examples are described in Box 8.

#### 4.3 Support to fishing activity in Akobo, Jonglei state

Projects by agencies working to address conflict, such as the VISTAS programme<sup>13</sup> have shown that it is possible to replace raiding with lawful, gainful alternatives. For example, in 2011, twelve fishing canoes were distributed to youth who were identified to be among the most notorious raiders in the area. Based on the success of the initiative and demand for more canoes, an additional 13 canoes were distributed in 2017. Evaluation reports indicated that the known raiders targeted, became the best fishermen and good law-abiding citizens, suggesting a close linkage between legitimate incoming generating activities and reduction of violence.

<sup>13</sup> South Sudan Conflict Mitigation and Transition Initiatives, Democracy International. <http://democracyinternational.com/projects/south-sudan-conflict-mitigation-and-transition-initiatives/>

#### Box 8: Dialogue between Upper Nile and Jonglei

From April 11-14, 2016, Lou and Jikany Nuer held a peace dialogue in Wanding locality Upper Nile State to discuss their peaceful co-existence, sharing of resources, and dispute resolution, among other things. “The two communities agreed to continue in sharing grazing areas, water points, and farmlands for wellbeing of the members” described a young man who worked with the USAID supported VISTAS project. The war-displaced IDPs from Jikany have been asked to come back and occupy their original pre-war settlement areas so as to close the security vacuum created by their absence. The two communities also discussed how to control and coordinate cross border smuggling of small arms and light weapons into Ethiopia from South Sudan. The practice has extremely dismayed the Ethiopian authorities as the guns sold fall into the hands of the opposition to their Government, and are said to have been used to destabilise Ethiopia. Hence the authorities have threatened to shoot anybody crossing the international border with guns; an action that could affect the dry season cattle raiders, who do not respect borders when grazing their cattle. To help the situation participants suggested formation of a joint committee constituted of Ethiopian and South Sudanese to monitor common borders, cooperate on measures leading to apprehension of culprits, and create awareness among the community members on consequences of the illegal sale of guns, and the severe punishment that follows. - *Unpublished report from USAID supported VISTAS programme.*



*Young South Sudanese men wrestle. Wrestling is one of the sports admired by rural communities in South Sudan.*  
© Tim Freccia/Enough Project

## 5. Recommendations

What do young people recommend to enhance the contribution and leadership of young men and women to build sustainable peace and prevent violence? Do they have particular views on how their government, state institutions, civil society organisations, media or the international community, could help to support these contributions? The following are recommendations drawn from the consultations with youth for this study:

### 5.1 Identify existing ad hoc youth structures in the country

Re-organise informal structures into meaningful entities or platforms that can coordinate, share information and forge common agenda for youth participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan.

Establish social cohesion centres, such as for wrestling, sports, etc. to engage youth.

Work on reducing tension between youth in PoC and opposition controlled areas with youth in areas controlled by government to start confidence-building activities. Include visits to each other, and to youth centers outside the country. Use these opportunities

to start discussing less sensitive topics such as youth in sport to bring youth from different ethnicities together.

### 5.2 Working on peace in South Sudan

Currently any efforts to build community or youth programme capacity and capability for peace are jeopardized by the ongoing civil war and failure to implement the 2015 ARCISS peace agreement. Without sustainable peace, disarmament or gun control measures cannot be implemented. In addition, youth will constantly acquire guns from warring factions and use them in raiding and related criminal or violent acts. Therefore, successful community interventions are a function of larger peace in the country. Advocacy is needed at the national and international levels to bring this most needed peace. Only then can youth play a meaningful part in reducing tensions at grassroots level and participate in peace and state building at all levels.

### 5.3 Youth engagement in alternative income generating activities

Poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods comes out clearly as one of the leading factors that encourage cattle raiding, and youth as the

main perpetrators. There is a need for concerted efforts to engage youth in productive income generating work. Some of the recommended activities are cattle and retail trade, fishery, farming, woodcutting etc. These sectors can employ rural youth. If the activities are expanded through provision of seed capital, and training in entrepreneurship, the youth can be empowered to help themselves and reduce violent cattle raids as a means to support their livelihoods.

#### **5.4 Build the capacity of youth in peace making**

Capacity building for peace is an important activity to avert violent cattle raiding among the pastoralist communities. Training of peace cadres or ambassadors ensures wider dissemination of peace messages throughout communities using local knowledge in two-way communication. Youth can combine traditional community dialogues, and acquired modern peace facilitating techniques to increase youth participation at local, national and international level.

#### **5.5 Adopt small arms policy and peaceful civilian disarmament to discourage cattle raiding**

Small arms proliferation is the biggest threat for peace. There is a need to devise implementable policies on small arms and light weapons control. The policy should be community driven to ensure ownership and sustainability, and prevent further proliferation of small arms among pastoralists.

Reduction or control of small arms through civilian disarmament would have a direct bearing on cattle raiding. However, people suggest that there is need for community-led simultaneous disarmament, because if one community is disarmed while others are not, the disarmed community become vulnerable to raiding from their armed neighbours. Disarmament should also ensure the guns do not go back to communities. Disarmament may not be possible in the current context of violent conflict. Nevertheless, there is a need to tackle this issue as soon as peace returns to South Sudan.

#### **5.6 Organise public debate on reduction of bride price**

Demand for bride price is one of the significant factors for cattle raiding. Youth who want to marry but do not own cows often resort to

cattle raiding. There is a need for debates at the community level about the reduction of bride price. This could lead to a more manageable price, if not its elimination, and thereby reduce cattle raiding. The capping of bride price to 25 cattle in Bhar El Ghazal is a model that should be promoted.

#### **5.7 Organise pre-cattle migration meetings**

Address competition over resources in rural areas that can result in confrontation and violence, by holding pre-cattle migration meetings between pastoralist groups to agree access to and sharing of natural resources (grazing land/ rights, pastures, fishing areas, water points, etc).

#### **5.8 Address access to reliable and accurate information**

In urban areas, youth are calling for the creation of youth centres. This would provide opportunities for the engagement of youth as trainers in peacebuilding who can reach out to other youth. Trainers can translate key documents into languages that can be understood. They can also create forums of engagement, for example, between parliament and youth, helping to finalise the youth policy and resource it. There is a need to facilitate dialogue with security agencies, and to include peace education and psycho-social support in schools, for example through peace clubs.

#### **5.9 Work to end sexual violence against women**

Awareness about the abuse of human rights, especially against women should be built into peacebuilding analysis and response activities. This requires the inclusion of girls in education to reduce illiteracy and provide them with the skills and knowledge to challenge discrimination and pursue livelihood options, choose when and who they marry, if they so wish, and contribute to the peace making processes.





*Youth erect shelters to be used as temporary housing for other displaced people at a UNMISS PoC Site in Juba. © UNMISS*

## 6. Conclusions

The study provides a cross section of information and opinion from youth in urban and rural areas, living under government and opposition control. The frustrations of youth are apparent in that they perceive the need for their participation in peacebuilding, but lack the capacity, and in many cases the education, and resources to take action. Youth recognise the need to communicate with each other and to set up platforms that are not affiliated politically but based on a common desire to achieve peace, at all levels of society and political life.

Many youth challenge the hegemony of political leaders and their manipulation of communities and youth in support of their agendas. Many political leaders act in personal or factional interest, and not in the interests of peace, nation building nor the development of their communities.

In this study, youth recognise their own contributions to violent conflict, including cattle rustling to gain wealth, to pay dowries and take vengeance for abuses of their kin, especially of women. They state that the reduction of cattle rustling requires increased security, more and effective policing, and a reduction in corruption.

Most importantly, and expressed by both female and male informants, changes in the attitudes and cultural norms that determine marriage processes and the roles of women are required. Youth, by cultural definition are seeking adulthood through “forming close relationships outside the family, often resulting in marriage and children” – to use one of the indicators of adulthood proposed by the World Bank (See Box 1).

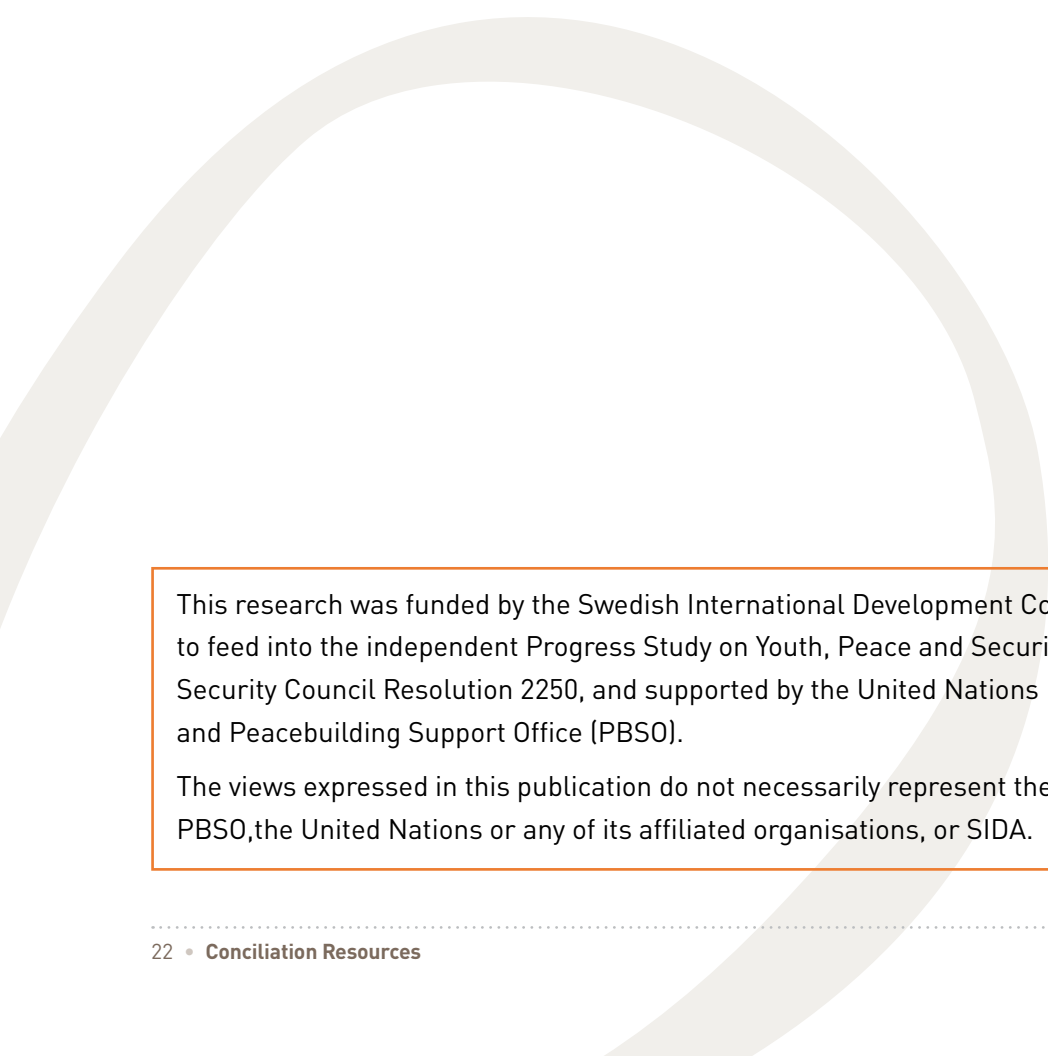
Depending on the definition, the upper age range of youth is defined as between 25 and 45 for men. However, women tend to be married at a young age and socially once they do so, they do not qualify as youth anymore. If young women are to play a meaningful role in peace making as part of South Sudan’s youth population, their education, literacy and skill development need to be promoted, along with the release from social pressures to marry for dowry needs. These changes are important for both male and female youth and are expressed in different ways by all participants in this study.

Youth were able to articulate examples of dialogues and negotiations in which they played a role in implementation though not in decision-making. Few were able to describe more than token participation, or, at best, inclusion due to



their roles as protectors and antagonists in inter-ethnic conflicts. They identified the changes needed to gain a meaningful participation in peace making. These included the formation of non-politicised platforms and youth forums which they can use to lobby for the recognition of their needs, rights and opportunities to engage meaningfully in peace making processes. Youth identified the need to build understanding and cooperation between ethnic groups who traditionally and currently take sides against each other. This can be achieved through the setting up of non-controversial sporting, and other activity centres and exchange visits across ethnicities.

Frequently both young women and men sought resources to lift them from poverty and reliance on illegal and/or immoral activities, or political patronage, for their survival and livelihoods. Only when freed from these constraints, and with adequate resources, do they believe they will usefully express themselves individually and collectively in the search for peace, and the prosperity of their country and communities.



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