



UNITED NATIONS  
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TRUST FUND

Reconciliation Stabilization Resilience

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**2023**



**United Nations Multi-Partner Trust  
Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization  
and Resilience in South Sudan**

**CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS**



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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS



ABP	Area-based programme
ARG	Area reference group
CEPO	Community Empowerment for Progress Organization
CES	Central Equatoria State
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FCA	Finn Church Aid
GBV	Gender-based violence
GPAA	Greater Pibor Administrative Area
ICGS	Inter-Community Governance Structure
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JSMC	Joint Special Mobile Court
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NP	Nonviolent Peaceforce
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCRC	Police Community Relations Committee
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RSRTF	United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience in South Sudan
SCE	Second Chance Education
SHG	Self-help groups
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPLM/A-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition
SPEDP	Support for Peace and Education Development Programme
SSNPS	South Sudan National Police Service
SSPDF	South Sudan People's Defence Forces
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNPOL	United Nations Police
GHANBATT	UNMISS-Ghana Battalion
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WFP	World Food Programme
WPT	Women Protection Team
WPDI	Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative

## FOREWORD



The year 2024 marks a momentous year for South Sudan as the country prepares for its first elections since gaining independence in 2011. I appreciate the people of South Sudan for their long and remarkable journey towards peace and stability.

2023 was a challenging year for the country, compounded by the intertwined political, humanitarian, and economic challenges, which were further exacerbated by the impact of the crisis in neighbouring Sudan. Since April 2023, close to 640,000 people have crossed to South Sudan from Sudan, seeking protection and humanitarian assistance.

In this intricate context, the tireless efforts of the UN, including those of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilisation, and Resilience, donor countries, and partners, have become even more crucial to ensuring stability and a path towards a prosperous future for the South Sudanese people.

In 2023, the Fund has also empowered women, enabling them to hold positions of power in Paramount Chief's courts, transforming them from victims of violence to leaders of their communities. With the unwavering support of the donor countries and tireless partners, countless women have become successful entrepreneurs, joined local police forces, volunteered their services, and secured their children's future.

RSRTF also recognises the urgent need to support South Sudanese youth, many of whom have had their childhoods stolen. Forced into armed conflicts, violence, and criminal activities due to a lack of socioeconomic support, hunger, and, most importantly, lack of hope, these young people are in desperate need of assistance.

The RSRTF is providing them with precisely that. Youth have, with support from the programmes, rejected violence and developed economic skills. They have become successful entrepreneurs and farmers, working with police and law enforcement agencies, and some are successfully volunteering to convince those involved in violence to change their lives for good.

It is of immense importance that peace is sustained in South Sudan and that escalations of violence do not wipe out the successes jointly achieved by the communities and the RSRTF consortium in these areas and their commitment to a brighter, peaceful future. The Fund's efforts and unique adoption of the triple nexus have resulted in noticeable improvements in target areas, which can be emulated and adapted to other regions.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the donors' support to the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund—RSRTF, who have played a crucial role in shaping the Fund's future. Their financial support of its integrated triple nexus programming has created stability in vital areas in South Sudan where development and resilience objectives may be realised.

I also extend my thanks to the Ministry of Peace Building and the Government of South Sudan for their unwavering support to the Fund and their trust in its initiatives.

**Ms Anita Gbeho Kiki**  
DSRSG/RC/HC  
Chair, RSRTF Steering Committee

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, the security situation in South Sudan remained relatively stable at the national level. However, conflicts between communities and armed groups, as well as between government forces, continued to take place. Despite the volatile situation, the RSRTF has continued implementing its area-based programmes (ABPs) in four hotspots across the country. These programmes, funded by donor countries, aim to address the root causes of violence and create a stable environment.

The RSRTF programmes are strategically designed to place women and youth at its core while building on robust foundations of RSR (Reconciliation, Stabilisation and Resilience). They provide communities with opportunities to reconcile with their past and with the perpetrators of violence, enabling them to move forward and build resilience through a consultative process. The coordination among all stakeholders, including government agencies, community leaders, different army factions, political groups, and non-RSRTF-funded partners, is pivotal in achieving robust results. Furthermore, the flexibility of the programme, which values community consultation and utilises crisis modifiers, has enhanced stakeholder engagement, raised awareness, and fostered inclusive dialogues for peaceful coexistence in the target areas. Through these powerful strategies, the RSRTF continues to make a significant impact in its mission to reduce violence and promote peace.

These achievements of the RSRTF and the broader peace generated in its ABPs by the RSRTF in 2023 were enabled by generous contributions from the European Union, as well as the governments of Canada, Sweden, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In 2023 total deposit by donor countries was USD16,571,473, resulting in cumulative contributions over the past five years reaching USD115,726,598.

This Annual Report highlights the Fund's impactful initiatives across its four ABPs in 2023. In Southern Central Equatoria State, programme activities led to a notable reduction in violence and improved conditions for voluntary returns, enhanced relations between law enforcement and civil society, expanded the presence and influence of local authorities, and established community policing initiatives.

In central Southern Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), the programme effectively mitigated inter-community tensions and averted mass mobilisation for violence, laying the groundwork for peaceful community governance, including through the establishment of an Inter-Community Governance Structure (ICGS).

In Unity State (Koch and surrounding Counties), programme activities bolstered reconciliation, mediation, and conflict resolution efforts, reduced intra- and inter-communal violence, and strengthened the criminal justice system. The programmes also provided infrastructural support to the government of South Sudan to enhance the rule of law and dispute resolution at the community and sub-national levels.

Similarly, in Greater Tonj, Warrap State, the programme's initial efforts to establish conflict prevention and mitigation systems led to the Greater Tonj Peace Conference, which resulted in a peace agreement and numerous peace resolutions and stability. These pivotal events laid the foundation for subsequent programme interventions and facilitated the resumption of daily activities and revitalisation of livelihoods in the area. In Greater Tonj, an extraordinary initiative was implemented - establishing a community-based radio station. This ingenious intervention served as a scalable and effective solution for resolving and preventing community violence through advocacy and sharing information quickly to prevent escalation and misinformation. A further opportunity exists to establish partnerships between this community-managed radio station, Radio Miraya of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and other capital-based radio stations in South Sudan. This partnership would serve a dual purpose of enhancing advocacy efforts and bridging the communication divide between the capital and the communities.

A final concluding section outlines the strategic steps the RSRTF plans to take in the months and years ahead to build on its successes further. In 2024, the RSRTF is poised to launch a new area-based programme, leverage new partnerships, including with other programs, and revise existing programming modalities to



continue to reduce levels of violence and advance peaceful coexistence among communities, and create the conditions needed for longer-term peace and stability in South Sudan. 2024 is also the year the Fund will be evaluated and possibly extended in light of the evolving conflict context of South Sudan.

## SOUTH SUDAN CONTEXT IN 2023

In 2023, South Sudan made some progress towards the conclusion of the Transitional Period of the R-ARCSS peace agreement, which is set to end on 28 February 2025. However, it must be acknowledged that the possibility of violence surrounding the upcoming elections, scheduled to take place no later than 28 December 2024, cannot be disregarded despite the support of the United Nations.

However, the overall implementation of the R-ARCSS remained slow in 2023. This allowed for both pre-existing and emerging conflict drivers to undermine security and contributed to high levels of violence within an already volatile security context of 2023. Furthermore, the nation continued to face a dismal economic outlook, currency devaluation, and a deteriorating humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023. These challenges have inflicted devastating effects on the civilian population across the country.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has documented a disturbing number of at least 3,294 civilians affected by violence in 2023.<sup>1</sup> These individuals have been subjected to killings, injuries, abductions, and various forms of conflict-related sexual violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) remains widespread, with limited access to justice for women and girls seeking accountability through the criminal justice system. Rape and abduction are frequently deployed as intimidation tactics amidst inter-communal violence. It has been estimated that in 2023, approximately 52% of girls in South Sudan were married before reaching the age of 18.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these human rights challenges, South Sudan has been confronted with an ongoing and dire humanitarian crisis. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that around 9.4 million people, including 4.9 million children, required humanitarian assistance and protection services.<sup>3</sup> As of December 2023, approximately 480,000 South Sudanese, predominantly refugees, were compelled to flee due to the conflict in Sudan, putting them in dire need of lifesaving aid.<sup>4</sup> This situation placed enormous pressure on aid agencies, rendering the operational environment in South Sudan extraordinarily challenging. These pressures also contributed to increased tensions between those who have returned and the host communities.

Competition over resources, land ownership, and management, as well as political manipulation and communal conflicts, remain the leading catalysts for conflict in the country. Notably, in RSRTF implementation areas like northern Jonglei and Unity States, conflict was broadly characterised as government attempts to exacerbate tension within opposition strongholds and diminish the presence of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). A similar situation was observed in Upper Nile. Furthermore, climate change-induced devastating flooding continues to impact available resources, such as grazing lands and agricultural production, vital for livelihoods.

Like in previous years, inter-communal violence persisted as the primary form of violence affecting civilians, with intensity increasing during the dry season due to the scarcity of grazing pastures and population mobility. Additionally, the infiltration of small arms in some intervention locations like in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), has exacerbated this issue and caused armed violence resulting in casualties and some of the RSRTF activities being put on hold. In 2023, violence again plagued Warrap, Jonglei, the GPAA, and Eastern Equatoria. The negative consequences of this violence have hindered the programmes of the Reconstituted Security Transitional Arrangements (RSTA) and have been perceived as political manipulation and exploitation targeting vulnerable youth groups. In many cases, these inter-

1 UNMISS, Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: January-March 2023; Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: April-June 2023; Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: July-September 2023; Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians: October-December 2023, available at: <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/human-rights-reports>.

2 UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2023, For Every Child, Vaccination, April 2023.

3 UNOCHA, South Sudan: Response to the Sudan Crisis Situation Report No.17, October 2023

4 UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No.12, 13 February 2024.

communal conflicts are rooted in unresolved disputes stemming from past cycles of violence, with criminal groups taking advantage of the limited or non-existent criminal justice system in remote areas.

Since March 2023, the security situation in Warrap became increasingly complex, with communal disputes over land ownership and control of economic hubs affecting two main border areas, which affected some of the activities of RSRTF partners. Additionally, communal violence in some hotspots predominantly arose due to access to resources between armed pastoral communities from Warrap, Lakes, and Unity. In Jonglei and the GPAA, communal violence persists along the same deeply entrenched patterns observed in 2022. Furthermore, it was observed that in 2023, pastoral communities, entered deep into the Central Equatoria States, causing conflict with farmers. The main reason for such inter-border conflict was the prolonged flood in the Jonglei state. Such climate effect is expected to play a major role as driver of conflict and violence in coming years without taking an appropriate measure.

These conflict drivers are likely to persist throughout 2024. While sluggish R-ARCSS implementation and the pending elections pose significant challenges to peace and stability in the country. It also presents opportunities to lay the foundation for long-term peace under a democratic system. However, competition over political influence may intensify in the near term as community grievances continue. Small arms proliferation and weak criminal justice and rule of law contributed to sporadic violence and caused causalities by unaccountable criminal gangs and different youth groups at subnational level. Similarly, the lack of improvement in economic governance and monetary stability and climate volatility are likely to contribute to a sustained economic downturn, which, together with poor government service delivery, risks further intensifying local grievances. Relatedly, risks of disrupted oil exports due to the conflict in Sudan will likely continue to contribute to a volatile economic environment, negatively impacting people's livelihood opportunities.

## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

As the legacies of violent conflict and civil war that erupted in 2013 persist, including displacement, violence, and insecurity, many communities remain divided and dependent on humanitarian assistance. Now in its fifth year, The South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilisation and Resilience Trust Fund (hereafter: RSRTF or Fund) continued addressing these challenges, helping communities reduce or eliminate violence, tackle its root causes, and create conditions for resilience and long-term development. Through its area-based programme, targeting distinct conflict hotspots, the RSRTF bridges community divisions and addresses conflicts by providing strategic and pooled inter-agency funding for activities spanning the humanitarian, development, and peace fields – or the triple nexus.

To this end, RSRTF's implementing partners and stakeholders leverage their respective capacities, mandates, and comparative advantages to maximise the potential to realize tangible change. Reconciliation, Stabilisation, and Resilience (RSR) activities are pursued concurrently depending on the needs and priorities of communities trapped in conflict hotspots and marginalized areas. The rationale behind this approach is to operate across the entire conflict cycle and address the many-layered conflict drivers and their impacts, including by working through strategic alliances that account for the political and security dimensions of the operating context. Furthermore, the Fund seeks to develop solutions to accommodate the complex, dynamic, and often localised challenges facing communities with a view toward self-reliance and sustainability. It does so by reframing the social acceptance of violence within and between communities, reducing and mitigating immediate and contextual risk factors, and fostering conducive environments to sustain peace.

## KEY FEATURES

The RSRTF builds on the sustaining peace approach outlined in the 2016 UN Security Council resolution<sup>1</sup> conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict and across all stages of the conflict cycle involving all segments of the society/community. The Fund effectively deploys this approach to imperatives of prevention and resilience in a context where the human and financial costs of crisis response remain untenable.

In line with UN Development System reforms, the RSRTF streamlines efforts across the triple nexus by structuring initiatives around three pillars, reflecting mutual priorities of the UNCT in South Sudan, the 2019-2021 UN Cooperation Framework (UNCF) and UNMISS mandate for South Sudan. The UNCF (2021-29) for South Sudan outlines the UN's strategic engagement in South Sudan, aiming to support sustainable peace, recovery, and development following years of conflict and instability, while UNMISS mandate covers four main areas: the protection of civilians; creating the conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance; supporting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the peace process; and monitoring, investigating, and reporting on violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights.

Created by UNMISS and UNCT in December 2018, RSRTF encompasses the UNCF and mission mandate for South Sudan while addressing the root cause of violence at the grassroots level, leveraging the presence and strategic support of UNMISS and the UN country team.

<sup>1</sup> UN Resolution 2282 (2016): Sustained Peace Action resolution was based on an experts report, 'which should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development, and emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders, and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions, and needs sustained international attention and assistance.' For more information: <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12340.doc.htm>



## THE THREE PILLARS

i) **Reconciliation** to rebuild confidence, strengthen social cohesion, and promote peaceful co-existence through gender- and age-sensitive communal conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

ii) **Stabilisation** to broaden participation and space for peaceful political processes, strengthen social contracts between citizens and institutions (both formal and informal), and support restoring security, the rule of law, and access to justice.

iii) **Resilience** to builds capacities, assets, and opportunities for community interdependence, deter the mobilization of at-risk youth, and promote social integration, equality, agency, and self-reliance to shift incentives and raise the costs of resorting to violence.

The consortium partners implement these pillars in a complementary manner as the pillars reinforce each other throughout the programming period. This enabled tangible violence reduction and mitigation while building foundations for transitional to medium-term peace, development, and self-reliance. Their complementary activities also enabled more flexible and adaptive approaches to programming across the RSRTF's six main outcome areas (see next page). This allows the Fund to account for shifting conflict dynamics and prioritize interventions based on local circumstances.

Additionally, the Fund enhances localisation and local ownership by involving local stakeholders and communities and utilising victims and perpetrators in analysis, planning, and decision-making. It is accountable for establishing peace and reducing violence. While utilising their existing capacities, experience, and lessons learned throughout the process. By adopting a 'whole of system' approach, it bridges silos among partners ensuring tailored and appropriate programme responses. Furthermore, the Fund fosters partnerships by promoting coherent, complementary, and coordinated activities among actors working across the triple nexus.

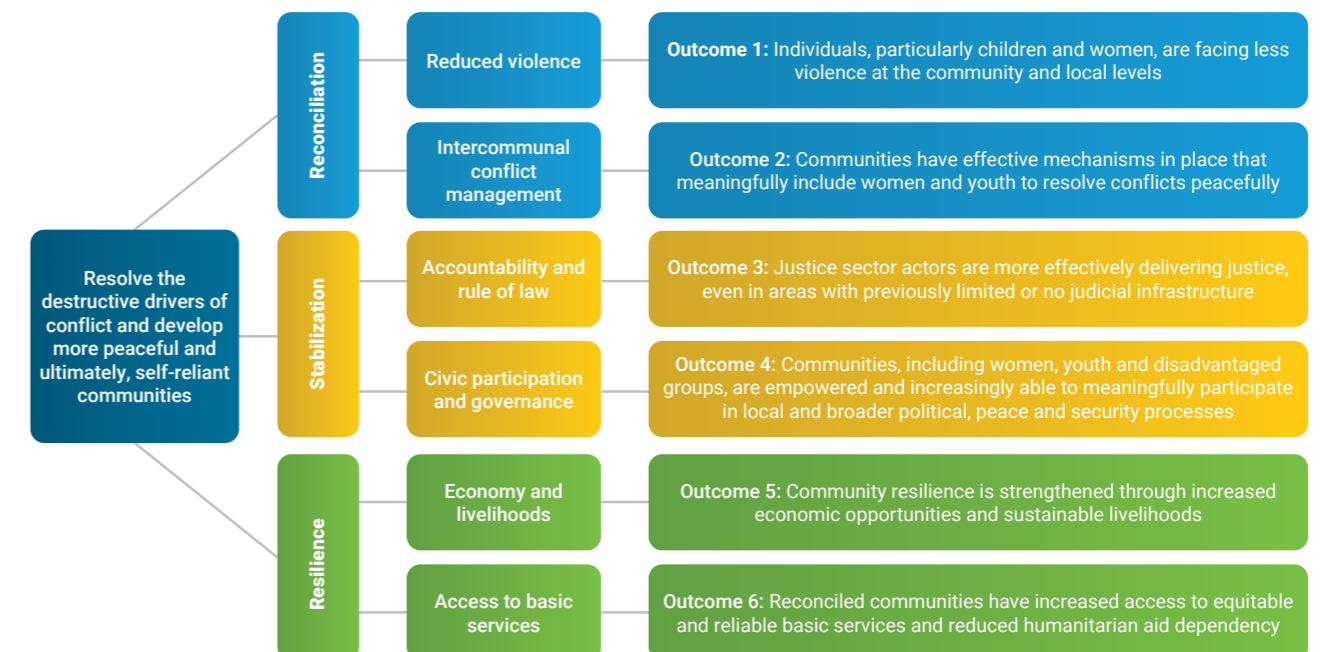
The RSRTF is also characterised by its ABPs, targeting conflict hotspots, and marginalised areas with small-scale grants (often on shorter timeframes) allows the Fund to concentrate resources and act in a cohesive and nimble manner. It reacts to windows of opportunity as they emerge while also addressing underlying conflict drivers. This holistic approach to complex challenges is further underpinned by political strategies and builds on locally owned peace agreements. These enable each ABP to pursue inclusive, people-centred approaches where local communities and their priorities are placed at the front and centre.

The unique features and the Fund's flexible approach enable synergies between its own activities and the between local government, NGOs, UN Country Team, UNMISS and civil society organisations and external and internal funding mechanisms at the grassroots level. It also avoids high levels of earmarking towards specific agencies or initiatives, thereby demonstrating trust and confidence in the RSRTF and its ability to build synergies across sectors, and actors.

## RSRTF ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO THE SDGs



## RSRTF PILLARS AND OUTCOMES



# 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

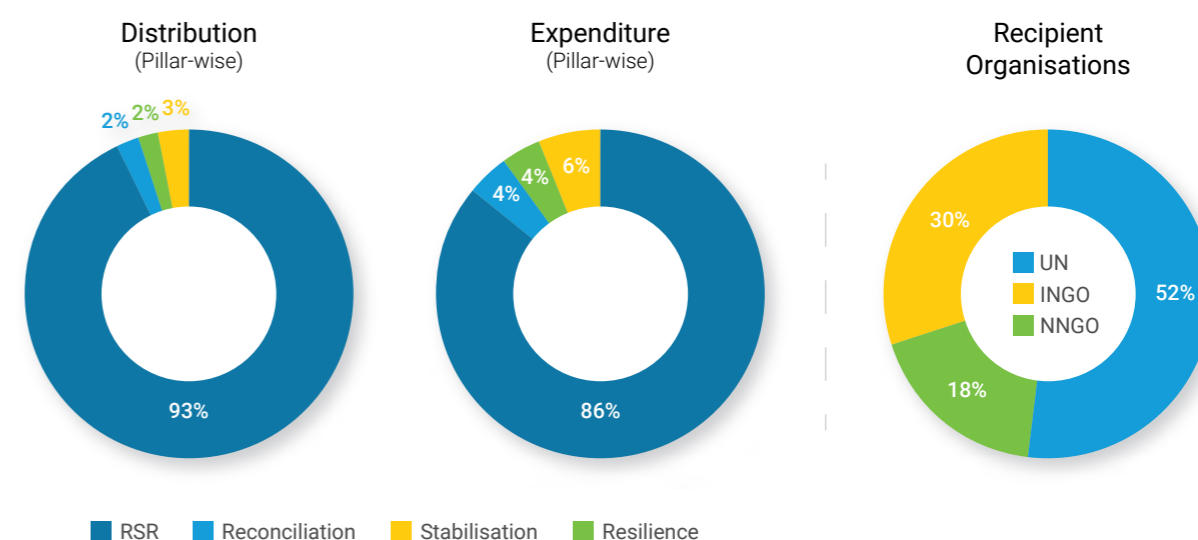


## RSRTF DELIVERY

In 2023, the RSRTF achieved its targeted priorities in line with its strategic investment plan for 2023. The Fund mobilised two programmes by investment of a total of USD 27.9 million, both are second phase programme in Jonglei and GPAA of volume USD 16.5 million in April and the other in Central Equatoria States of volume USD 11.4 million in December 2023<sup>1</sup>. The Final phase of the Koch programme was intended to close in November 2023, but the partners took an extension until February 2024 due to a delay in implementation for prolonged flood hindering infrastructure installation. The Greater Tonj of Warrap programme continued its activities throughout 2023.

Below is a table showing the breakdown of the financial contributions and commitments<sup>2</sup> followed by pillar-wise visualisation of allocations and expenditure, and its distribution amongst types of recipient organisations.

CONTRIBUTORS	CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2023		CUMULATIVE (2018-2025)	
	Commitments	Deposits	Commitments	Deposits
European Union	5,549,000	5,549,000	22,140,000	12,140,000
Government of Canada (Former DFAIT)	-	-	3,961,769	3,961,769
Government of Germany	3,301,380	3,301,380	21,517,039	21,517,039
Government of Netherlands	3,157,500	3,157,500	16,315,000	13,157,500
Government of Norway	4,008,995	4,008,995	29,190,125	29,190,125
Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)	-	-	2,200,000	2,200,000
Government of Sweden (SIDA)	-	-	18,221,074	18,221,074
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	554,639	554,639	2,181,591	1,641,634
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,571,473</b>	<b>16,571,473</b>	<b>115,726,598</b>	<b>102,029,141</b>



<sup>1</sup> Transfer of fund in January 2024.

<sup>2</sup> The commitment amounts are subject to change due to conversion rates. Therefore, please note that the commitment amounts are estimates

## 2023 highlights:

**1114** conflict management, prevention, and resolution activities enabled women's and youth leadership in peace processes and actively reinforced their roles as agents for peace  
2695 beneficiaries (1314 male, 1381 female) were reached

**26209** people reached with sensitisation messages on violence reduction promoting inter-communal peace and reconciliation efforts

**98** community peace agreements and reconciliation initiatives mediated or led by peace committees

**11257** individuals affected by violence were provided with mental health and psychosocial and rehabilitation support

**77** abductees recovered and supported with family tracing and reunification



**200** political actors trained in mediation, dialogue, and negotiation skills

**940** community representatives, including women-specific clusters trained on community security approaches and action planning



**631** justice sector actors trained

**469** government officials trained to better manage and provide basic services

**09** women and youth organisations capacitated to advocate for women's and youth participation in national and subnational political and governance discourse

**5616** women, men, boys, and girls received capacity strengthening, training and technical support

**87** women associated with armed groups integrated into society through social cohesion initiatives

**2863** at-risk youth were provided access to career development, employment, and livelihood opportunities

**8234** individuals engaged in building, restoration or maintaining community assets

**748** people actively participated in Harmonised Community-Based Participatory Planning exercises to identify structural drivers of recurring crises in their communities

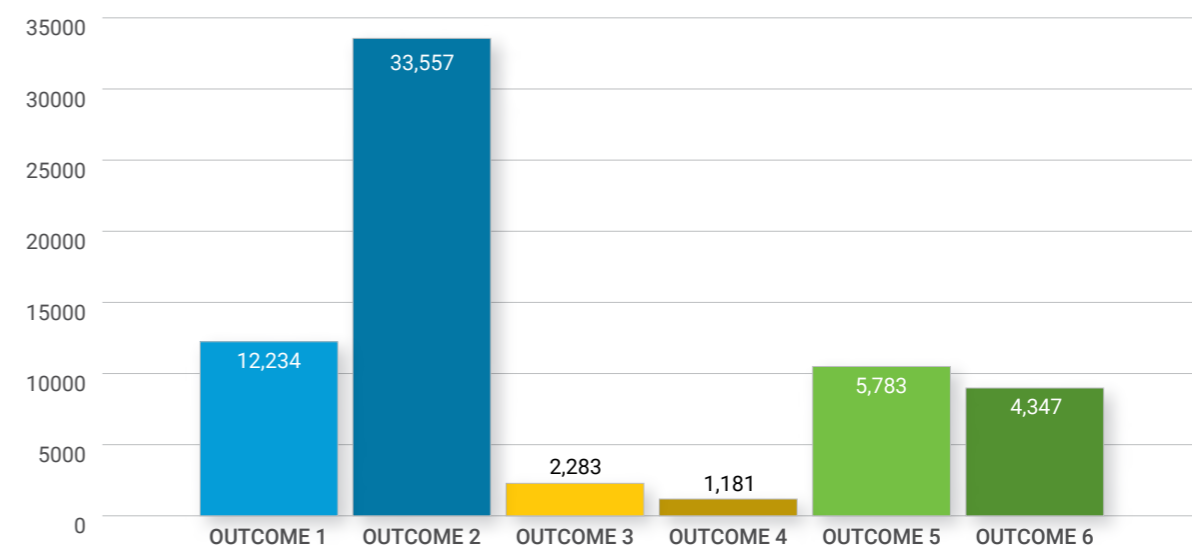


Partners and their consortium members were largely able to adjust and adapt programme activities navigating through the security risks and incidents as they arose in all programme locations. During this year, all ABP's demonstrated a strong emphasis on sustained outreach and community engagement, in addition to effective planning, information sharing, and coordination, which resulted in coherent engagement across all three pillars.

In 2023, the reconciliation pillar played a central role in promoting peace and harmony, engaging in activities of exceptional scale and scope. Notably, its efforts towards community engagement in resolving intercommunal conflicts and tensions (Outcome 2) were remarkable, benefiting a total of 33,557 individuals. Additionally, violence reduction initiatives (Outcome 1), including support for ex-combatants and conflict victims, involved 12,234 community members throughout all program areas, with a significant number of participants being former combatants. These endeavours were prominently featured across all four ABPs.

Furthermore, the stabilisation pillar, including accountability, rule of law, civic participation and governance activities (Outcome 3 and 4), provided support to 3,464 community members. Similarly, the resilience pillar (Outcome 5 and 6) empowered 19,477 individuals within the community, enabling them to enhance their livelihood capacity and confirming to peaceful coexistence. This was achieved through improved access to essential services, economic support, and comprehensive training programmes designed to enhance existing skills or acquire new ones.

Complementarity among pillars was prominent, where the resilience pillar was supported by the stabilisation pillar, creating increased access to (formal and informal) justice, the rule of law, and civic participation in governance mechanisms. It was also observed that in all ABP areas, the resilience pillar excelled in interventions, which were underpinned by extensive sensitisation efforts against conflict and developing intercommunal relations and while focusing on asset creation and livelihood support to provide alternatives to violence, including specialised support for conflict affected population and at-risk groups.



BENEFICIARIES BY RSRTF OUTCOME

## PERFORMANCE

The reporting period saw the RSRTF contribute to tangible reductions in violence and security incidents across all ABP areas, compared to 2022 and in years preceding RSRTF programming, though security risks and volatility persisted. However, the programme in Jonglei and the GPAA remain volatile due to frequent conflict between Murle and Dinka communities. Additionally, conflict from age restrictive youth of Murle community remain a challenge for all programme partners. In the GPAA, humanitarian convoys were also repeatedly attacked, with over 100 metric tons of supplies looted from January to March 2023 during the end of phase one of the RSRTF programming in this area. These attacks compound the dire humanitarian situation in Jonglei and the GPAA during this year, while the Fund has noticed multiple casualties among Dinka

and Murle communities due to revenge attacks and stopping aid vehicles from accessing GPAA, causing acute food insecurity in the region. The partners analysis states that administrations in both Bor and Pibor lack the means and will to resolve the crisis. However, the RSRTF programme has successfully prevented multiple conflicts during 2023 through community engagement and by implementing an inter-community governance structure that incorporated all ethnic groups of the area. This initiative was implemented as part of Peiri Action for Peace agreement (signed between Dinka and Murle community in 2021) in mid-2023. The difficult task of keeping community adhere to their commitment to peace and be accountable was inherently slow due to the complexity of the region, frequently politicised by the elites from the capital.

However, the positive shifts were reflected in improved community perceptions of safety and security in other intervention areas, validated by Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) findings and findings from MSS (Monitoring Safety and Security) data provided by Bridge Network. The success was evidenced by the increased freedom of movement and resumption of daily activities previously too risky to undertake in Koch, Greater Tonj and Central Equatoria Area. Notably, partners' in-depth planning and design processes, deliberate inclusiveness, sensitivity to local contexts, and ability to address both immediate and structural conflict drivers (and their impacts) underpinned their strong performance in 2023.

For instance, Southern Central Equatoria State recorded a significant reduction in security incidents and violent encounters with soldiers due to the removal of an estimated thirty-two checkpoints, which was an outcome of civil-military dialogues and related ABP outreach. And in Koch, efforts to empower community structures, promote awareness of protection issues and peaceful coexistence were instrumental in encouraging interactions between communities and reducing levels of violence. Furthermore, the successes of the ABPs can be attributed to their nimble and flexible approach to programming. This was demonstrated by the regular scaling of service provision in response to large arrivals of returnees and the rapid coordination of increased resilience-focused activities following improvements in the security situation.

## ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF RSRTF PERFORMANCE IN 2023

- **A dedicated focus on women and youth.** The inherent success of the RSRTF's peace and stabilisation efforts can be attributed to its effective utilisation of women's roles in their communities to reduce violence and secure peace. In Southern Central Equatoria State, this approach resulted in women and youth taking on roles as peace agents, contributing to an improved security situation and enabling conditions for returnees. And in Jonglei, Women's Protection Teams and Youth Protection Teams provided opportunities for women and youth to actively participate in conflict management, prevention, and resolution efforts. Moreover, in 2023, the Fund began collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data. This proved beneficial in several ways, not least in terms of contributing to outreach efforts to target and engage conflict actors in peacebuilding processes, including armed youth and women with important peace and security roles at the community level.

- **A strong operationalisation of the triple nexus** in line with RSRTF objectives resulted from efforts to ensure synergies across the reconciliation, stabilisation, and resilience pillars. Resilience and stabilisation initiatives, for instance, frequently supported reconciliation efforts. In Greater Tonj, the ABP successfully conducted outreach and dialogues with armed cattle camp youth to encourage alternative livelihoods and resilience building. The Fund's nexus work was also facilitated by effective information sharing and the development of granular, locally attuned conflict analyses, which influenced the timing and nature of cross-pillar activities.

- **Effective coordination among consortium members** and with external stakeholders, especially local government agencies, bilaterally funded programmes by the UN, and other NGOs led to synergies and joint successes. Notably, collaborations with the USAID-funded Shejeh Salam peacebuilding programme, and the FCDO-funded Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area were particularly successful. At the Juba level, the Fund maintained regular coordination with the Ministry of Peacebuilding to provide technical support and to facilitate information sharing. Mindful of its role in strengthening coordination at all levels, the Fund submitted a coordination concept note to its steering committee, which was approved in August 2023. This process will continue to be fully implemented throughout 2024.

- **Strong localisation of the ABPs activities and outcomes** generated a sense of ownership among beneficiaries. Extensive outreach and inclusion efforts saw stakeholders participating meaningfully, including planning and decision-making. In Jonglei and GPAA, the renewal of the ICGS helped to institutionalise community-led governance forums significantly enhance local capacities for managing and preventing conflicts and reduce escalation of violence during the last quarter of the year. Furthermore, the ABP activities effectively accommodated different local cultures and contexts, thereby gaining credibility, legitimacy as well as increased levels of participation.

## CHALLENGES

Notwithstanding the progress made, the ABPs also experienced challenges (both within and outside their scopes of influence), which impacted the timeliness and efficacy of certain activities. Overall, these were responded to in a flexible, timely manner, including by adjusting implementation as needed. This was made possible by a risk-informed, flexible programme design. The key challenges in 2023 included

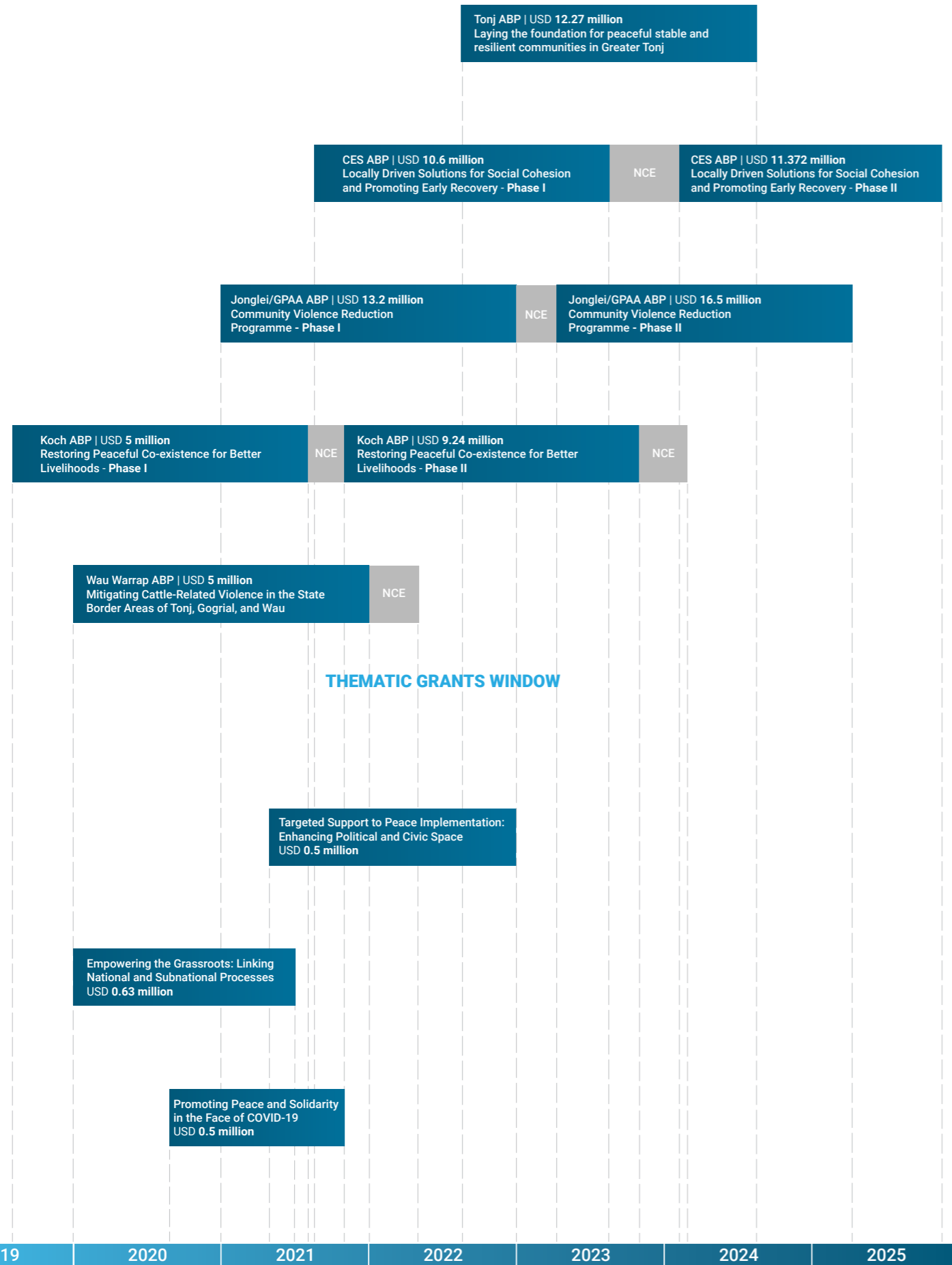
- **Insecurity and heightened security risks**, which impacted all four ABPs, albeit to different extents. Common incidents included inter-communal violence and revenge killings, cattle raiding and theft, gender-based violence, abductions, or women and children as well as robberies. Violent incidents that fell clearly within the ABP's sphere of influence were usually addressed in a timely and coordinated manner through dialogues, collaboration between UNMISS and with local and state authorities. That said, the overall security situation across all four areas improved in 2023 compared to previous years, largely due to targeted ABP interventions and sustained engagement with stakeholders, as evidenced by internal and external reviews, as well as direct feedback from stakeholders and communities.

- Other implementation challenges were linked to **poor road conditions and infrastructure**, exacerbated by heavy rains and flooding, notably during the rainy season. These conditions caused access constraints (particularly to remote areas), implementation delays, and limited stakeholder participation. The consortium mitigated these issues, including by arranging alternative means of transport, and by adjusting activity timelines. .

- Another challenge faced by all ABPs pertained to **high inflation** as well as **continuous devaluation** of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) against the US Dollar, poor economic performance, which impacted the ability of people to participate, the costs of programme materials, and rates of payments for ABP activities.

In some instances, delays and inefficiencies were registered due to **inadequate planning and coordination** and limited adoption of learned lessons though these instances were rare. Significantly **weak justice and rule of law institutions** (both formal and informal) and a generally challenging operating environment were also noted to impede programme implementation, as was the proliferation of guns and ammunition. Lastly, local, County, and State government officials were, occasionally, noted for their **limited, insufficient, or politicised engagement** in programmes, impacting their effectiveness and sustainability.

AREA BASED PROGRAMMES



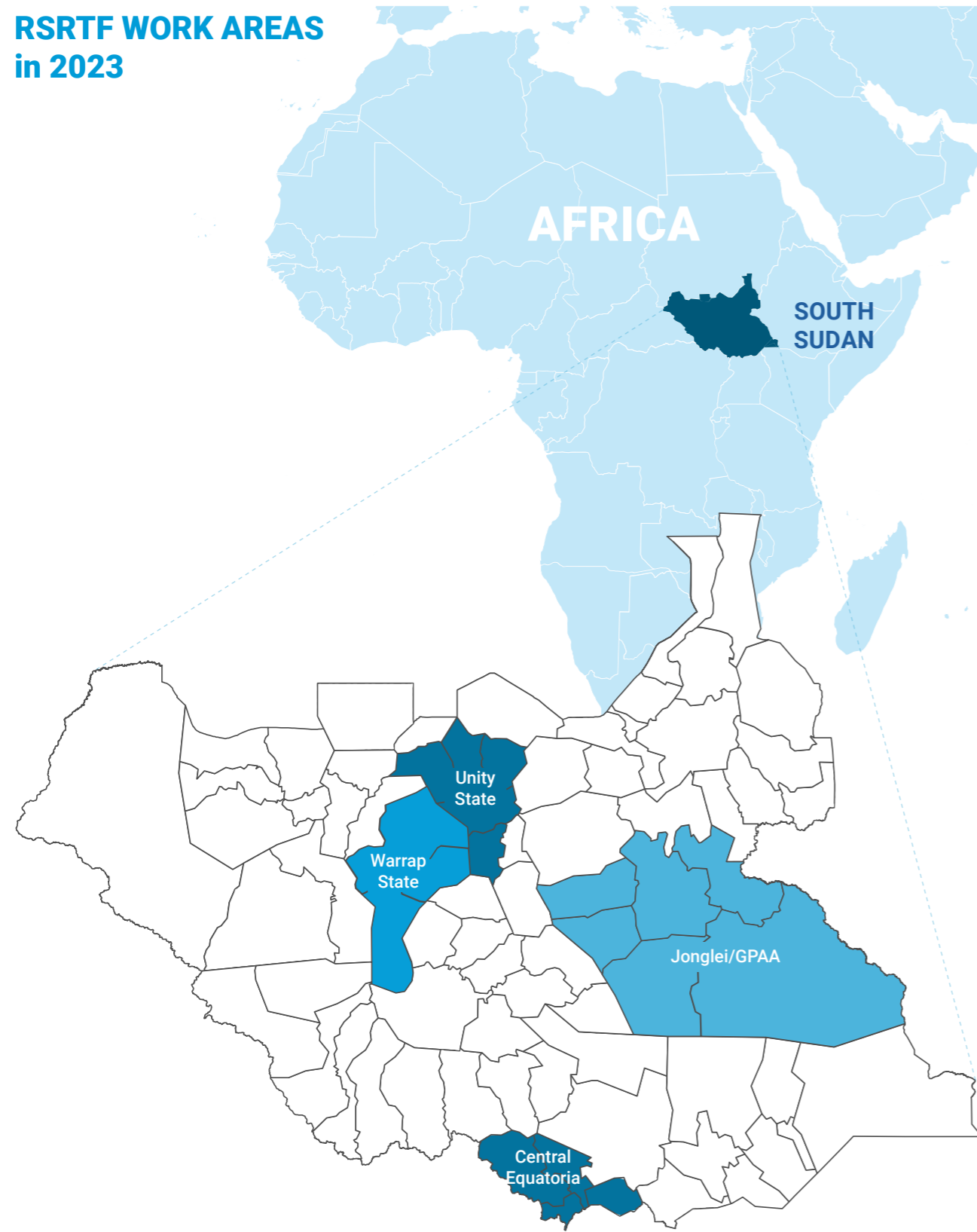
THEMATIC GRANTS WINDOW

AREA BASED PROGRAMMES  
PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

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**RSRTF WORK AREAS  
in 2023**



**Central Equatoria State**

Kajo-Keji, Lainya, Morobo and Yei River counties

**Warrap State**

Tonj East, Tonj North and Tonj South counties

**Jonglei State And Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA)**

Akobo, Bor, Duk, Twic East and Uror counties and GPAA

**Unity State**

Bentiu, Guit, Koch, Mayendit and Mayom counties



**Restoring Peaceful Co-existence for Better Livelihoods in Koch Phase II**

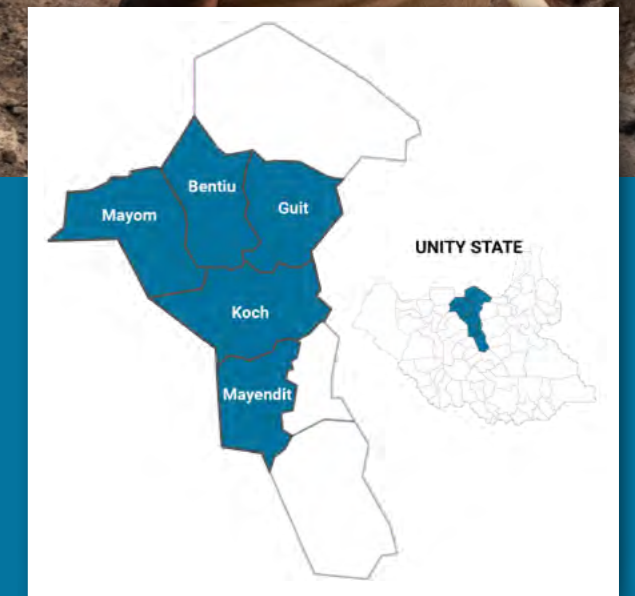
**Target areas:** Koch County, and Mayom, Rubkona, Guit, and Mayendit Counties, Unity State

**Lead agency:** World Relief South Sudan

**Budget:** USD 9,242,942

**Partners:** CARE, Mercy Corps, UNMISS, UNIDOR

**ABP timeframe:** 1st December 2021 to 30th November 2023 (NCE December 2023- February 2024).



## Highlights:

# 18

intra- and inter-communal dialogue sessions conducted to reduce community tensions and risks of violence

# 98

community peace agreements and reconciliation initiatives mediated or led by peace committees

# 07

instances where conflicts were resolved, or tensions reduced as a result of political engagement and opportunities taken to leverage political influence

# 26209

people reached with sensitisation messages on violence reduction promoting inter-communal peace and reconciliation efforts

# 501

UNMISS patrols were conducted to protect civilians



# 338

individuals supported to exercise and assert their housing, land, and property rights

# 200

political actors trained in mediation, dialogue, and negotiation skills



# 396

justice sector actors trained

# 224

government officials trained to better manage and provide basic services

# 492

students were enrolled and graduated from functional adult literacy and second chance education program

# 224

at-risk youth were provided access to career development, employment, and livelihood opportunities

# 580

active participants in community-based participatory planning exercises to identify structural drivers of recurrent crises

# 909

people supported to stay in or return to secondary education



# 12456

displaced individuals voluntarily returning or relocating to a target area

## ABP SUMMARY AND PERFORMANCE

In 2023, the ABP in Koch and the surrounding counties facilitated several peacebuilding activities, including inter-county and inter-communal peace dialogues and round-table discussions, cultural and youth sports events, cattle restitution, and truth-telling sessions. These initiatives were crucial in promoting reconciliation, mediation, and conflict resolution, addressing the high levels of intra- and inter-communal violence previously experienced in Koch orchestrated by political actors, and executed by armed youth. Through concerted efforts to address immediate and long-standing conflict drivers while strengthening a peace architecture to support the rule of law and dispute resolution, communities could live in relative peace with their neighbours in adjacent Counties. Despite these advances, programme implementation was occasionally disrupted by continuous flooding, intermittent security concerns as well as high costs of materials and transportation. A three-month No Cost Extension (NCE) was requested by the partners and granted by the Steering Committee to allow for the completion of outstanding activities, and it was completed in February 2024. The ABP was concluded in February 2024.

## PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

In 2023, security in Koch and the surrounding counties (Guit, Mayom, Rubkona, and Mayendit) remained relatively stable, largely due to the ABP's initiatives, which included peace conferences, community dialogues, and mediation efforts, and protection patrols by UNMISS-Ghana Battalion (GHANBATT). However, the security situation was unpredictable. For instance, Guit experienced fewer revenge killings after a community-led dialogue. In February 2023, Koch saw reduced communal violence after local authorities enforced gun registrations, although this wasn't in the scope of the RSRTF interventions. However, the ABP benefited from an improved security situation. However, the efforts of the government led to strained community relations. Rubkona faced tensions within SPLM-IO factions after appointing a new County Commissioner. By the end of 2023, the Southern Unity counties saw high tensions between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and SPLM-IO after a series of defections, though these and other shifting dynamics did not significantly impact ABP activities.

Cattle raiding persisted throughout the year, and an ongoing influx of returnees from Sudan put pressure on host communities and available services, particularly land and water resources. This led to conflicts, which the peace committee and local authorities managed, while the APB had to accommodate more participants. Moreover, the onset of rains in June destroyed roads, resulting in the displacement of people and complicating access to remote program locations, leading to more than double transportation costs. Additionally, flooding caused delays in implementation, worsened food shortages, and disrupted productive community capacity, which impacted participation, especially among women and girls. Furthermore, persistent economic hardship caused by currency depreciation further affected livelihoods and food security, as most households could not cope with high food prices in markets. These factors also influenced the costs of program implementation and the rates of payment for its activities.

## RECONCILIATION

In 2023, the consortium's violence reduction efforts centred around a community peace architecture, including a peace committee, women's advocacy groups, school peace clubs, paralegals, and protection networks. Through these forums, the ABP sensitised, capacitated, and empowered community governance structures, promoting awareness of key issues such as the dangers of forced and early marriage, physical violence, rape, revenge killings, and human rights. For instance, sensitisation messaging on conflict resolution reached 26,209 people and was delivered at cultural events and community meetings, including in hotspot areas. As part of its awareness raising, the ABP also conducted 18 intra- and inter-community dialogues. This included cross-border sessions between communities in Koch, Mayendit, Guit, and Rubkona, which helped create awareness, shape perceptions, and build trust. A notable dialogue held in a volatile area of Koch on 'truth-telling, trauma awareness and healing and reconciliation' reached 1703 people, mostly women. To this end, the ABP's activities were highly inclusive, with a strong focus on the meaningful participation of affected community members, notably women and youth, and designed to be culturally appropriate, which increased and diversified participation and helped spread resonated messages.

The ABP's dialogue and outreach work often sought to leverage political influence to address community



Guit, a County severely affected by conflict, has experienced continuous revenge killings and displacement of educated individuals, especially young male breadwinners, since 2007. This has negatively impacted the livelihoods of the community and the implementation of the national R-ARCSS peace process. In March, over 4000 community members, including County leadership, voluntarily came together to seek dialogue and resolve their long-standing grievances. They approached the ABP, including UNMISS, who offered unwavering support to facilitate an all-inclusive community dialogue forum. This forum resulted in the "Guit Peace Declaration of March 2023."

Eight months later, consortium partners followed up on the success of the peace initiative. Interviews and focus group discussions with chiefs, religious leaders, and women leaders validated its effectiveness and its influence on the attitudes and behaviours of the participants. They also highlighted how the community now recognises their central role in resolving the conflicts affecting them. The dialogue also helped to address several intercommunal conflicts in and around Guit, including cattle raids, gender-based violence, and inter-County conflicts. The Guit peace initiative is one of several community peace dialogues facilitated by the ABP that have helped resolve conflicts, minimize violence, and create favourable conditions for building resilience.

### ABP SNAPSHOT A PEACE INITIATIVE FOR GUIT COMMUNITY

**"I could not believe that one day the Guit community would come together and settle disputes through dialogue and reconciliation. This has put an end to the deaths of our sons. The support from UNMISS, partners, and the State government has been very valuable."**

- Guit County Head Chief

tensions and resolve conflicts. In 2023, it held seven politically focused engagements with community members and political actors. The ABP supported peace committees in leading or mediating 98 community peace agreements and reconciliation initiatives, which improved community relations. The consortium also conducted five cattle restitution events, attracting youths who previously participated in such events and demonstrating the continuity and sustainability of the ABP's reconciliation work. To provide security and safe spaces for these initiatives, including for vulnerable people, GHANBATT conducted 501 patrols in remote areas and by air. Together, these reconciliation efforts resulted in a marked decline in violent incidents in 2023, evidenced by communities able to move freely across Payam and County boundaries, including pastoralists who grazed cattle unhindered.

### STABILISATION

The consortium made important progress in improving access to justice and rule of law mechanisms. Efforts largely focused on building the capacity of justice and security sector actors, including police, prisons, chiefs, paralegals, and community-police relations committee volunteers. In 2023, the ABP trained 396 justice sector actors and supported 338 individuals to exercise and assert their housing, land, and property rights. Throughout the ABP, 85 GBV survivors were able to access victim redress mechanisms, including transitional justice. Capacity-building efforts also helped improve the reporting of crimes, documentation of cases, and customary court trials. In 2023, 463 such cases were recorded at the chief's court, 439 of which were resolved, while 32 serious cases received support from State investigators and UN Police (UNPOL). In addition, support for informal justice mechanisms included capacity building, mentorship, and supervision of chiefs to improve the fairness and speedy adjudication of cases. Moreover, the ABP improved accountability and the rule of law by constructing, renovating, and equipping justice sector facilities. It included the construction of a prison and a police facility, improving case tracking, and efforts to arrest, remand, investigate and prosecute offenders.

Another core aspect of the ABP's stabilisation work was civic engagement, notably advocacy and capacity building of civil society, women, youth, and disadvantaged groups. Their participation in ABP-facilitated peace rallies, events, and political processes was crucial in shaping community perceptions and approaches to peaceful coexistence. In 2023, nine women and youth organisations were supported to advocate for the active participation of women and youth in national and subnational political and governance discourse. One initiative empowered representatives of a women's advocacy group to present directly to the State Parliament with a petition against child marriage, which not only served a critical social cause but also women's participation in political processes and shaped their understanding of their role in decision-making processes and public affairs. Conversely, the consortium targeted institutions and individuals in positions of political authority. It trained 244 government officials to manage better and provide basic services and 200 political actors, including youth and women leaders, in mediation, dialogue, and negotiation skills.

### RESILIENCE

The ABP implemented enhanced community resilience activities by supporting asset creation initiatives, Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), and self-help groups, providing farm inputs, and providing start-up grants. These activities helped transform community perceptions and behaviours regarding income-generating activities and alternative livelihood opportunities.

In 2023, 292 women, men, boys, and girls received capacity strengthening, training, and technical support, and 224 at-risk youth were provided access to career development and employment opportunities. The targeted participants now engage in petty trading, tailoring, mason works, and other ventures while also benefiting from the increased business between Koch and neighbouring counties, which has contributed to conflict prevention and more peaceful coexistence across geographic, social, and ethnic boundaries. For example, the ABP facilitated four cross-country meetings with trade unions, producer groups, and market vendors to foster linkages between them. As a result, larger groups of traders from Leer and Mayendit brought their merchandise to the Koch market, which helped mitigate conflict drivers and build resilience in the process.

In addition, the ABP facilitated the creation and maintenance of 18 community assets, including market sheds, dykes, a Payam headquarter, the rehabilitation of bridges, a women and girls centre, access roads,



schools, and other basic services infrastructure. The consortium engaged 2038 individuals in building restoration or maintaining community assets through cash-for-work initiatives, which had the added value of providing employment opportunities to community members. Resilience building also involved supporting the education sector and promoting peace education, including in school peace clubs, which positively impacted peaceful coexistence in school settings. The ABP facilitated the rehabilitation of a learning facility at the Koch Girls School, refurbishment of a library at Bhang Schools, and the launch of parent-teacher association (PTA) trainings, which improved access to learning opportunities. Concurrently, the ABP provided formal education services in schools, second chance education (SCE) centres and cattle-camps. In 2023, 492 students were enrolled and graduated from functional adult literacy and SCE programs, while 909 people were supported to either stay in or return to secondary education. The influx of returnees from Sudan (12,456 people voluntarily returned to their respective target areas) significantly increased the school and SCE enrolment, though the ABP adjusted its services accordingly to meet demand.

## PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION, STABILISATION, AND RESILIENCE

**The HDP nexus:** Collaboration across the humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) sectors had a significant impact on the effectiveness and scope of programme implementation in 2023, and it greatly contributed to fostering peaceful coexistence in Koch and the surrounding counties. For example, members of the peace committee actively participated in creating assets in order to generate income. These resources served as capital for starting businesses and created opportunities for interaction with traders from neighbouring counties. In a similar manner, sports activities focused on promoting peace allowed young people to engage with their rivals from other countries, and they also participated in efforts to reconcile their differences. At the same time, they received vocational skills training and were involved in asset creation, providing them with alternative means of making a living instead of resorting to violence.

The programme utilised its triple Nexus approach to enhance the coordination and execution of activities, thereby improving conditions for peaceful coexistence and synergy among the three pillars. The reconciliation pillar played a crucial role in establishing stabler governance as violence decreased, enabling communities to participate in resilience-building initiatives. Similarly, the stabilisation pillar legitimised the presence of governance and facilitated dialogue among different communities, promoting both inter- and intra-communal interactions and further resilience-building efforts. In addition, the resilience pillar empowered communities to create assets, mobilise savings, establish small businesses, and access education services, thereby creating additional opportunities for interaction and reconciliation.

**Sustainability and local ownership:** Localisation was ensured by stakeholders (including local government) engaged in ABP coordination and implementation. The Area Reference Group (ARG) provided a platform to do so and offered the ability to adjust plans and better align them with the changing needs of the county. The ABP also engaged youth, women's groups, the peace committee, and other community structures through regular planning and programme activities, which built trust and active engagement. It also helped the ABP transition as the County and Payam Administration and community groups assumed management of all created community assets.

To further maximise localisation initiatives, the ABP national partnered - UNIDOR, an external national and local NGOs on strategic and operational matters, ensuring both complementarity and mutual benefit. It engaged them in the ABP board/Steering committee, where strategic decisions were made, and participated in joint weekly planning, activity implementation, and ARG meetings to review programme implementation. The NGO's ability to operate in remote areas due to their comparative advantages and familiarity with local context and culture benefitted the ABP, whose partners, in turn, enhanced their capacity in key programming areas, including models and implementation tools.

**Women and youth engagement:** The ABP integrated gender, age and disability considerations in its target selection criteria and monitoring tools and ensured a balance of female and male participation in activities through continuous monitoring. Women participated in all ABP initiatives, including community peace committees (exceeding 50% membership), saving groups (80% membership), as vocational skills trainees (about 45% of students), in community asset creation groups (exceeding 60% membership), and as appointees in customary courts. Women were the most influential change agents in the ABP due to their

willingness to participate and adopt new concepts, earning them the designation of "pace setters" and have, as a result, become family breadwinners and created opportunities to influence family decisions, and have started most Income Generating Activities (IGA). A woman leader in Koch said, "Achieving true women's inclusion requires more than mere provision of social space for women to participate in the governance system, but it requires the building of societies where all women feel that they can flourish."

To ensure effective youth participation, the ABP involved youth leaders in the planning of activities to align their expectations with desired outcomes and encourage their input in decision-making processes. The consortium members were careful in selecting activities and approaches that discouraged involvement in violent actions and instead exposed them to alternative livelihoods, although the level of participation varied depending on individual preferences. Due to their large numbers and enthusiasm, the youth were recognised as influential agents of change and ranked second to women in their role in perpetuating violence and their connections to conflict entrepreneurs. This further emphasised the importance of engaging youth in peacebuilding, which, in this case, helped foster trust between rival groups across different countries and promoted peaceful coexistence.

**Coordination:** The coordination among consortium partners greatly improved the implementation of the programme both strategically and operationally. The field teams were able to make the most of each other's strengths by engaging in joint planning, developing coordinated training materials, and working together to carry out activities and reviews. Throughout this process, they followed the guidelines of the RSRTF terms of reference and effectively shared resources. Notably, there was also significant capacity building for internal staff, including joint conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity assessments, reporting, and thematic activities.

Externally, consortium partners effectively utilised each other's strengths and mandates. However, some minor coordination gaps were observed in the procurement and transportation of supplies, which resulted from inadequate internal policies and processes.

The governance structure of the ABP was effectively coordinated. Its board was responsible for making strategic and policy decisions and conducting joint monitoring missions to evaluate outcomes and engage stakeholders. The coordination of ARG was highly inclusive and effective, with stakeholders assessing progress, suggesting changes to plans, and approving the ABP's exit and sustainability plan. In a noteworthy case, stakeholders reviewed and proposed modifications to infrastructure development plans, demonstrating the ABP's dedication to promoting local ownership, aid effectiveness, and cost reduction.

## ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

**Programme challenges and delays:** Flooding caused disruptions to supply transports to programme sites, resulting in delays to certain activities and the need for alternative transportation methods such as hired canoes, motorcycles, and carrying supplies by foot. There were occasional security incidents, including revenge killings, which posed threats to staff and interrupted field activities. In response, activities were coordinated with local authorities to obtain security guidance and clearance. Additional challenges arose from judicial delays, which led to the postponement of a mobile court session, necessitating a no-cost extension to allow for sufficient time. The NCE also played a role in facilitating protection patrols, providing capacity building on election-related processes, transitional justice, and governance. It supported traditional courts in referring cases to formal courts, aided in fencing and providing materials to the police station and prisons, and conducted an online evaluation.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** The coordination of M&E activities between managers, working groups, and ABP partners was highly effective. They conducted joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and thematic assessments, presenting their findings to the ARG and ABP board. However, partners' M&E roles suffered from limited capacity, which needs to be addressed in future joint programming.

The M&E assessments and reviews provided valuable lessons for the ABP. These lessons helped to adjust planning, inclusion practices, coordination, activity mapping, the exit strategy, and the decision to seek an NCE. One important lesson learned was that the ABP's engagement through peace conferences, community dialogues, mediation initiatives, and protection patrols played a crucial role in maintaining stability in the

Counties. This was supported by the State Governor, who witnessed the positive impact of the ABP's inter-county peace dialogue between Koch, Guit, and Mayendit during his visit to Southern Unity in March.

The validity of this assessment was confirmed by the Measuring Safety and Security (MSS) endline assessment, which showed a significant improvement in safety and security perceptions in 2023 compared to the baseline measurements in 2019. The midline measurement revealed an even more pronounced improvement, although there was a temporary decline in safety perceptions in 2021 before the improvement in 2023. This suggests that the relationships between Koch and the surrounding Counties have a strong influence on safety and security perceptions.

The only significant decrease in safety perceptions occurred in late 2021, during tensions and armed conflict between government and SPLA-IO forces. This conflict primarily affected Koch, Mayendit, and Leer Counties. These findings emphasise the importance of dialogue and relationship-building between counties, the government, SPLA-IO, and community members associated with SPLA-IO.



## Community violence reduction in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) Phase II

**Target areas:** Central-southern Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA): Weikol-Pulbura, Kadiang, Nanaam-Bishbish-Keriak-Kotome-Wuno-Lekuangole, Burmath-Nyandit, and Anyidi-Manyabol-Gumuruk corridors.

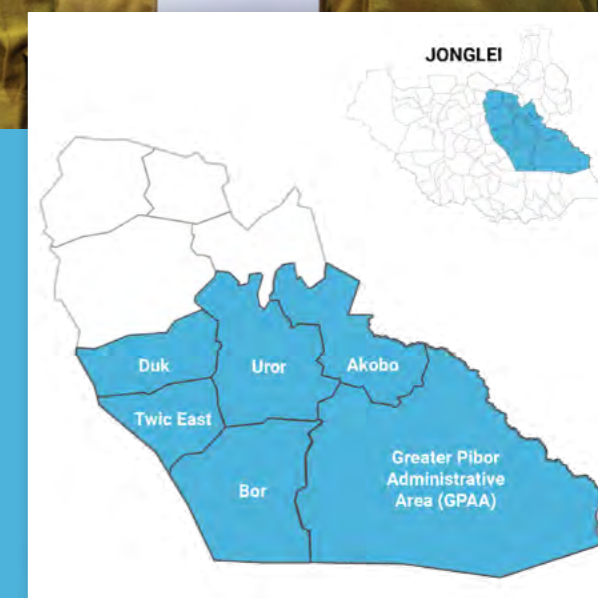
**Lead agency:** World Food Programme (WFP).

**Budget:** USD16,499,297.

**Partners:**

International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNMISS Rule of Law and Security Institutions Section (RoLSIS), Peace Canal, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), Save the Children International (SCI), Vétérinaires Sans Frontières -Germany (VSF-G).

**ABP timeframe:** 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2025



## Highlights:

**133** individuals affected by violence provided with mental health and psychosocial support services

**03** national and subnational conflict management mechanisms established or strengthened

**09** conflict management, prevention, and resolution activities conducted that broaden the space for youth leadership in peace processes and actively reinforce their role as agents of peace

**27** safety and security/ conflict monitoring activities were conducted and associated reports disseminated to inform advocacy and programmatic direction



**06**

**195** justice sector actors trained

functional community-based protection mechanisms for crime prevention and safety were established and strengthened

**55** community representatives, including youth and women-specific clusters trained on community security approaches and action planning

**455** students were enrolled and graduated from functional adult literacy and second chance education program

**60** at-risk youth were provided access to career development, employment, and livelihood opportunities

**168** active participants in Harmonised Community-based Participatory Planning (HCBPP) exercises to identify structural drivers of recurrent crises

**100** individuals engaged in building, restoring, or maintaining community assets through cash-for-work initiatives



## ABP SUMMARY AND PERFORMANCE

During the reporting period, the ABP successfully carried out initiatives to prevent and mitigate violence within and between communities despite ongoing security tensions linked to past attacks and some reported incidents. The programme strategically involved youth (including armed youth) and women, emphasising their peacebuilding roles and effectively engaging communities and local and national authorities through capacity building, training, advocacy, and awareness raising. These efforts positioned the ABP to significantly influence peace and conflict dynamics in targeted communities and develop nascent mechanisms for peaceful community governance and re-engagement, including through a noteworthy Inter-Community Governance Structure. Additionally, the ABP advanced important resilience and stabilisation efforts, most notably through the harmonised community-based participatory planning process and integrated activities with communities in conflict-affected areas, further amplifying its overall impact.

### PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

Jonglei and the GPAA have been identified as among the most troubled areas in the country, plagued by complex forms of violence that are often linked to elites based in Juba. These forms of violence are exacerbated by deep-rooted ethnicity-related hate, intolerance, and harmful traditional practices such as intergenerational fighting, revenge killings, and the abduction of women and children.

The ABP was implemented in December 2022 against the backdrop of major armed attacks by youth from Jonglei in the GPAA communities. Despite overall improvements in security, the risk of further retaliatory violence remained high, as the initial attack had limited success due to the many economic drivers of raiding. Fortunately, targeted interventions by the government and ABP partners, as well as a prolonged dry season, helped prevent further escalation, although smaller raids continued.

The ABP unfolded against the backdrop of major armed attacks by Jonglei youth in the GPAA communities in December 2022. And despite overall improvements in security, the risk of further and retaliatory violence remained high as the initial attack had limited success due to the many economic drivers of raiding. Further escalation was largely prevented due to targeted interventions by the government and the ABP partners and a prolonged dry season, although smaller raids continued. As the rainy season began, seasonal population migrations to Pibor town and other county centres increased, prompting the reconsolidation of cattle camps near homesteads and heightening risks of violence among groups of different age sets and with pre-existing grievances. Additionally, a delayed rainy season followed by intense rainfall disrupted traditional migration patterns, which escalated resource-based tensions.

In the latter half of 2023, there was an improvement in the security situation in Jonglei, resulting in lower levels of inter-communal conflict compared to previous years. This allowed easier access to areas of conflict and smoother programme implementation in the targeted locations, underscoring the importance of maintaining peace and reconciliation efforts. However, despite the improvement, the security situation remained delicate, with three major incidents resulting in fatalities, cattle raiding, abductions, and increased tensions. Additionally, around 18,000 returnees from neighbouring regions arrived in Jonglei, impacting ABP interventions. State authorities suggested redirecting funds for humanitarian response. To address the urgent needs of the new arrivals, the consortium partners initiated their registration and emergency fund streams.

### RECONCILIATION

In 2023, Jonglei and the GPAA witnessed a significant decrease in violence, a testament to the collective efforts of the ABP partners, community leaders, local authorities, peace infrastructures, and other protection mechanisms. No major mobilisations or conflicts were reported between the Murle (in the GPAA) and the Lou Nuer (in Akobo County), nor were there any significant conflicts related to different age sets or intra/inter-clan violence. This positive outcome was largely due to ABP partners' collaborative and dedicated work involving all stakeholders, who engaged in community activities to prevent violence, foster social cohesion, and address the root causes of conflict.

During 2023, 88 community engagement activities were carried out in Akobo County and the GPAA,



## ABP SNAPSHOT INTER-COMMUNAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES TO BRING PEACE

**“Leadership structures are responsible for ensuring secure and stable environment for peaceful coexistence. Nonetheless, security is both individual and collective responsibility hence the government is committed to working together with the local community and the RSRTF partners to restore peace and stability in Jonglei and GPAA.”**

- Stephen Par Kuol  
Minister of Peace Building

The first ICGS meeting was held in Juba in July, convening women and youth leaders, County commissioners, and chiefs to re-engage communities, establish, and validate priorities for the ABP’s second phase. It emphasized the need for inclusive governance to address inter-communal tensions and promote peace and resulted in a draft communique with follow-up commitments. A second ICGS workshop was held in Ayod in November and was seen as a valuable community mechanism.

The ICGS also underpinned a harmonized community-based participatory planning (HCBPP) initiative, and the creation of eight community governance structures in target locations, five of which were completed by end-2023.

These contributed to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflicts peacefully and support conflict-sensitive decision-making by prioritizing local ownership and activities sensitive to local cultural norms and rituals. They also incorporated disaster management considerations in community development planning, thereby enhancing community resilience to natural disasters and other emergencies.

exceeding the target of 48 planned activities for phase II of the ABP. Additionally, 36 activities focused on safety, security, and conflict monitoring were implemented, targeting 888 program participants (558 males and 330 females). These activities aimed to monitor conflicts and gain insights into the challenges faced by local communities. The consortium also invested in community-based approaches to tackle the issue of women and children abductions. Save the Children facilitated five high-level community engagement meetings and successfully reunited 77 abductees in Jonglei and the GPAA with their parents and caregivers. They also supported the recovered abductees and their families through mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, benefiting 133 individuals affected by violence.

Efforts to promote reconciliation and manage conflicts at the sub-national level were significantly bolstered by establishing three mechanisms during the reporting period, including the renewal of the ICGS. This was a pivotal moment in institutionalising community-led governance and conflict resolution mechanisms, ensuring the sustainability of our peacebuilding efforts. The first ICGS meeting, held in Juba in July, brought together women and youth leaders, chiefs, and County commissioners to establish and validate priorities for the second phase of the ABP. It underscored the importance of inclusive governance in alleviating tensions between communities and resulted in a draft communique outlining follow-up commitments. In November, a second ICGS workshop was held in Ayod to review progress and validate community action plans developed through a participatory planning process. This process led to the establishment of eight community governance structures in targeted areas, with five completed by the end of 2023. These structures played a crucial role in preventing, mitigating, and peacefully resolving conflicts, promoting conflict-sensitive decision-making by prioritising local ownership and activities aligned with local cultural norms and rituals.

## STABILISATION

The consortium worked with state and national-level actors to improve support for the justice and rule of law sector. They deployed judicial authorities and prosecuted conflict-related crimes, while also addressing jurisdiction issues within the customary court system. The judiciary, South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), and National Prison Service of South Sudan were engaged with to ensure these actors took ownership of and enforced the ABP-supported accountability processes. These efforts resulted in commitments to improve collaboration among all rule of law institutions and organisations. As a result, 120 police were deployed in Kadiang for patrolling, investigating, and case processing for the traditional court. Additionally, five police stations were handed over to SSNPS and became fully operational. The establishment of paralegal centres further supported these initiatives, providing legal and human rights awareness and psychosocial support to vulnerable groups. These centres helped 46 females access justice through traditional courts and successfully adjudicated 32 cases.

In addition, up to 420 community members were sensitised on their legal and human rights, and eleven women were supported with psychological services. The ABP also facilitated the formation of six Police Community Relations Committees (PCRC) to enhance security at the community level. The ABP empowered 145 women from different communities and backgrounds to actively participate and advocate for better representation of women in community decision-making and accountability mechanisms.

By collaborating with local communities, the ABP enhanced civic participation and local governance by making existing mechanisms more accountable, transparent, and responsive. They facilitated advocacy and mass awareness events to address protection issues, promote peacebuilding, and encourage dialogue. This included a one-week music festival for peace in Bor, bringing together thousands of youths to disseminate peace messages and engage in dialogue. Another one-day “Wrestling for Peace” event engaged youth through sports to foster a sense of community and contribute to peacebuilding efforts. All of these actions contributed to peacefully mitigating intercommunal conflicts, reducing tensions among communities, and promoting stabilisation in the hotspot locations of Jonglei and GPAA.

## RESILIENCE

During the first ICGS workshop held in Juba in the middle of the year, the consortium and participants completed targeting education, asset creation, and livelihood activities based on geographic and demographic considerations. After this, the resilience pillar partners, along with their reconciliation and stabilisation partners, conducted community-based participatory planning (CBPP) exercises in seven

counties, benefiting 3,250 households. CBPP planning teams were established, and five-year community action plans were created in each location to enhance capabilities, strengthen socio-economic resilience, and build community assets over time. The CBPP planning process involved 168 individuals (84 males and 84 females). Although the implementation was delayed by a month due to extended rainfall, it started in November with the provision of in-kind support for asset creation and livelihood activities. Overall, 100 individuals engaged in these activities, including rehabilitating a community access road.

Resilience activities also had a strong focus on education. The ABP facilitated the enrollment and graduation of 455 students from functional adult literacy and second-chance education programs while providing opportunities for non-formal education. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) created impactful non-formal learning opportunities for at-risk youth through its 'Learning Together – Growing Together' peace and life-skills development activity. This initiative empowered at-risk armed youth by enhancing their literacy and numeracy and supporting income-generating activities as peace dividends. The deployment of facilitators from these locations further helped learners identify, prioritise, and address their needs. In addition to non-formal education, 60 at-risk youth were provided career development and livelihood opportunities, including training to become community animal health workers. The ABP provided all these resilience actions as peace dividends to ensure the target population does not resort to violence as a means of livelihood.

As a result, all program participants demonstrated resilience to mass mobilisation and became peace agents in their target communities. Year, the consortium and participants completed the geographic and demographic targeting of education, asset creation and livelihoods activities, after which resilience pillar partners, together with their reconciliation and stabilisation partners, held community-based participatory planning exercises in seven Counties, benefitting 3,250 households. Partners established CBPP planning teams and five-year community action plans in each location to enhance capabilities, strengthen their socio-economic resilience, and build community assets over time. One hundred sixty-eight individuals (84 males, 84 females) participated in the CBPP planning process. Implementation was delayed by one month due to extended rainfall but started in November with the provision of in-kind support for asset creation and livelihood activities. Overall, 100 individuals engaged in such activities, including rehabilitating a community access road.

## PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION, STABILISATION, AND RESILIENCE

**The HDP nexus:** Implementation of the ABP was synergetic and characterised by coordination and collaboration across the three pillars, attuned to local contexts and security conditions. Through effective information sharing and joint planning among partners with mandates covering the full HDP spectrum, the consortium formed shared understandings and approaches from an early stage. For instance, the inception workshop for the ABP's second phase established a collective vision and shared direction among Area Reference Group (ARG) and ABP partners concerning activity sequencing, layering and integration, and joint work plans. The ABP was implemented in a coordinated and collaborative manner across the three pillars, which were adapted to local contexts and security conditions. By sharing information and planning jointly, the consortium was able to form shared understandings and approaches from an early stage. For example, during the inception workshop for the ABP's second phase, the Area Reference Group (ARG) and ABP partners established a collective vision and shared direction, which helped in sequencing activities, layering and integration, and joint work plans. This collaboration led to streamlined implementation and progress in reducing intercommunal violence. The joint dissemination of peace messages led by Peace Canal involved the stabilisation pillar, emphasising accountability themes, and community members ensured security through joint patrols and the use of early warning and early response mechanisms. The triple nexus was further applied when selecting targets for the HCBPP process from targets previously selected by WFP for its food assistance programme. Paralegals, customary court members, and PCRC members also assisted in food distribution missions and stabilisation pillar activities.

**Sustainability and local ownership:** Consortium partners developed close relationships with communities and authorities to improve programme planning and implementation. The consortium partners developed close relationships with communities and authorities to enhance program planning and implementation. This resulted in a strong sense of local ownership, particularly concerning the ICGS and CBPP processes. It helped establish community-led governance forums and programming approaches. The program aligns

its activities with local cultural norms and rituals for conflict resolution and meaningfully engages local actors, including women and youth-based groups, in implementing the program actions.

Moreover, the programming mechanisms established, including the intercommunal governance structures, will ensure the continuation of programme gains regarding managing and preventing inter-communal conflicts. Regarding the ABP reconciliation work, participants were committed to positive means of managing and resolving inter-communal strifes. However, Jonglei and GPAA authorities may need to show further commitment to interventions to have a sustainable impact, resulting in a strong sense of local ownership, particularly around the ICGS and CBPP processes, which helped institutionalise community-led governance forums and programming approaches. Localisation was also achieved by aligning activities with local cultural norms and rituals for conflict resolution and meaningfully engaging local actors, including women and youth-based groups, in implementing the program actions. Moreover, the mechanisms established by the programming, including the intercommunal governance structures, will ensure the continuation of the program gains regarding managing and preventing inter-communal conflicts. Concerning the ABP reconciliation work, participants were committed to positive means of managing and resolving inter-communal conflict, though Jonglei and GPAA authorities may need to show further commitment to interventions for them to have a sustainable impact.

**Women and youth engagement:** The ABP provided valuable economic opportunities for women and youth, including income-generating activities that helped reduce poverty while fostering community cohesion and stability. It also empowered women to manage conflicts and prevent and resolve them, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

It included income-generating activities that not only helped to reduce poverty but also encouraged community cohesion and stability. Moreover, it empowered women to participate in conflict management, prevention, and resolution, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts. For instance, under the stabilisation pillar, the ABP program enhanced women's technical capacities in decision-making, advocacy, dispute resolution, paralegal skills, and community security. In GPAA and Akobo County, Women Protection Teams (WPTs) led such initiatives. These teams were recognised by community leadership and were capacitated to initiate and lead dialogues and prevent conflicts. WPTs also participated in campaigns against GBV, advocated for women's rights, and discouraged harmful cultural practices.

Through the programme, women have been taking on important roles in decision-making, advocacy, dispute resolution, paralegal skills, and community security. In the GPAA and Akobo County, Women Protection Teams (WPTs) have been leading initiatives and recognised by community leadership. These teams have been trained to initiate and lead dialogues, prevent conflicts, campaign against GBV, advocate for women's rights, and discourage harmful cultural practices.

The ABP also made significant strides in youth empowerment, particularly in addressing the involvement of young men in armed violence and their roles in community security. The consortium conducted training that equipped youth with paralegal skills, dispute resolution techniques, and knowledge of community policing concepts. In the GPAA, the formation of Youth Protection Teams was a key initiative. These teams, designed to develop young leaders trained in social cohesion and conflict mitigation, engaged in numerous activities, including peace dialogues and unarmed patrols. They were also supported to participate in peace processes, effectively bridging the gap between youth and community leaders.

**Coordination:** Consortium members engaged in extensive coordination, particularly during the inception stage of the ABP's second phase. This collaboration was crucial to the programme's success in reducing violence and building resilience. A key workshop in April facilitated a comprehensive review of priorities, strategies, and work plans. It also enabled productive engagement with Jonglei and the GPAA authorities

The ABP ensured effective divisions of labour and harmonised approaches across pillars, which enhanced progress across the triple nexus.

and led to drafting a memorandum of understanding that clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. The ABP ensured effective divisions of labour and harmonised approaches across pillars, which enhanced progress across the triple nexus. This collaboration also streamlined the planning and execution of the ICGS and CBPP processes while maintaining consistent engagement with national and State-level counterparts. During the inception stage of the second phase of the ABP, consortium members collaborated extensively to ensure the programme's success in reducing violence and building resilience.

In April, a crucial workshop was held where priorities, strategies, and workplans were reviewed comprehensively. This workshop facilitated productive engagement with Jonglei and the GPAA authorities and resulted in the drafting of a memorandum of understanding that clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. The ABP ensured effective divisions of labour and harmonised approaches across pillars, which enhanced progress across the triple nexus. This collaboration also streamlined the planning and execution of the ICGS and CBPP processes while maintaining consistent engagement with national and State-level counterparts. It ensured that partners and communities in the eight border areas were actively engaged and at the centre of decision-making, ensured that partners and communities in the eight border areas were actively engaged and at the centre of decision-making.

Furthermore, the ABP ensured meaningful coordination of all actors implementing different programmes simultaneously in the same location by ensuring synergies and complementary actions. The USAID-funded Shaj e-Selam programme and the FCDO-funded Peacebuilding Opportunity Fund programmes jointly planned and implemented actions with the RSRTF partners in the region. As a result, duplication and wastage of resources were avoided, and cross-learning among different actors and knowledge sharing were enhanced.

## ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

**Programme challenges and delays:** During the implementation of the ABP, the team faced several challenges. These included heightened security risks, criminal activities, and rumours of potential attacks. As a result, some activities had to be rescheduled. Limited road access also caused frequent accessibility challenges, delays, and communication issues with communities, particularly during the rainy season. Seasonal migrations of communities seeking food and water further disrupted planned activities. Local authorities addressed this issue by alerting chiefs and Payam administrators ahead of joint missions.

In response to security risks, the ABP team learned from the first phase and implemented mitigation measures during phase II's design. This allowed them to respond nimbly to access and security challenges. For example, they prioritised hard-to-reach areas during the more accessible dry season and coordinated with partners for transport. It allowed the ABP to respond to access and security challenges nimbly, e.g., by prioritising hard-to-reach areas during the more accessible dry season and coordinating with partners for transport.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** The ABP programme reported their weekly activities and collected progress data systematically against project indicators. Monitoring activities were comprehensive and focused on the local context and security developments. The most reported security incidents were killings, which numbered 47 between April 2023 and January 2024, followed by inter-communal violence and cattle raids. Robberies and thefts were rare in the Jonglei programming area but were more frequent in the Pibor/GPAA programming area. Most monitoring activities were combined with insights from programming activities in weekly reports to assess the protection needs and program priorities of communities in these areas. Additionally, other ad hoc monitoring tools were also deployed. For instance, field teams based in Pibor and Walgak used an incident tracker to monitor and analyse conflict and security trends.



## Locally Driven Solutions for Social Cohesion and Promoting Early Recovery in the Country's Former Breadbasket Phase I

**Target areas:** Yei, Lainya, Kajo Keji and Morobo counties

**Lead agency:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Budget:** USD 10,600,000

**Partners:** Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPEDP), Finn Church Aid (FCA), Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative (WPDI), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (*Strategic partnership, not recipient*)

**ABP timeframe:** 1st October 2021 – 30th November 2023

## Highlights:

11124

individuals affected by violence provided with mental health and psychosocial support services

13

radio programmes supported to promote inter-communal peace and reconciliation, as well as 2 radio stations, which serve as key sources of information on economic, social, political and security issues

12

schools with peace education were incorporated into formal education and school curricula

726

at-risk youth were provided access to career development, employment, and livelihood opportunities

932

women, men, boys, and girls received capacity strengthening training, and technical support

30

conflict management mechanisms established or strengthened

09

community assets were built, restored or maintained

07

justice sector facilities (both formal and informal) were constructed, renovated, or equipped



## ABP SUMMARY AND PERFORMANCE

The ABP in Southern Central Equatoria State (CES), formerly known as the country's breadbasket, has in 2023 pursued initiatives contributing to significant violence reduction, especially compared to before the start of the programme. Although security remains a challenge in select locations, the reporting period has seen reduced violence and security incidents, enhanced conditions for voluntary returns, and a reduction in army checkpoints, which was highly influenced by the ABP's civil-military work. The ABP's adherence to the triple nexus resulted in strong synergies between reconciliation, stabilisation, resilience interventions and proactive inclusion of religious leaders, women, and youth as peace agents. Improved security translated into better relationships between law enforcement and civil society, increased engagement of local authorities, the establishment of community policing initiatives, and a notable increase in the number of returnees, all effectively facilitated by the ABP.

### PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

In 2023, southern Central Equatoria State continued to see marked reductions in violence and a decrease in security-related risks. This was reflected in more favourable conditions for the peaceful return and economic settlement of displaced people, though the number of returnees to the area slightly declined in 2023 (possibly attributed to armed attacks in late 2022 and early 2023). The number of army checkpoints decreased as relations between civil society and law enforcement strengthened and State representatives enjoyed improved freedom of movement, leading to partial restoration of local government authority. For example, Tore Payam in Yei River County was in past years cut off from government control and since the programme was implemented, these areas are accessible. This generally improved context strongly correlates with the ABP activities, which contributed to strengthening collective identities, reducing divisions, and leveraging political unity while improving conditions for voluntary returns.

Despite the improved security situation, challenges persisted. Social service provision remained dire and compounded by high inflation rates, and possible large-scale returns of displaced people risks placing additional pressures on the local economy and may act as an additional conflict driver. Cattle herder migrations from southern Jonglei and Terekeka to the greater Yei region, and Kajokeji notably during the dry season also gave rise to violent incidents (including 27 killings) jeopardising agricultural livelihoods. Risks of violence were further amplified by infiltration of arms and ammunition, and the presence of National Salvation Front (NAS) rebel forces in the area, hampering the free movement of goods and services. Security and political challenges in southern CES were largely linked to the implementation of the national peace process (R-ACRSS), further stressing linkages between national and local conflict dynamics.

### RECONCILIATION

In 2023, the ABP effectively reduced violence and promoted peacebuilding through various initiatives. Civil-military dialogues were held, and 10 such sessions were facilitated in collaboration with religious leaders who played a pivotal role in restoring trust and initiating engagement with communities in conflict, ex-combatants, the military, law enforcement, and other affected community members. These dialogues were attended by 1,077 people (861 men, 216 women) and resulted in the dismantling of 32 army checkpoints. This reduced levels of illegal taxation and enhanced access for civilians and authorities to areas that were previously off-limits.

Outreach and advocacy efforts were also undertaken to reduce violence. Campaigns targeting cattle herders were launched to reduce the risk of conflict. In Liwolo, for instance, the ABP facilitated a de-escalating meeting between Dinka Bor cattle keepers and local farmers following a violent cattle herder invasion into Kajo-Keji. The dialogue, supported by State government officials, resulted in the gradual departure of the cattle keepers from farming communities - with guarantees for their safety - thereby resolving the issue peacefully. Setting up a Radio broadcasting station was another effective outreach tool deployed by the ABP. The consortium supported the creation and broadcast of several radio programmes to promote inter-communal peace and reconciliation, in addition to creating two radio stations and a series of talk shows that raised awareness on peace-related topics, including outcomes of the civil-military dialogues.

To enhance intercommunal conflict management, the ABP established and strengthened 30 different



The ABP's civil-military dialogues and awareness campaigns were instrumental in reducing violence in the southern CES region. One such example was Otogo Payam in Yei River County, which had been suffering from violent incidents and repression by the armed forces stationed in the area. The soldiers harassed young people, labelled them as rebels, and instilled fear among the community members. This resulted in the displacement of many people.

Thankfully, Nimaya Idura Timateoy, an executive chef and a resident of Otogo Payam, reached out to CEPO to facilitate a civil-military dialogue. The dialogues were successful, and they resulted in soldiers being strongly rebuked and ordered to stop the illegal detention, torture, and harassment of civilians. The dismantling of several checkpoints enabled farmers and traders to access their farmlands and markets, improving their livelihoods.

Military representatives also appeared more willing to improve relations with civilians, and the Army's Executive Chief publicly stressed that the military must stop illegal taxation at checkpoints. This positive outcome was the result of the ABP's civil-military dialogues. Nimaya Idura believes that more dialogues should be held to review peace resolutions and to integrate returnees in Rubeke.

### ABP SNAPSHOT CIVIL MILITARY TIES IMPROVING THROUGH DIALOGUES

**"We wanted to promote peaceful co-existence, bridge negative perceptions and stereotypes to build trust and confidence for reconciliation, forgiveness and peace."**

- Joel Yeka  
CEPO Field Officer

mechanisms, including 12 'civilian-civilian' dialogues, which helped unite divided communities and promote peaceful co-existence. Peace and community cohesion were supported through peace-focused education, awareness-raising initiatives, and training. These included MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) sessions reaching 6141 individuals, and positive masculinity trainings, which encouraged discussions on gender equality and introduced conflict resolution techniques and referral pathways. The ABP also hosted three-day training sessions for peace committees, enhancing their roles as peacebuilders and mediators.

Moreover, peace education featured in school peace clubs is vital for educating children and their families, including those with disabilities. In 2023, in collaboration with local authorities, school inspectors and head teachers, the ABP established 12 peace clubs reaching 256 (117 men, 139 women) individuals. The efficacy of these various initiatives was reflected in the ABP's endline evaluation, which revealed significantly improved community relations and reductions in violence (53% of all surveyed individuals reported enhanced personal safety and security, and 89.8% did so in Morobo and Yei). It can, in many ways, be attributed to the meaningful inclusion of women, youth, elders, traditional leaders, returnees (IDPs), religious leaders, chiefs, and local government officials who were Internally Displaced Persons crucial in alleviating individuals' distress while helping identify and mitigate conflict triggers and enhancing social cohesion.

### STABILISATION

The ABP played a vital role in strengthening accountability and the rule of law in areas where the judicial infrastructure was either limited or absent. As a result, justice sector actors became now better equipped, more trusted, and effective in delivering justice within their communities. This success was achieved through initiatives such as training sessions on community-driven approaches to policing, targeting law enforcement and community members. These sessions fostered a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities in peacebuilding, culminating in the formation of joint police-community relations committees. Several training sessions were women-focused as part of broader efforts to empower women in decision-making processes. They included instruction on topics such as women, peace, security, gender mainstreaming, and human rights. Accountability and rule of law initiatives focused on formal and informal justice systems. In Yei, Lainya, and Morobo, 49 customary council leaders underwent training on various local customary laws, which led to the creation of customary law councils and orientations on these laws to ensure that traditional court proceedings upheld truth and fairness for all community members. Additionally, the consortium consulted with customary council members in Lainya and delivered materials to its traditional court (constructed by UNMISS) to enhance its functionality and efficiency as part of achieving synergies with external programmes.

The ABP has also been instrumental in promoting civic participation and governance, particularly among marginalized groups such as women and youth. The program's initiatives have fostered their meaningful engagement in local governance and peacebuilding and have significantly strengthened dispute resolution capabilities through grassroots peacebuilding and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. The ABP has conducted three conferences, benefiting 70 participants, including youth previously involved in violent clashes, and has held dialogues and training centered on reconciliation, the safe return of IDPs, and the promotion of gender equality in peacebuilding processes.

### RESILIENCE

The ABP created sustainable economic and livelihood opportunities to increase community resilience and reduce the likelihood of conflict. The partners achieved this by providing training on cooperative governance, group dynamics, and climate-smart agriculture to 986 individuals. The beneficiaries were equipped with essential skills for enhanced household crop production, socio-economic empowerment, and improved living standards. The monitoring report revealed that the trained individuals had scaled production and registered cooperatives with local authorities. The ABP also established and managed communal gardens, which generated income and improved social cohesion. Similarly, enterprise groups for women and youth were trained to identify profitable ventures and develop viable business plans. For example, SPEDP trained farmer groups on climate-smart agronomic practices and cooperative governance, benefiting 198 people, including returnees and host communities. It was followed by distributing seeds and tools to crop producer groups and cooperatives in Kajo-Keji and Morobo, aiding 500 people.

The ABP's efforts in achieving reconciliation in communities had a positive impact on access to basic





services, reducing dependence on humanitarian aid and enhanced prospects for long-term development. The ABP built and restored community assets and infrastructure, rehabilitating two schools and health facilities. These in turn greatly enhanced access to clean water by constructing a water facility at a health centre in Yei and establishing a water collection point serving 1000 people, with a water management committee formed to ensure sustainable usage. Additionally, seven customary law courts were constructed and rehabilitated in Kajo-Keji, Morobo, and Yei to facilitate the resolution of local disputes. Four Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres were also rehabilitated and equipped, enabling 363 people to graduate successfully, with only a few dropping out.

## PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION, STABILISATION, AND RESILIENCE

**The HDP nexus:** The ABP's implementation of the RSRTF triple nexus under the HDP fostered a highly synergistic programme, which incentivised collaboration and maximised the collective impact of partners. Protection activities, for instance, targeted the same groups identified for VSLA groups and TVET activities, which ensured complementarity and minimised redundancy of the activities. Coordination mechanisms at field levels also ensured effective planning and information sharing, which helped implementing partners identify and address issues and bottlenecks as they arose. This is exemplified by the Area Reference Group (ARG) structure, which enabled continuous information sharing among a diverse range of actors, and opportunities for joint planning, and adaptive learning across the three pillars, as well as opportunities to strengthen local leadership and ownership of programme activities.

Crucially, strategic planning around the unique triple nexus allowed for initiatives to progressively reinforce each other. For instance, intercommunal conflict management and violence reduction complemented peacebuilding efforts, civic participation, and rule of law initiatives.

By the end of the ABP's first phase, these were seamlessly integrated with resilience building activities such as livelihood and agricultural initiatives and infrastructure investments, which in turn bolstered reconciliation and stabilisation efforts. This integrated approach, premised on extensive joint planning, continuous information sharing, flexibility, and trusted relationships proved notably effective early in phase II. It acknowledged that while standalone stabilisation and reconciliation activities may yield quick stability and social cohesion gains, sustained peace requires a holistic approach that incorporates both immediate and long-term resilience support.

**Sustainability and local ownership:** Local stakeholders were engaged in every aspect of the ABP – from decision-making to implementation, including through engagement in the ARGs. All major national NGOs participated in designing activities and received additional trainings as needed such as in reporting. This approach aimed to cultivate a strong sense of ownership among communities and authorities, particularly in peace-focused and livelihood initiatives. The programme also promoted the localisation and sustainability of the programme results through targeted capacity building key groups, including law enforcement and women's groups. Engaged stakeholders, including women and youth, reported benefitting their communities through life skills trainings and becoming empowered as peacebuilders and change makers. To ensure the sustainability of the programme gains, the ABP partnered with national and international actors to implement programmes in the area through the ARG coordination mechanisms and a meaningful engagement of the local community actors.

**Women and youth engagement:** The ABP significantly advanced the empowerment of women and youth, promoting their leadership and equal participation in peace processes. Despite persistent challenges like harassment and discrimination, the ABP made notable achievements vis-a-vis gender through its outreach and by targeting more female than male beneficiaries. CEPO increased women's involvement in civilian-military dialogues and radio talk shows, while FCA ensured the presence of female beneficiaries in VSLA activities and TVET trainings, even accommodating lactating mothers with childcare assistance. Similarly, WPDl collaborated with UN Women to enhance women's inclusion in policymaking. Special efforts were made to include women in remote areas, empowering them to be community leaders and agents of change.

The ABP actively engaged youth in its activities, recognising their essential role in sustaining peace. Youth participation was prioritised in civil-military dialogues, and capacity-building sessions focused on youth empowerment and gender sensitivity while including gender transformative trainings were provided

aiming specifically at youth. Their engagement was progressively expanded into agricultural initiatives, environmental conservation, and community peace-building efforts, underscoring their vital contributions to community peace and cohesion (and the importance of working across the triple nexus).

**Coordination:** Coordination was integral to the ABP’s design, implementation, and governance. Despite initial challenges in early 2023, coordination significantly improved later in the year, including by reinforcing the programme’s triple nexus approach. Regular County-level ARG meetings, technical working group and M&E working group meetings and the Peacebuilding Partners Forum (at Yei level), facilitated synergies with government, UNMISS, and other partners. These mechanisms also enhanced localisation through engagement with County authorities and local actors who provided information and updates on the security situation and mobilised beneficiaries for activities.

State, and national ministries of peacebuilding coordinated with the ABP through a mix of informal meetings, activity planning, courtesy visits, and ad hoc meetings, leading to improvements in training and harmonisation of local peace committee members. Additionally, FCA and IOM actively participated in UN OCHA-led humanitarian coordination meetings, and IOM maintained continuous liaison with UNPOL, further advancing the triple nexus, partners also worked closely with UNMISS to streamline peace-focused activities while FCA, together with consortium partners and UNMISS civil affairs, revived County-level meetings with religious leaders on initiating grassroots dialogue with hold-out [armed] groups.

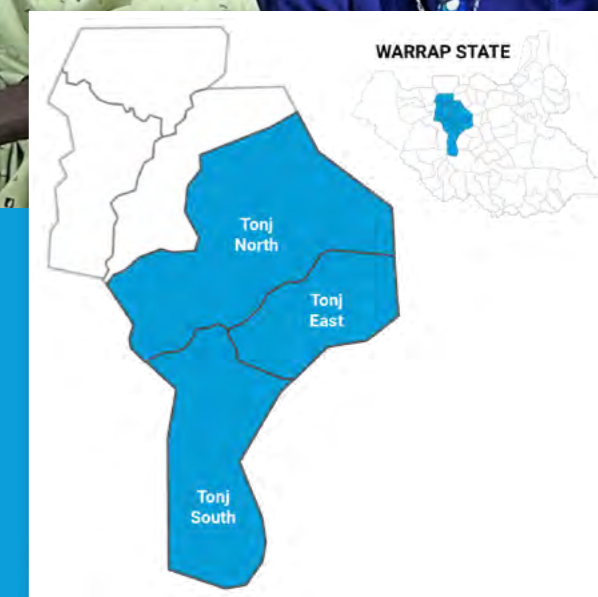
## ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

**Programme challenges and delays:** Significant challenges affecting the programme included insecurity linked to armed cattle herders, clashes between groups and poor road networks, especially during the rainy season. These factors hindered food production and caused loss of life and property. Consortium members responded quickly to these events. Following killings in Kajo-Keji and Lainya, FCA worked with religious leaders to promote non-violent solutions and temporarily halted the spiral of violence. And in response to armed robberies on roads, notably in Morobo, partners took measures such as renting terrain-appropriate vehicles and collaborating with County governments for security updates.

Lessons learned highlighted the importance of local coordination meetings, and the constructive role of religious leaders in facilitating dialogues, and the need to equip Peace Committees to be able to address future challenges, especially during sensitive times like elections. As noted above, initial coordination issues among partners affected synergy and reporting efficiency. However, enhanced communication, and monitoring led to significant improvements. The ABPs ability to adapt and adjust its strategies and approaches dynamically was crucial in addressing these challenges effectively.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** All ABP activities were guided through monitoring and evaluation. A midterm review assessed the ABP’s relevance, coordination, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency, and cross-cutting elements - affirming significant achievement in these areas. Additional M&E efforts included safety and security baseline assessments, field missions to verify activity completion, identify challenges, and provide recommendations for improvement. The ABP also conducted surveys to assess and inform activities, including a post-harvest survey, which estimated yields generated from agricultural inputs and gathered feedback on the suitability of livelihood support. It identified benefits from the distributed inputs but also challenges, including late delivery, insecurity, and missing items, and provided recommendations to address these challenges and improve future livelihood activities.

M&E activities also included data collection on returnees through the IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (the last two of four rounds were completed in 2023), which facilitated planning of ABP activities and their adjustment in response to returnee trends. The matrix found a steady increase in returns early in the ABP’s first phase, attributed to poor living conditions in refugee camps and other areas of refuge with some returnees possibly influenced by ABP programming. By mid-2023, a slight decline in returns was observed, which may be attributed to armed attacks in late 2022 in Morobo County, and in February in Kajo Keji.



### Kong Koc: Laying the foundation for peaceful, stable, and resilient communities in Greater Tonj

**Target areas:** Greater Tonj, Warrap State: Tonj South, Tonj North, Tonj East counties

**Lead agency:** World Food Programme (WFP)

**Budget:** USD 12,273,540

**Partners:** United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Peace Canal, The Organisation for Children’s Harmony (TOCH), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)

**ABP timeframe:** 15th August 2022 – 14th August 2024

## Highlights:

**1069**

conflict management, prevention, and restitution activities held that broaden the space for youth leadership in peace processes and actively reinforce their role as agents of peace

**05**

peaceful cattle restitution events completed

**44**

intra and inter-communal dialogue sessions held

**35**

UNMISS patrols were conducted to protect civilians

**11**

communities supported with functional mechanisms for conflict prevention, dialogue, and conflict resolution



**885**

community representatives, including youth and women-specific clusters trained on community security approach and action planning



**40**

justice sector actors trained

**225**

government officials trained to better manage and provide basic services

**4332**

women, men, boys, and girls received capacity strengthening training, and technical support

**1853**

at-risk youth were provided access to career development, employment, and livelihood opportunities

**6096**

individuals were engaged in building restoration or maintaining community assets through cash-for-work initiatives

**29**

community assets were built, restored, or maintained



**38**

hubs created for the interaction of people from different communities, extension agents and private sectors to stimulate inter and intra-community economic linkages

## ABP SUMMARY AND PERFORMANCE

Initially, programme efforts in Greater Tonj focused on community engagement and dialogue aiming to establish a foundational system for preventing and mitigating conflicts among communities. These efforts culminated in the holding of the Greater Tonj Peace Conference, the subsequent Greater Tonj Agreement and numerous peace and stability resolutions, all of which formed the basis for ABP interventions under the stabilisation and resilience pillars. Evidence indicated continuously improving perceptions of safety and security in most parts of Greater Tonj, further demonstrated by a significant reduction in intercommunal conflicts and in the magnitude and frequency of crimes. As a result of this reduction in violence, communities have been able to move freely and resume their daily activities and livelihoods, including farming, which has resulted in increased availability of food in both households and markets. Additionally, communities are increasingly acknowledging the roles of local chiefs, police, and courts in addressing their grievances, and discouraging vigilante justice. However, the justice system remains weak and under-resourced, posing a continued threat to the relative peace in Greater Tonj.

## PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

In 2023, Greater Tonj saw improved conflict dynamics compared to the year prior, though some violent clashes occurred. Tonj North experienced community violence linked to unresolved cattle restitutions from previous raids and revenge killings over unpaid blood compensation to relatives of people killed in prior conflicts. Tonj South remained relatively peaceful with only minor incidents reported, such as cattle theft. Sporadic violence occurred in Tonj East, triggered by cattle raids, girls' elopement, and pregnancies. Occasional casualties resulted from armed cross-border incursions suspected from Lakes and Unity States. Despite these incidents, there were some trading continued between communities in Greater Tonj which increased gradually as the areas were slowly stabilising while increasing confidence of traders and entrepreneurs.

The reporting period saw two major political shifts. Firstly, the acting commissioner of Tonj East, an SPLM-IG member, was replaced with an appointee who is an SPLM-IO member, allegedly resulting in tensions that were later defused through community interventions. Secondly, the former Governor of Warrap State was dismissed by the President and immediately replaced, which political commentators attributed to his failure to contain inter-communal fighting over internal borders. It remains to be seen whether the new governor will support the consortium's peacebuilding work to the same extent that his predecessor did.

Food crisis was considerably high during 2023. The price of sorghum and other staple cereals remained high throughout the year and was expected to rise further as stocks deplete. Other basic commodity prices also rose due to the ongoing depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound which created stress in the communities under the programme. Despite irregular rainfall in most of Warrap State, including in Greater Tonj, partners implementing the resilience component reported improved harvests in 2023 compared to 2022 as farmers were able to conduct their farming activities without fear of being attacked given the improved security environment.

## RECONCILIATION

In the first half of 2023, the ABP's reconciliation pillar spearheaded efforts to foster sustainable peace, stability, and resilience. These efforts included extensive community engagement and the establishment of community dialogue systems, culminating in the Greater Tonj Peace Conference. Held in Tonj Town in May 2023, the conference covered discussions on conflict drivers, community priorities and accountability mechanisms, and formed the basis for ABP stabilisation and resilience pillar interventions. It attracted over two thousand attendees (2000), including County, State, and National dignitaries, and resulted in the signing of the Greater Tonj Agreement detailing all resolutions for peace and stability. Follow-up engagements were also held to identify conflict drivers and spearhead conflict resolution and prevention efforts. This included dialogues with cattle camp youth (who initially were unable to participate) to discuss unaddressed grievances and, which resulted in a significant reduction in inter-communal conflicts. These exchanges and dialogues were highly valued by communities and recommended for expansion to enhance local ownership and reduce violence. During the reporting period, a total of 44 intra- and inter-communal dialogue sessions were facilitated by the consortium, in addition to five peaceful cattle restitution events.



The Kong Koc vegetable production intervention supported farmers like Yar Athiem, a 40-year-old housewife in Manyangok Payam, Tonj South County to sell their vegetable produce. It targeted participants, including armed youth from conflict hotspots as well as conflict-affected women and girls, for livelihood and asset creation activities. Following trainings on agronomic practices, and receiving inputs and technical support by ADRA, Yar's group embarked on crop and vegetable farming, establishing their own vegetable gardens.

After harvesting, Yar had enough vegetables to meet her household's own consumption needs as well as surplus for sale, including for restaurants. This result is notable considering how Greater Tonj has faced years of hunger and malnutrition as a cumulative effect of decades of intercommunal conflicts, flooding, and droughts. The programme has not only improved food security, nutrition, and supplemental income, but has also helped conflict-affected individuals like Yar develop critical skill sets and build resilience by reducing the need for negative coping strategies such as thefts, robberies, and violence.

The RSRTF area-based programme targeted participants from the most affected bomas to engage in livelihood programs that will support them in building resilience while contributing to violence reduction.

### ABP SNAPSHOT AGRICULTURE REDUCING VIOLENCE

**"I am very happy that now I can earn some money to buy what I and my family need. That, on top of having enough to feed my children. Indeed with peace, everything is possible."**

- Yar Athiem

The ABP advanced intercommunal conflict management through peace dialogues and dissemination of resolutions from the Greater Tonj conference. The ABP facilitated the establishment and strengthening of an oversight committee, police and community relations committee, and cattle camp crime prevention committees. These structures played a vital role in identifying, preventing, and mitigating tensions, and in monitoring and preventing conflicts. Women's participation in peacebuilding processes was bolstered through extensive outreach and support for women-led community organisations. The ABP also promoted inclusion through events such as a cultural gala aimed at women and youth, which was warmly received by communities who celebrated their shared culture, beliefs, and practices. In total, 1,069 activities and events were held aimed at conflict management, prevention, and restitution, which also facilitated youth participation and leadership in peace processes.

### STABILISATION

Justice and rule of law interventions enhanced capacities within these sectors, including by integrating efforts across the triple nexus. The stabilisation pillar assessed the needs of justice actors through the community engagement process (led by the reconciliation pillar). It identified, e.g., the need to map formal and informal justice actors, their capacities for adjudication, and gaps, including limited knowledge on criminal procedures and statutes, rule of law and human rights. These findings were instrumental in the capacity building training of 40 (35 Males, 5 Females) justice sector actors, and in developing training materials for chiefs and other justice actors on the Local Government Act, Criminal Procedures Act and human rights. The ABP also contracted three Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) two of which were women-led, to establish and support community paralegal networks to provide legal aid and help bridge the gap between formal and informal justice mechanisms in remote areas of Greater Tonj. They helped community members advocate and raise awareness on legal and human rights monitoring, which is important as poor accountability mechanisms were identified as a cause of revenge killing and intercommunal conflicts.

During the reporting period, public outreach programmes on community security, the role of PCRCs and the rule of law reached over 885 (535 Male, 350 Female) community members and police officers. The ABP further enhanced the capacity of local authorities and duty bearers by training them in participatory governance and effective community representation. This included instruction on the Local Government Act and its governance principles, which was well-received. Additionally, trainings were conducted on human rights principles, compliance, and standards in customary and criminal justice administration. Despite aiming for 25% female participation to enhance inclusive decision-making in local governance, female representation remained low, mirroring broader state and national trends. Of the 225 government officials trained for better management and provision of services, only 18 were women. In response, the ABP prioritised advocacy for women's inclusion in government and community structures.

### RESILIENCE

The improved security situation and reduced levels of violence linked to the consortium's community engagement and peacebuilding work allowed ample space for resilience and income generating activities. For instance, 4,332 (3080 Males, 1252 Females) people were targeted for training on good agronomic practices, provided seeds and farm tools and engaged in a range of resilience building activities such as crop and vegetable farming. Efforts to incentivise participation in resilience building efforts and related socio-economic processes included commissioning a new radio station, which covers a 75-kilometre radius and fosters social cohesion through a range of programmes on conflict, crime, justice, and community-related themes. Improved participation in resilience building also followed the construction and equipping of a technical and vocational training centre in Warrap town. Youth from across Greater Tonj, including conflict hotspots, enrolled in four vocational skills courses, and are set to receive job opportunities, and apprenticeships through market linkage activities. A transparent selection process of trainees was appreciated by the communities as it led to interested and committed youth being selected, which is expected to contribute to improved outcomes. Overall, the consortium provided 1,853 (1808 Males, 45 Females) at-risk youth with access to career development and various other employment opportunities in 2023.

Asset creation activities identified in dialogues and HCBPP exercises were incentivised among communities as well as in cattle camps. During the reporting period, 29 community assets were constructed, restored, or maintained, and 6,096 individuals were engaged in through cash-for-work initiatives. Although initially delayed, these initiatives were highly popular and included building community access roads (8.82km out of

16km) to link villages to health facilities, schools, markets, and social services. They included construction of flood control dikes (1.02km of 4.55km) to control flooding, which is important as it often displaces cattle keepers to higher land, thereby encroaching on other communities, land, and acts as a conflict driver. Other asset creation activities, such as seedling production for tree planting activities also contributed to natural resource management and climate adaptation. WFP supported several of these community activities while simultaneously distributing food to address local food insecurity challenges.

## PATHWAYS TO RECONCILIATION, STABILISATION, AND RESILIENCE

**The HDP nexus:** Consortium partners adhered to the triple nexus approach by ensuring active participation among partners and coordination among pillars. This also helped demonstrate to stakeholders how reconciliation, stabilisation, and resilience interventions reinforce each other for improved intercommunal violence reduction. An important example can be found in cattle camp engagement and how reconciliation is supported by resilience and stabilisation initiatives. In August, consortium partners carried out dialogues with rival cattle camp youths to encourage a cease in violence in favour of livelihood and resilience building, crime prevention, paralegal support, and community dispute resolution activities.

The consortium also established number committees as part of the community-led governance structures tasked with activities spanning the entire triple nexus. Under the stabilisation pillar, activities were geared toward community crime prevention and support to justice actors to help curb crime. Similarly, asset creation efforts (under the resilience pillar) targeted committee members (under reconciliation and stabilisation pillars) to receive monthly food rations in return for their participation in ABP peacebuilding activities. Here, spear masters and chiefs who are key participants in peace dialogues (reconciliation) were targeted to participate in resilience activities, as were cattle camp youth to dissuade them from violence.

**Sustainability and local ownership:** By actively involving broad and representative subsets of communities and authorities in programme design, (in phase 1 of the ABP) the implementation process better reflected their priorities, needs, and preferences. It also resulted in improved local support and ownership, and it is expected that this will contribute to the sustainability of the programme. Violence reduction activities and peace-focused dialogues in particular were considered by communities to be important and valuable not least as they fostered a sense of ownership and helped mitigate violence and occasionally, resolve it.

**Women and youth engagement:** As part of the ABP-facilitated dialogues, female-only focus groups offered positive opportunities for women to highlight their grievances without the influence of males who often dominate such spaces. To this end, two women-led CSOs, Legacy for African Women and Children Initiative, and Dot Bai Women Initiative were enlisted to support women and youth engagement in the peace process and conflict mitigation. Similarly, the resilience pillar empowered women and youth by engaging them in activities not traditionally practiced by them. Women were e.g., involved in livestock management groups, and activities to improve animal nutrition. This increased cattle feed options during the dry season, thereby potentially reducing the need for cattle migration and the conflict risks they bring.

Cattle camp youth were targeted for resilience activities, with the expectation that more will consider farming as an alternative livelihood, potentially reducing their involvement in cattle raiding. And to further influence youth who may be involved in criminal activities, women were observed by the community as key change agents (after cattle camp leaders and chiefs) due to their influence over their sons. They were, therefore, actively engaged in all programme processes, and the ABP ensured to include women and youth, and local chiefs in all local governance structures and community committees. Moving forward, the ABP will continue to build their capacity, encourage collaboration, provide material support and mentorship.

**Coordination:** To enhance coordination and information sharing between consortium partners, regular meetings were convened internally, as were exchanges with external actors. These included bi-weekly coordination and weekly pillar meetings to improve consortium synergies, and monthly Peace Partners Forum meetings convened by the Warrap State Minister of Peacebuilding to provide updates on conflict dynamics and coordinate interventions in response to violent incidents. Coordination was also ensured at field level through engagements with strategic partners, while quarterly technical working group meetings were held to cover all monitoring and evaluation issues. A notable example of coordination led by IOM, which was not part of the consortium, was a joint customary assessment and review of Wanh Alel customary laws

to assess the applicability of existing customary laws and their need for revision (as identified in phase I). Findings from the assessment will inform possible amendments to these laws.

## ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

**Programme challenges and delays:** Some programme challenges experienced by the ABP stemmed from high expectations from the community and government, which were difficult to meet given the limited availability of resources and required continuous engagement to manage. Other challenges were linked to cross-border conflict dynamics between people in Greater Tonj and neighbouring communities. An important lesson identified was to extend engagements across borders to better capitalise on peacebuilding opportunities. Some internal conflicts risked spreading due to the weakness of the justice system and people's limited access to justice - further exacerbated by political interference, or manipulation of communal conflicts.

Other adverse impacts on programming included unpredictable rainfall patterns, which impacted crop yields. They were compounded by poor road conditions making access to ABP locations difficult (especially Tonj East and North). Relatedly, the food security situation was challenging and expected to deteriorate, as was the economic situation due to high inflation rates, lack of safety nets, and increasing numbers of returnees from Sudan, which was also expected to increase crime rates. Unmet, basic community needs such as lacking clean water sources, water for livestock, animal health, and access to health and education remained a challenge and impacted efforts to improve community cohesion.

Mitigation efforts to programme challenges and delays were put in place and are guided by relevant plans, strategies and lessons learned. These include the value of involving community and government actors, which facilitated programme implementation, local ownership, and sustainability. Similarly, directly engaging conflict actors such as cattle camp leaders, and armed youth was seen as critical to peacebuilding efforts in all three counties, including through the establishment of cattle camp crime prevention committees. These committees and the broader community governance structures supported by the ABP have proved important to resolving conflicts and could as such have been established and resourced at an earlier stage. Other lessons speak to the importance of well-resourced political engagement strategies to influence conflict dynamics, inclusive disarmament strategies, and climate adaptation strategies. Lastly, the ABP benefited greatly from having women-led organisations as implementing partners. Engaging other women-led groups should thus be a priority for future programme design.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Consortium partners and the coordination team performed numerous regular and ad hoc M&E, accountability, and learning activities to inform programme implementation. These included finalisation of the ABP results framework, as well as ethnographic research. With respect to the latter, the Bridge Network conducted 12 ethnographic studies offering snapshots of the security situation and how ABP activities impacted the context, which were used to inform programme implementation (notably to address the limited access to justice in Greater Tonj). Several studies were also conducted, including a community perception of justice study launched by Bridge Network on behalf of the stabilisation pillar and conducted on a bi-monthly basis. ABP partners conducted routine monitoring of their own organisation's activities and held learning and review workshops to assess implementation progress, lessons learned and to improve and adjust programming.

# EVALUATION AND LEARNING

## Cross Partner Learning Workshop 2023

The year 2023 marked a significant milestone for RSRTF as it initiated its localisation strategy and embarked on a comprehensive coordination with all UN funds and partners, including external partners at the national level. This collaborative UN Funds coordination mechanism, endorsed by the steering committee, sets the stage for the development and streamlining initiatives and actions in 2024, emphasising the importance of every stakeholder's contribution.

RSRTF's programming is a dynamic process that evolves with the knowledge and experience gained by our partners. The MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, learning, and accountability,) framework along with knowledge management strategy form the bedrock of its investment strategy for the upcoming year. It also provides the rationale for Fund's strategic shift towards localisation, analysing its pillars and the fit-for-purpose coordination mechanism that it needs to adopt to enhance its agility. The Cross-Partner Learning Workshop is therefore an important platform that offers all stakeholders a unique opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions, share their learnings and challenges, and provide invaluable advice on how the Fund can adapt to be more effective. As part of the knowledge management process, RSRTF convenes an annual cross-partners learning workshop, bringing together all RSRTF implementing partners from the field, donors, steering committee members, and relevant government structures from the state and national levels.

In 2023, RSRTF successfully hosted its third Cross-Partner Learning Workshop in Juba, a pivotal event on November 23 and 24, 2023. The workshop served as a testament to the effectiveness of its collaborative approach, providing partners to reflect on the challenges and achievements of each area-based programme, RSRTF's strategy, and how its modus operandi can be refined for the future. It also offered a valuable opportunity for other UN funds, external partners, donors, and government relevant ministries to align their objectives and priorities through shared learning. Representatives of each of the Fund's four area-based programs (ABPs) participated, in addition to RSRTF Steering Committee members, donors, local community members, and strategic stakeholders such as the Ministry of Peacebuilding South Sudan from the South Sudan Ministry of Peacebuilding, representatives of UNMISS Field Offices, and partners from the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility. Approximately 75 partner representatives actively participated in the event, underscoring the collaborative nature of RSRTF's initiatives. During the workshop, donor representatives EU and SIDA representatives commended the work of each ABP, which has shown early results and signs of peace in the target locations. They also encouraged partners to sustain their efforts to achieve the desired reconciliation, stabilisation, and resilience outcomes.



“As we approach the first election year of South Sudan, the significance of RSRTF's programming becomes even more pronounced. The Area-Based Programs may even facilitate elections in conflict hotspots. We must not underestimate the peace and reconciliation activities that RSRTF has been spearheading. These activities create an enabling condition and a peaceful environment for the elections.”

- Mr. Pia Philip, Undersecretary  
Ministry of Peacebuilding

## WORKSHOP OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The RSRTF 2023 Cross-partner Learning Workshop was a vibrant platform that fostered collaboration among donors, partners, and the Fund and created a sense of community. During the workshop the partners and stakeholders had an opportunity to network, discuss common challenges, and exchange good practices. In their feedback, participants welcomed RSRTF's willingness to be innovative in its programming. This spirit of innovation and mutual commitment to continuous learning has transformed the RSRTF and its partners to be aligned to address violence reduction in RSRTF implementation areas of South Sudan over the past few years.

The 2023 workshop was a significant milestone, producing concrete and actionable recommendations that can shape the future of the Fund and its partners. The invaluable contributions made by the donors and partners during the sessions have the potential to be instrumental in shaping these outcomes.

Following are key learnings the workshop participants gained:

1. One key learning from the workshop was the unanimous agreement on the importance of community engagement. This was identified as a crucial entry point into conflict hotspots, allowing for a deeper understanding of local dynamics, building trust, and validating local partners for effective and context-specific interventions. Additionally, the workshop highlighted the comprehensive approach that can be achieved through the involvement of local, subnational, and national actors, aligning with RSRTF's bottom-up approach.
2. The partners also validated the investment RSRTF makes to ensure capacity building for community-level governance structures, particularly in areas like Greater Tonj and Jonglei/GPAA. This was perceived as a pivotal and innovative programmatic move toward creating a sustainable pathway toward peace and security.
3. The Fund also learned a valuable lesson on its localisation strategy through discussions with partners and national and international actors. It became evident that to achieve greater sustainability, RSRTF needs to promote localisation efforts by involving local authorities, partners, and communities in decision-making processes and involving the government and civil society organisations at the national and strategic levels to efficiently implement the strategy.
4. The workshop also provided valuable insight into how all stakeholders understand the Triple Nexus. It became evident that a collective understanding of the HDP Nexus is necessary. It also highlighted the need for integration of reconciliation, stabilisation, and resilience components in programme interventions, especially in areas like Koch.
5. Regarding sustainability, the partners recognised the need to encourage the involvement of development actors as RSRTF exits. This can involve conceptualising a comprehensive HDP nexus programming strategy soon after the early phase of the ABP is initiated in consultation with relevant stakeholders, ministries, and clusters to ensure a smooth transition of programmes for long-term sustainability.
6. Valuable learning for all implementing partners was a need for coordination among ABPs and other UN lead or non-UN agencies programmes to resolve cross-border conflicts, collective planning in logistics and resources, targeting beneficiaries/communities and gaining synergy.
7. A major MEAL learning focused on generating evidence to contribute to national-level discussions and policy development.

## RSRTF MOVING FORWARD

Since 2019, the RSRTF has made significant progress in effectively resolving conflicts and establishing transitional peace in challenging locations with complex drivers of conflict. Some of these drivers are structural, deeply rooted in the communities, and augmented by the political elites' manipulation and, often, beyond the remit of short-term programming.

While the RSRTF recognises the need for long-term programming to address complex conflict drivers, it has distinguished itself by successfully establishing transitional peace and reducing violence in conflict hotspots like Jonglei and the GPAA, in Unity, Central Equatoria States, Warrap, and Western Bahr el Gazal States. This achievement is a testament to the RSRTF's unique and effective triple nexus approach.

For instance, in Bahr el Ghazal, despite the completion of the programme in 2022, the area remains relatively stable. This resilience of the community is a testament to their determination for peace. However, it is crucial to understand that achieving long-term stability will require longer-term interventions with multi-pronged programming. RSRTF will continue to promote these relatively longer-term interventions to sustain the gains achieved through its initial efforts.

Such programming must also account for political dynamics, which play a significant and influential role in South Sudan's multilayered conflicts. The Fund notes that the political manipulation of vulnerable youth is particularly widespread. In this regard, the government of South Sudan and the international community need to prioritise efforts to prevent the proliferation of small arms and the manipulation of at-risk youths to destabilise communities for political or personal gain.

RSRTF values the role of its ABP partners and encourages them to strengthen their political engagement strategies. This can significantly improve the success of ABPs' efforts to achieve peace and stability in their intervention areas of South Sudan.

Throughout the RSRTF's programme areas, the youth and women have been successfully identified as the primary target groups for conflict prevention and reduction activities. This inclusive approach recognises the significant role these groups play in the peacebuilding process. Women, in particular, have historically experienced high levels of violence and marginalisation and bear the greatest burden of the country's economic stress. The RSRTF is committed to empowering these groups and fostering their active participation in peace initiatives.

Therefore, the Fund has targeted these two segments of the communities through its ABPs, resulting in successful stabilisation. In areas that have seen reduced violence, these primary groups have refocused on building resilience and stability, fostering peaceful coexistence, and improving their economic situation.

It must also be noted that lifting them out of poverty through the RSRTF short-term programming is challenging. RSRTF programme creates conditions and opportunities for economic growth, which can be capitalised by long-term programming. Therefore, it is important to recognise the need for longer-term programmes to use its initial successes and empower women and youth further while stabilising the local economy for improved sustenance and livelihoods, which catalyse local and national peace initiatives.

As conflicts intertwined with cattle migration corridors across state borders continue to pose challenges, the RSRTF is committed to strengthening its efforts to address this issue. This commitment extends to supporting and working with other programmes, particularly emphasising the humanitarian and development issues communities across South Sudan have been facing for years. This collaborative approach underscores the RSRTF's dedication to comprehensive peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

In 2023, the RSRTF experienced both success and learning. After almost five years of successful programming, the Fund aims to revise its Terms of Reference (ToR) in 2024 and implement its localisation policy at all levels. This important policy, aligned with the UN's localisation policy, aims to increase the

involvement of local communities and institutions in the design, implementation, and participation in the evaluation of programmes to analyse their successes and areas of improvement. By doing so, the RSRTF seeks to strengthen the sustainability of the programmes and ensure they are better tailored to local needs and contexts.

The RSRTF has been experiencing funding challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, global economic instability, wars, and unprecedented humanitarian and climate change-induced crises worldwide have led to funding shortages in the peace and security sector. Despite these limitations, the Fund has been strategically investing in locations that can strengthen the efforts of the government and aid community to create a conducive environment for long-term programming. The government of South Sudan and the Ministry of Peacebuilding, particularly the donor countries, have been unwavering in their support alongside the UN Country Team, UNMISS, and their benefactors.

In South Sudan, the RSRTF is an indispensable financial framework that provides essential resources to some of the most deprived and insecure communities and defuses conflicts and violence. The Fund's pursuit of peace and security in conflict-ridden regions has been remarkable due to its unique strategy and intervention model for South Sudan. The RSRTF will continue to create access for the government and partners to intervene, encouraging sustainable, long-term programming. At the same time, it will pursue securing essential resources for the most vulnerable communities in need.





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Reconciliation Stabilization Resilience

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