

Issue Brief

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Cohort 3: Gender Responsive Peacebuilding

Enhancing the full potential of South Sudanese women to foster inclusive dialogue and sustainable peace

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Introduction

If the ongoing South Sudan peace process were as inclusive as the 15 January 2011 referendum, in which women constituted over 60 percent of the 99.57 percent of South Sudanese who voted for independence from North Sudan, perhaps the world's youngest country¹ would be reaping more peaceful dividends from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-brokered peace negotiations now.

In December 2013, growing political tensions among key leaders in the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), resulted in violence, just two years after the country gained independence from Sudan. While the political dispute that triggered this crisis was not clearly based on ethnic identity, as the crisis escalated it was plagued with ethnic undertones. Beginning from the capital city of Juba, the crisis progressively spread, directly affecting Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei States of South Sudan. The fighting, which was initially between armed soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar, erupted into a civil war involving armed civilians and militias. As of July 2018, the total number of internally displaced people had risen to 1.74 million with 2.47 million refugees in neighboring countries, the majority of which whom are women and children².

This issue brief explores women's strategic agency at a national level in advancing or failing to advance their own participation and influence in the ongoing peace process.

South Sudanese women have knowledge, experience and skills in fighting for freedom, democracy and peace

Prior to the signing of the 2005 Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the 22-year civil war, women were not mere bystanders in South Sudan's liberation struggle. In response to a political situation that affected whole communities, thousands left their homes not just to accompany their husbands, but to fight for freedom, democracy, equity, justice, rights and dignity, with roles ranging from combatants to providers of support to fighters.

Although women were not among the signatories or mediators to the 2005 CPA, they made up nine percent of witnesses. However, despite Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) quotas for women's participation in assemblies very few women were included in the SPLM's peace negotiation teams.

Following the declaration of independence in July 2011 and through the post-independence fragility, a number of frameworks aimed at bolstering women's engagement in the peace process have been developed. These include the South Sudan National Action Plan (2015 -2020), the country's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2014, the Women's Seven-Point Agenda for Implementing the Peace Agreement and the Women's Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development in South Sudan (WAPSD).

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¹ South Sudan gained its independence on 9th July 2011

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-6-16-july-2018>

“Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men.”³

The UN General Assembly’s unanimous approval in [July 2011] of the first resolution (65 / 283) on peace mediation adopted by the United Nations and UNSC resolution 1325 (2000⁴), recognised the importance of women’s full and equal participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.

Since the adoption of the resolution and its seven follow-up resolutions from 2009 to 2015, there have been improvements in women’s participation

in peace processes and in the inclusion of their specific peace-building and security needs.

Women’s peace coalitions have grown in strength and are in some contexts able to put women’s concerns on the agenda of peace talks. Transitional justice mechanisms are increasingly responding to war crimes against women and girls with more overt attention to the ways conflict affects women and with specific arrangements to protect women witnesses. Post-conflict needs assessments, planning processes and financing frameworks have in some cases acknowledged the need to put women’s participation and concerns at the centre of peacebuilding and recovery processes.

However, generally women’s participation in peace processes remains one of the most unfulfilled aspects of the women, peace and security agenda. It is almost two decades ago that then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said: “*We can no longer afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men.*”⁵ Analysis of 1,187 peace agreements signed from 1990–2017, reveals that only 19 percent made reference to women, women made up two percent of mediators, five percent of witnesses and signatories and eight percent of negotiators.⁶

³ Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 2000

⁴ This was the first landmark Security Council resolution on women, peace and security. The resolution also calls for special measures to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and outlines gender-related responsibilities of the United Nations in different political and programmatic areas.

⁵ SC/7550 28 OCTOBER 2002- SUSTAINABLE PEACE NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT FULL, EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN UN-Meeting Coverage and Press Release <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/sc7550.doc.htm>

⁶ 73rd Session of UNGA. https://www.peacewomen.org/UN/general-assembly/GA73#_ftno10

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These advocacy frameworks became the blueprints for women’s concerns and demands at the mediated revitalized peace negotiations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2018, since they by clearly calling for the inclusivity in the inclusion, promotion, participation and protection of women in peace building and conflict resolution processes. Since the inception of the December 15th, 2013 political crisis, the women of South Sudan, through the South Sudan Women Peace Network (SSWPN), have mobilized at the national and grassroots levels to call through a number of advocacy initiatives for peaceful resolution to the conflict through a number of advocacy initiatives.

They participated in a side event on South Sudan at the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN headquarters in New York in March 2014, where they called for global support to end the conflict. They also participated in regional peace meetings on South Sudan in Nairobi, Kampala and Addis Ababa in 2014; and held a National Peace Conference and National Day of Prayers in Juba on December 2016. A technical committee drafted a policy document to register the needs of women, which was finalized after nationwide consultations in nine out of the 10 states and at the national level in Juba. In 2017, hundreds of South Sudanese women marched in silence through Juba, South Sudan’s capital, to call for an end to the conflict. They protested the continued rape and

killing of civilians, displacement, and lack of humanitarian services for people in need.

Other advocacy initiatives for gender responsive peacebuilding in South Sudan within the IGAD mediated process have included coordinating strategic meetings with the African Union (AU) special envoy on sexual violence, the head of the AU Commission of Enquiry on Crimes Against Humanity in South Sudan, and the under secretary and executive director of UN Women. These high-level advocacy efforts have, to some extent, compelled the Government to include three women on their negotiating team, while another three have been included on the opposition team.

Persistent barriers prevent South Sudanese women from being fully involved in negotiating sustainable peace

Despite the concerted efforts made by South Sudanese women to promote leadership and coordinate their engagement in the ongoing peace process, many challenges persist.

Not least among them is the recurring violence that has touched all areas and levels of society across South Sudan. Violence has weakened institutions, deepened ethnic and tribal divides, destroyed infrastructure and the rule of law, and created distrust among the various stakeholders

including among women themselves. For women leaders across political and ethnic divides having a consolidated approach to rebuilding the country, to combatting impunity, reconciling the nation and building a shared national vision is overwhelming.

Mobilizing women across the political and ethnic divides has occasionally been a delicate balance between Government and the opposition. For example, in 2013 following the outbreak of the war, while establishing the women's platform for peace, unfounded suspicions ran high, in the tense political environment, that UN Women was misunderstood as influencing women for one side rather than agency that was fostering cohesion.

Insecurity remains a challenge as it hampers South Sudanese women's efforts to mobilise and reach out to all women across the country. Planned scale-up of technical support to other states is challenging when fighting in various parts of the country persist.

Some notable achievements in women's participation in South Sudan

Women have de-escalated tensions between South Sudan's two main tribal groups: the Dinka and Nuer. While living in UN displacement sites, women successfully overcame tribal differences to reduce conflict between their communities. Following the adoption of the 2015 peace agreement, more than five hundred South Sudanese women joined across religious, ethnic, and regional divides to lay out their vision for the "South Sudan We Want," identifying priorities and establishing the Women's Peace think tank to monitor implementation of the agreement. They also insisted that all agreements be translated into local languages and worked together to sensitise the public on their contents and train them women in conflict resolution.

Due to the influence of South Sudanese women leaders, the 2017 cease-fire agreement expressly prohibited sexual violence in conflict and included strong commitments to protect civilians and reunify women and children. Throughout the process, women also demanded accountability for atrocities committed by armed groups, security forces, and peacekeepers, including widespread sexual violence that has destabilized communities across the country.

In December 2017, under the IGAD-led revitalized peace process, four women members of the South Sudan Women's Coalition for Peace attended as delegates in the high-level revitalized peace process, an acknowledgment of the Coalition as a key stakeholder and signatory to the agreement.

Earlier in June 2017, IGAD provided extended guidelines to all delegations to request that women made up at least 25 percent of all negotiating teams.

A coalition of women and gender advocacy networks established in January 2018 in Entebbe Uganda is engaging with influential peacebuilding stakeholders in South Sudan. Their capacities to analyse, and advocate that women constructively participate and engage in peacebuilding and negotiation processes, and not just be seen as survivors receiving humanitarian aid, have been transformative. These have been mainly attributed to the peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives rolled out in the early phases of the conflict.

About 180 women from different women's organisations gathered in South Sudan's capital, Juba for a three-day conference⁷ in March 2018 to sensitize women at all levels about phase one and two of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the 2015 peace agreement. The conference also brought together representatives of key institutions, including the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (JMEC), the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) and officials of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU). Under the theme "Women Together for Sustainable Peace", the conference⁸ sought to ensure that: a broad range of women are fully conversant with the High-Level Revitalization Forum; understand and are supportive of the demands made on behalf of women and how they will be implemented; understand the roles of the different stakeholders to the Peace Agreement and processes; and collectively discuss strategies on how to further engender the process.

The South Sudanese women's charter of demands

Considering both the Women's Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development in South Sudan (2014 WAPSD)⁹ and Women's Seven- Point Agenda for Implementing the Peace Agreement the ARCSS 2015,¹⁰ The Gender and Peace Advocates in South Sudan are unanimously demanding the following;

- Immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties and unrestricted and unconditional access for the UN and humanitarian agencies to ensure humanitarian aid reaches affected populations in all areas of South Sudan.
- Enforce punitive measures on any violators of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) and anyone who fails to comply with the Peace Agreement resulting from the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF)
- Convene a National Political Dialogue in the form of a National Conference in South Sudan hosted by the

7 The conference was organised by Women Bloc of South Sudan in partnership with UN Women, JMEC and UNMISS.

8 The conference was organised by Women Bloc of South Sudan in partnership with UN Women, JMEC and UNMISS.

9 2014 Women's Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SiIYcOLBNggqPt8sg-uCljzaMmWQfzZ3/view>.

10 The South Sudan We Want: The Women's 7 Point Agenda. <https://drive.google.com/drive/my-drive?ths=true>.

Transitional Government. Women would make up at least 30 percent of stakeholders.

- Ensure that a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) consists of 30 percent women.
- TGNU's mandate should include conducting free and fair elections, reviewing the composition of the Independent Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Council to ensure their independence, and providing adequate funding for them to effectively and efficiently execute their mandate.
- Maintain peace and order by implementing comprehensive security sector reforms, reflective of international standards and best practices from countries with similar experiences to that of South Sudan.
- Implement, as a matter of priority, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, including women associated with the wars. Integrate the SPLA and other forces into the national army and other security forces, with due regard for international standards and best practices; and control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Conclusion and recommendations

Although development partners and IGAD have made considerable efforts to integrate women into peace-building initiatives in South Sudan, they remain under-represented. South Sudanese women have a wealth of valuable

knowledge, information, experience and skills that should be tapped to contribute to building sustainable peace. In addition, they have constitutional and international rights that empower them to fully participate in every aspect of public life. The Revitalized Agreement coordinated by IGAD on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan signed by key stakeholders on 12 September 2018 offers a great opportunity to promote gender equity, improve the position of women, and increase women's participation in leadership and all other processes of peace-building in South Sudan. Recommendations include:

- Strengthen outreach to women across the country and consolidate their views through feedback sessions on the peace process. This increases support for the mediation efforts and for the inclusion of more representative voices that extend beyond the two major ethnic groups (Dinka and Nuer) across the 32 states.
- Engage parties to armed conflict in dialogue to seek time-bound commitments to cease all acts of conflict-related sexual violence, in compliance with international law.
- However, to sustain this effort, development partners will need to continuously strengthen partnerships and collaboration with those mandated to broker, implement and monitor the peace process by supporting both higher-level strategic planning and engagement at the subnational and community levels.

About the PDA Fellowship:

UNDP's Oslo Governance Center in partnership with the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme has established a PDA Fellowship Programme in 2016 consisting of several cohorts, each involving between 4-6 PDA's and/or PDA like conflict prevention specialists over a period of two weeks. The Fellowship Programme involves guided reflections to help draw out the Fellows' experience on pre-identified conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues.

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PRIO

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UNDP Oslo Governance Centre:

The Oslo Governance Centre (OGC) is one of six UNDP Global Policy Centres, established in 2002 and working since May 2015 with a renewed mandate. It is part of the UNDP Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and works closely with its New York based Headquarters and other relevant UN and UNDP units strengthening the overall analytical and learning ability in the area of Governance and Peacebuilding. It supports policy development and applied research with an overarching focus on democratic governance and peacebuilding in crisis, conflict and transitional contexts.

Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention

Since 2004, the United Nations Development Programme and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) have partnered to strengthen support to the UN's work in building national capacities for conflict prevention. Often times, such support is extended through the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors (or PDAs), a growing cadre of UN staff who support Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams adapt and respond to complex political situations and to develop and implement strategic conflict prevention initiatives and programmes.