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United Nations Development Programme in South Sudan

Reconciling Communities

Impact Stories



Peace and Community Cohesion Project
South Sudan





Reconciling Communities

Impact Stories

UNDP is working with local communities in South Sudan to improve social cohesion and foster reconciliation through creating and sustaining structures for preventing and resolving local conflicts. Using a conflict-cluster approach, Peace committees established across five “conflict clusters” have recorded different successes in addressing and mitigating local-level conflicts. These are their stories.



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I. Introduction

How does community peacebuilding work?



UNDP's Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) project focuses on five "conflict cluster" locations, with field coordination presence in Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Rumbek, and Torit. Our peacebuilding work focuses on the interconnectedness of conflict actors, causes and issues, and uses a community-led approach to address differences and equip communities with the tools to resolve conflicts, boost local security, and protect life, business, and property. In each location, community members form local peace committees and receive training in transformational leadership, conflict management, and prevention of gender based violence. Once formed, local peace committees participate in peace dialogues, conferences and consultations, as well as economic empowerment initiatives and ad-hoc mediation as issues arise in their communities. In 2018, the PaCC project reached:





II. Bor Cluster

Twich North Peace Committee Facilitates Dialogue to Resolve Dispute Over New Counties



Location: Duk Pagaak

Peace committee: Twich North County

Key issue: Conflict over creation of new counties

Key partner: Upper Nile Youth Mobilization and Development Agency (UNYMPDA)

“We, the mediators are not here to judge you, instead we are going to advise you to remain calm until the real peace comes to your place. We want to listen to both voices and guide you to have self-reflection on how to come to common ground by putting the interest of the people you are leading first. Look back at the faces of the women, children and elderly people who are terrified by acts of violence, put yourself in their shoes as a leader and make the decision. Make sure every decision you make positively affects the people you lead directly.”

**-Chief Duot Ajang Duot,
chief mediator and chairperson of the Twich North peace committee**

Twich North Peace Committee



Challenge

A dispute triggered between Dinka Hol sub-clans of Angeech and Duor, contesting the location of the headquarters of the newly created county of Duk Pagaak, sparked violence which left three people dead.

Action

After a joint training with the peace committee from Duk, the Twich North peace committee volunteered to mediate and host a community dialogue for Duk Pagaak.



Impact

The three-day community dialogue resulted in a five point resolution to end the dispute. Throughout the dialogue, the state government representatives participated as observers, as the Twich North Peace Committee took the central role of mediation.

Personal Transformation

Mr. Ruot Panom Deng

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Mr. Ruot Panom Deng is a former cattle rustler turned peace maker and arbitrator, who now actively settles local cattle rustling disputes.

It wasn't always the case.

Mr. Ruot was born to a large extended family of Dinka Duk ethnic group and took a leadership role amongst his peers at an early age.

At 16, he led a group of the most notorious cattle rustlers and raiders across Jonglei. Their raids targeted Lou Nuer, Gawaar, Murle, and even other Dinka clans.

"We survived using raids, because it was the only way we could restock our kraals. When we were raided, we could avenge to keep the balance," says Mr. Ruot, of his past.

Coinciding with Mr. Ruot's appointment as a local chief, he was nominated by his community to become a member of the local peace committee serving Duk. As part of the initiation process, he underwent training in transformational leadership, peace and conflict management,

conducted by UNDP and partners.

"I always called myself a leader, believing in avenging the mistakes done to my people. I carried out many raids which led to many deaths. Through the training, I realized that leadership demands a leader care for his people and avoid issues that expose them to unnecessary death. This is what I have been doing for the last four months," says Mr. Ruot, who has so far attended five negotiations, of which three have succeeded.

"Youth dealing in cattle rustling have respect for me, I can easily negotiate for swap or return of stolen cattle between communities."

Mr. Ruot says achieving sustainable peace in his community is his goal.

"The tear on the face of a mother who has a toddler that depends on a cow that has been raided is devastating. When I reflect on my past deeds, those might be the tears I put on the faces of many victims."

Twich North Peace Committee Prevents Revenge Attack



Location: Paliu Payam, Kongor County, Jonglei State

Peace committee: Twich North County

Key issue: Revenge killing after adultery/murder

Key partner: Upper Nile Youth Mobilization and Development Agency (UNYMPDA)

In Paliu payam, a man was shot and injured by the husband of his mistress. Following the incident, the clan of the injured man organized a revenge attack, which killed the husband (who hailed from a separate clan). The Twich North Peace Committee immediately conducted shuttle dialogue between the two communities to defuse the escalating tensions and persuaded them to refrain from further revenge attacks and to seek judicial settlement of the case instead. The suspect of the revenge killing is now in police custody. The injured person was evacuated to Juba and admitted for treatment. The two communities have been living peacefully since the intervention and resumed joint cultural practices, such as wrestling matches and cultural dances.



III. Rumbek Cluster

Wulu Peace Committee Heals Tension Between Pastoralists and Farmers



Location: Wulu County

Peace committee: Wulu and Rumbek Center County

Key issue: Crops destroyed by cattle

Key partner: Women Aid Vision (WAV)

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In April 2018, peace committee members in Wulu County engaged in reconciling the cattle keepers of Ruop community of Rumbek Center with the farmers of Wulu County, who were having conflict.

The tensions between the two communities were high because some of the farming crops in Wulu County were destroyed by the cattle belonging to the Roup herders.

"We, the peace committees, approached

the two parties separately with an aim of providing a solution to the matter together with the local authorities and the conflict has been resolved," said Wulu peace committee member Suzan Nadi.

The two communities were able to reconcile through mediation, peace dialogue and are living peacefully. A total of 14 males and 6 females comprising of peace committee members and the farmers in conflict were involved in the reconciliation process.

Awerial Peace Committee Resolves Conflict Over Wrestling Match



Location: Awerial Town

Peace committee: Awerial (Guthom)

Key issue: Conflict over wrestling

Key partner: Solidarity Ministries Africa for Reconciliation and Development (SMARD)

The peace committee in Awerial (Guthom) intervened to settle a dispute between wrestlers from the Akuei and Apuk communities. The dispute originated from a brawl during a wrestling match in February 2018. The authorities stepped in and suspended all wrestling activities in the state. After two months, peace committee members with support from the traditional leaders reconciled the two communities through mediation and dialogue after compensation was made. The committee also updated the county and state authorities about the progress made related to the case and suggested for the resumption of wrestling activities. The authorities agreed and with support from the peace committee a big wrestling event between the Bor and Aliap community was organized in June in the UNDP-constructed community wrestling ground in Mingkaman. One of the reasons why communities had requested to construct the wrestling ground in town was to be better able to control conflicts that could erupt during wrestling matches. The event concluded peacefully.

Yirol West and Awerial Peace Committees Team Up



Challenge

A conflict between three sections of Greater Yirol, i.e. Atout, Aliap and Ciec communities, resulted into many deaths and a cattle raid at Pakuach cattle camp in Awerial county.



Action

The Yirol and Awerial peace committees resolved to form a joint inclusive committee to facilitate the recovery of the raided cattle and a return to rightful owners on neutral ground.



Impact

The two committees were able to collect all the stolen cattle and bring them to Mingkaman where the rightful owners were asked to identify their cows together with the help of a witness. The cooperation also facilitated the arrest of the culprits.





IV. Aweil Cluster

Greater Gomjuer Peace Committee Resolves Disagreement Over Place Names



Location: Akeuic Payam, Gomjuer Centre County, Aweil West State

Peace committee: Gomjuer County

Key issue: Conflict over naming of land used for cultivation

The Gomjuer Peace Committee resolved an outstanding case related to the naming of cultivation land through mediation in Akeuic Payam of Gomjuer Centre County, Aweil West State. The conflict began in 2017 between the Golbeny and Parek clans when the original land name 'Narook Atak' was replaced with 'Mabook-Kuot'. The new name sparked disagreement initially between two individuals and later engulfed the two clans. Tension between the groups built to the extent that people from the two clans refused to greet each other anymore, and the community chiefs were unable to resolve the matter on their own. Following the peace committee induction training provided by UNDP in April 2018, the newly formed peace committee mediated between the elders from the two clans and an agreement was found to use the original name of the place. The relations between the two clans have returned to normal.

Joint Border Peace Committees from Sudan and South Sudan

“When we received the message from members of the Joint Border Peace Committee (JBPC) in Aweil East about the Mayom-jurwiir incident allegedly carried out by suspected Misseriya youth in Merram, we immediately informed the clan heads in Merram and Muglet to monitor movement of people with cattle in their areas. The JBPC and clan heads in collaboration with local security agents intercepted the suspects near a local market in Muglet as they were about to sell the cattle. The cows and the guns were then handed over to the members of the JBPC in Merram who then organized. in coordination with their counterparts in Aweil East, to hand the property back over to the Dinka Malual cattle owners and armed forces of South Sudan, respectively.”

**-Abdel Gelil Abaker,
Misseriya representative and member of the JBPC**



Challenge

In August 2018, a cattle raid occurred in Aweil East leading to 37 cows stolen from Dinka Malual, death of four raiders and two soldiers from the South Sudan armed forces. One soldier remained missing, three rifles were stolen as well as SSP 30,000. The raiders were suspected to be from Sudan.

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Action

The Joint Border Peace Committee, formed between the Dinka Malual of South Sudan, and the Misseriya nomads of Sudan, intervened and coordinated with communities on both sides of the border.



Impact

A handover of stolen property took place in Aweil East State. 17 cattle and three guns were returned within 30 days. Compensation of the dead and missing persons was referred as an action point for the following pre-migration conference held in Wanyjok.

“Following the Mayom-jurwiir incident on 28 August 2018, we informed members of the JBPC in Merram who worked very hard to recover the cows and three guns lost in the incident and finally handed them over to the Dinka Malual and South Sudan Armed Forces on 28 Sept 2018 in Warawar Market, Aweil East.”

**-Mr. Deng Deng Akuei,
Aweil East Peace Coordinator**

V. Bentiu Cluster

Coordination Between Youth Peace Champions Enables Arrest of Criminals



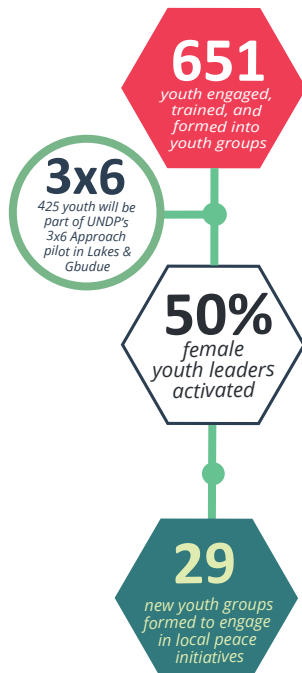
Location: Bentiu PoC (Sector 01, 05), Rubkona County, Northern Liech State

Peace committee: Bentiu and Rubkona towns, PoC

Key issue: Cime in the PoC site

Key partner: Action for Conflict Resolution (ACR), Hope Restoration South Sudan (HRSS)

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In September 2018, criminals entered the Bentiu PoC at night, looted and injured four individuals and escaped with stolen items. After the news of the looting spread in the early morning hours, youth peace committee members from the PoC immediately contacted members of the youth peace committee from Bentiu Town. The cooperation and early sharing of information enabled the youth from town to pass relevant information to security services in Bentiu, who started an investigation. A suspicious person was caught in the morning, who later confessed to the crime in the PoC. The police apprehended nine criminals as a result of the investigation. The looted items were recovered and handed over to their rightful owners. The swift intervention demonstrated the value of cooperation and further increased the trust between the youth from PoC and Bentiu town.

Youth Establish Peace Coordination Mechanism in Bentiu

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Challenge

Since 2013, youth from Bentiu and Rubkona towns have largely been cut off from youth residing in the neighboring PoC. Trust levels are low, while crime and insecurity persist. Monthly youth coordination meetings were regarded as ineffective.



Action

Following the UNDP-supported joint training for youth in transformational leadership and conflict management, youth took ownership of coordination to improve what is now known as the "Youth and Partners Peace Coordination Forum", where youth from the PoC, Rubkona and Bentiu town, jointly and freely discuss issues and challenges.



Impact

In October 2018, for the very first time, two youth leaders (one male, one female) from the PoC and a youth leader from Rubkona town formally joined the youth coordination meeting, thus opening a formal forum for youth dialogue between the separated communities.

"The training we received together taught me about leadership and peacebuilding. Now if I see youth fighting, I can intervene, and we as youth can do more together – sports, music, dramas. It taught us we are one blood, one people, whether we are in the PoC or living in Bentiu town. We only want peace."

-Angelina, 20, deputy of the PoC Youth Forum

VI. Torit Cluster



Challenge

In June 2018, the two communities of Bari and Lomorwo fought over a piece of land used for cultivation. During the clashes 28 people from Bari and 15 from Lomorwo were killed.

Action

Peace Committee members of Torit Central County and the chiefs of the two communities formed committees to meet the two conflicting communities separately. After hearing from the two groups, the peace committee mediated the process.

Impact

The killers were handed over to the local authorities and the parties agreed to be compensated. Compensation was traditionally made in form of a girl child. However, thanks to the involvement of the peace committee, it was agreed that no human being should be used for compensation and the family accepted to be compensated in terms of cows and cash. The peace committees are now closely monitoring the compensation process as well as the case of the murders. The two communities are reconciled and are moving peacefully between the two areas.





From
the People of Japan



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The Peace and Community Cohesion Project is generously funded by Sweden, Japan, KOICA, PBF and UNDP.

PaCC's work is made possible by a diverse group of partners in the field, including CSOs such as: Action for Conflict Resolution (ACR), Hope Restoration South Sudan (HRSS), Upper Nile Youth Mobilization and Development Agency (UNYMPDA), Women Aid Vision (WAV), Solidarity Ministries Africa for Reconciliation and Development (SMARD), Non Violent Peace Force, SSPRC, BCSSAC; and IOM, FAO, and UNMISS CAD.

Photography: UNDP/Kymerly Bays, UNDP/Louis Fourmentin, UNDP/Alberto Gonzalez Farran, UN/Julie Pudlowski

