

CONFLICT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

SOUTH SUDAN

Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme

This report summarizes findings from conflict analyses undertaken as part of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme, funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The purpose of the report is to create actionable recommendations for the education sector in South Sudan to inform and shape peace consolidation and nation building.

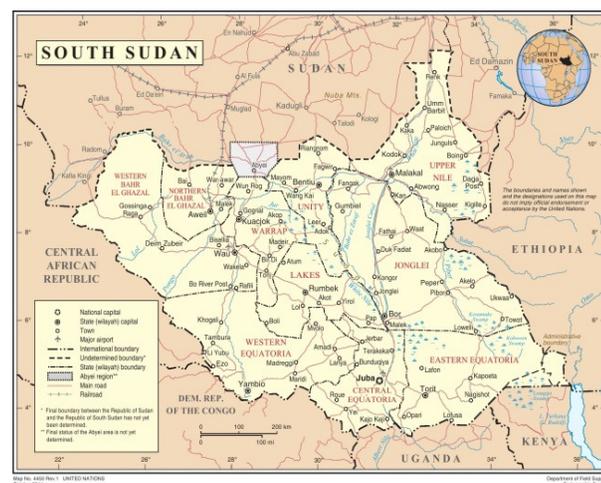
The PBEA programme, 2012-2016, seeks to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system.

Methodology

The conflict analysis was developed using information gathered during interviews and a review of studies, strategic documents and contextual analyses, including 'Inventory of Recent Context Analyses in South Sudan' developed for the PBEA programme, as well as the consultant's own understanding of the context. The conflict analysis is viewed from the perspective of key stakeholders, including the South Sudanese, the Government of South Sudan and the international community. The context and conflict analysis in Tonj East County, Warrap State, was based on consultative workshops in Kuacjok (capital of the state) and Romic (Tonj East County) and provides further understanding of the context, conflict dynamics and priorities for action.

Context

South Sudan gained its independence from the Sudan in 2011. Prior to this separation, a unified Sudan experienced latent and violent conflict, including two civil wars (1955–1972 and 1983–2005) and multiple, concurrent inter- and intra-communal conflicts spanning over half a century. More than 2 million people died, 4 million were displaced, and half a million refugees fled the country during this period. Tribal and ethnic conflict and the eventual division of the country were partially rooted in the arbitrary international and domestic borders established by colonial



powers at the end of the nineteenth century as well as failed efforts by subsequent Sudanese administrations to foster a cohesive national identity. The end of the second civil war in 2005 and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement heralded a new era with a strong desire for lasting change that would result in stability and peace. The anticipated peace following the 2011 referendum and declaration of an independent Republic of South Sudan has not materialized as quickly as hoped, and the new country faces escalating challenges to political, economic and social transformation. These challenges are complicated by the many and varied cultures of the largely rural population, in which traditional forms of governance, social norms and ways of life persist. During recent years, thousands of people have died or been displaced as a result of ongoing violence. The nature of the violence has, by some accounts, become both more brutal and more normalized, and citizens have yet to see and feel the full benefits of peace.

Key conflict drivers

A number of underlying causes and dynamics of conflict were identified through the conflict analysis. These factors should not be seen in isolation but rather in the ways they combine and interact with each other in different contexts to drive multiple and complex changes in behaviour, power structures and responses to political, economic, social and environmental stresses. Where relevant, links between conflict drivers and education and learning have been identified.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE

- **Chronic insecurity:** The Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 left many issues unresolved and did not end the fighting. Citizens continue to experience insecurity, fear and distrust due to ongoing tensions between northern and southern Sudan, inter-communal violence, an increase in crime and the breakdown of the rule of law. The massive influx of small arms, readily available and unregulated, undermine traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and accelerate violence.
- **Reintegration of refugees:** The large number of returning refugees following independence, particularly in urban areas, increases social, cultural and economic tensions as a result of increased competition for scarce resources and ongoing cultural differences.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Weak governance:** Slow progress in development, the inaccessibility of government, nascent decentralization and the persistence of traditional forms of governance all contribute to a weak social contract between the State and citizens, and to an overall frustration with and alienation from the Government. In particular, the social and political marginalization of pastoralist cattle societies in particular undermines social cohesion. Inadequate access to education has the potential to create further divides in political representation and voice. Corruption and the negative influence of government officials in conflict situations perpetuate a lack of trust. Most citizens lack basic awareness of their political representatives or the constitutional reform process.
- **Inequitable distribution of resources:** Historical imbalances in the distribution of resources and services such as education, health care and economic opportunities are a source of grievance. These imbalances are compounded by difficult terrain, austerity measures and the purposeful destruction of education facilities, infrastructure and resources during decades of conflict. Inequitable distribution of oil revenues has led to competition for power and the concentration of

wealth and resources in the national and state capital cities.

- **Ethnic and political tensions:** Deep and historical tribal and ethnic divisions have long been a feature of Sudanese life. Decades of war have fostered ethnocentric identities by forcing communities to rely on their own capacities for security and economic survival. The resultant social fragmentation has been a key driver of conflict and has prevented a national identity from emerging. A trend of rising intolerance and hate speech has recently incited conflict through inflammatory online content or through letters. Concepts of justice that require clan retaliation have resulted in cyclical violence and killing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Poverty and inequitable economic development:** The economy's overdependence on oil and limited 'trickle down' of oil revenue to the population, especially in isolated areas, leaves the country vulnerable. Populations are largely dependent on subsistence agriculture. Cattle are an economic and sociocultural asset that is vulnerable to raids, and intra-communal conflict is incited over access to grazing areas. A lack of educational opportunities and vocational training inhibit economic growth and diversification of employment opportunities, particularly for young people.
- **Absence of development:** The absence of basic infrastructure development, especially at the local level, is often seen as perpetuating historical and ongoing marginalization of certain groups. Development is hindered by poorly-executed decentralization, austerity measures and budget shortfalls. This reduces local growth opportunities, including for education and social services, and increases political competition. Dependency on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international aid organizations for delivery of services in some areas is unsustainable.
- **Lack of livelihood opportunities (youth unemployment):** Lack of local educational, vocational and economic opportunities have left many youth unemployed and more vulnerable to recruitment into armed conflict, cattle raiding or robbery. Young men who cannot pay a dowry often elope with their brides, which sparks conflict and revenge from families that may have been depending on the bride price as a source of income.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- **Trauma and social norms related to violence:** The legacy of civil war is a society in which the majority of people have some form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Appalling acts of violence, including those against seniors, women and children, have become normalized. Anger, fuelled by desperate circumstances, leads to acts of vengeance and a lack of respect for human life. Children are impacted as victims of direct violence or as bystanders to inter-communal conflict. Some schools are implicated in the perpetuation of trauma and violence through sexual assault at school, lack of safe facilities and incitement by teachers to participate in violence.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Competition over scarce resources:** Growing pressure on water and land resources, due in part to agricultural expansion privatization of water and other natural resources, and urban growth, are a key source of communal tension and clashes. Competition to control ports (including in Gaalkacyo), airstrips, checkpoints and access points are key conflict drivers. Commercial interests can exacerbate divisions in an effort to gain advantage.

The role of education in peacebuilding

South Sudan's education system is challenged by massive gaps in service delivery, insufficient infrastructure, inadequate training for teachers, a large out-of-school population, gender inequities, low literacy rates and struggles to translate education into meaningful employment. Education provision is complicated by issues of language; school instruction is typically in English, but many children speak Juba Arabic or one of 50 other languages spoken in South Sudan. Little attention has been paid to education's transformative potential to strengthen national identity and build peace, harmony and social cohesion within the country.

Given the enormity of needs, the focus of the Government and donors has largely been on restoring access to education by increasing the number of schools, training teachers and providing learning materials to quantifiable numbers of young people. Where present in peacebuilding plans, education is largely seen as responding to the symptoms of violence and conflict and not its root causes. The absence of educational opportunity for several generations has resulted in a lack of basic knowledge, tools and analytical skills required for nation-building.

Although many South Sudanese have endured successive conflict over many years, education offers hope for a new generation. The provision of education and other social services can serve as a peace dividend for the new Government, reduce poverty through vocational development and diversified economic opportunity, and contribute to building peace.

Efforts are under way to revise the curriculum and reduce divisive content. The revised curriculum will include life skills education that seeks to build resilience, coping skills and compassion. Efforts are needed to increase public understanding of education as a pathway for peace and development, and promote buy-in from families, teachers and children. Reaching out to pastoralist groups and isolated or marginalized minorities will help ensure that these groups are able to participate in the political system. Equitable access to education will be crucial for diffusing competition between groups.

Peacebuilding entry points in education and learning

Political and policy responses

- **Increase emphasis on and support for education at all levels:** Government and international NGO support for teacher training, gender equality, and getting all children into school – regardless of geographical barriers – should be a significant priority. Focus on improving access, quality of learning and completion rates.
- **Develop an easy-to-use national curriculum:** Create new, culturally sensitive oral and written curricula with guidelines, booklets and digital audio files such as MP3s for educators to use, particularly with marginalized groups. Include media and arts-based methodologies that communicate peacebuilding and reconciliation messages.
- **Promote education as a strategy in peacebuilding programmes:** The potential for education to address conflict dynamics is significant. Integrate the theme of education into ongoing conflict transformation and peacebuilding programmes and processes and establish dialogue to explore potential synergies between education and peacebuilding.

- **Coordinate international interventions:** Coordinate national and international interventions to ensure education responses are conflict sensitive, take into account localized conflict dynamics and do not inadvertently lead to competition or resentment.

Structural reforms

- **Target initiatives to improve access to education for marginalized groups:** Focus on improving access to education, especially among pastoralists and out-of-school youth, through oral curriculum, informal education and the potential development of standardized spelling for Juba Arabic to assist with early literacy adoption.
- **Provide training for education stakeholders at all levels:** Motivate, mobilize and train key education actors such as ministry officials, teachers, parent-teacher associations, parents and students in life skills, conflict transformation methodologies and other approaches to peacebuilding.

Individual and interpersonal changes

- **Promote the value of education for peacebuilding and peace consolidation:** Advocate to parents, teachers and children regarding the peace and prosperity-building potential of education. Encourage all children and youth to value and pursue education, and to see it as a pathway to political and national participation, working towards a greater South Sudanese identity and social cohesion.