



*THE UNITED NATIONS MULTI-PARTNER TRUST FUND FOR RECONCILIATION,
STABILIZATION, AND RESILIENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN*

*RESTORING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE FOR BETTER LIVELIHOODS IN KOCH
COUNTY UNITY STATE, KOCH AREA-BASED PROGRAM*

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM END EVALUATION

7TH OCTOBER 2024

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ACRONYMS

ABP	Area-Based Program
ARG	Area Reference Group
ET	Evaluation Team
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MC	Mercy Corps
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCE	No Cost Extension
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NNGO	National non-governmental organization
PoC	Protection of Civilians
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of conflict in South Sudan
R-TGoNU	Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity
RSR	Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience
RSRTF	Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund
SC	Steering Committee
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SPLA-IG	Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Government
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army -In Opposition
SSD	Republic of South Sudan
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNIDOR	Universal Intervention and Development Organization
WR	World Relief

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Koch Area-Based Program (ABP), *Restoring Peaceful Coexistence for Better Livelihoods in Koch County*, implemented from August 2021 to November 2023, was supported by the Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) in the amount of USD 8,614,261. Its aim was to address key drivers of violence, promote peacebuilding, and improve livelihoods in Koch County and surrounding areas. Aligned with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, this program-end evaluation assesses the program's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the program gains made to date. In addition, the evaluation documents lessons learnt and offers recommendations for future interventions. Data was collected from July to September 2024 through document reviews and participation of 109 people through interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey. In total, 109 people were consulted for the evaluation. This executive summary highlights the key findings from the evaluation and recommendations for future programs.

Relevance

The Koch ABP's interventions, which focused on the three pillars of Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience, were found to be highly relevant to the local context. The program effectively tackled some key challenges that drive violence, insecurity, and economic hardships. Its impact was evident in the reduction of violent incidents, including revenge killings, rapes, and kidnappings, which improved overall security. Additionally, the program strengthened community resilience by supporting the return of displaced individuals to safer environments.

Other peacebuilding programs in the region, such as the Shejeh Salam project in Unity State, also address similar objectives through economic empowerment and reconciliation activities. However, there was no evidence of coordination between these programs, highlighting the need for stronger alignment to enhance impact and sustainability.

The establishment of inclusive peace committees played a transformative role in promoting social cohesion, empowering marginalized groups including women, youth, and fostering community-driven conflict resolution. Furthermore, the program's focus on strengthening formal and informal justice systems, such as the implementation of the 2018 Wenkach Law for blood compensation, helped reduce violence and promote accountability.

Initiatives provided sustainable livelihood opportunities for women and youth. These included activities such as vocational training and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) which supported economic empowerment of participants as well as the overall communities. The program offered vocational training for youths in various skills such as tailoring, bakery, carpentry, bicycle repair, and motorcycle repair. These trainings were instrumental in providing alternative livelihoods for the youth, helping them move away from conflict-driven activities such as cattle raiding and supporting their economic independence through self-employment.

Coherence

The integration of reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience within the Koch ABP created a cohesive strategy to address the complex challenges in the region. However, the evaluation highlighted some practical implementation challenges. Coordination between the different pillars was occasionally disrupted due to logistical issues, such as delays in stabilization activities. For instance, the late construction of police posts and court facilities hindered the synchronization of stabilization with reconciliation and resilience efforts, creating gaps in service delivery and affecting the overall coherence of the program. The program's Area Reference Group (ARG) was instrumental in improving

coordination among agencies, but challenges remained in terms of resource allocation and alignment of activities across sectors.

Despite these obstacles, the program demonstrated strong collaboration and partnership, particularly through joint planning sessions, joint monitoring field visits and dialogue events. However, limited support for cultural events that could have strengthened cross-county relationships suggests a missed opportunity to leverage all available platforms for peacebuilding and social cohesion.

Effectiveness

The Koch ABP achieved many of its objectives despite external challenges. The Program led to a reduction by 68.4% in violent incidents, with cases dropping from 95 at baseline to 30 by the project's end. This contributed to improved security and greater community stability, supported by the establishment of inclusive peace committees that promoted social cohesion and empowered marginalized groups. Conflict resolution mechanisms were strengthened, with over 1,200 cases resolved through formal and informal justice systems, exceeding the program's target. The program also contributed to economic development by improving livelihood opportunities for community members and facilitating the movement of goods and people across county borders.

Community engagement and participation in peacebuilding efforts were particularly strong, with inclusive peace committees playing a critical role. The program empowered local community members to take ownership of initiatives, particularly in the areas of governance and conflict resolution. Capacity-building efforts in youth vocational centers and infrastructure improvements in schools and markets further contributed to long-term development goals.

The program struggled to fully integrate livelihood interventions into market systems, limiting the economic impact on participants. Furthermore, the livelihood assets, such as maize mills, was another concern, as weak operational structures and lack of management agreements reduced their effectiveness and impact.

Efficiency

Efficiency in program implementation was affected by logistical challenges, including poor road conditions and supply chain disruptions caused by flooding, which limited access to project locations. Delays in transporting key materials, such as sand and stones from outside the county, further impacted timelines. Despite these challenges, the program effectively used no-cost extensions to compensate for lost time, reallocating savings to complete critical activities and meet key deliverables. Initial resistance from local authorities and community members also slowed progress, but targeted engagement and effective communication helped address these concerns, leading to improved participation and program buy-in. The combined approach of using no-cost extensions and minimal logistical support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) allowed the program to meet most of its targets despite the challenging conditions.

Resource management, particularly in the construction of infrastructure, faced delays due to environmental and logistical constraints. The Consortium Steering Committee established by the consortium improved coordination among consortium partners, contributing to more efficient program execution. The involvement of national organizations like Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR) in Phase II strengthened localization efforts and improved the overall sustainability of the program. Moreover, in its second phase, the program, including UNMISS capabilities as direct implementers, improved the stabilization pillar actions of the ABP.

Impact

The Koch ABP has made a significant impact in enhancing security, promoting peaceful coexistence, and supporting livelihoods in Koch County. Key contributions include the reduction of violence through strengthened conflict resolution mechanisms, fostering social cohesion, and enabling safe movement across previously insecure areas. The program's focus on infrastructure, such as schools and detention centers, has bolstered governance and service delivery, improving the overall quality of life. Furthermore, economic initiatives, including small business development and vocational training, have empowered local communities, particularly women and youth, to achieve economic stability. The ongoing return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees signifies increased confidence in local security and peace in the region driven not only by the program's contributions, but also by external factors such as the ongoing conflict in Sudan and the reopening of oil fields, which have further influenced migration patterns and encouraged returns.

Sustainability

The Koch ABP laid a strong foundation for sustainable peace and development in Koch County. Key achievements include the continued functioning of peace committees, improved access to justice, and enhanced economic opportunities through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and small businesses. The construction of key infrastructures, such as boreholes and vocational centers, contributed to long-term social and economic improvements.

However, several factors threaten the sustainability of these gains, such as limited buy-in from local authorities and challenges in integrating value chains into livelihood components. To address these challenges, the program strengthened the capacity of local institutions and community structures, supported the establishment of sustainable peace committees, and enhanced collaboration with local authorities to ensure continued judicial support and conflict resolution mechanisms beyond the program's lifespan.

Recommendations

- **Integrate Mobile Courts Early:** Mobile courts should be introduced at the beginning of the program to ensure sustained judicial processes. Early engagement with local authorities is crucial to align interests and prevent the premature release of convicted criminals.
- **Address County Government Revenue Conflicts:** Resistance from local authorities, primarily county governments, stems from fears over revenue loss from traditional courts. A clear Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clarifies roles and financial implications could help mitigate this challenge.
- **Timely Onboarding of Key Staff:** Delays in recruitment should be minimized by starting the hiring process before program launch. Incentives for timely onboarding should be implemented to ensure full staffing from the outset.
- **Strengthen Market Integration:** Livelihood interventions should focus on value chain development and market access. Supporting model farmers and providing tools for value addition, such as rice hullers or maize mills, will enhance productivity and household income.
- **Improve information flow from community structures:** A formal feedback mechanism should be established to ensure that success stories and challenges from community structures, such as peace committees and women's groups, are regularly reported and discussed in decision-making forums.
- **Extend Program Cycle to at least three years:** The current two-year program cycle is too short for the maturation of key activities. Extending the timeframe to three or four years would allow for better planning, implementation, and adaptation to challenges.

Conclusion

The Koch ABP made significant strides in reducing violence, fostering peace, and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Despite challenges in implementation and sustainability, the program's interventions have contributed to lasting improvements in the security, governance, and economic well-being of Koch County. Future programs should build on these successes by addressing logistical and governance challenges, ensuring stronger market integration, and expanding the program cycle to allow for the full maturation of interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from the program evaluation of the Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) Area-Based Program (ABP) implemented in Koch County, Unity State, South Sudan. The program was in response to the effects of conflict that have plagued Koch County since 2013. The program focused on restoring peace and fostering community resilience. Specifically, the RSRTF initiated the ABP in Koch County in order to contribute to reducing violence, stabilizing the region, and promoting resilience through locally driven peacebuilding initiatives.

The first phase of the Koch ABP commenced in August 2019, with a budget of \$5.16 million, and ran until September 2021. This phase was led by a consortium including World Relief (WR), CARE International, Mercy Corps (MC), and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). A second phase, with a larger budget of USD 8,614,261 million¹, was implemented between October 2021 and November 2023, later receiving a No-Cost Extension (NCE) extending the program to February 2024. The second phase included the original partners except for DRC. It also added two more partners to cover gaps identified in the first phase. This included the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR), further reinforcing the program's emphasis on local engagement and long-term sustainability.²

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: (1) to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Koch ABP, and (2) to draw lessons from the implementation of the RSRTF's three pillars of Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience (RSR) in using an ABP approach to address multiple drivers of conflicts in the target hotspot location. The evaluation objectives specifically are to:

1. Evaluate the collective performance and impact of the Koch ABP using the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria.³
2. Analyze whether the RSRTF's approach to the three pillars enhanced coherence and effectiveness in violence reduction and stability in Koch County.
3. Capture lessons learned, innovative practices, and implementation challenges that emerged from the program, with a view to informing future ABPs and RSRTF programming in South Sudan.
4. Provide actionable recommendations to strengthen future program design, delivery, and coordination within the RSRTF framework.⁴

This end evaluation was conducted by Trias Consult Ltd. between July and September 2024. The evaluation team (ET) engaged with key stakeholders in both Juba and Koch County through a mixed-methods approach. This included a document review and engagement with 109 participants through key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), a survey, and outcome harvesting. This methodology aimed to capture both quantitative data and qualitative insights, ensuring that the perspectives of beneficiaries, local authorities, and implementing partners were central to the evaluation process. The

¹ https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-12/project_amendment_unmiss_wr_undp_redacted.pdf, accessed September 25, 2024.

² RSRTF 21A2-Koch Program proposal

³ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/applying-evaluation-criteria-thoughtfully_543e84ed-en, accessed September 3, 2024.

⁴ Request for Proposals – RSRTF Koch ABP Comprehensive Program End Evaluation, January 2024.

findings presented in this report will help guide the continued refinement of RSRTF-supported initiatives and offer strategic insights for other conflict-affected regions in South Sudan. The key evaluation questions, which were outlined in the ToR and refined in the inception phase, are in Table 1 below.

Table 1: OECD-DAC lines of inquiry

Category	Line of inquiry
Relevance	To what extent were the area-based programming approach, theory of change, and implementation modalities realistic and relevant to the operating context?
Coherence	To what extent does the ABP complement and leverage other ongoing initiatives with similar objectives in Koch and its surroundings?
Effectiveness	To what extent have the ABP and the program activities achieved the RSRTF objectives in the target locations?
Efficiency	To what extent have the implementers delivered planned results in a cost- effective, timely, and operationally efficient manner?
Impact	To what extent has the ABP contributed to reducing violence and promoting peaceful coexistence for better livelihoods in Koch and its surroundings?
Sustainability	Has the program built local ownership of its gains? If so, how and where? Which changes or activities are continuing or likely to continue since the program's ending?

Following this introduction, the next section outlines the methodology. Section three gives an overview of the context in Koch County, the first phase of the program, and the design of the second phase. Section four examines the main findings of the report per OECD-DAC criteria. The final section presents the recommendations for future programming in Koch County and, more broadly, in the context of South Sudan.

2. Methodology

The evaluation employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to thoroughly assess the program's impact. During the inception phase, the ET conducted an in-depth review of key program documents, including reports, policy briefs, and secondary data sources, to establish a clear understanding of the program's operational context. In addition to this, the team held a series of inception meetings with key stakeholders, such as implementing partners and representatives from the RSRTF Secretariat, to identify priority areas of focus for the evaluation. These initial activities informed the development of a detailed inception report that outlined the evaluation's methodology, data collection strategies, and research questions. The inception report also included tailored guidelines for conducting KIIs, FGDs, and an online survey and outcome harvesting, ensuring that the evaluation could effectively capture both broad thematic trends and in-depth contextual insights.

In August 2024, the ET conducted a two-week fieldwork period, gathering data from both Juba and Koch County. The team utilized a participatory approach, engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, including beneficiaries, local authorities, community leaders, and implementing partners. This method ensured that a broad spectrum of perspectives was considered. KIIs and FGDs were used to gather

qualitative data, while quantitative data was collected through a survey using Kobo Collect, an online survey platform. This rigorous methodology allowed for the triangulation of data, thereby increasing the reliability and depth of the evaluation's findings.

The evaluation included engagement with 109 individuals (42 females and 67 males), which represents a wide cross-section of community members and key stakeholders, as shown in Table 2 and 3 below. Participants included program beneficiaries, local leaders, civil society members, and officials from local authorities, all of whom gave their consent and provided valuable insights. Their feedback played a crucial role in assessing the program's outcomes and identifying areas that could be further improved. The diverse data collected during this process served as the foundation for the analysis and recommendations.

Table 2: Evaluation of participants

KIIs		FGDs		Online survey		Total all	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
21	11	30	28	16	3	67	30
65.63%	34.37%	51.72%	48.28%	84.21%	15.79%	61.47%	27.53%
32		58		19		109	

Table 3: Evaluation of participants by location

In person – Koch	In person – Juba	Online survey	Virtual interview	Total all
77	10	19	3	109

Limitations

A significant challenge in evaluating the program's impact in Koch County is the difficulty in drawing direct causal links between interventions and contextual changes. Koch, like many conflict-affected regions in South Sudan, shows typical signs of recovery from prolonged conflict, which include a gradual revival of agricultural activity, the re-establishment of markets, enhanced freedom of movement for goods and people, and improved relationships between clans and neighboring communities. While there is strong evidence that the program has contributed to these positive changes, it is difficult to attribute these developments exclusively to the program, given the complex and multifaceted nature of the region's recovery as well as areas of continued outbreaks of conflict.

That said, the evaluation was able to link specific program interventions to changes at the individual or group level. Additionally, structural impacts, particularly in reconciliation activities, were evident.

The evaluation used an approach that collected stories and feedback from participants to illustrate the program's role in these changes. However, given the complexity of the situation in Koch, it remains difficult to empirically isolate the program's direct contribution to the broader stabilization of the area, as many other factors are influencing the region simultaneously. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) is a major external factor that has significantly shaped local dynamics. Changes such as power-sharing arrangements, the appointment of new local leadership, and the restructuring of governance have impacted the community's stability and social structure, creating both opportunities and challenges for the program. This interplay between the R-ARCSS and the local context makes it challenging to attribute outcomes solely to the program, a limitation commonly encountered in short-term assessments in rapidly changing conflict zones.

Another challenge faced during the evaluation was that many participants had difficulty distinguishing the ET from the program's implementing partners. Consequently, rather than focusing on the program's impact, many participants used the opportunity to express their ongoing needs and request further assistance, particularly during FGDs. Although this highlights the high levels of unmet needs in Koch and the appreciation for development initiatives, it can detract from a more thorough analysis of the program's outcomes and lessons learned. To mitigate this, the ET made efforts to clearly communicate their independence through the informed consent process, ensuring that participants understood their responses would not influence future access to services.

Given that the program had ended in February 2024, there were challenges in locating participants or identifying ongoing activities for the evaluation. To mitigate this limitation, the ET employed a variety of data collection tools to ensure sufficient data is gathered. This multi-method approach helped to compensate for any gaps in participant availability or limited continuing activities. Furthermore, an advantage of conducting the evaluation after the program's end, is that the actual sustainability of aspects of the program were examined.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Conflict Situation in Koch County

Koch County, located in Unity State, South Sudan, has been significantly impacted by the civil wars that have plagued the country, particularly since 2013. The county, like many others in the region, has experienced long-standing inter-communal violence, driven primarily by competition over resources such as cattle, land, and political control. Historically, Koch has been a hotspot for cattle raids, especially between the Jagey Nuer of Koch and the Bul and Lek Nuer from neighboring Mayom and Rubkona Counties. These raids, exacerbated by environmental degradation and displacement due to the establishment of oil fields in the region, have contributed to the county's instability.

During the civil war that followed South Sudan's independence in 2011, Koch became a frontline between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA-In Opposition (SPLA-IO), leading to widespread violence and displacement. The fighting in the region was further fueled by the presence of oil fields, particularly the Thar Jath oil field, which became a critical asset for both the government and opposition forces. Control over these resources was a key factor in the conflict, with armed youth often being used as proxies by various factions.

In early 2022, the conflict in Koch County intensified as government forces, supported by armed youth, launched a series of attacks on civilians in SPLA-IO-held territories in Leer, Koch, and Mayendit Counties. This offensive, which took place between February and May 2022, resulted in the displacement of over 44,000 people, the death of 173 civilians, and widespread reports of sexual violence, including the rape and gang rape of 131 women. These atrocities highlighted the ongoing volatility and humanitarian crisis in the region.

Despite the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018, which aimed to establish a power-sharing government and bring stability to the region, Koch County remained divided between government-controlled areas and SPLA-IO strongholds. However, after the 2022 offensive, the government regained full control of the county, leading to a fragile peace. While the presence of government forces has brought a semblance of stability, the legacy of violence, the

militarized governance style, and unresolved grievances continue to pose significant challenges to long-term peace and security.

The ongoing tension between government forces and former SPLA-IO supporters, coupled with the region's political and economic importance due to its oil reserves, means that Koch remains a critical area for both national and regional stability. Efforts to rebuild trust between communities, address land disputes, and provide sustainable livelihoods are essential to preventing further violence and fostering lasting peace in the region.

3.2. Overview of the Koch ABP

The ABP in Koch County, funded by the United Nations RSRTF, aims to restore peaceful conditions and improve livelihoods for the residents and returnees in Koch County, Unity State. The program is part of the broader RSRTF strategy to address conflict-related challenges across South Sudan

As outlined in the introduction, Phase I of the Koch ABP was implemented by a consortium led by World Relief (WR), CARE International, Mercy Corps (MC), and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). In Phase II, the consortium transitioned to include WR, CARE International, MC, UNMISS, and UNIDOR. The addition of UNIDOR, a national non-governmental organization (NGO), aimed to bring a more potent local focus by enhancing community-level engagement and ownership. UNMISS was incorporated to strengthen political engagement, leveraging its influence to support governance and justice mechanisms. These new partners were included to build on the foundations laid during Phase I, specifically emphasizing consolidating peace, improving social cohesion, enhancing access to justice, and strengthening livelihoods in Koch County.

The primary objective of the Koch ABP was to create conditions that allow residents and returnees to live in safety and build sustainable livelihoods. As noted in the evaluation report for Phase 1, Phase I successfully established key community structures for conflict resolution, such as peace committees and chiefs' courts, and contributed to a noticeable reduction in violence. However, despite the decline in physical violence, perceptions of safety and security had decreased by the end of Phase I, revealing underlying tensions within the community, particularly between the Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO) and Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Government (SPLA-IG) factions.⁵

Building on the lessons learned from Phase I as well as the evolving context in South Sudan and specifically, Koch County, Phase II sought to address issues including cross-border violence, youth inclusion in peace processes, and the economic challenges that could fuel future conflicts. The reopening of oil fields and the increasing return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) introduced both challenges and opportunities. At the same time, R-ARCSS and the establishment of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) created openings for fostering stability and institutionalizing the rule of law. It is under this background, that Phase II was developed.

As outlined in the ABP program documents, Phase II was designed around six key outcome areas, aligned with RSRTF's pillars of Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience.

Alignment with RSRTF Pillars

Each of the six key outcomes from Phase II is strategically aligned with the RSRTF's pillars of Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience. Outcomes 1 (Reduced Violence) and 2 (Intercommunal Conflict

⁵ Final Measuring Safety and Security Koch Endline December 2023 report.

Management) contribute to Reconciliation by promoting peace and conflict resolution among communities. Outcomes 3 (Accountability and Rule of Law) and 4 (Civic Participation and Governance) align with Stabilization, focusing on justice, governance, and the involvement of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Outcomes 5 (Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods) and 6 (Access to Basic Services) reinforce Resilience by fostering economic stability and improving access to essential services, reducing aid dependency and empowering communities to recover and sustain long-term peace.

Table 4: Overview of outcomes ⁶

RSRTF Outcomes	Description
Outcome 1: Reduced Violence	Individuals, particularly children and women, experience less violence at the community level.
Outcome 2: Intercommunal Conflict Management	Communities have effective mechanisms that meaningfully include women and youth to resolve conflicts peacefully.
Outcome 3: Accountability and Rule of Law	Justice sector actors more effectively deliver justice, even in areas with limited or no judicial infrastructure.
Outcome 4: Civic Participation and Governance	Communities, including women, youth, and disadvantaged groups, are empowered and increasingly able to participate in local and broader political, peace, and security processes.
Outcome 5: Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods	Community resilience is strengthened through increased economic opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.
Outcome 6: Access to Basic Services	Reconciled communities have increased access to equitable and reliable basic services, reducing dependence on humanitarian aid.

The Koch ABP's overarching goal is to consolidate gains in conflict resolution and resilience-building by enhancing livelihood opportunities and promoting peaceful coexistence. Phase II introduced a stronger emphasis on cross-border conflict resolution, youth and women's economic empowerment, and the stabilization of the rule of law through justice mechanisms in Koch and surrounding counties. By leveraging community structures, such as chiefs' courts and peace committees, the program aims to address the complex dynamics of cross-county violence and resource competition to ensure lasting peace and stability.

The findings from the evaluation have found that while there has been significant progress in improving safety and security in Koch County through this program, ongoing efforts are needed to sustain these gains, particularly through strengthening local governance structures, enhancing the capacity of community-based peace committees, and increasing support for livelihood initiatives that address economic drivers of conflict. The community has shown increased stability and capacity for self-governance, indicating that it is gradually becoming more prepared for development initiatives. However, successful development will depend on continued support for local institutions and careful management of the reintegration of returnees to prevent tensions from resurfacing.

Alignment with Revised RSRTF Outcomes (2022) The Koch ABP Phase II was designed to align closely with the revised RSRTF outcomes for 2022. The program's activities and results directly contributed to several key RSRTF priorities, ensuring coherence with broader peacebuilding and stabilization efforts. Specifically, the program addressed the following RSRTF outcomes:

Reduction in Violence (RSRTF Outcome 1): Through strengthened conflict resolution mechanisms and enhanced social cohesion, the Koch ABP helped reduce incidents of violence, particularly benefiting women and children in affected communities.

⁶ Koch II ABP Technical Proposal November 7, 2022.

Inclusive Conflict Resolution (RSRTF Outcome 2): The program established effective community-based mechanisms that meaningfully included women and youth in conflict resolution, promoting peaceful coexistence and community-level stability.

Strengthening Justice Delivery (RSRTF Outcome 3): By engaging local justice sector actors and supporting the implementation of laws, the program improved the effectiveness of justice delivery in areas previously lacking infrastructure.

Community Empowerment and Political Engagement (RSRTF Outcome 4): The program empowered communities, especially women and youth, to participate in local political and peace processes, thus fostering more inclusive decision-making.

Increased Economic Opportunities (RSRTF Outcome 5): Through vocational training, small business development, and agricultural initiatives, the program strengthened community resilience by increasing economic opportunities and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Access to Services and Reduced Aid Dependency (RSRTF Outcome 6): The program facilitated better access to basic services such as education and justice, reducing communities' dependency on humanitarian aid and promoting self-reliance.

By aligning with these outcomes, the Koch ABP ensured that its interventions not only addressed local challenges but also supported the broader RSRTF strategy, enhancing its relevance and impact within the region.

Mid-term review of the Koch ABP

In January 2023, the Koch ABP conducted an internal mid-term evaluation to assess the progress and challenges encountered during the first year of Phase II implementation. The mid-term review aimed to provide actionable insights for improving programming during the remainder of the program. It utilized a combination of FGDs, key informant interviews, and a desk review of program documents to gather qualitative and quantitative data across various program locations. The mid-term evaluation's key findings and recommendations, which are summarized below, provided essential information for this endline evaluation for comparison and to identify how recommendations were taken forward.

Summary of key findings

- **Relevance and Coherence:** The program has shifted from siloed activities in Phase I to a more integrated approach, particularly in coordinating the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding aspects (triple nexus). Despite complex challenges, including floods and security issues, the program was seen as relevant and highly coordinated with local authorities and community groups. Women and youth were increasingly involved in conflict prevention and mediation efforts, indicating progress in inclusivity.
- **Effectiveness:** Many planned activities were implemented successfully, although some construction projects were delayed due to flooding and security concerns. Peace committees, community protection networks, and self-help groups (SHGs) were established or strengthened, contributing to increased local capacity for conflict resolution. The ABP program's capacity-

building efforts also improved governance structures and community resilience, with participants showing increased trust in local justice mechanisms such as chiefs' courts.

- **Efficiency:** Implementation in Year I was slower than anticipated due to challenges such as staff recruitment delays and security incidents, including clashes in Mirmir Payam in February 2022. However, coordination improved in the latter half of the year, with better collaboration among partners, which enhanced resource utilization and cost-efficiency.
- **Impact:** Community engagement was notable, with peace dialogues and economic activities contributing to greater stability. Youth and women played a key role in these activities, including peace dialogues and livelihoods initiatives, which bolstered social cohesion and economic resilience. Moreover, cross-border peace dialogues between Koch, Mayendit, and Leer counties reduced tension and fostered peaceful co-existence.

Recommendations

- Pre-position program supplies before the rainy season to ensure timely completion of construction activities.
- Focus on implementing more activities in hotspot areas to prevent conflict spillovers from neighboring counties.
- Strengthen the Area Reference Group (ARG) to better focus on program deliverables and include community feedback.
- Improve coordination and ensure that peacebuilding interventions remain gender-sensitive, especially concerning the participation of women and youth in decision-making processes.

The mid-term review highlighted the program's flexibility in adapting to the challenges on the ground and stressed the importance of maintaining momentum as Phase II progresses toward its completion. The endline findings will build on the mid-term evaluation and further explore the successes, challenges and lessons learned of the ABP through the lens of the OECD-DAC criteria.

4. ENDLINE EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the results from the final evaluation of the Koch ABP program and conclusions drawn from the data collected organized by OECD-DAC criteria. It reviews the overall program effectiveness, impact and outcomes of the intervention compared to baseline and mid-term assessments. By measuring key performance indicators and evaluating the extent to which objectives were achieved, this section provides a comprehensive overview of successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. The findings offer insights into both quantitative and qualitative aspects, enabling stakeholders to assess the sustainability of the program's outcomes and make informed decisions for future initiatives. Each sub-section includes an introduction, a table of key findings, the findings and conclusions with links to specific program outcomes as appropriate.

4.1. Relevance

This section evaluates the relevance of the Koch ABP in addressing the community's urgent needs and conflict dynamics in Koch County. It assesses how well the program's activities aligned with the needs of vulnerable groups and broader contextual challenges, focusing on how relevant the outcomes and

subsequent interventions were to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in communities. In this section, the evaluation's primary focus for relevance was to answer the question of: *To what extent were ABP approach, theory of change, and implementation modalities realistic and relevant to the operating context and to address destructive drivers of violence?*

Table 5: Relevance summary findings

Relevance – key findings
The program intervention areas which cover the three RSR pillars are highly relevant to the context of Koch Couty.
The intervention's success in decreasing violence in the Koch County and its neighboring counties has contributed to a safer environment for residents, leading to a decline in instances of revenge killings, rapes, and kidnappings. This positive outcome has not only enhanced security but also encouraged the return of individuals seeking protection elsewhere, promoting community resilience and stability.
Addressing inter-county issues demonstrates the program's relevance by adapting to evolving regional dynamics and acknowledging the interconnected nature of conflicts that transcend administrative boundaries. This shift ensures that program interventions are responsive to the actual needs and challenges faced by communities beyond Koch County.
The establishment of inclusive peace committees has played a transformative role in empowering marginalized groups, particularly women, girls, and youths, in conflict resolution processes. By challenging traditional power dynamics and ensuring fair resolutions, these committees have been instrumental in fostering peace and social cohesion at the local level, aligning with the community's specific needs and priorities.
The program's focus on strengthening formal and informal justice systems has significantly improved access to justice and accountability for serious crimes like rape and murder. This enhancement has contributed to establishing a more just and secure environment within the community, addressing critical challenges and promoting effective conflict resolution mechanisms.
Initiatives aimed at providing economic opportunities and sustainable livelihoods, such as VSLA approaches, vocational training, and agricultural programs, have had a positive impact on the community. By empowering residents with economic resources and skills, these efforts have not only improved resilience and stability but also promoted economic empowerment and social integration within the region.
The program's emphasis on women, girls, and youth have been instrumental in promoting sustainable peacebuilding and resilience within the community, reflecting a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to effectively address socio-economic challenges. Additionally, one of the significant impacts is the inclusion of women as members of community courts, as this allowed women to feel free to bring their issues to the courts.

The evaluation found that the Koch ABP approach was highly relevant to the local context and effectively addressed the key drivers of violence in the region. The findings indicate that the program was well-aligned with the needs and challenges faced by the communities in Koch, as demonstrated by the following:

Appropriateness of RSRTF framework of the three reconciliations, stabilization, and resilience pillars: The program's intervention areas, which cover the three RSR pillars, are highly relevant to the context of Koch County given the contextual challenges and community needs. KII interviewees and FGD participants reported that the dialogues conducted within the county and between counties significantly contributed to improving the security situation. Based on the responses from those involved in peace committees including youth and women, it is anticipated that Committees will have a sustainable impact on security moving forward. Furthermore, the focus on agricultural development and small businesses addresses the dire economic situation in the post-conflict setting, while the development of infrastructure and support for traditional justice mechanisms bolster stabilization efforts in Koch.

Decrease in Violence and Enhanced Security: The documentation of 30 violent incidents⁷ and associated civilian casualties within Koch County over 24 months represents a 63% reduction compared to the 90 incidents recorded in the baseline. This significant decrease, though slightly below the target by 50%, demonstrates the program's impact on reducing violence. A substantial 95% of individuals reported heightened feelings of personal safety and security in the final endline survey report, indicating that the ABP successfully contributed to creating a safer environment for residents. As one FGD respondent stated, "We are people [who the] Trust Fund brought out of their trenches into peace. We are the survivors of conflict in Bhang Payam." This reduction in violence has led to fewer revenge killings, rapes, and kidnappings, thereby bolstering security and fostering a peaceful environment in Koch County. Another FGD participant highlighted the stark change, "In those days, we were living in fire, life was meaningless, and nobody could predict if you would come back when you went out... As you can see, nobody is carrying a gun, we walked from our homes to this meeting, and we will walk back without fear."

RSRTF Program Reinforcement to Existing Agreements: The RSRTF intervention has been highly effective in reinforcing existing agreements and community-level laws, particularly through the implementation of the 2018 Wenkach Law for blood compensation. Coordinated and ratified by the seven counties of Unity State, this law has been pivotal in reducing revenge killings within the target areas of the Koch ABP program. By increasing blood compensation to 121 cows, the Wenkach Law has played a significant role in mitigating retributive violence. This higher compensation standard serves as a deterrent to acts of vengeance, promotes peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthens adherence to both legal and traditional justice mechanisms. The success of these efforts was further supported by the strengthening and capacity building of justice actors, who played a crucial role in implementing and upholding these legal frameworks. RSRTF's backing of these transformative legal initiatives has been essential in enhancing social cohesion and fostering a more stable, peaceful environment in Koch County.

The Koch II ABP successfully reinforced community agreements and customary laws, including the implementation of the 2018 Wenkach Law, which significantly reduced revenge killings by increasing blood compensation to 121 cows. However, concerns about potential misuse of these penalties by local authorities highlight the need for future ABPs to integrate stronger accountability measures when working with customary justice systems. This experience underscores the importance of incorporating clear oversight mechanisms and community monitoring into the design of future peacebuilding projects. Strengthening local justice capacity and ensuring transparent application of penalties will be critical to maintaining community trust and safeguarding the legitimacy of customary laws.

Adapting to Inter-County Issues: The ABP's ability to surpass targets across various output indicators reflects its adaptability to the evolving regional landscape, particularly in addressing interconnected conflicts such as cross-border cattle raiding and revenge killings involving Koch and neighboring counties. The program strategically shifted towards increased political engagement to address these inter-county issues, demonstrating a proactive approach to mitigating the root causes of conflict. This was done primarily through bringing leaders together from three counties to discuss issues and solutions in dialogue sessions. As one interviewee reported, "The project aimed to unite leaders from three counties... The level of engagement from the political leaders was positive, as their involvement was easier [because they are more accessible] compared to [trying to] getting the youth involved." The program's success in involving political leaders is underscored by an interviewee, who stated, "Without the projects involving political leaders it [would]... have been impossible to stop cross-border cattle raiding and revenge killings."

⁷ Consolidated ABP RF Results Framework, November 7, 2023.

During data collection, some respondents reported the successful recovery of fourteen cows through coordinated efforts involving the commissioners of Koch, Mayom, and Mayendit counties. One interviewee explained the process, saying:

“Last week, some youth raided a family in a Gor Boma 45 minutes’ walk from Koch County and stole 14 cows, attempting to take them back [home]. However, thanks to the coordination mechanism between the counties, the Mayom County government intervened and successfully recovered the cattle. The perpetrators were not caught because they abandoned the cows as soon as they learned that authorities from the three counties of Mayom, Mayendit, and Koch were searching for them.”

Empowerment through Inclusive Peace Committees: The establishment of 19 inclusive peace committees, featuring active participation from former combatants, women, youth, and marginalized individuals, was a key element in promoting social unity and conflict resolution. The presence of diverse voices within these committees, including women and persons with disabilities, highlights the program's commitment to inclusivity. As noted by an interviewee, “As a woman I have worked closely with former combatants, youth, elderly, even one of our peace committee members is disabled... So, when people are looking for peace, all voices are heard.” This inclusivity played a crucial role in fostering peace and harmony within the community.

Improvement in Access to Justice: The ABP's efforts to strengthen both formal and informal justice systems resulted in a significant improvement in the resolution of serious crimes within the community. The program, according to the RSRTF Results Framework, exceeded its target by resolving 1,251 cases, representing a 162% accomplishment. This outcome underscores the relevance and effectiveness of the justice interventions in promoting fair and equitable resolutions. A KII Interviewee highlighted the community's shift towards using courts for conflict resolution: “Ever since the community stopped resorting to violence to settle disputes, we have seen more cases being taken to court for resolution... This shift towards using the courts to resolve issues shows that our community is moving towards a more peaceful and fair way of handling conflicts.” Furthermore, the increased support from male advocates for women's engagement in political and social realms, as reported in the endline assessment, from 14% at the baseline to 52% in the endline, represents a positive step towards promoting gender equality and justice.

Economic Empowerment and Social Integration:

The program's strategic focus on improving the livelihood opportunities for youth, marginalized individuals, women, and groups associated with ex-combatants has been pivotal in shifting the community away from conflict-driven behaviors towards constructive, peace-promoting activities, including those focused on economic improvement. This approach aligns with the broader program objectives of fostering social integration and promoting livelihoods in Koch. It was reported that over the program period 550 youth (209 female (F); 341 male (M)) across seven payams successfully completed vocational training in the areas of tailoring, bakery, carpentry, bicycle maintenance, and motorcycle repair respectively.⁸ “Of these, 112 were ex-combatants (35 women, 77 men), and 192 were women associated with armed groups.”⁹ These women were also integrated into VSLAs, peace committees, and community asset creation groups, allowing them in many cases to generate sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, the focus on economic empowerment has provided youth with alternative livelihoods, contributed to their reduced involvement in conflict-related activities such as cattle raiding, and enhanced their economic

⁸ 2023 RSRTF Koch ABP Annual Report, page 5.

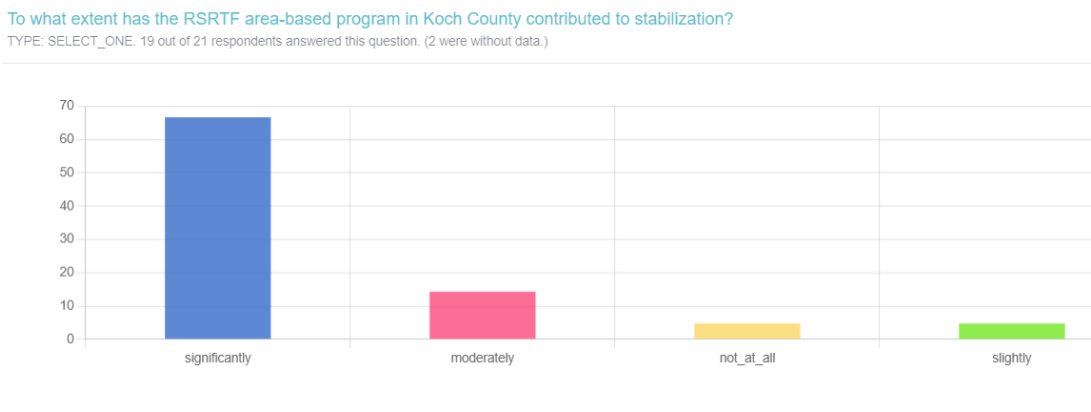
⁹ 2023 RSRTF Koch APB Annual Report, page 6.

independence. The program's commitment to gender mainstreaming, demonstrated through increased awareness of conflict resolution and peace education, also addressed critical issues of violence against women and girls, further reinforcing long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Conclusions

The graph below demonstrates the perception of the relevance of the interventions of the RSRTF area-based program in contributing to stabilization in Koch County. Most survey respondents (66.67%) indicated that the program contributed significantly to stabilization, reinforcing the report's findings on the success of key interventions aimed at reducing insecurity, strengthening local governance, and promoting community cohesion. The moderate and slight contributions (14.29% and 4.76%, respectively) suggest that while the program has largely achieved its stabilization goals, there are opportunities for further strengthening specific areas to ensure their relevance and contributions to long-term stability. These findings align with the report's conclusions on the positive impact of the program’s integrated approach to peacebuilding and development.

Graph 1: Contributions to stabilization



The Koch ABP was highly relevant to the local context, addressing key drivers of conflict and insecurity, including violence, limited economic opportunities, and weak governance structures. However, challenges such as limited market access for livelihood interventions indicate a need for stronger economic integration strategies. The lessons learned highlight the importance of continuous alignment with community needs and evolving conflict dynamics to maintain relevance.

4.2. Coherence

This section analyzes the coherence of the Koch ABP in integrating the three pillars of Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience. It examines how effectively the program’s interventions, across pillars and all six outcomes worked together to complement and reinforced one another whenever possible to promote a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding while complementing other regional initiatives. Specially, it seeks to answer the question of: *To what extent have the reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience pillars under the ABP interlinked, complemented each other, and demonstrated results?*

Table 6: Coherence summary findings

Coherence – key findings

• The Koch consortium comprising of five partners has largely met its specified objectives related to program outputs, as outlined in program documents. While there are some gaps, these discrepancies are primarily linked to external factors like flooding.
• The ABP program effectively contributed to decreasing instances of violence in Koch County and fostered stronger community bonds, leading to a more peaceful environment within the region.
• By strengthening relations with neighboring counties of the Area Based Program (ABP), the ABP program successfully enhanced the bridging aspect of social cohesion, contributing to improved inter-community relationships and collaboration.
• The efforts of the ABP program resulted in a noticeable decrease in cattle rustling incidents and revenge killings, addressing key sources of conflict and instability in Koch and the surrounding counties by strengthening inter-county coordination for conflict management, introducing cattle restitution events, and fostering trust between communities through peace dialogues. Engaging youth through vocational training and alternative livelihoods also reduced their involvement in raids. Additionally, awareness campaigns promoted conflict resolution, and local governance structures provided effective mechanisms for dispute resolution and accountability, resulting in greater stability.
• The ABP program's initiatives facilitated increased movement of individuals and businesses across county boundaries, promoting economic activities and social interactions within and beyond Koch County.
• The ABP program interventions led to an enhancement in livelihood opportunities for community members in Koch County, creating sustainable economic benefits and improving the overall well-being of the population.
• Through the implementation of the ABP program, there was an observed improvement in conflict resolution mechanisms within the community, enabling more effective and peaceful ways of addressing disputes and grievances.
• The ABP program contributed to greater empowerment of local community members, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes and take ownership of initiatives aimed at fostering peace and development.
• The ABP program successfully raised awareness about the importance of peacebuilding and conflict resolution strategies, leading to heightened community engagement and active involvement in promoting sustainable peace in the region.

The evaluation found that the Koch ABP's approach, which integrated the pillars of reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience, was crucial in addressing the complex challenges in the region. This integration aimed to create a collaborative effort to tackle issues comprehensively. However, the findings reveal that while the program made significant strides, practical implementation faced notable challenges. Key aspects of this evaluation include the effectiveness of the ARG in enhancing coordination, the promotion of collaboration and partnership principles, examples of sectoral integration, adherence to the 'New Way of Working' principles,¹⁰ and the impact on local capacity and overall ABP program coherence. These findings collectively highlight both the successes and areas requiring improvement to ensure optimal results and long-term sustainability of the program.

Integration and Sequencing of Program Pillars:

The evaluation found that the Koch ABP's approach, structured around the pillars of reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience, was essential for addressing the region's complex and interconnected challenges. Each pillar contributed uniquely to fostering stability and development, and they were designed to work together in an integrated manner. The strategy also employed a thoughtful approach of layering and sequencing, which involved implementing activities logically based on the communities' immediate needs and readiness for engagement.

¹⁰ Request for Proposals – RSRTF Koch ABP Comprehensive Program End Evaluation.

For example, communities needed to be sensitized before initiating long-term development efforts, and trust had to be rebuilt between different groups. One interviewee explained, "It is impossible to build peace just overnight. In Koch, we started by restoring trust through dialogues and addressing the community's immediate needs before we could introduce more complex activities like vocational training or infrastructure development. The activities were intentionally layered, step by step, because rushing them risks losing progress. Each step paves the way for the next to ensure a smooth transition and long-term impact." This method ensured that each stage of the program prepared the ground for the next, thereby reducing the risk of setbacks and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Moreover, integrating the three pillars—reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience—was critical in achieving the program's goals. As another interviewee noted, "We [worked] ... as a team; when we conducted reconciliation activities, partners [who] focused on stabilization and resilience also participated. Without reconciliation, stabilization efforts would falter, and resilience would be ineffective; thus, these three pillars are interdependent." This collaborative approach enabled the program to holistically address the multifaceted needs of Koch County. However, implementing these strategies was not without significant challenges.

Stabilization activities, such as the establishment of mobile courts and the construction of police and prison facilities, were delayed by logistical and coordination challenges. This lack of synchronization disrupted the alignment of stabilization activities with reconciliation efforts, impacting the overall cohesion of the program's interventions. As highlighted by one respondent, "Stabilization activities ... [such as mobile courts introduction and construction of prison and police were] ... delayed by logistical constraints, underscoring the need for enhanced synchronization and better resource allocation to ensure that efforts in stabilization and resilience effectively support reconciliation initiatives."

Despite the challenges, the project's adaptability allowed it to achieve notable successes in critical areas. For instance, the consortium demonstrated flexibility by reprioritizing and reallocating resources through collaborative mechanisms like the Area Reference Group (ARG), ensuring that essential security, governance, and economic development in the nexus programming were addressed even when full implementation could not be achieved.

As the project has already ended, these insights underscore the critical importance of coordination, resource management, and realistic planning for similar future programs. The experiences from Koch highlight that effective sequencing and integration are essential, but so too is the ability to adapt when faced with resource and timing constraints. For future programs aimed at integrating reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience in complex environments, addressing these challenges early on will be crucial for achieving sustainable, long-term impact.

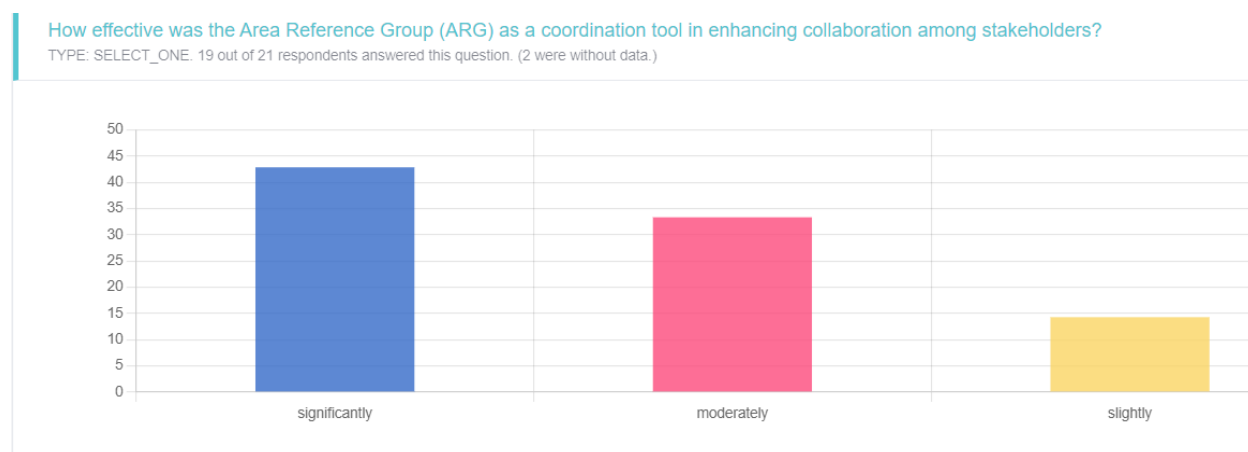
Further emphasizing the critical nature of integration and sequencing of activities, another participant noted, "The project's success hinges on the seamless integration of the three pillars. Stabilization can drive business development, but it requires a reconciled community to be truly effective." However, challenges in execution were apparent, particularly in managing resources. An interviewee pointed out, "During the planning phase, we organized joint and individual activities. However, we encountered budget shortfalls, which compelled us to make prioritizations through the ARG." This meant that project activities could not always complement and reinforce one another to the extent that the strategy had outlined and envisioned. On the other hand, the ability to adapt and reprioritize within the nexus program approach, maintained coherence by ensuring that core elements of each pillar—such as security, governance, and economic

opportunities—were still addressed, even when faced with resource constraints. This adaptability allowed the program to continue pursuing a balanced and integrated approach, thereby preserving the synergy between the different pillars.

Role of the ARG: The ARG played a significant role in improving coordination among agencies and reducing duplication of efforts. Initially, there was resistance, as noted by a KII participant: “In the beginning, there was resistance from the government and community leaders. We had to clarify the benefits to the commissioner before they came to understand [the value of being involved].” The ARG’s role evolved in Phase II from reactive to proactive where they were guiding the coordination and alignment of activities. As one interviewee described, “The ARG provided critical feedback on program implementation and helped streamline efforts, contributing to more effective coordination and resource utilization in later stages.”

The graph below illustrates the effectiveness of the ARG as a coordination tool among stakeholders. A significant 42.86% of respondents indicated that the ARG significantly enhanced collaboration, while 33.33% noted moderate improvement. This suggests that, overall, 76.19% of respondents recognized a notable improvement in coordination. The varying ratings reflect the diverse perspectives of stakeholders, influenced by their differing levels of engagement with the ARG. While the 42.86% reporting "significant enhancement" may appear below average by some benchmarks, it is important to consider that achieving consensus on "significant effectiveness" is often challenging due to diverse expectations and experiences. The 14.29% who reported only slight effectiveness have been flagged as an area for improvement. The evaluation recommends refining ARG engagement strategies to address these concerns, ensuring that the platform continues to enhance coordination, reduce fragmentation, and achieve greater alignment among all stakeholders.

Graph 2: Effectiveness of the ARG in coordination



Promotion of Collaboration and Partnership: The program demonstrated its commitment to fostering collaboration and partnership through joint planning sessions with all consortium members, dialogue events, and coordinated program activities. Additionally, cultural events facilitated by the county commissioner in Koch Town played a significant role in bringing together youth from different counties, building trust, and enhancing social cohesion among previously conflicting communities. These events,

held every weekend, offered a unique opportunity to strengthen cross-border relationships and reinforce peacebuilding efforts.

The ABP program undertook two initiatives specifically in regard to cultural events which included (1) advocacy with county authorities to change cultural events from the night to the day to be able to be more inclusive of who was able to attend from both a practical and safeguarding perspective; and (2) led several cultural events during the day. However, the consortium was unable to fully support the county authority's cultural events to the extent because they were held at night, and this was seen as a safeguarding and protection issue for the program. This limitation points to an overall need for future programming to work more closely with county authorities so that they better understand the issues around protection and safeguarding across activities and celebrations .

Adherence to the 'New Way of Working': The program aimed to adhere to the 'New Way of Working'¹¹ principles, such as increasing local focus, bridging silos, and promoting partnership. Improvements were noted in Phase II, including enhanced coordination and increased involvement of national partners. Below three factors are highlighted which include the program's focus on localization, coordination and integration.

Localization and Coordination: A Coordinated Approach to Program Delivery:

A key improvement in Phase II was the inclusion of UNIDOR, a national organization that effectively bridged the gap between local and international efforts by providing contextual insights and facilitating communication between local communities and international partners. The ABP's approach was to layer activities to strengthen the justice and security systems in a cohesive manner. For instance, while UNMISS focused on capacity building within the formal justice system—including the police, prisons, and community policing—World Relief (WR) concentrated on linking customary courts with peace committees to create a streamlined local referral mechanism. This approach enabled complainants to report issues to peace committees, many of whom included members of the community police. If disputes could not be resolved at this level, they were escalated to the chiefs' courts and, in severe cases, referred to the formal mobile court system.

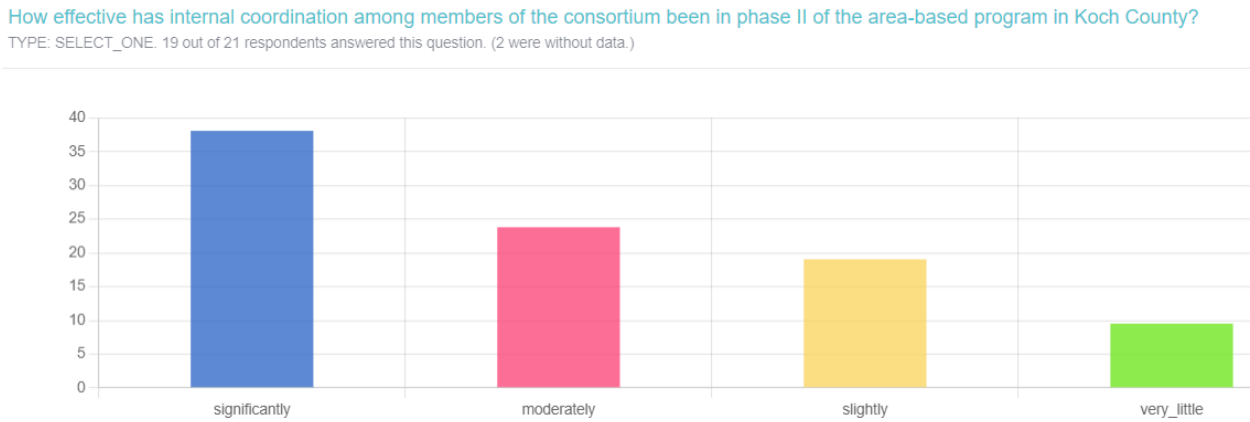
However, practical challenges emerged in the coordination and continuity between formal and customary justice systems. One respondent explained, *"One of the serious issues that emerged was when the mobile court arrived, it reviewed both existing cases of those already in prison and new cases. As a result, several prisoners were released because they were found to be detained without valid charges, while others were given prison sentences. However, after the mobile court left, many of those released were rearrested, and some of those who were sentenced by the mobile court were set free."* This situation highlights a critical gap in maintaining the linkages between customary and formal courts, as well as the limited capacity of the local justice system to sustain mobile court decisions. Addressing these coordination gaps more effectively could have strengthened the integration of the justice mechanisms, leading to a greater overall impact of the program.

An Integrated Approach to Program Delivery: In Koch County, various stakeholders—including implementing organizations, local government, and traditional authorities—demonstrated a commendable degree of integration in pursuing common goals. This collaboration facilitated joint planning and coordinated execution of activities, showcasing the potential for effective multi-sectoral cooperation.

¹¹ Request for Proposals – RSRTF Koch ABP Comprehensive Program End Evaluation.

However, the full integration of these principles into daily operations faced challenges. For example, while the program made strides in bridging operational silos, some gaps remained in implementing the principles consistently across all activities. A more thorough evaluation of how well these principles were embedded into decision-making processes and operations is necessary to ensure their effective application in future programming.

Graph 3: Effectiveness of internal coordination



Impact on Local Capacity and Coherence: The program made strides in improving local capacity and coherence through joint activities and resource sharing. However, there were limitations in building local capacity and ensuring coherence among all stakeholders. For example, certain local actors faced challenges in fully engaging with the program due to skill or resource constraints. These gaps potentially hindered the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions. Addressing these capacity issues and ensuring greater coherence among local actors is crucial for the long-term success of a program especially one that is focused on integrated sectors and initiatives.

Conclusions

The program demonstrated good coherence in integrating its three pillars, particularly through cross-county dialogues and the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in peacebuilding. This was further reinforced by joint activities and resource sharing, which enhanced collaboration among partners and promoted a unified approach in addressing community needs. However, logistical and coordination challenges disrupted the synchronization of stabilization and resilience activities. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, especially through the ARG, could further improve coherence across program components and external initiatives.

4.3. Effectiveness

This section evaluates the effectiveness of the Koch ABP in achieving its intended objectives. Specifically, it examines the progress made toward Outcome 1 (Reduced Violence), Outcome 2 (Intercommunal Conflict Management), and Outcome 5 (Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods), This targeted focus in the section was intended to highlight the most significant areas of impact within the given context, while still maintaining a comprehensive evaluation across all six outcomes in the full report. It focuses on how

well the program reduced violence, strengthened local peacebuilding mechanisms, and improved economic opportunities. Specifically, it addresses the following research question: *To what extent have the ABP and the program activities achieved the RSRTF objectives in the target locations?*

Table 7: Effectiveness summary findings

Effectiveness – key findings
The Koch consortium, comprising five partners, has largely met its specified objectives despite some gaps primarily linked to external factors like flooding and conflict. The partners managed to meet about 90% of the performance indicators set in their results frameworks, demonstrating a high level of commitment and adaptability to challenging circumstances.
The ABP program has contributed significantly reduced violence in Koch County, decreased incidents of cattle rustling and revenge killings, and strengthened conflict resolution mechanisms. These efforts have contributed to a more peaceful environment and fostered stronger community ties, enhancing the overall security and stability of the region.
Enhanced social cohesion through improved relations with neighboring counties and facilitated movement of individuals and businesses across county boundaries, promoting economic activities and interactions. The program has also notably improved livelihood opportunities, creating sustainable economic benefits and enhancing the well-being of the community.
The ABP program has effectively empowered local community members, enabling active participation in decision-making and ownership of peacebuilding initiatives. Increased awareness and participation in peacebuilding efforts have been observed, with community members more actively involved in promoting sustainable peace.
Challenges such as delays in construction projects and the need for fund realignment highlighted areas for improvement in budget management and risk mitigation. The implementation saw timely delivery against most targets and effective monitoring and reporting.
The consortium's monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems have effectively tracked outcomes and outputs. Some weaknesses in systems resulted in a delay in identifying some challenges which was partly the reason for a no-cost extension. The quality and timeliness of reporting to the RSRTF Fund Secretariat generally met expectations.
While gender-sensitive approaches have been implemented, the lack of gender balance among key staff suggests that further efforts are needed to enhance gender mainstreaming within the program. More inclusive strategies are required to ensure broader participation and benefit distribution because of the historical deep-rooted nature of socialization inequalities, and gender roles.
Delays in onboarding key staff, the absence of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) s for community contributions, and limited success stories from community structures indicate the need for improved coordination and engagement practices to enhance the effectiveness of the program.
Although capacity-building initiatives were introduced, they were insufficient to adequately prepare local partners for full leadership of the program post-exit. Local organizations lacked the administrative, financial, and technical skills to sustain program activities independently. The lack of a structured, long-term capacity-building strategy, combined with limited training in critical operational areas, hinders the ability of local actors to manage the program effectively without international support.

Achievements

Adaptive Budget Realignment for Responsive Programming: The consortium partners employed budget realignment as an innovative project management strategy to enhance program responsiveness and adapt to emerging needs during implementation. This flexibility was especially critical in the second phase when unforeseen expenditures *arose as stated by an interviewee, "Realignment was done due to lack of funds. Police posts were not established, and for the renovation of the school, we had to move the funds to the girls' primary schools, {hence} Bhang and Kuachlual primary schools were left out because of funds. And*

for the commissioner's office renovation, we left out three centers for second chance education. As well, money for renovating the court halls was shifted to the ... {renovation of the} ... commissioner's office." A key success factor was involving the ARG in realignment decisions to prioritize resources based on local needs and challenges. One interviewee noted, *"When we realized that our budget was not enough due to unplanned expenditures early in the implementation, we brought together the ARG to prioritize and informed the programmatic realignment, which was followed by budgetary adjustments."* This adaptive approach improved resource allocation and decision-making and ensured that interventions remained aligned with evolving community priorities, ultimately strengthening project impact and efficiency.

Community Engagement and Stakeholder Participation:

- The program effectively bolstered collaboration with local authorities and actively engaged youth leaders, which enhanced local governance and community participation. Meetings such as those held by the ARG and various youth engagement forums facilitated constructive dialogues, ensuring a broad spectrum of community voices was considered. These efforts were pivotal in integrating insights from youths and local leaders into the planning and execution of program activities, fostering a more inclusive approach to community development.
- The ABP's experience in local capacity building revealed varied levels of responsiveness among different groups. Women were the fastest adopters of new models and ideas, followed by youth, while men showed the least engagement initially. This trend affected the participation of the county authorities, who are predominantly male, resulting in limited engagement in the first half of the program. The county leadership only started actively participating in the second half of the final year. This lukewarm response, especially from key decision-makers, created delays and posed challenges to the timely implementation of some activities, potentially hindering project progress.

Capacity Building and Skill Development: Activities conducted at the youth vocational center were reported to be impactful. Specifically, the vocational trainings, particularly in tailoring, provided not only economic opportunities but also enhanced social interactions that contribute to community peace. However, the evaluation found that barriers disproportionately affecting female participation were not fully addressed by the program, indicating a need for a more targeted analysis and adaptation of initiatives to better accommodate women's circumstances and enhance their involvement.

Infrastructure and Resource Accessibility: While the evaluation observed significant improvements in infrastructure at key sites like Bhang Secondary, Koch Girls Primary schools, and women's centers, logistical challenges delayed the completion of other critical projects, such as the prison, police station, and market shades in Jaak Payam. Additionally, the safe house in Kuachlual, planned for implementation in October 2023, was not executed as scheduled. These setbacks highlight the need for enhanced project management and resource allocation to ensure that future infrastructure developments are completed efficiently and achieve their intended impact on community development.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods: The ABP program's support for individual traders and the facilitation of inter-county trade at local markets notably boosted economic development and peace. Despite these successes, both male and female youth articulated a persistent need for more substantial employment opportunities and deeper involvement in economic activities, indicating gaps in addressing the economic underpinnings of conflict and youth unemployment.

The evaluation revealed that while economic engagement was a shared priority across genders, there were distinct gender-specific concerns that shaped their experiences. Male youth expressed stronger dissatisfaction due to limited access to capital and vocational training, aligning with their traditional roles and responsibilities within the community. As one youth leader noted: “The lack of vocational training and capital to start small enterprises is our biggest challenge. Most of us have ideas but no resources to turn them into reality.” Another male respondent added: “The trainings provided were not enough to help us support our families. We need more advanced skills and financial support to engage in meaningful economic activities.”

In contrast, female youth emphasized barriers to establishing and sustaining women-led businesses due to limited access to resources and support for entrepreneurship. One participant explained: “Before the project, many women didn’t know how to run a business, but we were trained in bakery, retail, and vegetable farming. Still, access to financial resources remains a big challenge for us.” Another female youth shared: “We need more support for women-led businesses and access to start-up capital to ensure we can sustain these enterprises.”

These gender-specific differences indicate that economic interventions must be tailored to address the unique needs and aspirations of both male and female youth. A more targeted approach that expands vocational training and financial support for male youth while enhancing entrepreneurial support and resources for female youth would result in more balanced and impactful outcomes for the community.

Monitoring, Feedback, and Adaptation: Community feedback during ARG meetings was generally positive, appreciating the program’s impacts but also voicing concerns over program delays and the need for more robust support for women and youths. The Final (SC) Mission Report to Koch Dec 2022¹² recommendations stressed the importance of adapting program strategies to community needs, such as integrating the production of reusable pads at youth centers and enhancing market facilities.

Gender Disparities: A second shortcoming in program staffing concerns gender disparities. The program staff at the field-level were overwhelmingly male. This was attributed to contextual factor of the conflict as stated by an interviewee, “The initial context in Koch contributed to the gender disparities observed at the program’s outset. Additionally, the limited capacity among women in Koch County hindered the recruitment of qualified female personnel for the program. Despite our intentions, we did not meet the gender mainstreaming standard [with] the target of... 35% women. [This] was not achieved due to these contextual challenges.” Another interviewee reported that “The activity head of our program in Koch was a female but she ended up resigning from her post due to unspecified reasons.” Although, efforts were made to increase the number of female staff such as articulating that females were encouraged to apply, still very few were recruited. However, this is not an uncommon occurrence in South Sudan. There are contextual factors why there are less women available to work which include education levels as well as often, families who can afford to do so, the women are with the children outside of South Sudan to prioritize the education of the children.

At the implementation level, the program’s efforts to involve diverse community members in peacebuilding and economic activities were commendable. Nevertheless, there was a gap identified in relation to a more focused interventions to bolster female participation, particularly in sports and vocational training.

¹² Final SC Mission Report to Koch December 2022.

Supporting the localization agenda: Localization plays a significant role in various normative frameworks that shape the aid sector, such as the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, the Grand Bargain, and the UN Secretary General's Sustaining Peace agenda, all aiming to enhance support for local actors. Despite this emphasis, there remains a substantial gap between the ideal and the actual practice. The share of development and humanitarian aid reaching local and national civil society actors decreased from 3.5 percent in 2016 to 2.1 percent in 2020, a shortfall from the Grand Bargain's goal of 25 percent.¹³

In South Sudan, attention to localization increased following a 2018 study by the Humanitarian Policy Group, which found that only four percent of donor funds for humanitarian aid went directly to local or national NGOs. This issue is compounded by power dynamics that restrict local access to funding. Nevertheless, there have been improvements; for instance, the share of funding local actors received from the Country-Based Pooled Fund rose from 12 percent in 2016 to 33 percent in 2022. Yet, most national organizations still depend on subcontracts with UN agencies and INGOs, with few accessing international funds directly.

The RSRTF has been proactive in enhancing national organizations' participation. Unlike Phase 1, which solely involved international organizations, Phase 2 included UNIDOR as a national partner in line with RSRTF requirements. However, the broader disparities between national and international actors persist within the aid sector in South Sudan. According to the 2022 Annual Report, national NGOs received only nine percent of the Fund's allocations, compared to 54.5 percent to UN agencies and 36.5 percent to INGOs. The Koch ABP stands out for including a strong national NGO within its consortium of five implementing partners, yet with only 7.5 percent of the budget allocated to national actors, it remains significantly below the Grand Bargain's target of 25 percent.¹⁴

Conclusions

The graph below illustrates the effectiveness of Koch ABP and the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus in reducing violence in Koch County. The data reveals that 57.14% of respondents believe the program significantly reduced violence, aligning with the findings of the Koch Evaluation Report, particularly in relation to Outcome 1 (Reduced Violence). The program's integrated approach to fostering peace and community-led conflict management mechanisms has been successful in driving stability. While the majority of respondents highlighted significant progress, the moderate and slight responses (23.81% and 9.52%, respectively) suggest areas where ongoing improvements could further enhance long-term impact.

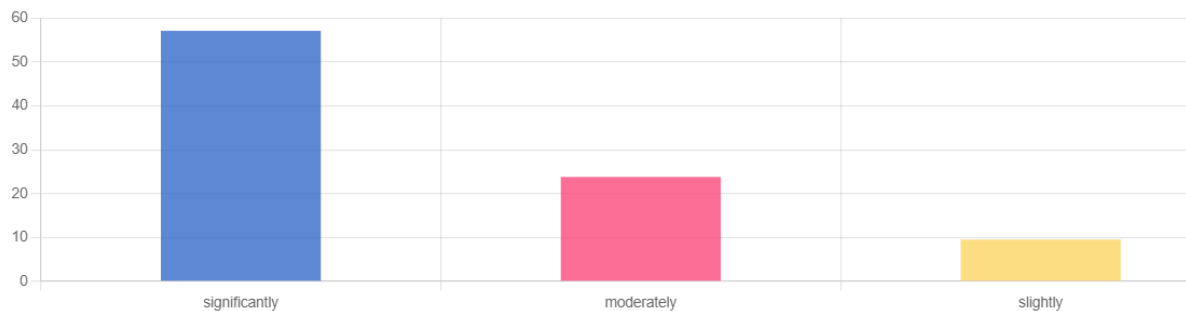
Graph 4: Effectiveness of the ABP and the Nexus in Koch County

¹³ Mie Roesdahl, et al., A Global System in Flux: Pursuing Systems Change for Locally-Led Peacebuilding, Conducive Space for Peace (Apr. 2021), available at <https://usercontent.one/wp/www.conducivespace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CSP-A-Global-System-in-Flux-final-1.pdf?media=1690643671>.

¹⁴ Barnaby Willitts-King, Nisar Majid, Mo Ali, and Lydia Poole, Funding to Local Humanitarian Actors: Evidence from Somalia and South Sudan, Policy Brief 73, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2018), available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/funding-to-local-humanitarian-actors-evidence-from-somalia-and-south-sudan/>.

How effective has the RSRTF's approach to area-based programming and the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus been in reducing violence in southern Koch County?

TYPE: SELECT_ONE. 19 out of 21 respondents answered this question. (2 were without data.)



The Koch ABP effectively contributed to reduced violence and enhanced social cohesion, meeting the majority of its performance targets. The program successfully empowered local communities to take ownership of peacebuilding efforts. However, further work is needed to address challenges in market integration and capacity-building for sustainable economic development.

4.4. Efficiency

This section assesses the efficiency of the Koch ABP by examining how well resources were allocated and used to achieve the program's objectives. While it evaluates efficiency across all outcomes, it gives more prominence to the activities delivered under Outcome 3 (Accountability and Rule of Law) and Outcome 4 (Civic Participation and Governance) within the constraints of logistical and operational challenges. This approach allows for a more targeted analysis of how efficiently these particular outcomes were delivered, while other sections provide a broader assessment of the remaining outcomes in terms of overall program success. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question: *To what extent have the implementers delivered planned results in a cost effective, timely, and operationally efficient manner?*

Table 8: Efficiency summary findings

Efficiency – key findings
- At the beginning of the Koch ABP program, local authorities and community members expressed resistance. This hesitation stemmed from a lack of understanding of the program's purpose and unresolved payment issues from previous programs. However, through targeted engagement and communication, these concerns were effectively addressed. - Logistical challenges posed by poor road conditions significantly increased transportation costs, making the movement of goods and personnel more expensive and difficult. These transportation barriers complicated the overall program implementation, requiring adjustments in budgeting and planning. - Certain partners, like UNIDOR, only joined the program during its second phase, which allowed them to learn from the gaps identified in Phase One. The lessons gathered from the experiences of the first consortium lead and other partners were instrumental in improving performance during the second phase. The enhanced collaboration and shared learning ensured that mistakes were not repeated, contributing to more efficient program execution in the later stages. - WR, as the lead organization, established a SC that included representatives from the consortium partners. This governance structure emphasized teamwork and collaboration, supported by bi-annual learning events. These events provided an opportunity for open communication, feedback, and joint decision-making, all of which were critical for aligning the program's objectives with the realities on the ground and enhancing its overall effectiveness.

- **National partner organizations reported feeling well-supported by their consortium partners**, which was a key factor in enhancing program efficiency. UNMISS also played a crucial role in ensuring security and providing capacity-building support for consortium members. Their logistical assistance, including helicopter transport between Leer and Bentiu, facilitated the smooth movement of personnel, particularly in difficult-to-access areas.
- When DRC withdrew from the program, UNIDOR, a national organization, was brought in as a replacement. This transition was handled smoothly and had a positive impact on the program's activities. **The involvement of a national partner further supported the localization agenda.**

The efficiency analysis of the Koch ABP Phase II reveals a nuanced picture of program delivery, characterized by notable successes and significant challenges that offer insights for future interventions.

Operational Efficiency and Stakeholder Engagement: The program overcame initial resistance from local communities and authorities through effective stakeholder engagement strategies, enhancing operational efficiency. This initial challenge was transformed into an opportunity for deeper community understanding and acceptance of the program's benefits, as highlighted by strategic responses to local concerns, thus facilitating smoother program implementation.

Timeliness and Learning from Experience: The program demonstrated a strong capacity for learning, with strategic improvements implemented in Phase II based on lessons learned from Phase I. For example, the integration of new partners and the refinement of governance structures led to enhanced program performance, showing the program's adaptability and commitment to timeliness. As one interviewee noted, "Most of the indicators were measured and about 90% ... achieved their targets," which underscores the program's ability to meet its objectives effectively.

Cost-effectiveness and Resource Management: Logistical challenges, exacerbated by poor infrastructure, highlighted critical areas for better resource management. The program's efficiency was impacted by factors such as flooding, poor road conditions, and disruptions in the supply chain. For instance, transporting key materials such as sand and stones from outside the county incurred higher costs and caused delays in construction activities. However, the program successfully leveraged external support. The support from UNMISS in logistics and security was instrumental in mitigating these issues, ensuring efficient use of resources and continuity of program activities without undue delays. This support helped reduce operational costs and enabled the program to continue its activities despite significant challenges.

Additionally, the Consortium Steering Committee established a platform for better resource coordination, leading to more effective budgeting and risk management. The strategic use of no-cost extensions and reallocating savings ensured that critical activities were completed without requiring additional funding, demonstrating a high level of adaptability and fiscal responsibility.

Inclusive Decision-making and Localized Partnerships: The program's approach to inclusive decision-making and fostering localized partnerships enhanced the relevance and acceptance of its activities. This shift not only improved cost-effectiveness but also leveraged local capacities to ensure sustainability and local ownership of the program outcomes.

Community Involvement and Infrastructure Development: Significant strides were made in engaging communities and developing infrastructure in strategic areas like Koch. This focus on community involvement and infrastructure development. The community has taken ownership, with women and youth playing a leading role in the peace committees, and local authorities contributing significantly, such

as installing a borehole in the prison. They have also maintained open communication channels for reporting incidents and warning neighboring communities about potential cattle raiding movements in project hotspot areas, which has been crucial for maintaining peace and security fostering local ownership and actively involving communities in peacebuilding efforts, thereby enhancing the ABP program’s overall operational efficiency.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Systems: The robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems employed by the program were vital in tracking progress and adapting strategies effectively. These systems facilitated a comprehensive assessment of program achievements against benchmarks, enabling timely adjustments to enhance program outcomes.

Budget Alignment and Expenditure Management: Financial challenges necessitated realignment of funds, impacting the ABP program’s ability to execute certain planned activities. The reallocation of funds from planned infrastructure projects to more urgent needs underline the importance of flexible financial planning to adapt to on-ground realities.

Conclusions

The program's effectiveness was hindered by logistical challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure and delays in staffing, which impeded progress. While the program has concluded, nonetheless, there remains strong engagement with many stakeholders and collaboration among partners. Looking ahead, lengthening the program cycle would facilitate improved planning and resource distribution, leading to enhanced overall efficiency, impact and sustainability.

4.5. Impact

This section provides an assessment of the impact that the Koch ABP had on reducing violence, promoting peaceful coexistence, and improving livelihoods in Koch County during its implementation. It reviews the program’s contributions to peacebuilding, governance, and economic outcomes, particularly focusing on Outcomes 1 (Reduced Violence), 2 (Intercommunal Conflict Management), and 5 (Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods). The evaluation also considers the relevance and implications of these findings for similar interventions in other contexts, addressing the question: To what extent did the ABP contribute to reducing violence and fostering peaceful coexistence to improve livelihoods in Koch and its surrounding areas?

Table 9: Impact summary findings

Impact – key findings
• The program has significantly contributed to improved security, enabling residents to move freely and safely within hotspot areas. This development has allowed individuals to engage in daily activities without fear, fostering social cohesion and accessibility. • There has been a notable reduction in violent incidents, exemplified by the community-mediated return of a stolen gun from Koch to Mayendit. This act demonstrates enhanced conflict resolution mechanisms and growing trust between neighboring communities. A significant decline in shooting incidents and revenge killings was reported which indicates improved security and the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. This reduction has contributed to a more stable and peaceful community environment. • Improvements in physical infrastructure including the renovation of key facilities-including the commissioners' office, schools, and prisons has strengthened local governance and service delivery. The upgraded detention facilities now better respect human rights and uphold the rule of law, contributing to a more just and orderly society.

- **Enhanced awareness of the importance of coexistence** has enabled neighboring communities to collaborate and work together in Koch. This collective effort has strengthened inter-community relationships and promoted mutual support in various development activities.
- **School renovations have led to improved academic performance** among youth, with a particular emphasis on girls' education. Some girls have received sponsorships from partners even beyond the program cycle, highlighting sustained investment in female education and empowerment. The ABP program enhanced school attendance.
- The program supported the **establishment of small businesses**, opening of shops, and acquisition of livelihood tools such as motorbikes for transportation. These initiatives have encouraged community members to invest in local enterprises rather than leaving the area, thereby stimulating economic growth and stability. Moreover, in part, as a result of the program, the areas stability attracted more returnees who were displaced because of earlier intercommunal violence.

Security and Safe Movement: The program has made a clear contribution to improving security and facilitating safe movement within Koch County. Prior to the intervention, residents were reluctant to move freely, particularly at night, due to prevalent security risks. One interviewee noted that before the program it was unsafe to travel between payams and counties because of insecurity and rape. Since the program, the interviewee reported was now safer with fewer incidents of violence and rape when traveling at night. Improved security has allowed residents to re-engage in critical economic activities, such as fishing, farming, charcoal production, and traveling to the market to sell goods. As one interviewee explained, "People can access the forest for fishing, hunting, collection of firewood, making charcoal... and farming.". This enhanced mobility has not only contributed to the community's economic resilience, but it has also fostered social cohesion.

Reduction in Violence and Conflict Resolution: The program's establishment of peace committees has been instrumental in addressing domestic violence and community conflicts at the grassroots level. The peace committees which were formed in villages were reported by an interviewee "to resolve conflicts at the household level related to domestic violence.". The reported decline in sexual violence, particularly rape, was another significant achievement. According to one participant, "Because of this program, rape has reduced, in the past women were not able to go to the bush to collect firewood or even walk at night without being attacked and raped" During the ET's visit to Koch, a 37-year-old man who was accused of raping a 15-year-old girl was arrested waiting for sentencing indicating that the justice system was functioning. This was reported as an improvement and in part, due to the program's interventions. In addition, a senior government respondent reported that the incidents of rape cases have significantly reduced since the start of the intervention. Further, the respondent noted that, "Prior the intervention, and during the conflict, reports of women raped were common and because of insecurity, no arrests were made." The evaluation also found that the decrease of inter-clan fighting, coupled with improved access to justice, has contributed to a more stable and peaceful environment.

Return of Stolen Property and Decline in Revenge Killings: The program also made significant strides in addressing historical issues of cattle rustling and revenge killings. The cooperation between local authorities, including county commissioners, was critical in reducing these incidents. For example, one interview involved in the meetings describe it in this way, "Meetings were conducted... with the presence of the commissioners... the agenda: cattle rustling, rape, revenge killing, random killing... they decided to cooperate". Notably, there are examples from the program whereby the local government played an active role in recovering stolen cattle and deterring future thefts. One such case is the successful recovery of cattle in Mayom where it was reported that "The government of Mayom took the initiative and recovered the stolen cattle... the perpetrators left the cows because they heard the government was looking for them."

Improvement in Physical Infrastructure: While infrastructure improvements were a visible success, they do not guarantee long-term peace or governance reform. The new prison facility has improved human rights conditions of inmates as reported during hand over by WR that an inmate, “who is serving a three-year sentence at the Koch Prison was arrested with seven other accomplices in May 2023, on allegation of attempted murder. He is one of the first inmates to be transferred into the spacious modern prison facility. He admits that while he still misses his freedom, life in the new facility is relatively better compared to the time he spent in the container.” The inmate said, “Since we were shifted here [to the new building] last month, life has become a bit better. Here, we have enough windows for fresh air. We also have good ventilation,”¹⁵

The construction of prisons, police stations, and market facilities significantly enhanced the program's impact on law enforcement, judicial outcomes, local governance, and trade. These physical infrastructures improved the capacity for maintaining law and order, facilitating the resolution of disputes, and boosting economic activity by providing safe spaces for commerce. As a local community member noted, "They constructed the prison, police station, and market shade. These constructions helped improve security and trade." The presence of these facilities created a more secure environment, encouraging greater community engagement in both legal processes and economic exchanges.

However, while the infrastructure developments are crucial, they alone cannot resolve the deeply rooted social and political challenges that hinder effective governance. Without ongoing investment in human capacity building and institutional reforms, these facilities may not fully achieve their intended objectives. The evaluation identified a gap in the effectiveness of infrastructure developments alone in addressing the underlying social and political challenges that hinder effective governance. While infrastructure developments are essential, the evaluation found that they alone are not enough to address these deeply rooted issues. Outcome 3 specifically focuses on addressing these gaps, emphasizing the need for ongoing investment in human capacity building and institutional reforms to ensure that the infrastructure facilities achieve their intended impact.

Boost in Education and Gender Inclusivity: The program demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting education and addressing gender disparities. Significant efforts were made to encourage girls to return to school and to raise awareness around issues such as early marriage. These initiatives which resulted in a substantial increase in school attendance, with 32 schools operational by the end of 2022, many of which had girls who had previously dropped out due to pregnancies re-enrolling. Another initiative involved the support through UNIDOR to centers for women and girls' which provided safe spaces for women and girls to share their experiences, report incidents of gender-based violence, and engage in income-generating activities.

Economic Empowerment: Economic empowerment was a cornerstone of the program's success. The program provided critical support to participants, equipping them with the skills and resources needed to sustain their livelihoods. As one participant observed, "The program taught and trained me how to improve my business... peace has its indirect impact on my business because, without peace, my business wouldn't have prospered." The program also promoted women's economic participation, ensuring that the program promoted equal access to leadership and economic opportunities. For example, women were selected to lead VSLA groups where they could demonstrate their leadership skills and ability to manage groups and resources. As one respondent noted, "Through training of the women leadership, women have

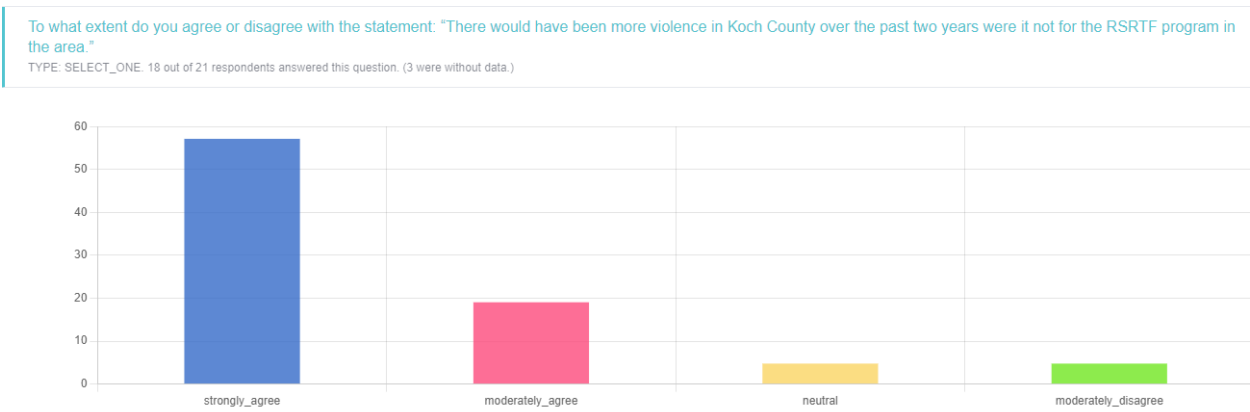
¹⁵ Success Story -World Relief RSRTF Program hands Koch County a modern police and prison facility.

rights to participate in community leadership and equal participation in economic activities" This focus on women’s empowerment, particularly in the context of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), has fostered sustainable economic growth at the community level.

Conclusions

This graph below demonstrates the perceived impact of the RSRTF program on reducing violence in Koch County. A total of 57.14% of respondents strongly agreed that there would have been more violence without the program’s presence. This aligns with the overall positive impact the program has had on stabilizing the region, particularly through conflict mitigation and community peacebuilding efforts. The data underscores the critical role of the RSRTF ABP in contributing to a safer and more secure environment, though the 4.76% that moderately disagreed indicate there may be areas where the program’s impact was less felt.

Graph 5: The contribution of RSRTF program to reducing violence



The Koch ABP made significant progress in reducing violence, fostering social cohesion, and promoting economic resilience. The return of displaced persons and improvements in local security are notable indicators of success. However, the sustainability of these gains will depend on continued efforts to strengthen economic integration and market access, as well as ongoing support for local governance structures.

4.1. Sustainability

This section assesses the sustainability of the Koch ABP’s interventions, particularly in terms of how well the program built local ownership of peacebuilding efforts and established structures for long-term resilience. It focuses on Outcomes 4 (Civic Participation and Governance) and 5 (Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods) as key contributors to sustainability. These two outcomes were selected because they reflect the foundational aspects of local ownership and community capacity to sustain peace and economic stability independently. The main evaluation questions that this section answers are: *Has the Program built local ownership of peacebuilding? If so, how and where? Which changes or activities are continuing or likely to continue since the Program’s ending?*

Table 9: Sustainability summary findings

Sustainability – key findings
Peace committees continue their mediation roles even after the program’s completion.

• The ABP program addressed sustaining prisons through community involvement and support, through exploring training programs for inmates to acquire skills while incarcerated, allowing them to gain valuable experience.
• The county's contribution of constructing a borehole has enhanced water access for communities, providing a sustainable solution for clean water and demonstrating local ownership and support for the project.
• The ABP program interventions led to an enhancement in livelihood opportunities for community members in Koch County, creating sustainable economic benefits and improving the overall well-being of the population.
• The ABP program provided security as well as engagement with stakeholders and decision makers in violence reduction and prevention as a result citizens have decided to move back to the county to explore development options.
• The ABP program contributed to greater empowerment of local community members, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes and taking ownership of initiatives aimed at fostering peace and development.
• The ABP program successfully raised awareness about the importance of peacebuilding and conflict resolution strategies, leading to heightened community engagement and active involvement in promoting sustainable peace in the region.
• The evaluation highlighted the need for a clear exit strategy for international partners to ensure program sustainability. This strategy should include a handover of responsibilities to national partners, development of local capacity, and securing resources to maintain long-term program impact. These steps will help mitigate risks and preserve the program's legacy after international partners exit.

The Koch ABP sustainability and exit strategy was developed to ensure the longevity of program interventions across multiple sectors. The strategy focused on capacity building, institutional handover, and integration of activities into ongoing local initiatives. However, the evaluation found that the strategy was not fully implemented, which limited its effectiveness in securing the long-term sustainability of achievements in peacebuilding, economic recovery, social services, and youth and women empowerment beyond the program's completion.

Below is a harmonized analysis of key sustainability elements, drawing from interviews, FGDs and the sustainability strategy and exit plan. Specifically, the effectiveness and challenges of the sustainability strategy and exit plan will be reviewed.

Strengthening and Consolidating Local Structures: The strategy emphasizes building and consolidating local structures, such as local government, civil society organizations, VSLAs, peace committees, paralegals, and youth associations. These groups are essential for continuing peace and development activities after the program cycle ends because relying on existing community structures, the ABP increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability, as these entities have already demonstrated their capacity to function effectively within the local context. An interview reported, "As a head of ... VSLA, our activities are still continuing, and I can even show how much we have in our chest." However, these structures will require ongoing support in the form of mentorship and capacity development to maintain their impact. Without this, they may lack the resources and skills to scale and sustain activities independently, thereby compromising the program's long-term goals.

Mainstreaming Activities into Ongoing Partner Programs One of the key strategies proposed for sustainability is the integration of ABP program activities into ongoing programs. However, there is no clear evidence that this has been effectively implemented. A significant challenge has emerged, as two key consortium organizations have ceased their operations in Koch and closed down, limiting the potential for

sustained integration. Without these partners, ensuring that RSRTF-supported community structures transition into broader humanitarian and development programs becomes more difficult. Furthermore, the sustainability of these activities relies on the capacity and commitment of the remaining partners.

Capacity Building for Local Non-Governmental Organizations (NNGOs): Capacity building for local NNGOs is a critical aspect of the ABP's sustainability plan. The ABP program has offered training in conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity, program management, and report writing to local organizations. These efforts are intended to equip NNGOs with the skills they need to take over key roles in development efforts after the program concludes. But this did not happen as stated in the Exit and Sustainability report, "the consortium supported capacity building for the NGO staff in conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and report writing. Others include mentorship through periodic spot check on program and financial management and sharing resource materials for community training; however, this has not been consistent and well-structured as there were no set capacity building targets or objectives."¹⁶ This inconsistency presents a risk to long-term sustainability, as underdeveloped NNGOs may struggle to maintain program initiatives or expand their operations without ongoing training and support.

Handover of Social and Economic Infrastructure: The ABP strategy ensures that key infrastructure, such as schools, market structures, and youth and women centers, are handed over to local government authorities. This step is essential for fostering ownership and ensuring that these assets remain functional and beneficial to the community. The sustainability and exist strategy did not address the importance of linking community groups and youth/women's associations to local government departments which would have reinforced the sustainability of program activities by clearly integrating them into formal governance structures.

Empowerment and Participation in Peacebuilding: The ABP's efforts to empower community members, particularly in decision-making processes, have been successful in fostering local ownership of peacebuilding and development initiatives. By giving communities a sense of responsibility, the program has increased the likelihood that these initiatives will continue beyond the program's lifecycle. Community-led peace committees, for example, have assumed responsibility for local conflict mediation, showing strong local buy-in. As one interviewee highlighted, "[Our work as the] ... PC has never stopped though it might have slowed down. We are still solving problems in our communities, problems like domestic violence, conflict between cattle owners and farmers, and many others... The community are still coming to us for help, and we will continue to do our work because it is our community". However, it was noted that sustaining this empowerment requires ongoing leadership development and governance support. Without continuous training, local leaders may struggle to maintain the momentum needed to drive these efforts.

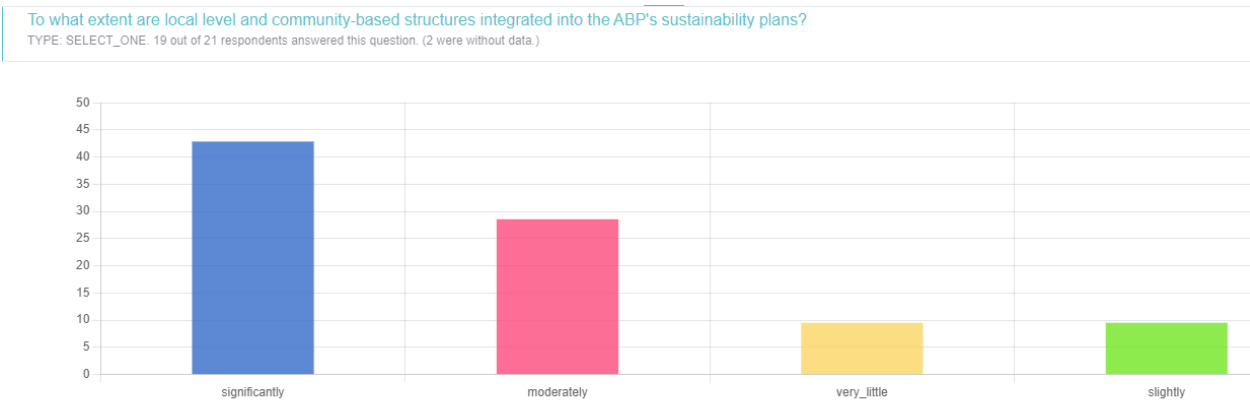
Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Improvements: The program's interventions in livelihood support and economic empowerment, particularly through VSLAs and small businesses, have laid the foundation for sustainable economic growth in Koch. By providing community members with the tools and skills needed to sustain businesses, the program has reduced dependency on external aid and fostered economic stability. However, for these gains to endure, continued market access, financial resources, and capacity building are necessary. The region remains vulnerable to conflict and economic shocks, which could undermine these improvements without ongoing support.

¹⁶ Exit and Sustainability Strategy 2023.

Conclusions

This graph below shows the extent to which local-level and community-based structures have been integrated into the ABP's sustainability plans. A total of 42.86% of respondents reported significant integration, with 28.57% indicating moderate integration. This reflects the program’s success in building local ownership and capacity for long-term sustainability. However, the presence of 9.52% respondents reporting "very little" or "slight" integration suggests a need for more comprehensive efforts to embed these structures fully into sustainability strategies, ensuring that local institutions can carry forward the program’s initiatives post-exit.

Graph 6: Perceptions of the integration of local structures into the ABP’s sustainability plans



The program has laid a strong foundation for sustainability, particularly through community-led initiatives and governance structures. However, the sustainability of livelihood activities remains uncertain due to weak market integration and ongoing resistance from some local authorities. Strengthening these areas will be critical to ensuring the long-term success of the program’s outcomes.

5. Overall conclusions

The Koch Area Based Program (ABP) made substantial strides in reducing violence, fostering peace, and supporting economic development in Koch County and its neighboring regions. Key accomplishments include a contribution to marked decrease in violent incidents, the formation of inclusive peace committees many of which remain active today, and the empowerment of women and youth. Additionally, the program's infrastructure initiatives, such as the schools, and vocational centers, have laid a strong foundation for long-term socio-economic development. The integration of community structures into peacebuilding and governance has also contributed to establishing lasting stability and resilience as well as strengthened capacity within these structures for managing issues and implementing solutions.

Despite these successes, several factors hindered program gains and impact. Delays in onboarding key staff, limited engagement with local authorities, weak connections between community structures and the program consortium, and challenges in integrating value chains into livelihood components presented significant obstacles. Furthermore, while the deployment of mobile courts was a necessary step, it was

introduced too late to realize its full potential. Resistance from local authorities to the bench court system further weakened judicial outcomes, limiting the impact of this intervention.

In conclusion, while the ABP has initiated important and impactful interventions, sustaining and amplifying these achievements will require ongoing efforts. Key areas for further support include strengthening local governance, enhancing market integration for livelihoods, and deepening engagement with local authorities and community structures. Continuous capacity development and improved project management of key community structures and local government and justice actors will be essential in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of the program's outcomes.

Key lessons learned from the ABP include

- **Community Buy-In is Essential for Sustainability:** The program's success in promoting peace and stability was largely driven by the active involvement of the community. Empowering local stakeholders and fostering ownership of peacebuilding processes proved crucial for ensuring the lasting impact of these interventions. For future initiatives, securing strong community buy-in from the outset is critical for sustainability.
- **Integrated Approaches to Peacebuilding and Economic Development:** The simultaneous focus on addressing violence and economic hardship was a key factor in the program's effectiveness. A holistic approach that integrates peacebuilding with livelihood support and governance improvements is essential in conflict-affected areas to address both immediate and long-term needs. Future programs should continue this integrated strategy to ensure more comprehensive solutions to conflict.
- **Sustainability Requires Long-Term Investment:** While the ABP successfully laid the groundwork for sustainable peace and development, long-term success requires ongoing financial and technical support. Investments in building local capacity, maintaining infrastructure, and strengthening economic resilience are essential to preserving and expanding the program's gains. Without sustained commitment, the risk of regression remains significant.
- **Seasonal Timing is Critical for Activity Execution:** Adjusting key activities such as procurement and construction to the dry season can mitigate delays caused by environmental challenges like flooding. Aligning program timelines with favorable weather conditions will reduce bottlenecks and improve the efficiency of program implementation, ensuring smoother operations and avoiding unnecessary disruptions.

6. Recommendations

This section presents the recommendations for building on the successes and lessons learnt of the ABP in Koch County. It is intended to be applicable both for future program in Koch County as well as more broadly in similar contexts in South Sudan. It is organized by strategic, programmatic and management recommendations. The final section outlines strategic pathways for implementing the recommendations.

Strategic Recommendations

These recommendations focus on the long-term vision, system-level changes, and sustainable impact at a strategic level.

1. Integrate Mobile Courts Early in the Program Lifecycle

Introduce mobile courts early in the program lifecycle to sustain judicial processes, foster local ownership, and build trust with both authorities and the community. This should be supported by training local judicial actors on formal justice mechanisms, human rights, and the rule of law, while conducting awareness campaigns to enhance community trust and reduce resistance from local authorities.

2. Strengthen Local Governance and Address Resistance from Local Authorities

Develop and implement Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with local authorities to clarify roles and financial arrangements. This will help mitigate resistance from local authorities, particularly concerning fears over revenue losses from traditional justice systems.

3. Expand the Program Cycle to Ensure the Maturation of Interventions

The current two-year program cycle is too short for activities to fully mature. Extending the program duration to three or four years will provide more time for planning, implementation, and adaptation to challenges, resulting in more sustainable outcomes.

4. Develop a Clear Exit Strategy for International Partners

It is recommended that a comprehensive exit strategy be developed for international partners to ensure the sustainability of program outcomes. This strategy should include a detailed handover plan, transferring responsibilities to national partner organizations, while focusing on building local capacity to manage program activities independently. Additionally, securing the necessary financial and human resources will be essential to maintaining the program's long-term impact and success after the disengagement of international partners.

Programmatic Recommendations

The programmatic recommendations are related to the design, planning, and implementation of specific program activities.

1. Revisit Livelihood Interventions with a Focus on Market Integration

Livelihood programs should be strengthened by incorporating value chain development strategies and market access for producers. This could involve supporting model farmers, providing value addition tools (such as rice hullers and maize mills), and establishing connections with local and regional markets to enhance productivity and household income.

2. Strengthen Information Flow from Community Structures

Establish a formal feedback mechanism to ensure success stories and challenges from community structures (e.g., peace committees, VSLA groups) are regularly reported to the consortium. This will ensure that program decisions are informed by real-time community inputs, improving the program's responsiveness and adaptability.

3. Adjust Program Planning taking into Consideration Seasonal and Environmental Constraints

Align major project activities such as procurement, construction, and agriculture-related work with the dry season to mitigate delays caused by environmental conditions. Creating contingency plans for environmental risks will improve the efficiency of program implementation.

4. Provide Timebound Technical Support for Livelihood Assets

Establish cooperatives or community-owned enterprises to manage livelihood assets, such as maize mills. Offer structured business planning, operational training, and technical support for a minimum of 12-18 months. During this period, implement a phased transition plan to gradually reduce external support, ensuring community members develop the capacity to manage and sustain these assets independently, ensuring long-term success.

Management Recommendations

The management recommendations focus on the program's operational, staffing, and resource management aspects.

1. Timely Onboarding of Key Staff

Delays in recruitment and onboarding impacted the timely start of the program. Future programs should initiate recruitment processes well before the program launch and consider providing incentives to ensure timely staffing. A centralized or automated recruitment system could streamline this process across consortium partners.

2. Enhance Coordination Mechanisms to Improve Resource Allocation

Strengthen the role of the ARG and other coordination mechanisms to ensure better synchronization between activities and timely resource allocation. This will improve the coherence of program interventions across different pillars.

3. Create Contingency Plans for Seasonal Bottlenecks in Implementation

Address seasonal and logistical challenges by developing contingency plans for environmental risks such as floods and road closures. Ensuring the prepositioning of supplies and flexible work schedules will allow for smoother program execution during the wet season.

Pathways to change

To overcome the challenges identified in the evaluation and support the uptake of the recommendations for future programs, specific pathways for change are outlined below. These pathways highlight the key actions needed to build on the successes of the Koch ABP. They are designed to tackle bottlenecks and gaps in current programming approaches.

1. Focus on system-level changes for long-term sustainability and impact

Strengthen Local Governance and Address Resistance from Local Authorities

- **Strategic Pathway:** Engage Early and Formulate Clear MOUs with Local Authorities
 - **Action Plan:** Establish MOUs with local authorities to clarify roles, responsibilities, and financial arrangements. Creating shared oversight and revenue-sharing mechanisms will reduce local resistance to mobile courts.
 - **Capacity Strengthening:** Train local government officials on judicial reforms and how they coexist with traditional systems.
 - **Incentive Structures:** Create a shared benefit system that gives local authorities a vested interest in overseeing the mobile courts. This will encourage smoother integration and cooperation in the judicial process

Expand the Program Cycle to Ensure the Maturation of Interventions

- **Strategic Pathway:** Shift to Longer Program Cycles for Greater Program Maturity

- **Action Plan:** Extend the program cycle from two to three or four years, allowing for phased implementation to ensure interventions fully mature.
- **Phased Implementation:** Implement a phased approach, focusing on different program components at different stages (e.g., peacebuilding in year one, livelihood development in year two, market integration in year three).

Enhance Judicial Outcomes by Deploying Mobile Courts Early

- **Strategic Pathway:** Deploy Mobile Courts in Early Phases and Build Local Ownership
 - **Action Plan:** Integrate mobile courts at the program's onset with early public awareness campaigns to inform communities and build trust.
 - **Capacity Strengthening:** Train judicial actors and traditional leaders on human rights and the rule of law.
 - **Community Judicial Monitors:** Create community-based monitors to ensure accountability and the integrity of court decisions after the courts exit.

Increase Local Partner Involvement and Capacity Building

- **Strategic Pathway:** Engage Early and Formulate Clear MOUs with Local Authorities
 - **Resource Allocation:** Gradually increase the share of program budgets allocated to national NGOs, aiming to meet the Grand Bargain target of 25% direct funding to local partners. Regular reviews will ensure funding allocations stay on track and national partners receive the support necessary for long-term involvement.
 - **Capacity Building and Technical Support:** Develop a comprehensive capacity-building plan to enhance local partners' competencies in financial management, conflict-sensitive programming, and program implementation. Early-stage training programs with regular progress assessments will ensure local partners can take on increasing responsibilities.
 - **Mentorship and Collaboration:** Facilitate mentorship programs where international partners provide ongoing support and guidance to national partners in management and technical areas. This collaboration will enable a gradual transfer of knowledge and ensure local partners are ready to manage operations independently.
 - **Increased Decision-Making Authority:** Include local partners in consortium-level strategic decision-making processes from the outset, empowering them to shape program design and implementation strategies. This inclusion fosters greater ownership and ensures local interventions align with community needs.

2. Address the design, planning, and implementation of specific interventions for better program effectiveness.

Revisit Livelihood Interventions with a Focus on Market Integration

- **Strategic Pathway:** Develop Comprehensive Value Chains and Market Access Programs
 - **Action Plan:** Strengthen livelihood interventions by focusing on value chain development and establishing connections between producers and local/regional markets. This includes providing resources such as rice hullers and improved storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses.
 - **Market Facilitation:** Set up a market facilitation unit to connect farmers with buyers, organize trade fairs, and establish digital platforms for trading.

Strengthen Information Flow from Community Structures

- **Strategic Pathway:** Establish Robust Community Feedback and Communication Mechanisms
 - **Action Plan:** Create formal feedback mechanisms for community structures (e.g., peace committees and VSLAs) to report success stories and challenges to the consortium. This will enable real-time adjustments based on community needs.
 - **Community Engagement Officers:** Assign dedicated officers to liaise between the consortium and community groups, ensuring continuous engagement.

Provide Ongoing Technical Support for Livelihood Assets

- **Strategic Pathway:** Develop Community-Based Management Structures for Livelihood Assets
 - **Action Plan:** Establish cooperatives or community-owned enterprises to manage assets like maize mills, including business plans, operational training, and technical support.
 - **Ongoing Technical Support:** Partner with local technical colleges (Dr. John Garang Technical College, e.g.) and vocational or training centers to train technicians for the long-term maintenance of these assets.

Adjust Program Planning to Seasonal and Environmental Constraints

- **Strategic Pathway:** Adjust Program Planning to Seasonal and Environmental Constraints
 - **Action Plan:** Align construction, procurement, and agricultural work with favorable seasons (e.g., the dry season). Develop contingency plans to mitigate environmental risks such as flooding and road blockages.

3. Focus on improving operational efficiency, staffing, and resource allocation.

Timely Onboarding of Key Staff

- **Strategic Pathway:** Improve Recruitment Processes and Create Contingency Plans
 - **Action Plan:** Start recruitment processes early to avoid delays. Implement interim staffing measures or second staff from consortium partners as needed.
 - **Automation and Centralization:** Automate recruitment platforms and centralize human resource processes across consortium partners to ensure consistency.
 - **Incentives:** Develop incentives for timely onboarding to ensure full staffing at the start of the program.

Enhance Coordination Mechanisms to Improve Resource Allocation

- **Strategic Pathway:** Strengthen Coordination and Resource Allocation through the ARG
 - **Action Plan:** Strengthen the role of the ARG to ensure synchronization between program activities and efficient resource allocation. Incorporate community feedback mechanisms into these meetings.

Create Contingency Plans for Seasonal Bottlenecks in Implementation

- **Strategic Pathway:** Plan for Seasonal and Logistical Challenges
 - **Action Plan:** Stockpile materials before the wet season and implement flexible work schedules to ensure that major activities can continue despite seasonal disruptions.

4. Ensure long-term viability and sustainability of interventions.

Sustain Local Ownership of Peacebuilding Initiatives

- **Strategic Pathway:** Empower Community-Led Peace Committees and Build Long-Term Leadership Capacity
 - **Action Plan:** To maintain momentum, provide continuous leadership development and governance training to community-led peace committees.
 - **Sustainability Mechanisms:** Establish sustainable local governance and leadership models that can operate without ongoing external support.

Handover of Social and Economic Infrastructure

- **Strategic Pathway:** Develop Handover Strategies and Foster Government Buy-In
 - **Action Plan:** Facilitate the handover of key infrastructure (e.g., schools, market centers) to local governments, ensuring that they are linked to local governance structures for continued functionality. Although the viability of this action is in question in the South Sudan context, implementing it may find possible success in other counties in South Sudan.
 - **Incentive Mechanisms:** Ensure local governments have the resources and incentives to manage these assets long-term.

Enhance Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Sustainability

- **Strategic Pathway:** Foster Market Access and Resilience to Economic Shocks
 - **Action Plan:** Ensure that community businesses can access local and regional markets. Establish financing and capacity-building mechanisms to help VSLAs and small businesses weather economic challenges.
 - **Ongoing Support:** Partner with local financial institutions to support community savings and loans.

7. Annexes

Annex 1 – Interview question guide

Good morning/afternoon/evening,

My name is _____ and I am part of a team currently evaluating the United Nations Multi- Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) Area- Based Program (ABP) in Koch County. Since 2019, a consortium comprising World Relief, CARE International, Mercy Corps, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and NNO Universal Intervention and Development Organization – South Sudan (UNIDOR) has been implementing this program.

Today, we are seeking to engage in a discussion with you to gather your perspectives on this program. Should you choose to participate, the interview is expected to take approximately 45- 60 minutes. Your insights will contribute to shaping recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Trust Fund in the future.

Voluntary Consent:

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You have the freedom to opt-in or opt- out at any point. Your decision to participate will not impact the services you receive from partners working in this area. While there is no monetary compensation, we believe the outcomes of this study will contribute to enhancing humanitarian and developmental assistance provision in the region.

Confidentiality and Data Security:

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Following the evaluation, a publicly shared report will be produced; however, no specific individual will be identified in relation to their feedback. With your consent, your name may be included in a list of individuals consulted, appended to the report. Do you agree to have your name included at the end of the report?
Yes ____ No ____

Possible Risks:

Engaging in this study does not pose risks exceeding those encountered in regular discussions. However, sensitive or personal topics may arise. Should you feel uncomfortable with any question, you may choose not to respond, and we will respect your decision.

Procedures:

We intend to take notes during the interview solely for transcription purposes. If you prefer that we do not take notes, please inform us.

Do you have any questions? Are you willing to participate in this study? (YES/NO)

For any queries or to withdraw your statements partially or entirely post-evaluation, please feel free to reach out to the evaluation team leader, Bol Bulabek, at xxx.

Thank you for your consideration.

Questionnaire for implementing partners

Note: The main question in each category will be the primary question that will be asked. The sub-questions are meant as guides to ensure information is collected for all the lines of inquiry. However, given the expertise and specific focus areas of interviewees, not all questions will be asked in every interview.

Date:

Interviewee affiliation/function:

Interviewee demographics: gender:

Location of interview: Koch/Juba

Consent given: Y/N

1. What role have you played in RSRTF program in this area?
2. What have been the main changes in the county during the program's duration [outcome harvesting]?
3. What is your overall impression of the program?
4. What has been the main impact of the program [outcome harvesting]?

Relevance

5. **Main question:** To what extent were the ABP's area-based programming approach, theory of change, and implementation modalities realistic and relevant to the operating context?
 - 5.1 To what extent was the ABP relevant to and appropriate for the everyday life of targeted stakeholders and partners?
 - 5.2 To what extent were the program approaches informed by the needs and interests of diverse stakeholders, including local authorities and different community segments?
 - 5.3 Were the ABP's theory of change, results framework(s), expected outcomes, and implementation modalities of both Phase I and Phase II realistic and relevant to the Koch context?
 - 5.4 Compared to previous violence reduction initiatives in Koch County, how is the ABP's approach different, and is its approach more or less promising or innovative than approaches adopted by previous initiatives (and why)?

Coherence

6. **Main question:** To what extent have the reconciliation, stabilization, and Resilience pillars under the ABP interlinked, complemented each other, and demonstrated results?
 - 6.1 How valuable and influential were the Area Reference Group and its various sub-bodies in enhancing coherence and complementarity between the ABP Partners, including parallel peacebuilding initiatives implemented by others, if any?
 - 6.2 To what extent has the ABP reflected the 'New Way of Working and the Fund's three principles ('Increasing local focus; Bridging silos; Promoting partnership')? Has the RSRTF area-based programming approach enhanced coherence around collective outcomes?
 - 6.3 What are examples from the ABP where actors from across the HDP 'Triple Nexus' have worked together to achieve collective outcomes? Are there any examples of practical (joint) activities implemented in coordination between actors from Nexus?
 - 6.4 To what extent has the ABP leveraged UNMISS' field office political engagement and peacekeeping capabilities? How useful is having the GHANBATT TOB (Temporary Operating Base) in Koch, in supporting the RSRTF programming?
 - 6.5 To what extent has the ABP fed into implementing partners' Juba-based country offices, and vice versa, to ensure accountability, appropriate technical support, and greater programmatic coherence?

Effectiveness

- 7. Main question:** To what extent has the ABP achieved its stated objectives?
- 7.1 To what extent and how has the RSRTF area-based programming approach enhanced effectiveness in reducing conflict and increasing stability?
 - 7.2 Per their results frameworks, how much has the RSRTF achieved results against the stated outputs and outcomes?
 - 7.3 Which activities were particularly effective and/or synergetic, and why?
 - 7.4 Which activities have failed, and why? Which activities were duplicated or implemented in silos?
 - 7.5 Have implementers managed risks appropriately, and was there sufficient oversight and accountability from the lead agency to ensure program effectiveness?

Efficiency

- 8. Main question:** To what extent have the implementers delivered on time against the milestones and targets in their results frameworks?
- 8.1 To what extent have partners' monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems enabled them to track their outcome and output-level results?
 - 8.2 Has partners' reporting to the RSRTF FS met the Fund's expectations (timeliness, quality)?
 - 8.3 To what extent are the program expenditures in line with the agreed-upon budget?
 - 8.4 Have sufficient financial and human resources been allocated to mainstream gender equality and youth considerations throughout the ABP's design, implementation, and M&E?

Impact

- 9. Main question:** To what extent has the ABP contributed to reducing violence in Koch?
- 9.1 How effectively has the ABP supported communities, especially women and youth in Koch, in identifying conflict drivers, implementing interventions to address them, reducing violence, promoting peaceful coexistence, enhancing resilience, and improving livelihoods after four years of RSRTF implementation?
 - 9.2 How successfully has the ABP supported the Local peace process, and what was the peace process's impact on local communities during the implementation period and beyond?
 - 9.3 Beyond the immediate program participants, what impact have the programs had on the overall quality of life of communities in Koch and its surroundings?
 - 9.4 Are there any signs of real change in gender relations among the program participants, for example, about equal access to and use of resources, decision-making power, division of labor, and destructive gender norms undermining peace efforts?

Sustainability

- 10. Main question:** Did the Program build local ownership for the RSRTF gains, and how likely were the ABP's net benefits to outlast the Program's existence?
- 10.1 To what extent have program participants been involved in the design and implementation of the programs and their activities?
 - 10.2 How did the Program ensure that local concerns are central to peacebuilding?
 - 10.3 To what extent has the Program supported local ownership of peacebuilding and established or strengthened locally owned structures and solutions?
 - 10.4 Is the level of program stakeholder ownership sufficient to allow for program benefits/outcomes to be sustained in the long term?
 - 10.5 What are the critical lessons learned from the ABP that would help enhance local ownership and sustainability as the ABP exits the area? Prompt for specific examples.

Recommendations

11. Do you have any recommendations to strengthen future programs of a similar nature?

Questionnaire for program participants

Date:

Interviewee affiliation/function:

Interviewee demographics: gender:

Location of interview: Koch/Juba

Consent given: Y/N

1. What relationship (if any) have you had with programs implemented by [list organizations in relevant consortia] in this area?
2. What were the County's main changes during the program's duration [outcome harvesting]?
3. What is your overall impression of these programs?

Relevance

4. How did the program's activities relate to your everyday life in Koch County?
 - 4.1 Did the program address the needs of different community members, including local leaders? If so, how? If no, why not?
 - 4.2 Did the program activities address any of your needs? If yes, which ones? If not, why not?
 - 4.3 Were you or anyone you know asked for your suggestions on the types of activities the program should have?
 - 4.4 How well do you think the program involved political leaders in addressing conflicts?
 - 4.5 How do you think the program considered the needs of women, men, boys, and girls?

Coherence

5. How did the program's pillars of reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience work together in Koch County?
 - 5.1 Were you a member of the Area Reference Group? If so, how did you participate in it? How did it improve coordination among agencies in Koch County? (Provide a specific example if possible.)
 - 5.2 Did the program promote collaboration and partnership principles in Koch County? If yes, how. If not, why not?
 - 5.3 Can you share examples of different sectors working together for common goals in Koch County?

Effectiveness

6. Do you believe the program achieved its goals in Koch County? Please explain?
 - 6.1 How aware were you of all the activities being implemented in this program? Why?
 - 6.2 How effective was the program in reducing conflict and increasing stability in Koch County? Why?

Efficiency

7. How well do you feel the activities were implemented? Why?
 - 7.1 Were you asked at any point how the program was going? If yes, did you make any suggestions for changes? Do you feel these suggestions were taken into consideration? Why or why not? Do you have any suggestions for improving the results?

Impact

8. How has the program helped reduce violence in Koch County from your perspective? (Prompt for a specific example.)
 - 8.1 Have you observed any changes in the community since this program began? (Prompt different aspects of the program objects including on gender.)

8.2 What has been the main impact of the program [outcome harvesting asking for specific examples]?

Sustainability

9. Have any of the activities continued since the program ended? If yes, what were these? If not, why not?

9.1 Are governmental officials involved in the program? If so, how?

Recommendations

10. What improvements would you suggest for future programs similar to the one that has concluded?

Annex 2 – Documents reviewed

ABP documents

- Program document
- Results framework / M&E frameworks
- Quarterly Narrative reports
- Annual reports
- Base- and endline surveys and analysis, e.g., ‘Measuring Safety and Security’
- ABP Internal Governance Organogram
- ABP Board Terms of Reference, meeting minutes
- ABP Area Reference Group Terms of Reference, meeting minutes
- ABP lessons learned, as documented by the partners.
- ABP Internal evaluations and external evaluations
- ABP Assessment Reports
- ABP Impact Report
- Learning Events reports
- Lessons Learned
- Proposals
- Success Stories
- RSRTF online factsheet: <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/ssr00>

Other reference documents

- UNMISS annual brief violence against civilians
- Human Rights Reports on violence committed
- Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility South Sudan
- Other relevant books on Conflict on Unity state and Koch