



CASE STUDY

Inclusion & Participation of Youth in Peacebuilding: Exploring the Experiences of Youth in South Sudan

APRIL, 2021

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Acknowledgements

The research was led by Malish John Peter, Evaluation, Policy and Research Expert of the Institute of Social Policy and Research, South Sudan with substantive contribution from Gale Emmanuel, Amany Joseph, Boboya James Edimond and Farouk Ismail. The Institute of Social Policy and Research is thankful to the SFCG team for the valuable comments and support during the research.

The Institute of Social Policy and Research (ISPR) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit policy and research center, registered with RRC. It specializes in social, economic and governance policy research, governance trainings and technical support to civil society groups, the public and private sectors. ISPR offers expert analysis on public policies, legislation and capacity development mechanisms to stakeholders and works with civic groups to create platforms for the government, private sector, and the civil society to work together to fast-track policy development that respond to the needs of the citizens.

Abbreviations

FGDs Focus Group Discussions

AU African Union

AYC African Youth Charter

CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CTSAMVM Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements and Verification Mechanism

EFMA Economic and Finance Management Authority

HLRF High Level Revitalization Forum

HLRF High-level Revitalization Forum

IDPs Internally displaced persons

IGAD Intergovernmental Authority on Development

ISPR The Institute of Social Policy and Research

KII Key Informant Interviews

NCAC The National Constitutional Amendment Committee

R-ARCSS Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

R-JMEC Revitalized Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission

SDSRB Strategic Defense and Security Review Board

SFCG Search for Common Ground

SSCSF South Sudan Civil Society Forum

UNSCR United Nations Security Council Resolution

Executive Summary

South Sudan is emerging out of a brutal conflict that killed thousands and displaced millions of its citizens since the civil war broke out in 2013 barely two years after its independence. In 2018, after months of negotiations following the collapse of the 2015 agreement, various political and armed groups signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Despite their numerical strength, the young people in South Sudan from the age of 15-35-year-old found themselves stuck in unimaginable generation-threatening challenges. The youth continue to face forced conscription into military activities, lack of participation in political, civic decision-making, high unemployment, lack of business opportunities, lack of adequate skills and access to education, inadequate access for health-related information and services, including sexual and reproductive health. This situation is even becoming worse among the young people in rural counties who are prone to communal conflicts. Young people continue to be marginalized from effectively participating in the peace process despite the pivotal contribution they can bring to peace building.

This research was commissioned by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in the framework of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) funded project “Strengthening Young Women’s Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan” to examine the progress made in youth inclusion and participation in the South Sudan peace process and identify opportunities for youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts. The study assessed the in-depth understanding of the socially and politically constructed attitudes, behaviors and policies among different stakeholders that promote or undermine the genuine inclusion and participation of youth in the peace process. The research paper adopted the “We are Here” model¹ (“in the room,” “around the room” and “outside the room”) to analyze and identify youth engagement in the negotiation and implementation of the peace agreement and peacebuilding efforts.

Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research methods, with primary data collected through 167 key informant interviews and 15 focus group discussions in Juba, Central Equatorial State; Torit, Eastern Equatorial State; and Aweil, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State. The study adopted a purposive sampling approach to select key stakeholders and youth leaders in the three state capitals of South Sudan. In total, 252 people participated in the study, of whom 49% (n=123) were female and 51% (n=129) were male. Out of the 252, 63% (n=158) respondents were between 15-35 years old and 37% (n=94) were 36 years and above. The study interfaced with different youth leaders, civil society, academia, government, peace monitoring mechanisms, religious and community leaders and political actors. The study locations were pre-selected by SFCG as key youth peace building interventions were conducted in these areas. The enumeration areas in these major towns

¹ Altiock and Grizelj (2019). We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes

were carefully selected to reflect ethnic diversity of young people and stakeholders who play a critical role in enabling youth participation and inclusion in peace building. The study also analyzed relevant literature on youth inclusion and participation in peace, with a specific focus on past research that aimed to examine the emergence of youth participation in peace building. The study did adequately tackle analysis of the youth spaces and participation in political parties and opposition groups to understand some of the structural strengths and gaps that affect young people's participation and inclusion in the peace process. However, the research has not explored in-depth how cultures influence youth roles in local peacebuilding. Furthermore, the research did not extensively cover the political parties' structures and leadership that can promote young people's participation in politics. These are potential areas for future investigation to complement the research findings.

Much as the study is limited in scope and may not represent the exhaustive views of the young people across the country, it provides reflections, experiences and opinions of the youth in the current peace process.

Key Findings

In the room: as delegates at the negotiation table, fewer youth participated in the 2014/15 ARCSS and 2018 R-ARCSS negotiations. The number and scope of young people participation in the negotiations increased and improved in 2017 than in 2014 peace talks. This is because the young people became more assertive and vocal in claiming their space. The youth participation in the peace process was further augmented by regional and international stakeholders' interest to expand the peace talks beyond the political elites following the adoption of the UNSCR 2250 in December 2015. A number of civil society groups including Okay African Foundation, Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), the Organization for Responsive Governance and the Institute of Social Policy and Research and Eve Organization worked alongside the South Sudan Civil Society Forum to mobilize many young people to take active role at the peace negotiation. As it was noted in this study, the delegates at the peace negotiation table were largely political elites from parties and armed groups. This was substantiated with evidence generated from the work of SFCG and other international and national organizations which suggested that the youth have not been fully active during the implementation of R-ARCSS despite their strength in the local peacebuilding process in their communities. The majority of the young men and women were observers in the peace negotiation process.

The inclusion and participation of youth in the room brought fresh energy, ideas and experiences to the parties. For example, the presence of the youth delegate was instrumental in the inclusion of articles that ensured creation of a youth ministry led by young people at the national level and prioritization of young people participation in all peace implementation mechanisms. As a result, across the peace mechanisms,

the youth have six representatives including in the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM), Strategic Defense and Security Review Board (SDSRB), Economic and Finance Management Authority (EFMA) and National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC). As the RARCSS implementation takes shape, the youth representatives occupy vital positions in peace mechanisms and government structures. Despite this gain, the quality of young people's participation, influence and respect of opinions continued to be undermined by political elites. This is because of negative social and cultural stereotypes and attitudes towards acknowledging the positive contribution of young people in society.

On the positive side, the inclusion and participation of the youth as delegates shaped the conversation as they made submissions to mediators that ensure the outcome of the peace talks benefit the citizens especially the youth. As technical team and observers they brought voices of those affected by the conflict to mediators and negotiators that was not always common. This led to an inclusive and participatory agreement that broadened the inclusion of non-political stakeholders in the implementation mechanisms. After the signing of the peace agreement and formation of the Revitalized Government, the youth and young women continued to raise their voices through the media which was largely supported by the SFCG. The project created more awareness on peace and transformation process in South Sudan and further enhanced the ability of young people and women to engage duty bearers on issues of national concern.

Similarly, through the sustained advocacy by various youth groups supported by SFCG and other actors, the young people became key stakeholders during the national dialogue. During the grass root consultations and regional and national conferences, the youth were fully engaged as delegates where they influenced the conversation towards recognition of generational protection. For instance, recommendations of the national dialogue reflected key issues concerning governance, security, economic recovery and social cohesion that affected the young people. This was instrumental in the final outcome of the national conference that called for inclusion and participation of young people and women at all levels of government in the country.²

Around the room: beyond the negotiations inside the room, the young people mobilized in different networks and coalitions to exert pressure on the parties. The youth ensured the public has access to information on the peace process, bridging the gap between the citizens and political elites. Obtained information suggested that the approach used by the youth around the room resulted in the 35% affirmative action for women and affirmative action for youth as witnessed in the inclusion of young people in all mechanisms of the peace agreement. The success around the introduction of the affirmative action for women and youth into the R-ACRCS was a result of sustained networking and coalition building with religious groups, regional, international actors and the various political parties at the negotiation table. The joint advocacy with like-minded allies ensured that political elites take the voices of youth seriously and create opportunities

² https://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/national-dialogue-south-sudan-final.html

for engaging the young people.

Outside the room: the young people used the media especially the social media to launch different campaigns that increased access to information. This was amplified with the support of the SFCG and its partners' media activities around youth and women voices in the peace process. For example, the several peace festivals and camps organized by the SFCG partners help youth in communities to exchange ideas and increase community outreach to preach messages of peace. Externally, the youth increased advocacy with regional and global entities to push for speedy resolution of the conflict. The visit of the African Union (AU) and UN Youth Special Envoys were key initiatives that amplified the voices of youth. However, participation of young women in the peace building processes both in the state and national levels is not yet realized, making the implementation of 35% affirmative action for women representation at all levels of government unattainable.

Recommendations

To the youth:

- ➔ Organize and develop platforms to enhance coordination, learning and advocacy on the peace process both nationally, regionally and locally.
- ➔ Increase dialogue with security actors to navigate through the complex and restricted civic space.
- ➔ Protect and safeguard their space through getting organized and elect their own representatives at national and subnational levels.
- ➔ Shun participation in communal violence and invest their energies on local peace building through dialogue and coexistence debates.
- ➔ The youth should harness the positive use of social media to promote peer- peer engagement, coordination, cohesion and shared vision.
- ➔ Youth representatives in the peace mechanisms and government should increase engagement with young people across the country to strengthen their participation.

To the R-TGONU and political parties:

- ➔ The government should uphold its commitment to the R-ARCSS and enact the legislations amended

by the National Constitution Amendment Commission so as to lift the restrictions on the civic space and guarantee the role of the youth providing oversight and informed support to policy processes and include provisions that ensure the participation of youth as stakeholders in the peace process in line with AU youth charter and the UN Resolution 2250.

- ➔ The R-TGoNU should deepen its partnership with likeminded local and international institutions to build synergy and shared agenda to enhance youth inclusion and participation
- ➔ The Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare and partners should unite women leaders in the various sectors to address women issues and develop shared strategy for women inclusion and participation.
- ➔ The Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare should scale up the establishment of women centers and safe spaces to address cases of sexual and gender based violence at all levels.
- ➔ The R-TGoNU should establish platforms that counter the dominant negative narratives, perceptions and over dependency among the youth
- ➔ The civil society and relevant governmental bodies should engage the political and military elite to desist from negative incitement and mobilization of youths for violence.
- ➔ The R-TGoNU should revive and further strengthen the existing public vocational training institutions in all the states through effective and sustained resourcing, development of standardized and context specific curriculum and related policies that promote and protect the labor force from unhealthy competition from regional and international economies.
- ➔ The Government should establish a context specific program targeting the youth at the cattle camps. This should be aimed at enhancing information, education, inclusion and participation of the cattle camp youths
- ➔ The government at all levels should establish institutions, structure and invest resources that empower, nurture and guarantee the participation of youth in decision-making and development.
- ➔ The government should urgently establish and operationalize the youth and women enterprise development fund. This fund will support the development of youth in the private sector and increase their access to income. The ongoing deliberations on the youth enterprise fund should result into legal and policy framework that ensures that the fund is managed in a transparent, effective

and equitable manner

- ➔ This in turn can ensure the young people live productive lives that will contribute to socio-economic progress of the communities.
- ➔ The RTGONU should urgently open civic and political space for the young people to conduct civic education and policy advocacy at subnational and national levels. The current environment does not promote active participation of the young people in the peace process.
- ➔ The RTGONU should enact and implement the national youth policy that has been developed and submitted to the cabinet for deliberation and approval. This policy is a critical instrument that will provide overarching guidance for government institutions at state and county level to lead empowerment of youth in the country. In addition, the government is ratifying and adopting the UNSCR 2250 and African Youth Charter by developing an operationalization framework. This ensures there is policy and institutional safeguard to guarantee long term inclusion and participation of youth in the governance and future conflict resolution mechanisms.
- ➔ The political parties and coalitions to the RTGONU should step up their inclusion of young people in their senior structures and government institutions. Particularly, the state and national parliament appointment should include more young people including females to increase their participation in policy making and oversight of the reforms.
- ➔ The national and state ministries of youth and sports should increase their engagement, identify with the young people and play a pivotal role of advocacy in government. The ministries should design programs and initiatives that will involve youth in productive lifestyles.

To the NGOs, regional and international partners:

- ➔ The regional and international partners should support and increase youth programming that builds their capacities in peace building, reconciliation and nations building processes so that youth can become active citizens and civically engaged especially in building peace and development in the rural areas.
- ➔ The international NGOs like SFCG should support long term peacebuilding programs in South Sudan. The respondents stressed that impact initiatives that target social behavior change requires establishment of long term programs as peace building is a process.

- ➔ Search for Common Ground and partners should establish more youth peace networks at subnational levels to build a critical mass for policy influence, promote collaboration and joint programming,
- ➔ SFCG and partners should continue to rollout the youth media outreach program to inform and engage the youth in peacebuilding processes.
- ➔ The civil society should establish specific programs that further amplify the voices of the youth in peacebuilding processes.
- ➔ The international partners should support existing women groups and also promote the establishment of new ones including building their capacities in leadership skills, governance, confidence building training including public speaking
- ➔ The international partners should prioritize the convening of peace conferences both at state level and local level to strengthen peaceful coexistence and to address immediate peace issues; grazing land, water resources, pastoralists and agricultural communities.
- ➔ The international partners should develop context specific peace messages, translated and disseminated at grassroots levels using peace building strategies such as arts, sport, dances, wrestling, radio distribution and IEC materials.
- ➔ The regional and international partners should leverage their diplomatic voices to engage the government to enact relevant laws that open the civic and political space for the young people to participate in nation building .
- ➔ The regional and international community should invest in financing and technical skills in areas of or conflict transformation for youth-led organizations to build their structures both at national, state and local levels.
- ➔ The international NGOs like SFCG should step up capacity building of young people on positive use of social media for social change. This ensures young people become champions of peace through the use of social media. Support to social media advocacy and campaigns such as the #SouthSudanIsWatching will be instrumental in raising voices of youth in the peace process.

1. Background Information

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of South Sudan gained its independence on the 9th July 2011 from Sudan in line with the arrangements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). South Sudan has a population of about 11.06³ millions of which more than 70 percent of the country's population is under the age of 30⁴. The draft National Youth Policy defines youth as anyone aged 15 to 35 years. The country enjoyed relative peace for barely two years after independence when violence broke out on 15 December 2013 in the capital Juba. Since then, South Sudan was embroiled in political violence and internal struggle which affected the country until the 2015 peace agreement which was quickly abrogated. In 2016, violence broke out in Juba and spread throughout the country including to areas that were previously peaceful. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiated the High-level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) to bring opposition groups and the government to redesign the peace agreement. The HLRF negotiations and implementation mechanisms included both male and female youth compared to the 2015 agreement. But young people remain largely absent in key peacebuilding decision making bodies and the political structures despite their central role in violence. Several factors including cultural, economic, traditional, social and political space continue to impede the young people's genuine participation in the peace process despite their leading role in and during the armed conflict. Historically, social exclusion and inequalities, ranging from gender discrimination, regional imbalances in economic development, political marginalization, and harmful traditional practices, have had significant impact on the lives of young men and women.

Despite their numerical strength, the young people in South Sudan found themselves stuck in unimaginable generation-threatening challenges. The youth continue to face forced conscription into military activities, lack of participation in political decision-making, high level of unemployment, lack of business opportunities, lack of adequate skills and access to education, inadequate access for health-related information and services including sexual and reproductive health. This situation is even worse among the young people in rural counties where communal conflicts are common. As a result, the greatest number of South Sudanese youth do not have the opportunity to fully develop their potential and contribute effectively to the socio-economic development and political stability of the country.

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) provides for the inclusion and participation of youth in the peace process. This is witnessed in the increased youth representation in various peace monitoring mechanisms including the Revitalized Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (R-JMEC), the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements and Verification Mech-

³ World Bank, 2019

⁴ Crossroad. Y. A. (2014). Pursuing a Positive Path in South Sudan. Retrieved March 2015, from <http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan%2C%20Through%20Youth%27s%20Eyes%20-%20Youth%20Assessment%20%20%282014%29.pdf>

anism (CTSAMVM) and the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) among others. At the governmental level, the R-ARCSS mandated the creation of the ministry of youth and sports to be led by a person under the age of forty while also in all the states, there are ministries of youth, culture and sports. However, the agreement fell short of mandating an affirmative action threshold for youth participation and inclusion in the governance process during the transitional period. In practice, the parties to the agreement have no established mechanisms to ensure inclusion and participation of youth in the peace process as well as in government. This has left the young people largely outside the peace-making decisions.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

SFCG in partnership with AnaTaban, Crown the Woman (CTW), National Women's Empowerment & Rehabilitation Organization (NWERO), Catholic Radio Network (CRN), and Eye Radio designed an eighteen months' intervention in response to the limited representation and participation of youth and women in decision making processes in South Sudan. The UNPBF funded project targeted young people in Juba, Bor, Torit, Yambio and Rumbek.

The theory of change was premised on the assumption that: if a diversity of young women have skills and opportunities to actively contribute to peace-building at the national and local levels, collaborating across gender and generational-based divides, and if young women's positive contributions are acknowledged, accepted, and celebrated by the community-at-large, then young women will play a greater role in advancing the underlying peace-building principles of the R-ARCSS, solidifying their vested interest in upholding the peace agreement because they will have a greater sense of ownership of the peace process.

The project contributed to strengthening young women's participation in local and national peace processes in South Sudan. The project's overall objective is to equip young women with skills and opportunities to contribute to the peace process at the local and national level, reinforce their collective power, and challenge the social stereotypes and barriers that hinder their equal participation.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

Within the framework of SFCG's project "Strengthening Young Women's Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan", this research aimed to examine the progress made in youth inclusion and participation in the South Sudan peace process and identify opportunities for youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts. The study assessed the in-depth understanding of the socially and politically constructed attitudes, behaviors and policies among different stakeholders that promote or undermine the genuine inclusion and participation of youth in the peace process.

The specific research objectives include:

- ➔ To conduct a case study assessment on the progress made on youth inclusion, participation and engagement in the negotiation and implementation of the R-ARCSS using the framework of the “We Are Here” policy paper (“in the room,” “around the room” and “outside the room”) and identify opportunities for future project activities targeting youth engagement in implementation of the peace agreement and peacebuilding efforts. In order to do this, lessons learned, best practices and project strategies need to be documented.
- ➔ To conduct a stakeholder analysis using the framework of the “We Are Here” policy paper (“in the room,” “around the room” and “outside the room”) to identify the roles and responsibilities of key players and institutions that play a vital role in ensuring young people engage in implementation of the R-ARCSS, and develop recommendations to strengthen linkages among the partners.
- ➔ To build synergies and linkages between SFCG project components and activities need to be documented, and case studies on thematic work developed with focus on the impact of youth on the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

The seven key questions that the research team explored include:

- ➔ How are youth leaders and organizations engaging in the peace process and what are their roles in the government and coordination mechanisms?
- ➔ What kind of peace building activities are youth mainly involved in the community?
- ➔ What are the social and political structures or organizations that actively encourage and promote the participation of youth in implementing peace activities?
- ➔ Are there laws and regulations that affect or promote your engagement in peacebuilding in South Sudan?
- ➔ What are the opportunities for youth inclusion and participation in the implementation of the peace agreement?
- ➔ What does the future of young people’s participation in the implementation of the peace agreement look like in South Sudan?

- ➔ What should be done differently including activities to enable youth to become active participants in the peace process?

2. Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research methods, with primary data collected through 167 key informant interviews and 15 focus group discussions in Juba, Central Equatorial State, Torit, Eastern Equatorial State and Aweil, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State. In total, 252 people participated in the study, of whom 49% (n=123) were female and 51% (n=129) were male. Out of the 226, 63% (n=158) respondents were between 15-35 years old and 37% (n=94) were 36 years and above. The study adopted a purposive sampling approach to select key stakeholders and youth leaders in the three major towns in South Sudan. The study interfaced with different youth leaders, civil society, academia, government, peace monitoring mechanisms, religious and community leaders and political actors. The study locations were pre-selected by SFCG as key youth peace building interventions were conducted in these areas. The enumeration areas in these major towns were carefully selected to reflect ethnic diversity of young people and stakeholders who play a critical role in enabling youth participation and inclusion in peace building. The study also analyzed relevant literature on youth inclusion and participation in peace, with a specific focus on past research that aimed to examine the emergence of youth participation in peacebuilding.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study utilized the below data collection methods and analyzed data from the different sources to inform the synthesis and recommendations of this report. The research team analyzed and coded a list of existing literature and key documents provided by the SFCG and other reports to understand the perspectives, policy frameworks and practices that relate to youth inclusion and participation in the implementation of R-ARCSS. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with youth leaders, community leaders and civil society actors. The FGDs were useful in understanding in-depth perceptions of what different actors believe is the existing practice in the participation of youth in the peace process. The Key Informant Interviews (KII) were used to solicit expert views from a wide range of actors including SFCG beneficiaries, partners, youth leaders, government policymakers, civil society and eminent personalities that possess huge thematic knowledge and experience on governance issues as well as the peace process. Both the FGD and KIIs were guided with Questionnaires. The research was conducted from March and May 2021.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited in scope and may not represent the exhaustive views of the young people across the country. But it provides a reflection of the experiences and opinions of the youth in the current peace pro-

cess. The research did not extensively cover the political parties' structures and leadership that can promote young people's participation in politics. Similarly, the study has not explored the influence of social and cultural values and norms on youth roles in peace building or leadership. These are potential areas of research interest in future.

3. Findings

DEFINING YOUTH IN SOUTH SUDAN CONTEXT

There is no legal and formal definition of who is a 'youth' in South Sudan. The draft National Youth Policy 2019 defines a youth as anyone between the age of 18 and 35 years. The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan 2011 (as amended), indicates that anybody below the age of 18 is a child but did not mention youth. Meanwhile, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) provided that the Minister of Youth and Sports must be anyone below the age of 40 years. The African Union recognizes anyone between the age of 18-35 as youth and the United Nations refers to a youth as anyone between 15-25 years old. The lack of unified and common definition and understanding of who a 'youth' is in the country remains a major structural barrier to inclusion and participation of young people in the peace process.

"...without clear definition of who is a 'youth' in South Sudan, the young people will continue to remain outside the peace process, and key decision-making institutions."

—Youth respondent in Aweil

CONCEPT AND FRAMEWORK OF THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY

Young people constitute the largest demographic in the world and in countries with ongoing peace processes.⁵ Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj (2019) defined the Youth, Peace and Security agenda as "conscious actions and processes to protect young people from participation in, and the ill effects of, violent conflicts and insecurity, and to promote and support their contributions to peace efforts in conflict and post-conflict situations." This acknowledges the need for institutionalized initiatives and targeted actions that reflect the needs and perspectives of youth in the prevention and recovery from armed conflicts and insecurities in fragile conflict contexts.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 recognized the positive role young people

⁵ Altiok and Grizelj (2019). We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes

play in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and asked for “[the establishment of] integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution”. The subsequent Youth, Peace and Security resolution, UNSCR 2419 (2018), reiterates the importance of youth participation by demanding the “inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements”.

The UNSCR 2250 was adopted in December 2015 and expressed deep concern that youth account for the biggest proportion of the population affected by armed conflicts including as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It recognizes the critical role youth play in shaping lasting peace, justice and reconciliation that contributes towards promotion of peace and security at national, regional and global levels. As a result, the UN called for the inclusion and participation of youth in governance mechanisms in member states. The resolution further called on all relevant actors involved in negotiating and implementation of peace agreements to take into consideration the participation and opinions of youth to ensure sustainable peace given the role young people play in armed conflicts and peace building initiatives⁶.

The African Union (AU) in its 7th session of the Conference of Heads of States and Government, held in Banjul, Gambia, in July 2006, adopted the African Youth Charter (AYC), a continental political affirmative action policy that calls on member states to initiate deliberate programs to empower youth and involve them in socio-economic and political development at all levels. The AYC strengthens, reinforces and consolidates partnerships and relationships that prioritize youth development in Africa. This is in line with the vision to realize an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena, as envisioned in the African Agenda 2063. The African Youth Charter calls on member states to ensure youth participation in all decision-making bodies including parliaments and establishment of platforms for youth involvement at all levels of governance. It further urged for strengthening of youth organizations in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through intercultural learnings, civic education, tolerance, human rights education, democracy and mutual respect for ethnic diversity⁷. And further require for the youth to take a pivotal role in the reconstruction of their communities devastated by civil wars including active involvement in promoting peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation activities.

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH SUDAN PEACE PROCESS

Altiok and Grizelj (2019) developed the framework for analyzing young people inclusion and participation in any given peace process⁸. These are classified into three layers of engagement, inclusion and participa-

⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, December 2015

⁷ African Youth Charter 2006, Banjul Gambia

⁸ Altiok and Grizelj (2019). We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes

tion as defined below:

In the room examines the inclusion and participation of youth in the formal peace ecosystems during the negotiations for agreements or dialogues for political settlement.

Around the room assesses the close engagement and involvement of young people in the peace agreement but outside the negotiation or dialogue rooms. This can be through formal or informal mechanisms or representation.

Outside the room observes young people's inclusion and participation through informal engagement or alternative mechanisms that seek to bring the voices of youth to the peace negotiation table and implementation.

The multilayered approach allowed for creativity and innovation that informed and shaped public discourse on the process through other platforms and therefore a critical channel to forge support for the formal processes.

The presentation of the findings in this section analyses the inclusion and participation of young people in the peace process using the three layers. The limitation with this model is that it focuses more on formal peace processes and actual negotiations.

IN THE ROOM

Youth are often perpetrators, victims and survivors of conflicts in fragile contexts, yet they are hardly involved in making political peace processes. Despite the recognition by respondents that young people comprise more than 70 percent of the population in South Sudan, the peace negotiation that was initiated in 2014 was highly exclusive of youth. Most non-youth stakeholders interviewed noted that the youth are the future of the country and that involving them in the peace process in key decision making institutions provides the ground for comprehensive solution to various conflicts ongoing in the country, and generates hope for a potential peaceful transition of leadership. They further describe the youth as active, powerful and ambitious members of the society who should be empowered with positive thinking and encouraged to take greater responsibilities. However, some stakeholders; especially among the political elite held the view that most of the youth are illiterate, lack enough experiences, have limited understanding of the country's context and the future path the country should take. Political elites cite the role of youth in subnational level violence perpetrated by young people as impediment to genuine transformation of youth and that of the country.

As delegates and actors

Many South (ern) Sudanese experienced participation in political peace processes during the long negotiation and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. At the time, significant number of delegates were youth below the age of 35 years⁹. This also explains why CPA implementation largely witnessed a mixture of young people and the adult taking very active roles and responsibility. For example, young people played an instrumental role during the 2010 elections and 2011 referendum. They traversed many difficult areas across the country to deliver civic education¹⁰.

In comparison, the aftermath of the 2013 violence and proceeding political peace processes witnessed exclusion of youth from the negotiating table, particularly in 2014¹¹. The Addis Ababa peace talks that led to the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was dominated by old political elites, both men and women. This period witnessed significant exclusion of youth from the negotiation hall¹². Although, the IGAD mediators attempted to include youth representatives among the delegates, the negotiations approach was not appropriate to allow voices of the young people to be heard¹³. This led to a general lack of clarity on the inclusion and participation of the youth during the implementation stage which was short-lived by the violence that erupted in 2016.

Perhaps, the High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) negotiation will be argued as the process that increased youth participation in the peace process since 2005. The HLRF process started in November 2017 with consultations of stakeholders including the youth¹⁴. As cited by the civil society respondents, the foundation of the HLRF negotiations was set around broader inclusion and participation of all South Sudanese stakeholders to ensure the outcome of the peace process is owned and accepted by the South Sudanese, and not just the political elites¹⁵. This approach was adopted as a lesson learnt from the collapse of the ARCSS.

At the HLRF negotiation table, the youth, women and civil society representatives had the same voice and rights of procedures¹⁶. They made presentation and submissions on draft protocols presented to the political parties¹⁷. This was instrumental in shaping the calculus of negotiators from the political parties, and

⁹ Interview with government official

¹⁰ Interview with youth leader in Aweil.

¹¹ Notes from FGD in Torit

¹² Notes from FGD in Torit

¹³ Interview with youth leader in Juba

¹⁴ HLRF consultations report, 2016

¹⁵ Interview with civil society in Juba

¹⁶ Interview with youth leader in Juba

¹⁷ Notes from FGD in Juba

the direction of the mediation by IGAD. For example, when talks stalled due to wide differences, the mediators always relied on the youth, women, church and civil society actors to re-energize the political and military elites. In some circumstances, the mediators allowed the South Sudanese stakeholders including the young people to speak to their political leaders to reach compromises¹⁸. Despite this positive approach by IGAD, the entire process was not smooth until the agreement was signed. At some point when the negotiations were moved to Khartoum, this phase witnessed total exclusion of the youth from the negotiations. The South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) had to write formally to the IGAD chief mediator to request for their inclusion and participation¹⁹. While this was granted, the representatives in Khartoum barely had any significant impact in the process as they remained peripheral stakeholders²⁰.

Despite the progress in the participation of youth as delegates from the non-political entities, both the 2014 ARCSS and HLRF negotiation has not involved youth leaders from political parties to be active negotiators on the table. This is attributed to party bureaucracies, structure and order of hierarchy²¹. This has weakened the collective bargaining power and influence that youth from political parties and civil society could exert to turn the outcome of the peace process towards strengthening inclusion and participation of the young people in national and community-level peace building in formal structures such as government. Consequently, the outcome of the increased inclusion and participation of the broader civil society including the youth on the negotiation table was positive. This is reflected in the inclusive and engendered text of the agreement and some transformational articles that the youth delegates advocated for during the plenaries. For example, the presence of the youth delegate was instrumental in the inclusion of articles that ensure youth are represented in the revitalized government structures, peace implementation mechanisms and the establishment of the youth enterprise development fund among others. As a result, across the peace mechanisms, the youth have six representatives including in the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM), Strategic Defense and Security Review Board (SDSRB), Economic and Finance Management Authority (EFMA) and National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC). As the RARCSS implementation takes shape, the youth representatives occupy vital positions in peace mechanisms and government structures²².

¹⁸ Interview with government official

¹⁹ Interview with youth leader in Aweil.

²⁰ Notes from FGD in Torit

²¹ Notes from FGD in Torit

²² Interview with youth leader in Juba

As technical analysts and support team

The most common and effective role that the youth played inside the peace negotiation was providing analysis of protocols and supporting the delegates with analyzed notes²³. The HRLF in Addis Ababa saw most of the young people's representatives within the political parties work as a support team. Their role was mainly to provide secretarial assistance to the negotiating delegates. This affected their constructive and intellectual contribution in the negotiation process. Comparatively, the non-political youth at the negotiation played a critical role of technical analysis and advisory to the delegates on the table. The technical team nicknamed "Team 5AM" in Addis Ababa worked sleepless nights to quickly review and analyze proposals of political parties and compromise protocol put on the table by the mediators. In some instances, they did comparative literature study of other peace processes to draw best practices to inform the delegates submission²⁴. This increased engagement of the youth widened the scope of understanding of the peace process and ensure that the process was not just elites-centered but reflect the views of the South Sudanese²⁵.

As observers

The observer's role was not dominant at the HRLF negotiations²⁶. Most of the youth representatives were either delegates or technical team members. But few young people representatives were invited to the negotiations from the internally displaced people and refugee camps to voice their concerns on the stalemate. For example, some youth came from Uganda and Ethiopia to express their dissatisfaction of the slow progress being made in 2018²⁷. While they did not have a formal mandate to sit on the table and make submissions, their periodic presentations and remarks during the opening plenary of the talks was always a powerful reminder of the need for peace to return to South Sudan. This was energizing and instrumental in rallying regional and international pressure on the parties to reach agreement²⁸.

AROUND THE ROOM

Participation through non-political networks

When the HRLF process started, the youth were not organized to influence peace discussions. At the time,

²³ Note from FGD in Torit

²⁴ Interview with youth leader and civil society in Juba

²⁵ Notes from FGD in Aweil

²⁶ Interview with political actor in Torit

²⁷ Notes from FGDs in Juba

²⁸ Interview with civil society in Torit

the National Youth Union (NYU) that had the responsibility to organize and advance the voices of the young people was not playing its role. In December 2017, the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) was formed by women, youth and civil society groups as a platform to provide space for engagement, advocacy and participation in the peace process²⁹. Later in February 2018, the Youth Organizations Coalition (YOC), a loose umbrella body of youth institutions was formed to further provide technical and advocacy prowess to the delegates in Addis Ababa. The Women Coalition for Peace and Women Bloc were other influential networks that provided space for young women to take part in the HLRF negotiations and implementation of the agreement³⁰. The YOC and SSCSF were instrumental in conducting events in the public as well as engaged in media campaign to solicit feedback and views from the citizens³¹. Through these events, majority of youth in urban and semi urban areas gained access to information on the peace process and provided their opinions³². Other institutions like the universities and the churches provided platforms for youth to give their views and express their concerns during the peace negotiations and implementation³³. The youth participation in the peace process around the room expands the reach for the majority to gain access, contribute to and amplify advocacy. But it hardly addresses the need for direct inclusion and participation of the youth in decision making around the peace negotiations and implementation.

Currently at the national level, the youth coalitions and groups continue to hold the parties and guarantors of the agreement accountable to their commitments through media engagements, dialogues and lobby meetings³⁴. While at the subnational, the youths in Torit and Aweil have established platforms such as media and community meetings for disseminating the peace agreement, monitor and influence the parties at the subnational level to implement the agreement³⁵. The fact that representatives of the youth are part and parcel of the R-ARCSS have enhanced their legitimacy and the level of influence. The respondents cited this strategic position of the youth in peace and transformation processes at all levels as solid ground for meaningful and sustained participation in monitoring and implementation of the agreement³⁶.

Participation through political parties

Besides the non-political coalitions, the political parties often organized feedback sessions with their members but mostly without explicit focus on the issues that concern the young people³⁷. It is worth noting that

²⁹ Interview with civil society in Juba

³⁰ Interview with youth leader in Juba

³¹ Notes from FGD in Juba

³² Interview with youth leader in Torit

³³ Interview with civil society in Aweil

³⁴ Notes from FGDs in Torit

³⁵ Interview with youth leaders in Torit and Aweil

³⁶ Notes from FGD in Juba

³⁷ Notes from FGD in Aweil

most political parties involved in the HLRF had youth leagues. But these useful organizations were hardly involved or led civic engagement to ensure their membership understood the peace process³⁸. In fact, the political parties' youth leagues were often mobilized to demonstrate against certain aspects of the peace protocol presented by the mediators, and not to raise concerns of the youth. Thus, involving the young people more in negative activities instead of empowering them to be on the negotiation table³⁹. For example, there were demonstrations against IGAD and the UN by some of the political parties youth leagues on actions by the international community to use sanctions as pressure mechanism against belligerent political actors during the peace negotiations⁴⁰. Some of the youth also participated through writing blogs and articles published in the local dailies. But most of such publications focused a lot on propaganda and not providing much positive feedback on what needs to be done for the peace process to focus on the substance of the conflict and young people⁴¹.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

Internal front

The civic space and environment in South Sudan shrunk due to the civil war. This has affected the ability of youth groups and leaders to organize informal entities that can influence the peace process⁴². Most youth including male and female youths in rural areas neither participate inside or outside the peace process⁴³. This is attributed to the lack of support and repressive laws that limit effective expression of views and assembly for young people in the states and counties⁴⁴. The situation means, few individuals in urban areas and with access to civil society networks, church entities and political parties can share their views on the peace process.

In 2018, the Youth Organization Coalition convened two conferences in Entebbe and Kigali⁴⁵ that brought all HLRF political groups' youth leaders to discuss their position as youth on the peace negotiation. These conferences were instrumental in bridging the differences of youth from different political and armed groups⁴⁶. For example, following the conference, youth league leaders improved their relationship and

³⁸ Notes from FGD in Aweil and Torit

³⁹ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁴⁰ Interview with civil society and youth leader in Aweil, Juba and Torit

⁴¹ Interview with youth leader in Aweil

⁴² Notes from FGDs in Juba

⁴³ Notes from FGD in Aweil

⁴⁴ Interview with youth leader in Torit

⁴⁵ Communique on the National Youth Agenda Conference March 2018 held in Entebbe Uganda

⁴⁶ Notes from FGD in Juba

jointly advocated for inclusion of youth delegates from political parties among the negotiators inside the room⁴⁷. At the Kigali conference, the youth reached resolution to call on the parties to allocate specific seats for young people in the cabinet and parliament at all levels⁴⁸. However, skeptics of young people leadership persist among the political formation due to the historical structures that do not promote inclusion and participation of youth⁴⁹.

The media was instrumental in connecting young people *in the room* and *outside the room* to share information. There was heavy usage of the social media platforms that allowed the young people an opportunity to reach out to other groups in various locations. Communication was through “WhatsApp”, Facebook live sessions and “tweets” to inform youth populations in refugee camps and diaspora on progress, conducted discussions on Radio Miraya FM, Radio Tamazuj– given accessibility to those in the remote regions. This approach enabled young people to keenly follow the process that had huge implications on their future. Also, it was a strategy to legitimize the process and get more young people own it towards a more responsive leadership and successful execution of the peace agreements⁵⁰.

Respondents also attribute their participation in the peace process to the sustained support from international actors working on peace building. International NGOs like SFCG, Oxfam and Norwegian People Aid (NPA) continues to create spaces for youth participation in the peace process⁵¹. They provide trainings, access to information, platforms and even funds for youth groups and civil society to organize themselves and conduct civic education⁵².

Despite the progress towards inclusion of youth in the peace process, many young people in the rural areas still believe their voices are not adequately heard because of the disconnect with their political elites⁵³. Few of the young women and men talked to during the research believed that the only way to reach many young men and women is through outreach activities just like what SFCG and partners have implemented in the past. The restrictive civic space has scared many youth from being active actors⁵⁴. This is captured in a research paper that found that young people hardly discuss political issues with politicians. Instead they feel more comfortable speaking with a family member or religious leader⁵⁵.

⁴⁷ Interview with youth leader in Juba

⁴⁸ Youth Position on Outstanding issues regarding the High-Level Revitalization Forum on South Sudan June @0th 2018 Kigali Rwanda

⁴⁹ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁵⁰ Notes from FGD in Juba and interview with civil society in Juba

⁵¹ Interview with civil society leader in Juba

⁵² Notes from FGD in Aweil

⁵³ Notes from FGD in Aweil

⁵⁴ Interview with religious leader in Torit

⁵⁵ Malish, J. Peter. (2019). Baseline Study on Youth Participation in Governance and Decision Making Processes: The Case of Jubek State. Organization for Non-violence and Development. Juba, South Sudan.

Engagement with regional and international platforms

The advocacy for increased youth participation in the peace process was also championed by different stakeholders including the IGAD, UN and AU. Young people utilized platforms, spaces and high-level delegates to voice their opinions and experiences of the peace agreement. For example, in 2020 the AU Youth Envoy visited Juba where she met with political actors including the President and called for representation of youth in governance and peace structures. At this meeting, the President promised to ensure 20 per cent of his SPLM party nomination were young people⁵⁶. Similarly, the UN Youth Envoy visited South Sudan where she called on the peace actors and stakeholders to embrace empowerment of young people in leadership and social structures in line with UNSCR 2250⁵⁷. In 2020, the UN Youth Envoy also presided over the launch of the UNPBF “strengthening young women’s participation in local and national peace process project” which aims to equip young people, and specifically young women with skills and opportunities to contribute to the peace process at local and national levels. Throughout the HLRF and implementation phase of the RARCSS, the youth fraternity has been recognized by the African Union Peace and Security Council and ensured that their delegation met the young people. Furthermore, different youth and women activists have briefed global fora including the UN Security Council on the crises in South Sudan, and what needs to be done. This is because regional and international actors play crucial economic and political role in South Sudan⁵⁸. Through these engagements, the youth were able to share their aspirations for peace⁵⁹.

Networking and coalition building

The respondents pointed out that the youth played a very pivotal role in the pursuit of peace during the IGAD led peace negotiations and now at the implementation of the peace agreement⁶⁰. At the peace negotiations, the youth secured a space at the negotiation table as key stakeholders where they made submissions of the issues that affect young people⁶¹. For exam-

“...the involvement of youth and women in the peace processes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia made a difference. Their presence made things turnaround and pushed the parties to accept to sign the peace agreement.” —Religious leader in Juba

⁵⁶ <https://southsudan.un.org/en/52116-youth-envoy-calls-political-representation-young-people>

⁵⁷ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2020/02/un-secretary-generals-envoy-on-youth-visits-south-sudan/>

⁵⁸ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁵⁹ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁶⁰ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁶¹ Interview with religious leader in Juba

ple, the youth and women delegates at the negotiation table were instrumental in the inclusion of the women and youth enterprise development fund, the 35 percent affirmative action for women and reinforced discussions on security and safety of civil population⁶². While at the implementation stage, the youth are playing a critical role in disseminating the peace agreement, monitoring its implementation, engaging the parties to commit to the agreement as well as taking up critical positions at Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity at national and subnational levels. At the subnational level, the stakeholders cited the role of the youth in promoting peace and addressing intercommunal conflicts. For example, the youth in Aweil and Warrap struck a peace deal that guaranteed peaceful co-existence between the communities along the borders of Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap State⁶³.

The youth networks and coalitions at national and subnational levels amplified advocacy for peaceful resolution of the conflict⁶⁴. Building on lessons from previous IGAD led peace process, the youth including those in the civil society and youth institutions created platforms that coordinated and consolidated their voices to meaningfully engage during the negotiations and implementation of the R-ARCSS⁶⁵. The networks were diverse in terms of ethnic background and profession, loosely organized and structured through internal consensus, competence, willingness and contributions of members⁶⁶. This has broadened the space for youth participation at all levels of decision-making processes in the peace process. Some examples include:

In Maridi, National Women Empowerment and Rehabilitation Organization (NWERO) established a network of peace actors in Maridi to engage the community in peace building. This came as a result of SFCG support where the community recognized the network and its members who were engaged in monthly radio talk shows on Maridi FM. The NWERO also conducted mentorship for young women aged 18-35 years old selected from all the 10 states of South Sudan⁶⁷. These young women were diverse including young women with disabilities, students, emerging activists, basketball players, poets, journalists, artists and leaders of women-led organizations. The mentorship included training of peace actors on advocacy, mediation looking at win-win and Do No Harm approach. As a result, young women acquired the skills, competence and the drive to lead peace efforts at the local and national levels. While this mentorship initiative by SFCG created impact, some respondents argued that the mentorship program should be extended to the men as well for sustained results.

Meanwhile, political youth platforms such as Youth League and the Red Army Foundation as well as tradi-

⁶² Notes from FGD in Juba

⁶³ Notes from FGD in Aweil

⁶⁴ Notes from FGD in Juba, Torit and Aweil

⁶⁵ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁶⁶ Interview with civil society in Juba

⁶⁷ Interview with local partner representative

tional youth structures like the *Monyemijji* age sect among the Otuho of Eastern Equatorial state were useful structures that enabled the youth to participate in local peace building and community level decision making processes⁶⁸.

Youth organizations and networks have increased local peacebuilding and social cohesion in communities⁶⁹. There were several initiatives that have brought the young people together and buried their differences. For example, in 2019 and 2020, the youth coalition convened annual youth camp in Torit and Nimule respectively⁷⁰. It was during these annual peace camps that the youth shared their experiences, mentored each other and created opportunities to share critical information, coordinate and interact with key political and, opinion leaders⁷¹. Most importantly, they shared their different cultural norms, values and behaviors that are often triggers of hate and violence. This helped create understanding of the ethnic diversity in the country⁷².

Influencing policy development and implementation for peace

The youth played key roles during the review of the laws and regulations that are critical driver for sustained youth inclusion and participation in the peace process in 2019 and 2020⁷³. The youths engaged in the analysis of the NGO Act (2016) and Relief and Rehabilitation commission (RRC) Act (2016), the National Security Service Act among others⁷⁴. For example, the youth and civil society are fully represented and participate in the review of these restrictive laws at the National Constitution Amendment Committee (NCAC). Through their representatives at the NCAC, the youth presented written and oral submissions on various laws including the

“...we need more peace camps organized by the youth and for the youth. You can feel the togetherness and unity of the young people. I believe that consistent events like the peace camps help address negative stereotypes that creates hate and violence.”

—Youth leader in Torit

⁶⁸ Notes from FGD in Torit and Aweil

⁶⁹ Interview with community leader in Torit

⁷⁰ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁷¹ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁷² Interview with youth leader in Juba

⁷³ Interview with community leader in Torit

⁷⁴ Notes from FGD in Aweil

constitutional amendment, security and economic reforms bills to the stakeholders for consideration⁷⁵. As a result, the amendment bills are already deposited at the Ministry of Legal Affairs for enactment by the Revitalized Transitional Legislative Assembly. The youth in political parties and civil society continue to push for the enactment and implementation of these laws to open the civic space for genuine inclusion and participation of youth in the peace agreement implementation⁷⁶.

Engagement and dialogue with the relevant security agencies has sustained the limited civic space to remain open for the youth to participate in the peace process⁷⁷. The youth at local and national level continued to dialogue with authorities to clarify, influence and to present their concerns and recommendations through face to face, constructive and issue-based advocacy⁷⁸. For example, during arrest and detention of youth activists, youth leaders mobilized and engaged stakeholders to release those in custody⁷⁹. This dialogue and engagement assisted to build trust and confidence between youth and the security actors. Meanwhile, the youth in rural areas always engage the local authorities in their counties to reduce the disconnect between young people and decision makers.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

Over the last months, several actors including SFCG supported young people and women to develop strategies and tactics that increased their inclusion and participation, as well as amplified their voices in the peace process. Some of the strategies and tactics include:

Establishment of social media platforms for peace-building

Equally, the young people used social media extensively to participate in the peace process. For example, with the support of SFCG, digital platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook groups were created to enhance sustained and effective civic engagements.

“...the youth have shown that they can do it. Their contribution during the security laws review was superb. Maybe what we need now is way to support them to do better”

—Political party leader in Juba

⁷⁵ Interview with youth leader in Juba

⁷⁶ Interview with government representative

⁷⁷ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁷⁸ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁷⁹ Interview with youth leader in Juba

Meetings and information sharing including development of policy documents, strategies and press statements were coordinated online. The WhatsApp platform was used for sharing key policy and peace building documents that seek to support women's and youth's rights such as the Maputo protocol, UNSCR 1325, peace agreement and mentorship documents. While Facebook is used to profile emerging women peace leaders and link the local and national level women-led peace initiatives. To a larger extent, the social media platforms ensured the safety and security of their information, the members and partners. It also has reduced cost, time and risks associated with COVID-19. The social media platform managed by AnaTaban and Crown the Woman helped sustain collective action and voice of the young people and women in the peace process.

Increased rural outreach to communities

Many times, the participation of young people and women in the peace process are linked to urban settings. This is because youth and women in rural areas have limited access to information, capacity to mobilize and organize themselves. This remains a big gap. With support from the SFCG, Crown the Woman (CTW) and National Women's Empowerment & Rehabilitation Organization (NWERO) conducted several rural outreach in large towns and rural areas. This outreach was aimed at challenging harmful social norms on women and girls, disseminating the peace agreement, popularizing the role of young women in the peacebuilding and to increase COVID-19 awareness and its impact in South Sudan. The outreach activities included house-to-house campaigns, radio talk shows, community dialogues and panel discussions. Respondents interviewed for this case study cited that the rural outreach program contributed to increased citizens' understanding of the key components of the peace agreement and a greater sense of ownership of the peace process at the local level, especially in the hard to reach areas. A limitation of this particular program strategy pertains to the access to young women in Rumbek. It was reported that most of the young girls were in the cattle camps in the rural areas of Rumbek and hence were not reached with the campaigns.

Scaled up engagement with key governmental institutions

Sustained engagement and dialogue between youth and duty bearers remains a critical driver of future inclusion and participation. Dialogues are instrumental in demystifying misconceptions that discourage collective action. SFCG and its partners facilitated several policy dialogues with decision makers. For example, a team of four young women were supported to present policy recommendations on women affirmative action to the National Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare. During the visit, a policy brief⁸⁰, was produced and shared with the ministry. This engagement enhanced collaboration and opened up the

⁸⁰ Crown the Woman (2020) Policy Paper

space for continuous dialogue in regards to the participation in peace and transformation processes in South Sudan.

Media for peace program

Engagement through the mainstream media was instrumental in strengthening access to peace information by young people in the peace processes. The youth utilized the private media houses including Miraya FM, Eye Radio, the Catholic Radio Network affiliate stations, Juba monitor and social media to conduct outreach on the peace processes⁸¹. For instance, during the South Sudan Peace negotiations, Radio Miraya provided a wider space for the youth, women and other civil society delegates to brief the public about the processes, including airing content developed by “The South Sudan We Want” campaign led by South Sudan Action on Small Arms urging the parties to prioritize the people and the country over their personal interests⁸². In Juba, notably the AnaTaban art initiative deployed different public billboards with peace messages and paintings around the city to communicate their opinion and aspirations for peace in the country.⁸³

At national level, Eye Radio and the Catholic Radio Network play a critical role in advancing the work of youths including providing the platform for outreach, amplifying young people’s voices, promoting behavior change and policy influencing through live and pre-recorded radio programs. Key messaging includes domestic violence, girl child education, women empowerment and peace building.

In a bid to promote and sustain dialogue and information dissemination in South Sudan, the PBF partners designed the “NUSWAN SALAM” (Women of Peace) radio talk shows tailored to create a platform for the mentors and mentees to disseminate peace messages and engage key stakeholders including women political leaders and grassroots. Eye radio and CRN radio stations further broadcast a drama series called SERGENT ESTHER. This drama series was intended to shape community perception about the role of women in a male dominated society. The media for peace program created the opportunity for the PBF Partners to reinforce their collective power, reach out to various peace actors at the local and national level with peace messages and to challenge the social stereotypes and barriers that hinder their equal participation. The feedback generated suggests a wider outreach and support from the audience.

⁸¹ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁸² Interview with youth leader in Juba

⁸³ Notes from FGD in Juba

Organization of peace festival

Organizing sports and cultural peace festivals at the local level fostered trauma healing and participation of young people in local peace building. Youth invested in creative means of promoting and engaging communities and leaders in peace program, ranging from art and music events to mass tea drinking and garbage cleanups in Juba and major centers across the country⁸⁴. For example, the AnaTaban peace movement conducts annual peace festivals called the **Hagana** (*Ours*) concerts that combined art exhibition, cultural performances and popular music⁸⁵. The last Hagana festival took place just before COVID-19 in March 2020.

“...the Hagana festival are always healing. Many young people come from different background to celebrate their diversity and forge a sense of belonging as South Sudanese”

—Civil society leader in Juba

The festival was meant to urge the youth to take up ownership of solutions in the country. It was indicated that despite such campaigns South Sudanese young people continue to be subjected to a number of human rights violations and have limited engagement in political and peace processes.

Other local peacebuilding events include the ‘Take Tea Together’ which helped build social cohesion in Juba. Similarly, SFCG, Whittaker Peace and Development Initiative and I am Peace organized dialogues and youth peace camps at local level that increased participation of the young people in peace building⁸⁶. The respondents also cited the ongoing South Sudan Women football tournament that brings together South Sudanese from different walks of life as avenues for youth to build cohesion and promote peace in the country. In other locations, respondents recalled the youth led sports for peace events in Aweil and Torit which brought joy and cohesion among the young people in both areas⁸⁷. International women’s days also were used to promote women rights through talking about women and peace. Catwalk protest and post with placards with key messages affecting women. This contributed to increased understanding of the content of the peace agreement, role of young people, and especially women, in peacebuilding and encouraged the youth to take lead in the peace process. The initiative supported by SFCG and its partners on ‘Take Tea Together’ was reported to be a very good initiative but very small in nature and only implemented in a very small area of Juba.

⁸⁴ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁸⁵ Interview with youth leader in Juba

⁸⁶ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁸⁷ Notes from FGD in Torit and Aweil

KEY OUTCOMES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE SFCG SUPPORTED PEACEBUILDING PROJECT

The project created an opportunity for confidence building and empowerment of young women. The respondents cited that most women involved in the SFCG supported program have taken some initiatives, increased collaboration and have individually engaged in trainings and taking the lead in disseminating the peace agreement. Furthermore, they expressed that the radio is a useful platform for the young people to speak up and speak out their voices. Interactions, trainings and engagements brought in many young people of different diversity and ethnicity to promote peaceful coexistence. However, the partners and beneficiaries pointed out that it is still early to tell that the project improved the ability of young women to lead peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. They hold the view that empowerment and behavior change programs including media messaging require a sustained and long term intervention to change humanity. They recommend the need to build up on the current lessons and have a long term intervention.

Through the project, NWERO established a network of peace actors in Maridi to engage the community in peace building. This came as a direct result of the project and the community recognizes the network as the members of the network engage in monthly radio talk shows on Maridi FM.

A similar network was established in Torit by NWERO. This is comprised of 24 women in two groups of 12 each from Malakia and Ilangi blocks of Torit town. The two groups were further empowered through peacebuilding trainings by Community Engagement on Development and Resilience (CEDAR) and SFCG, to take lead in promoting peaceful coexistence within their communities. Following these trainings, the women networks in Torit initiated their monthly dialogue forums in which they document conflict issues affecting women in the communities, design and implement initiatives to address those issues and engage in radio talk shows to create a wider community dialogue about the issues affecting women and especially young girls.

Breaking social stereotypes and negative perceptions was cited as a positive contribution. During the study, the partners pointed out that the project contributed to breaking the social stereotype that young people cannot lead. The focus of the interventions was to change the attitude in the communities on the important role of young women in leadership and decision making.

A SUCCESS STORY FROM YAMBIO:

The project enabled women to gain confidence to speak in public. One of the issues that came out was that women do not have space to talk and to speak out but now women are able to speak out. The confidence level has been built just for the few that participated in the process.

This program has strengthened my capacity to engage local decision makers in engaging young women in grassroots leadership and how to deliver services to communities. I got empowered in the areas of how young women can engage in the peace processes. My team and I were able to engage traditional leaders in mainstreaming the female gender in their leadership structure. we have continuously engaged the community in peace building activities through local sports on a voluntary basis, we thank Crown the Woman for the efforts to strengthen our capacity.

Some of the few examples in which the activities strengthened me and other young people as peace-builders is the knowledge share with us regarding the R-ARCSS, peace processes, youth and women contribution. It has strengthened us to the extent of making us advocates at local levels.

The project has made me confident to the extent that I am a peace ambassador in my community, promoting peace, something which I didn't have before.

During the study, the respondents cited improvement in collaboration with some influential civic actors and line governmental institutions such as the rule of law institutions, national and state ministries of gender, child and social welfare and legislative committees as one of the strategies for maintaining their influence. Some of these governmental institutions continue to provide the necessary endorsements for women-led programs, providing spaces for dialogues as well as participating in joint civic events. For instance, the current campaign against sexual gender-based violence in South Sudan led by the women coalition and civil society has secured the support of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, including other governmental institutions. Most respondents hold the view that establishing formal and informal alliances in strategic institutions including the media can ensure the success of your influencing efforts including widening and protection of the civic space.

CHALLENGES AFFECTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESSES

The outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic complicated the sustained engagement and advocacy witnessed in 2019. As engagement moved into virtual and use of technology, many young people; especially those in the remote and hard to reach areas became further excluded from the peace processes due to access problems⁸⁸. Meetings and information sharing including development of policy documents, strategies and press statements as well as coordination among youth leaders and groups were affected⁸⁹.

⁸⁸ Interview with youth leader in Aweil

⁸⁹ Notes from FGD in Aweil

The respondents cited restrictions, threats, arrests and detention by authorities as impediments to youth participation in peacebuilding processes. Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2013, the authorities imposed tight restrictions on freedom of association and expression which affected civic engagement processes in the country. Such restrictions include the adoption of bureaucratic and legal tools to control, complicate and marginalize some youth platforms, engagement and participation in civic peace programs. Freedom to access information, right to expression and even gathering have become security matters. The tight restrictions and self-censorship of the mainstream media has impacted negatively on youth engagements at all levels. The respondents decried the bureaucratic, complex and expensive registration processes including the difficulties with obtaining event approvals for workshops, awareness raising programs organized by the youths.

Furthermore, while the political elite acknowledge and appreciate the need to enhance the role of the youths in peace and transformation processes, some authorities, especially the security agents perceive youth organizations as public instigators, elements of regime change and emissaries of the foreign agents. For example, a key informant in Torit cited lack of political space to interact with the youth as a barrier to youth engagements with politicians.

"...if you organize the youth, you can be accused of organizing for a rebellion, henceforth, there are limited opportunities where we politicians can organize a meeting with the youth."

—Political party leader in Torit

Limited civic and political opportunities for youth empowerment due to lack of political will from the top leadership of the government. Respondents hold the view that there is foot-dragging from some governmental and political institutions to create opportunities for young people empowerment and participation in decision making processes. Respondents cited that some government structures are concerned and critical about programs that organize youth and their activities. When the government sees youth being organized they are a force and their control will be challenged. The political platforms do not have robust programs that nurture youths to actively participate in decision making processes.

"...the problem facing the youth to effectively participate in the implementation of the peace agreement is lack of civic space and political will to nurture the young people by political elites"

—Government respondent in Juba

Another challenge relates to grassroots peace building and leadership capacity of young women and youth to influence conversations on peace agreement implementation. This particular challenge was noted by several respondents when

asked what could be improved in terms of Search's project implementation. It was indicated that the project did not include the majority of the youth and young women who are in the various political parties. It was suggested that achieving sustainable peace necessitates inclusive engagements that respond to the local drivers of the conflict. Engaging youth and young women both in and outside politics in peace building process increases the chances that the community will buy into the process and that the root causes of the conflict. Further, during the study, stakeholders including government representatives refer to the youth as active, powerful and ambitious members of the society who should be empowered to become patriotic, smart and intelligent future leaders. They further noted that the youth can play an important role in monitoring the peace implementation if they are given opportunity by the political actors. But opportunities for youth education, mentorship, participation and development are limited in the country⁹⁰.

Difficulty in identification and mobilization of peace interlocutors. In most cases, political leaders are not readily available to dialogue with young people especially through the existing media platforms. The media houses find it difficult to coordinate the availability of high profile persons from the ministries as they often turned down the commitment to participate in youth empowerment programs.

Safety and security at national and subnational levels continue to affect the participation of youth in peace building⁹¹. Violent incidents are on the rise at the subnational level despite the establishment of the state and local governments. The ongoing security threats resulting from the road ambushes, raids, revenge killings and lawlessness across the country impede youth participation in peacebuilding. For example, the youth in Aweil blame the neighboring tribes from Sudan for causing chaos in their State⁹². These recurrent incidences of insecurity hinder the youth from reaching out to monitor and contribute to meaningfully contribute to peace and stability as much of their efforts are aimed at prevention and response to emerging security threats including community defense, revenge and destruction⁹³.

Respondents from Aweil and Torit including the government and academia regard the youth as the source of insecurity at state and even at county or village level. During the study majority of the rural and urban youth cited lack of opportunities for youth as causes of negative coping mechanisms among young people. This has affected the efforts by institutions of government and other stakeholders in mobilizing and engaging youth in peacebuilding, governance and decision-making processes.

⁹⁰ Interview with political party leader in Torit

⁹¹ Interview with youth in Juba

⁹² Notes from FGD in Aweil

⁹³ Interview with community leader in Torit

Division among youth based on political and tribal lines threatens collective bargain power of the young people on the issues that face them⁹⁴. Due to the political problems in the country, the youth are sharply divided along tribal and political lines. Political actors and social institutions have polarized the youth according to their interests. Respondents hold the view that the national and subnational youth platforms are influenced by political entities⁹⁵. This was witnessed at some point during the peace negotiations when various youth groups claimed legitimacy to represent the youth.

“...the poor political parties set up based on tribal basis. And lack cohesive national youth policy by government is responsible for the confusion among youth.”

—Civil society leader in Juba

At the community level, the respondents seem to agree that the youth structures at the local level are formed and influenced by tribal interests. A community leader claims that traditional institutions and structures caused more confusion among the youth. This has not helped groom productive and peaceful young people in communities. Furthermore, in most parts of the country lack of formal structures for the inclusion of youth in peace processes continued to impact negatively on how youth can be engaged in peace building and peace process throughout the country.

Similarly, negative social and cultural practices have continued to impede the inclusion and participation of youth in peace building. Both the male and female youth face the challenges that limit their participation in monitoring and implementation of the peace process. In Torit and Aweil, youth cited some negative cultural practices such as those that promote early marriage including those that hinder the participation of females in the decision-making processes in the community. For example, among the Otuho community, the decision making is vested in the male dominated **Monyemijji** age set while in Aweil girls are forced to marry at a tender age. Majority of male youth are armed and organized in a traditional set up of Monyemijji unlike the ladies who do not attend Monyemijji's meeting as the culture does not allow them to participate⁹⁶. This denies young women the opportunity to participate and access information on the peace process.

There are limited sustainable and cohesive platforms that nurture and coordinate the participation of the peace processes. In this regard, the efforts of the youth have not been adequately directed towards common goals and objectives aimed at promoting peace and development⁹⁷. The South Sudan National Youth

⁹⁴ Notes from FGD in Juba

⁹⁵ Notes from FGD in Torit and Aweil

⁹⁶ Notes from FGD in Torit

⁹⁷ Interview with religious and community leaders in Aweil

Union including the other existing youth structures are not well established at the subnational level and continue to be managed like political entities.

There are high expectations and demands for empowerment opportunities by the youth, which was expressed during interviews with UNPBF project partners: *"We have limited carriage yet the needs of the youths are very wide"* (A quote from the respondent of WECSS). The partners cited that there are limited opportunities for referral and coordination of youth empowerment program especially in the remote and hard to reach areas in South Sudan.

Drug abuse by young people has ruined many. Stakeholders including the government, academia and civil society noted that many youths abuse drugs that led some young people to be lured into antisocial behavior including involvement in criminality. This has affected the ability of some young people to build their careers and meaningfully participate in peace and development initiatives⁹⁸.

WHAT SOME PROJECT PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN:

The project enabled women to gain confidence to speak in public. One of the issues that came out was that women do not have space to talk and to speak out but now women are able to speak out. The confidence level has been built just for the few that participated in the process.

"There will be no total peace but hostility will reduce. The peace that will be there will depend on the hard work of the current generation. There are generational gaps and young people are learning negative behavior from the elderly. Corruption, nepotism and favoritism is not reducing right now. Peace is still outside many people Sudanese and there is no inner peace" —Young women Leader

"Peace will take long to achieve. We are not doing enough to build a peace foundation for your next generation. South Sudan needs effective laws to regulate people and their behaviors" —Young women Leader

"There is no positive political will and no clear roadmap in this country. social exclusion and ethnic communities are divided and encouraged to continue to be divided by political leaders. There is no positive behavioral change due to lack of awareness and education. Increased poverty on young people and general communities will increase the cycle of violence and conflict. Young people believe in peace agreement but it must be a genuine peace where 35% for women and 20% representation for youth are respected" —Young youth male Leader

⁹⁸ Notes from FGD in Torit

Inadequate funding and technical support for youth in advocacy affect their participation in monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement⁹⁹. Existing bureaucracies within some funding intermediaries, including mismanagement and preferential treatment resulting in unhealthy competition among youth-led and youth-focused institutions. This is a major barrier to youth engagement in peace monitoring and implementation of R-ARCSS. Some established and mushrooming youth platforms and initiatives that advance the role of the youth in peace and development feel disenfranchised and not receiving adequate financial and technical capacity building to deliver¹⁰⁰. Meanwhile the government decries the current economic crisis emanating from the protracted war and the global fall in oil prices as the reason for declining government financing for promoting youth engagement in peace and development in South Sudan. As a case in point, respondents among the consortium members pointed out that funding allocation for the SFCG funded program is so little to address major peacebuilding radio programs including drama episodes and talk shows. The partners pointed out that such program require a good amount of resources for it to be more impactful. It can be indicated that, national and local-level monitoring allows grassroots youth and young women to offer local knowledge, access to communities, and capacity and expertise.

Poor transport and communication infrastructure continue to deny young people the opportunity to engage in the peace processes. The youth cited the poor transport and communication infrastructure as a major impediment to their role in peace monitoring and implementation. At the subnational level, transport and communication infrastructure, including roads, telephone networks and radio, have been either closed, interrupted and destroyed during the conflict. For example, parts of Eastern Equatoria and Northern Bahr El Ghazal remain poorly connected to radio and telephone network and hard to reach by road and air due to bureaucracy, poor nature of the roads, rampant roadblocks mounted by armed groups¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ Interview with political leader in Juba

¹⁰⁰ Notes from FGD in Juba

¹⁰¹ Notes from FGD in Aweil and Torit

4. Findings

South Sudan has no clear definition of who is a youth. Although the draft national youth policy defines youth as someone between 18 – 35 years. This has not been formally adopted to provide guidance on youth inclusion in the institutions that manage the peace implementation. This lack of clarification continues to deny young people their spaces in government to effectively participate in the peace process.

The inclusion and participation of young people in peace processes is a global and continental requirement by countries emerging from conflict. The UNSCR 2250 and African Youth Charter both provide the frameworks for government and political actors to ensure youth are part of conflict resolution mechanisms to ensure sustainable peace in fragile states.

Since the signing of the RARCSS, there is steady progress in the inclusion of youth in the peace mechanisms and RTGONU institutions. But this is often not enough. The youth remain the majority population and are active perpetrators of violence. The participation of youth as delegates during the peace negotiation and inclusion in the different implementation mechanisms provides an opportunity to deepen their participation. But this cannot be achieved without deliberate affirmative action that targets the inclusion of the young people during the peace agreement implementation.

The youth need to get organized to better influence the peace process. Building networks and coalitions have been an effective driving force for their inclusion during the negotiation. This should be strengthened during the implementation. The National Youth Union and other youth entities are good structures that can promote youth programs and advocacy. But they need to identify with the young people and remain non-partisan.

In the recent past, youth initiatives have contributed immensely to building local peace in communities. The peace camps, dialogues and festivals organized by young people have built social cohesion in communities. These events were instrumental in demystifying ethnic hate and violence anchored on stereotypes. Many young people are building their own positive relationships through such events in the communities. The young people still face setbacks in their push for inclusion and participation. The civic and political space remains restricted. Safety and security of youth leaders has always been a concern. Many youth entities lack the capacity including financial resources to effectively engage the young people in the country. And the government structures and system continue to impede inclusion and participation of the youth in the peace process.

It is important to note that the success of this peace agreement largely depends on the attitudes and behaviors of the youth. As such, investment in youth programs and strengthening support for youth institutions to influence policy development and implementation, conduct civic education in communities and provide opportunities for growth can drive this peace process forward. But this needs deliberate steps by the government and partners to urgently deliver youth programs that will make them agents of social

change and enable them to become productive citizens in their communities.

5. Recommendations

Based on the analysis and findings presented, the study provides the below recommendations to increase youth inclusion and participation in the peace process.

TO THE YOUTH:

- ➔ The youth should develop structures and strategies that are relevant and effective to engage government and partners. These include investment in secure and effective virtual platforms to enhance coordination, learning and strengthen the weak link with political actors and between themselves at national and subnational levels. Youth platforms at local and national levels will help bring young people together to have collective voices on issues that affect them.
- ➔ The youth should continue to explore and establish appropriate channels for information sharing and dialogue with authorities including regular bilateral meetings, roundtable events and sharing the work that they do in communities. This will increase their participation and influence the implementation of the agreement and widen the civic space as misconceptions will be addressed on the table. Furthermore, they should choose their battles carefully, be constructive in criticism and try to avoid aggression but remain assertive.
- ➔ The youth should guard their space and have full mandate to establish their institutions and choose their own representatives from the grassroots to the national level without any influence from political elite or community elders.
- ➔ At the Subnational level, the youths should be a solution to addressing the ongoing intercommunal conflicts by providing comprehensive, durable and nonviolent solutions to various conflicts ongoing in the country. They should shun violence and build the culture of dialogue, peaceful co-existence and social cohesion with their fellow young people from the different communities.
- ➔ The youth institutions like the National Youth Union should review its structures, approach and identity to provide effective platforms that lead advocacy for the empowerment and development of young people across the country irrespective of political affiliation.
- ➔ The youth should harness the positive use of social media to promote peer- peer engagement, coordination, cohesion and shared vision.
- ➔ The youth representatives in the peace implementation mechanisms including the R-JMEC, CTSAMVM and SDS-RB should increase engagement

TO THE RTGONU AND POLITICAL PARTIES:

- ➔ The government should uphold its commitment to the R-ARCSS and enact the legislations amended by the National Constitution Amendment Commission so as to lift the restrictions on the civic space and guarantee the role of the youth providing oversight and informed support to policy processes and include provisions that ensure the participation of youth as stakeholders in the peace process in line with AU youth charter and the UN Resolution 2250.
- ➔ The R-TGoNU should deepen its partnership with likeminded local and international institutions to build synergy and shared agenda to enhance youth inclusion and participation
- ➔ The Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare and partners should unite women leaders in the various sectors to address women issues and develop shared strategy for women inclusion and participation.
- ➔ The Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare should scale up the establishment of women centers and safe spaces to address cases of sexual and gender based violence at all levels.
- ➔ The R-TGoNU should establish platforms that counter the dominant negative narratives, perceptions and over dependency among the youth
- ➔ The civil society and relevant governmental bodies should engage the political and military elite to desist from negative incitement and mobilization of youths for violence.
- ➔ The R-TGoNU should revive and further strengthen the existing public vocational training institutions in all the states through effective and sustained resourcing, development of standardized and context specific curriculum and related policies that promote and protect the labor force from unhealthy competition from regional and international economies.
- ➔ The Government should establish a context specific program targeting the youth at the cattle camps. This should be aimed at enhancing information, education, inclusion and participation of the cattle camp youths
- ➔ The government at all levels should establish institutions, structure and invest resources that empower, nurture and guarantee the participation of youth in decision-making and development.
- ➔ The government should urgently establish and operationalize the youth and women enterprise development fund. This fund will support the development of youth in the private sector and increase their access to income. The ongoing deliberations on the youth enterprise fund should result into legal and policy framework that ensures that the fund is managed in a transparent, effective and equitable manner

- ➔ This in turn can ensure the young people live productive lives that will contribute to socio-economic progress of the communities.
- ➔ The RTGONU should urgently open civic and political space for the young people to conduct civic education and policy advocacy at subnational and national levels. The current environment does not promote active participation of the young people in the peace process.
- ➔ The RTGONU should enact and implement the national youth policy that has been developed and submitted to the cabinet for deliberation and approval. This policy is a critical instrument that will provide overarching guidance for government institutions at state and county level to lead empowerment of youth in the country. In addition, the government is ratifying and adopting the UNSCR 2250 and African Youth Charter by developing an operationalization framework. This ensures there is policy and institutional safeguard to guarantee long term inclusion and participation of youth in the governance and future conflict resolution mechanisms.
- ➔ The political parties and coalitions to the RTGONU should step up their inclusion of young people in their senior structures and government institutions. Particularly, the state and national parliament appointment should include more young people including females to increase their participation in policy making and oversight of the reforms.
- ➔ The national and state ministries of youth and sports should increase their engagement, identify with the young people and play a pivotal role of advocacy in government. The ministries should design programs and initiatives that will involve youth in productive lifestyles.

TO THE NGOS, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

- ➔ The international partners should step up youth programming including providing skills training for young people in the rural areas. As the environment for accessing grants is becoming more restrictive, international donors should adopt more flexible and sustained support to initiatives that empower the youth, including investment in capacity-building both in terms of personnel training, linking and learning and assets, such as the internet, equipment, physical and virtual spaces.
- ➔ The partners should support long term peacebuilding programs in South Sudan. The respondents stressed that impact Programme targeting behavior change requires establishment of a long term platform for young women including translating it to grassroots and hard to reach communities with different languages. “Long term programming is needed with consistency. As peace building is a process but not a project”
- ➔ Search for Common Ground and partners should establish more youth peace networks at subnational levels to build a critical mass for policy influence, promote collaboration and joint programming

- ➔ SFCG and partners should continue to rollout the youth media outreach program to inform and engage the youth in peacebuilding processes.
The civil society should establish specific programs that further amplify the voices of the youth in peacebuilding processes.
- ➔ There are few peace building partners in South Sudan and maintaining long term projects with local partners will be key in creating an effective peacebuilding network. Search for Common Ground and partners should support existing women groups and also supporting the establishment of new ones including building their capacities in leadership skills, governance, confidence building training including public speaking
- ➔ The partners should provide more resources to support activities that lead to change in perception and attitude. These include initiatives that scale up mentorship and support to youth led peacebuilding initiatives. Rural based outreach is required especially in hard to reach communities. Key topics should include community defining their own understanding on peace and building local young women structures to sustain peace building, providing young women peacebuilding tools and engagement with community gatekeepers
- ➔ Partners should prioritize the convening of peace conferences both at the state and local levels to strengthen peaceful coexistence and to address immediate peace issues around social conflicts on grazing land, water resources, pastoralists and agricultural people.
- ➔ The partners should develop context specific peace messages, translated and disseminated at grassroots levels using peace building strategies such as arts, sports, traditional dances, wrestling, radio distribution and IEC materials.
- ➔ Regional and international bodies including the IGAD, AU and UN should leverage their influence on the government through the relevant channels to pressure the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity to repeal the laws and lift the measures that limit the freedom of assembly, association and, speech and expression.

6. Appendices

Based on the analysis and findings presented, the study provides the below recommendations to increase youth inclusion and participation in the peace process.

ANNEX 1: TOOLS

Key Informant Questionnaire—Youth

Hello, my name is _____, I am a Research Assistant for the Institute of Social Policy and Research. We are conducting a research on the role of young people in peace building at local, state and national for Search for Common Ground. This discussion is anonymous and confidential. We will not quote you unless with your approval. The results of this study is to inform policy and program development that will benefit the youth to actively take part in the peace process. Consent: Are you ready to take part in this interview? Yes [] No []

RESPONDENT BIO-DATA	
Name of respondent (optional)	
Location	County / Block / Quarter
Gender	Male / Female
Age	18-24 / 25-29 / 30-34 / 35-40 / Above 41
Marital Status	Unmarried / Married / Divorced / Seperated / Widowed
Education level (choose only one)	No formal education / Primary school / Secondary / Tertiary (college and university)
Occupation (choose only one)	Formal employment / Self employed / Unemployed / Other

YOUTH NETWORKING AND REPRESENTATION

Are you a member of any youth group, association, organization or coalition?	Yes / No
If yes, what kind of youth group, association or coalition do you belong to?	Political party youth league Civil society Community/regional association School/PTA committee Church association Health management committee Water management committee Quarter council youth committee Other (mention) _____
If yes, what is your status in the network, group, association or organisation?	Leadership role (chair, deputy, secretary, treasurer) Executive member Ordinary member

IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS

Note to researcher: In/Around the room - Perceptions

What role and level of influence do youth (including your organization) have in political and government decision making and coordination mechanisms to implement the peace agreement? <i>(Probe: think about the role and influence of youth at local, state and national level institutions)</i>	
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What are the common issues or challenges faced by the youth to actively participate in political and government decision making and coordination mechanisms in this peace process? <i>(Probe: think about the common issues that impede the role and influence of youth at local, state and national level institutions)</i>	
Do both female and male youth face the same common issues or challenges, or are they different? <i>(Probe: Please explain)</i>	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth inclusion and participation in formal decision making and coordination mechanisms in the peace process?	
Note to researcher: Around/Outside the room questions	
What role and level of influence do youth (including your organization) have in monitoring and implementing the peace agreement?	
What are the common issues or challenges faced by the youth to actively participate in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	
Do both female and male youth face the same common issues or challenges, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth participation in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	

Note to researcher: Current youth participation in peace process	
In the past 18 months, how have youth (including yourself) participated in activities that contribute to the peace process at national or state level ?	
In the past 18 months, what issues or challenges have youth faced to participate in the peace process at the national or state level?	
In the past 18 months, how have youth (including yourself) participated in activities that contribute to the peace process in your community ?	
In the past 18 months, what issues or challenges have youth faced to participate in peace activities in your community? How did youth manage these issues?	
What are some of the strategies you have adopted to ensure sustained engagement in peacebuilding in the context of COVID-19 ?	
What kind of support do youth leaders and youth led organizations need to advance their work on the peace process?	
What are social and political structures or organizations that actively encourage and promote the participation of youth in implementing peace activities?	
What strategies have you used to engage with the peace actors (mediator, parties and guarantors) to ensure that the voice of young people are heard?	
Note to researcher: General	
Why do you think youth inclusion and participation in the implementation of the peace agreement is important?	

In your opinion, how is the progress on implementing the peace agreement?	
In your opinion, how does the future of young people's participation in the implementation of the peace agreement look like in South Sudan?	
How does the UNSC resolution and AU youth charter support your/youth involvement in implementing the peace agreement?	

Key Informant Interview for Stakeholders—Academia, Civil Society (Non-Youth)

Hello, my name is _____, I am a Research Assistant for the Institute of Social Policy and Research. We are conducting a research on the role of young people in peace building at local, state and national for Search for Common Ground. This discussion is anonymous and confidential. We will not quote you unless with your approval. The results of this study is to inform policy and program development that will benefit the youth to actively take part in the peace process. Consent: Are you ready to take part in this interview? Yes [] No []

RESPONDENT BIO-DATA	
Name of respondent (optional)	
Position/Title	
Gender	Male / Female
Age	Below 35 / Above 35
Organization/Ministry/Department/County/Mechanism	

Note to researcher: In the room/Around the room questions	
In the past 18 months, how have youth (including yourself) participated in activities that contribute to the peace process at national or state level ?	
In the past 18 months, what issues or challenges have youth faced to participate in the peace process at the national or state level?	
In the past 18 months, how have youth (including yourself) participated in activities that contribute to the peace process in your community ?	
In the past 18 months, what issues or challenges have youth faced to participate in peace activities in your community? How did youth manage these issues?	
What are some of the strategies you have adopted to ensure sustained engagement in peacebuilding in the context of COVID-19 ?	
Note to researcher: Around/Outside the room questions	
Who are the key actors in monitoring and implementing the peace agreement at the national level? At the state level? How do they engage youth?	
What role and level of influence do young people have in monitoring and implementing the peace agreement at these levels?	
What are the common issues or challenges faced by the youth to actively participate in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	
Do both female and male youth face the same common issues or challenges, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth participation in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	

Note to researcher: Outside the room questions	
Who are the key actors in peace and reconciliation efforts at the local level ? How do they engage youth?	
What role and level of influence do young people have in peace and reconciliation efforts at the local level ?	
What are the common issues or challenges faced by the youth to actively participate in peace and reconciliation efforts at the local level ?	
Do both female and male youth face the same common issues or challenges, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth participation in peace and reconciliation efforts at the local level ?	
General questions	
Why do you think youth inclusion in the implementation of the peace agreement is important?	
What would you say are the successful stories or impacts that youth brought into the peace process and its implementation?	
How often do you interact or engage young people in your peace related events or activities? (If applicable) What roles do they play? What is their level of influence? Can you give an example?	

Key Informant—Community and Religious Leaders

Hello, my name is _____, I am a Research Assistant for the Institute of Social Policy and Research. We are conducting a research on the role of young people in peace building at local, state and national for Search for Common Ground. This discussion is anonymous and confidential. We will not quote you unless with your approval. The results of this study is to inform policy and program development that will benefit the youth to actively take part in the peace process. Consent: Are you ready to take part in this interview? Yes [] No []

QUESTION	RESPONSE OR DISCUSSION: TYPE HERE
Location	
Number of participants	Male _____ Female _____
Organization/Ministry/Department/County/Mechanism	
Note to researcher: Outside the room questions	
How often do you interact or engage young people in your peace related events or activities? Can you give an example?	
How do you engage young people in your peace activities? What roles do they play? What is their level of influence?	
What are the common issues or challenges to involve youth in your peace activities?	
Do you face the same common issues or challenges for involving female and male youth, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth inclusion and participation in your peace activities?	
What would you say are the successful stories or impacts that youth brought into your peace activities?	

Note to researcher: General on implementation of peace agreement	
Why do you think youth inclusion in the implementation of the peace agreement is important?	
What is needed to improve youth inclusion and participation of youth, especially young women , in the implementation of the peace agreement?	

Key Informant—Community and Religious Leaders

Hello, my name is _____, I am a Research Assistant for the Institute of Social Policy and Research. We are conducting a research on the role of young people in peace building at local, state and national for Search for Common Ground. This discussion is anonymous and confidential. We will not quote you unless with your approval. The results of this study is to inform policy and program development that will benefit the youth to actively take part in the peace process. Consent: Are you ready to take part in this interview? Yes [] No []

QUESTION	RESPONSE OR DISCUSSION: TYPE HERE
Location	
Number of participants	Male _____ Female _____
Age Group	
Organization/Ministry/Department/County/Mechanism	
Note to researcher: In the room/Around the room questions	
How do you engage young people in important decisions about the peace process? What roles do they play? What is their level of influence?	
What are the common issues or challenges to involve youth in formal decisions and discussions about the peace process?	

Do you face the same common issues or challenges for involving female and male youth, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth inclusion in formal decisions and discussions for the peace process?	
Note to researcher: Around/Outside the room questions	
How do you engage young people in implementing or monitoring the peace agreement at the national level? At the state level?	
What role and level of influence do young people have in monitoring and implementing the peace agreement?	
What are the common issues or challenges you face to involve youth actively in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	
Do you face the same common issues or challenges for involving female and male youth, or are they different?	
How can these challenges be addressed to promote youth participation in monitoring and implementation of the peace process?	
Note to researcher: Around/Outside the room questions	
How often do you interact or engage young people in your peace related events or activities? Can you give an example?	
Why do you think youth inclusion in the implementation of the peace agreement is important?	
What would you say are the successful stories or impacts that youth brought into the peace process and its implementation?	

Youth - Focus Group Discussion

Hello, my name is _____, I am a Research Assistant for the Institute of Social Policy and Research. We are conducting a research on the role of young people in peace building at local, state and national for Search for Common Ground. This discussion is anonymous and confidential. We will not quote you unless with your approval. The results of this study is to inform policy and program development that will benefit the youth to actively take part in the peace process. Consent: Are you ready to participate in this discussion? Yes [] No []

1. What contribution do young people bring to the current peace building processes at the **local level in your community**?
 - a. What challenges and issues do they face? Is it different for females and males?
 - b. How can these challenges be addressed to improve youth participation?
 - c. Are there any other opportunities for youth participation in peace at the local level?
2. What contribution do young people bring to the current peace **implementation and monitoring** processes at the **state and national level**?
 - a. What challenges and issues do they face? Is it different for females and males?
 - b. How can these challenges be addressed to improve youth participation?
 - c. Are there any other opportunities for youth participation in peace at the state level?
3. What contribution do young people bring to the current **decision making and coordination** of the peace process at the **state and national level**?
 - a. What challenges and issues do they face? Is it different for females and males?
 - b. How can these challenges be addressed to improve youth participation?
 - c. Are there any other opportunities for youth participation in peace at the state level?
4. What are **social and political structures or organizations** that actively encourage and promote the participation of youth in implementing peace activities? How can they improve their youth engagement?
5. How do government institutions and other stakeholders work with you (youth) in peace activities currently? How can this engagement be improved? (Urban based and grass root youth)?
6. What kind of support do youth leaders and youth led organizations need to advance their work on the peace process?
7. What is your **vision for the future of young people's role and contribution** to the peace process in South Sudan?

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

African Youth Charter 2006, Banjul Gambia

Altiok and Grizelj (2019). We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes

Amel Aldehaib. (2017). Channels of Change in South Sudan: Youth Civil Society Organizations & Critical Empathy in Nation-Building

Chatham House. (2016). Peacebuilding, Reconciliation and Community Cohesion in South Sudan: The Role of Youth. The Royal Institute of International Affairs

Communique on the National Youth Agenda Conference March 2018 held in Entebbe Uganda

Crossroad. Y. A. (2014). Pursuing a Positive Path in South Sudan.

Emmaculate Asige Liaga. (2017). Situating 'The Local' In Peacebuilding In South Sudan. Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding Scholar

Esther Soma. (2020). Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's National Peace Processes, 2005–2018

Liezelle Kumalo and Cassie Roddy-Mullineaux. (2019). Sustaining peace: harnessing the power South Sudanese women. Institute for Security Studies

Malish, J. Peter. (2019). Baseline Study on Youth Participation in Governance and Decision Making Processes: The Case of Jubeck State. Organization for Non-violence and Development. Juba, South Sudan.

Nyathon James Hoth Mai. (2015). The Role of Women in Peace-Building in South Sudan, Sudd Institute

Rita Martin and J.N Pelekemoyo. (2012). A project of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Fiji, Liberia, Nepal, Netherlands, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, and Uganda.

RJMEC Reports, 2018 – 2021

Roz Price and Anna Ornert. (2017). Youth in South Sudan: livelihoods and conflict. Institute of Development Studies and Future Seed C.I.C.

Search for Common Ground Project Proposal "strengthening Young Women's Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan".

United Nations Secretary General Report (2018). Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, December 2015

Youth Position on Outstanding issues regarding the High-Level Revitalization Forum on South Sudan June 2018 Kigali Rwanda

ANNEX 3: CASE STUDY TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for Consultancy:

Case Study Assessment to Document Lessons Learned and Best Practices:

INTRODUCTION:

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) South Sudan, in partnership with Ana-Taban, Crown the Woman (CTW), National Women's Empowerment & Rehabilitation Organization (NWERO), Catholic Radio Network (CRN), and Eye Radio with funding from UN-Peace building fund are implementing 18-month project (*Strengthening Young Women's Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan*) that aims at equipping and empowering young women with Knowledge, skills and opportunities to contribute to the peace process at the local and national level, reinforce their collective power, and challenge the social stereotypes and barriers that hinder their equal participation. In order to measure the impact of the youth lead peace efforts in influencing the implementation of the R-ARCSS in South Sudan, a case study assessment has to be conducted with an aim of documenting the lessons learnt and best practices.

TASK OBJECTIVES:

- ➔ Search for Common Ground needs to conduct a case study assessment progress made on youth engagement and identify opportunities for future project activities targeting youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts. In order to do this, lessons learned, best practices and project strategies need to be documented.
- ➔ Linkages between project components and activities need to be documented, and case studies on thematic work developed with focus on the impact of youth on the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

SCOPE OF WORK AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS:

- ➔ Collect, review and analyze all the necessary project documents and literature to fully understand youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.
- ➔ Conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify the roles and responsibilities of key players and institutions that play a vital role in ensuring young people engage in peacebuilding activities, and develop recommendations to strengthen linkages among the partners.

- Facilitate two working group consultations (organized by Search for Common Ground) and present the draft document to the key stakeholders. Finalize the document and incorporate all of the input from stakeholders.
- Produce a well-written and comprehensive report (max. 20 pages) documenting all the lessons learnt and best practices surrounding the work of the youth in peacebuilding initiatives.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE ASSESSMENT:

- The consultant will strictly follow the work plan and the time schedule agreed with Search for Common Ground in undertaking the contract assignment.
- An appropriate methodology will have to be determined by the consultant in consultations with Search for Common Ground.
- The consultant will work in close collaboration with Search for Common Ground and its partners.
- The consultant will undertake collection of all the required data/information from various sources, including Government departments, Ministries and other relevant sources;
- Search for Common Ground shall facilitate collection of the data/information with required official letters, and coordinate with focal person(s) wherever required.
- The consultant will undertake review, assessment and judgment of the data/information in close consultation with Search for Common Ground.
- The consultant will facilitate presentations and lead coordination of the stakeholder workshops/consultations organized as per the agreed work schedule.