

Final Report

Assessment and mapping of existing systems, mechanisms and networks on conflict resolution and local peacebuilding in Wau and Pariang Counties

17 June 2022

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Acronyms

ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
AIWE	African Indigenous Women's Empowerment
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GESS	Girl's Education South Sudan
HRSS	Hope Restoration South Sudan
ICC	Inter-Church Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare
MPHSS	Mental Health and Psycho-social Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PSS	Psycho-Social Support
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
SGBV	Sexual & Gender-Based Violence
SSCC	South Sudan Council of Churches
SPU	Special Protection Unit
SSPRC	South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission
TGoNU	Transitional Government of National Unity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
WDG	Women Development Group

WGFS	Women & Girl Friendly Spaces
WOTAP	Women Training and Promotion
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WROs	Women Rights Organisations
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Glossary

Conflict Resolution: In the context of this report, conflict resolution is defined as the steps, measures and processes, both formal and informal, used by parties to find solutions to their dispute.

Peacebuilding: The United Nations defines peacebuilding as a long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace with an aim of reducing “risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.”¹

Gender roles: The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) defines gender roles as “social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex” and often determines the traditional responsibilities of such individuals.² CARE International provide further guidance by identifying the “roles and responsibilities in the household and economy, how different groups of people spend their time, what resources/opportunities/services they can/can’t access, how they are expected to act”³

¹United Nations Peacekeeping. (n.d). Terminology. United Nations Peacekeeping. Available at: [Link](#) Accessed on: 15 March 2022

² UNICEF. (2017). Glossary of Terms and Concepts. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. pp.4-5. Available at: [Link](#)

³CARE International (2019) Gender Marker Guidance. [Link](#)

I. Executive summary

I.a Introduction

South Sudan is the world's youngest country, having gained independence from Sudan on 9 July, 2011. The country entered into conflict in 2013 with the breakout of a civil war that has led to the displacement of millions, significant loss of human lives, and has impacted the livelihoods of the country's population. Since the start of the civil war, both international and national actors have invested in numerous peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts to encourage the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement and mitigate the disastrous effect of the protracted crisis in South Sudan. While the conflict disproportionately affects women and children, women themselves remain largely excluded from peace processes both at the local and national level. This is largely driven by the patriarchal nature of the South Sudanese society which dictates norms and attitudes limiting women's empowerment. This acts to enhance their vulnerability to both conflict-induced impacts of violence, and cultural practices and barriers such as early marriage, low levels of education, and economic dependency. Similarly, youth have limited access to platforms through which to engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

I.b Methodology

In support of CARE International's two-year project 'Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls as a Catalyst for Peace' that seeks to promote gender-responsive stabilization and recovery of conflict-affected women, men, girls and boys in Wau and Pariang, Bodhi Global Analysis undertook research to assess and map the current conflict dynamics and gender norms, actors and networks involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and their inclusion of women and youth, the roles, and activities designated to women and youth in peacebuilding and structural barriers to respond to GBV and participation in peacebuilding processes.

To meet the research objectives, the team undertook a mixed-methods approach with several forms of primary and secondary data collection taking place between 5th January - 22nd February 2022 across Juba, Wau and Pariang. A total of 21 focus groups, 32 key informant interviews and 847 household-level surveys⁴ were conducted with duty bearers and rights holders including male and female community members, government officials, local chiefs, Gender-based Violence (GBV) service providers, humanitarian practitioners and women's rights organisations.

I.c Results and Findings

Sources and drivers of conflict and community gender dynamics

Internal conflicts linked to cattle raiding and revenge killings triggered by high bride prices are one of the main factors leading to insecurity and causing displacement at the community level in Pariang. Early marriage, for girls as young as 10-12 years, continues to be a widespread practice driven by the need for dowry. Other drivers of community conflict include stealing, adultery, GBV and tribal tensions. Overall, a common characteristic of these drivers of conflict is that they revolve around women and girls, who are in return disproportionately impacted by the violence. Indeed, violence against women and girls at and outside

⁴ In Wau and Pariang

of the home is pervasive as they are exposed to beatings by their husbands, and sexual violence when they go out. Similarly, in Wau, stealing, adultery and GBV were cited as major causes of conflict in the community, along with land disputes.

Deeply ingrained traditional gender roles continue to normalise these instances of GBV and fuel a culture of impunity for the perpetrators. In addition, cultural and gender norms contribute to excluding women from roles beyond the domestic arena and from decision-making. Nonetheless, this study identified positive developments in those dynamics, as women respondents reported increased freedom and responsibilities within the household, and also within the communities, as some women have been appointed to local leadership positions. However, negative perceptions on these changes are indicative of the progress that remains to be made.

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding networks

This study has identified seven main conflict resolution and peacebuilding actors and networks which play a crucial role in peacebuilding processes in South Sudan, namely (not in order of importance), local/boma chiefs, customary and statutory courts, churches and religious leaders, police forces, local NGOs/CSOs and WROs, schools, and finally, conflict resolution and peacebuilding commissions. The extent to which these networks respond to and incorporate the views and experiences of women vary widely. Local/boma chiefs are the main focal point for conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the community level, and women are commonly integrated in chieftain offices, although their role remains limited to addressing women-specific and family issues. Beyond evidence to support increasing engagement of women in chief roles, local chiefs' roles are limited in their ability to address gender inequality, manage instances of GBV, and get involved in youth project development, mostly due to a lack of resources, infrastructure, and support from public authorities and state actors.

Both customary courts and formal courts are male-dominated conflict resolution structures that present numerous limitations in terms of their inclusion of women. In rural areas, customary laws are applied by chiefs and where there is a restrictive environment both for reporting cases of GBV or social issues, and for obtaining fair rulings, as the handling of cases are conditioned by social relations, and biases. Access to formal justice for women is also limited, due to the lack of formal statutory courts in more rural areas, and perceived issues of corruption and bribery.

Churches and religious leaders are seen as legitimate and trusted peacebuilding actors, identified by survey respondents in Wau and Pariang as the most important category of actors for bringing peace in South Sudan. This level of influence can be explained by their connection to both the local and national level. At the community level, religious leaders are involved in activities aimed at empowering women and girls and addressing gender-specific issues including conducting awareness in communities and counselling in schools in regards to early and forced marriage, encouraging women's empowerment by introducing them to micro-finance and adult education for women. However, their power can be limited by conflicts of interests with chiefs, and lack of resources.

In Wau, police forces are also identified as peacebuilding actors, which are directly involved in the protection of women, with the Special Protection Unit (SPU) making a concerted effort to integrate women in positions of leadership, through training on GBV and women's concerns⁵. However, the absence of police

⁵ KII. Police. Wau, South Sudan.. January 2022

posts in some areas, widespread corruption and bribery, and issues of structurally inadequate service provision, such as the lack of a GBV hotline, create barriers to women's access to assistance.

Local NGOs/CSOs and WROs are flourishing across South Sudan, leading community-based activities including peacebuilding training, mentorship programmes, and lifesaving services to survivors of GBV, as well as establishing networks and collaborating with each other to empower women at the national level through various programmes. Most of the WROs interviewed as part of this study were founded by women and have female staff. However, such actors also face challenges including lack of resources and capacities, threats due to their advocacy work, limited coordination and sustainability which can hinder their impact.

Schools also play a key role in building peace in South Sudan, through their intrinsic education and social cohesion mission, but also through their involvement in more targeted peacebuilding initiatives. In addition, conflict resolution and peacebuilding commissions, such as the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC), are bodies which despite their specific mandate to solve disputes and promote reconciliation, face challenges stifling their impact on women's participation in peacebuilding. For example, the work of the Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Commission on women's inclusion in Pariang is pervaded by gendered stereotypes and cultural norms and a lack of financial support.

Mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding

A key finding of this study is the high level of awareness of mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the community level, and the diversity of these mechanisms. Local chiefs and elder councils were identified as the main actors on whom the community rely on for the resolution of different types of conflict, ranging from customary disputes to cases of homicide and rape. Local forums including community dialogue and peace committees, self-formed or assisted by INGOs, are also conflict resolution mechanisms which are present in communities. However, accessibility to women and youth and their mainstreaming of gender considerations is largely lacking, given the male-dominated nature of these institutions, which position women as observers rather than active participants, underrepresent issues that impact women and the expectation of community members that payment is required to gain access.

More indirectly, Village Savings Loan Associations (VSLAs) and small businesses also contribute to sustaining peace in communities by promoting women's economic empowerment and decreasing their vulnerability to early/forced marriages, but also by inducing a change of norms regarding traditional gender roles and in turn encouraging the development of positive masculinity. Similarly, training on business skills, livelihood activities (including for younger women) and job creation can have a transformative effect and address underlying causes of violence. Finally, creative outlets and radio talk shows can serve as a means to initiate participation and dialogue in peacebuilding through disseminating positive messages, and leveraging the transformative power of art and sport in primary and secondary schools. While these can have positive effects on peace and cohesion, dissemination of peace messaging is seen as restricted to urban centres, leaving rural communities with limited knowledge of women's rights.

Women and youth inclusion

Whilst women are active in conflict resolution at the household level, resolving family tensions and disputes, their participation in more formal peacebuilding efforts at higher levels is limited in scope and meaningfulness. Most survey respondents stated that in Wau and Pariang, women are mostly engaged in awareness raising, organising meetings and attending public hearings, and less so in activism and advocacy, and holding government positions. At the community level, despite enduring cultural norms, women are able to participate in peace processes in a limited way. This was noted through involvement in customary mechanisms such as chief councils/courts for example, or in a more passive way by attending dialogues and meetings and being involved in activities such as cooking. At the national level however, women are largely excluded from the peacebuilding space, partly due to nepotism, and accessibility issues. While some leadership positions are occupied by women at the national level, in general their roles remain limited in scope compared to their male counterparts.

Nonetheless, some improvements can be observed, as women increasingly engage in micro-businesses and income-generating activities, with reported dual effects. Women's economic empowerment was argued to decrease the vulnerability of women and girls to early/forced marriages. This is because of its ability to target underlying drivers, i.e. family pressure to marry to provide income and subsistence for the family and also the need to be supported by a husband to afford and access basic products. Economic empowerment, through VSLAs, business skills and trainings was also seen to be best case practice for inducing a change of traditional gender norms by men towards women. In this sense, economic empowerment helps to change the relationship between men and women, promote the legitimate role of women in roles outside of domestic duties and help develop positive masculinities whereby men support the role of women as it is mutually beneficial to eliminating poverty.

Whilst some male respondents mentioned a general improvement in communities and families thanks to increasing women's economic participation, a change in the balance of power can also create tensions and the changing role of women requires a conflict-sensitive approach to programming.

Youth voices are mostly excluded from local and national level peace processes. A lack of organised platforms to allow them to express their views and take on an active role, and limited economic opportunities, insecurity and limited capacity building limit both opportunities and the impact of the efforts undertaken by some youth organisations. Survey findings indicate that youth across Wau and Pariang most often cite being involved in awareness raising (64 and 73 percent respectively). Pariang youth more frequently reported involvement in mediation and negotiation and public hearings compared to youth in Wau. While those in Wau were more likely to report organising meetings and discussions and involvement in community dialogue.

Structural barriers

Structural barriers include deep rooted cultural beliefs, norms and attitudes such as early/forced marriage, the stigmatisation of survivors of sexual abuse, and the attribution of gender roles resting on preconceived ideas such as the emotionalism of women and the role of men as the head of household. These act to create power inequalities at the household and community level, which are reflected by exclusion at the level of decision-making and peacebuilding processes. For example, in both Wau and Pariang, the primary barrier reported was that home duties were prioritised over participation (63 percent and 65 percent

respectively). When disaggregating by gender, male respondents in Wau were more likely to report this than female respondents (70 percent vs. 55 percent), suggesting that traditional gender roles are crystallised from a male-perspective. This is further supported by the greater proportion of male respondents in Wau citing a barrier for women's participation is that their voices are subordinate to men's (47 percent of male respondents vs. 39 percent of female respondents). In Pariang, male and female respondents were equally likely to report home duties as the largest barrier to meaningful participation in peacebuilding.

Poverty is another structural factor leading to exclusion by causing limited access to education, or more directly a lack of access to transportation necessary to take part in community level peace processes. Women's low level of education and literacy has also been mentioned in KIIs as a key barrier to participation in peacebuilding activities, due to both real and perceived capacity and skills gaps and low awareness of their rights. In addition, limited technical capacity and insecurity challenge national-level engagement, especially in rural areas where freedom of movement is restricted during cycles of violence. This issue of insecurity is reinforced by challenges in the GBV referral system, reducing trust in staff and authorities and sustaining systemic abuse against women. Lastly, the lack of funding capital, including for micro-business activity directly hinders women's empowerment and the capacity of women's organisations and other actors such as ministries to implement women-focussed activities.

I.d Recommendations

Short-term

1. **Address impacts of GBV at the household level by empowering women and men with skills to manage and mitigate conflict with husbands.** This would include engaging with men and women from the same household on an individual level, to understand the causes of conflict between them, and then bringing them together to share perspectives and identify solutions, where this seems feasible and will not put women at risk.
2. **Continued advocacy and awareness raising among local leaders and authorities on GBV in Wau,** focusing specifically on (1) funding and resource management support for SPUs in Wau police station to reduce barriers to accessing assistance for GBV survivors, (2) develop platforms for community leaders (boma chiefs, religious leaders and WROs) to share best practices on GBV and strengthening role of local chiefs as first responders, (3) establish safe, accessible and reliable GBV hotlines with greater role awareness of healthcare providers, police forces and local chiefs and (4) establish Women and Girl Friendly Spaces to reduce insecurity, enable sharing of community issues and provide access to psychosocial support.
3. **Conduct advocacy to increase access of women to legal services.** Supporting WROs to establish dialogue with local chiefs and partnerships with South Sudanese lawyer associations and advocates of women's rights will serve to increase access to justice and build trust in court systems. Mapping of potential male change-agents within the justice sector could further build on some initial successes of WROs in using male champions to improve access to justice. Emphasis should be on ensuring women's access to legal advice on land rights, divorce, and GBV.

4. **Develop gender-sensitive conflict sensitivity indicators, taking guidance from UNDP and International Alert in Myanmar.** These should include both context and interaction indicators designed to monitor changes in the context in areas of programme implementation, and interactions between the programme intervention and the context, as well as indicators to evaluate whether conflict sensitivity was taken into account throughout the programme.

Long-term

1. **Develop mentorship and capacity-building programmes for identified youth and women with requisite education to gain leadership experience at the state or national level.** Provide financial support to educated young women to undertake internships within key ministries, followed by subsidising their salaries for a fixed period, should ministries be willing to offer them employment.
2. **Capacity building of local organisations to enable them to better meet the needs of women and girls affected by conflict.** Focus should be on (1) identifying and supporting WRO's with the technical capacity to expand their reach and operations into Pariang, in order to increase access to life-saving assistance and women's rights services and (2) supporting youth organisations to engage decision-makers by facilitating inter-generational dialogue where children and youth can share their experiences, discuss their issues and break down social divides that position youth as instigators of community-level conflict. Youth radio and inter-generational dialogue are two mechanisms that can work to break down social divides and build social cohesion.
3. **Expand economic empowerment activities for women in a conflict-sensitive manner.** Form VSLA groups in areas where these currently do not exist, provide microfinance, vocational training, or small-scale business initiatives to empower women. This should be done in parallel with three streams of activities:
 - a. **Parallel awareness raising for women and young women on the purpose of economic empowerment** to increase awareness of women's rights and influence greater uptake and participation in activities, particularly in Pariang.
 - b. **Household conflict management workshops between husbands and wives.** Include male counterparts in workshops (husbands) to showcase the added value of women's participation in economic activities and encourage joint decision-making on the use of finance to reduce family tensions and exposure to GBV.
 - c. **Intergenerational dialogues with families/parents to reshape the 'social value' of women and girls and the status of young men beyond their marital status.** Highlight the impact of leadership skills and business activities of women and young girls that aim to reshape perspectives on the value of women and girls in terms of dowry prices and their contribution to the family.
4. **Pursue strategic partnerships with WROs to enable them to extend their services to female and male community members in a sustainable fashion.** Engage donors to provide flexible, multi-year funding and reduce administrative procedures to fund staff salaries and build capacity of WROs to more formally engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the national level through attendance of events and advocacy.

II. Introduction & Background

Since its independence from Sudan in mid-2011, South Sudan has experienced a protracted conflict that has led to a significant number of deaths, reduced quality of life, mass displacement, and elevated poverty levels. Two years after its independence from Sudan, the country officially entered into a civil war that lasted until 2018 when a major peace agreement - the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed by parties to the conflict.

Notwithstanding, the parties have done little to implement the peace agreement further prolonging the conflict. In 2020, a coalition government was formed to bring together the two main actors in the conflict with the World Bank arguing that this presented an opportunity and hope for 'recovery and peacebuilding.'⁶ As of 2022, South Sudan remains to be a conflict-affected country where the risk of escalation is high. Mass displacement has been one of the consequences of the conflict and a 2018 report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) shows that 85 percent of those displaced were women and children.⁷ Additionally, the intersectionality of issues such as patriarchal systems, GBV and poor economic conditions, interconnect with conflict and exacerbate its impact on women.

South Sudan is ranked 163rd out of 168 countries in the 2019/2020 Women Peace and Security Index⁸ and dropped two spaces to 165 out of 170 countries in the 2021/2022 Index⁹. In the period between the start of the civil war in 2013 and the signing of the second peace agreement in 2018, the National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2019) reported that women were subjected to widespread forms of GBV. These violations included rape, abductions, and bodily harm, among others, and were perpetrated by both parties to the conflict. The government report argues that as a result of these violations, "trauma, stigma, abandonment, death, isolation, HIV/AIDS, and unwanted pregnancies"¹⁰ are some of the serious consequences that women and girls have to live with in the country. Outside the direct effects of conflict, women and girls still have to live with other forms of gender-based discrimination, such as intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs that are skewed against them.

Caught up in the middle of South Sudan's conflicts are women and girls, who have limited space to take part in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. While women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict, men and boys have also been significantly affected, with specific vulnerabilities. Child soldiers, mainly boys, are often on the forefront of conflict as soldiers and thus miss out on children's rights such as education. A report by Oxfam found that young men in Pibor who are not married are often marginalised and denied access to decision making systems. The report also argued that marginalisation of young men based on their marital status has led to a loss of sense of purpose and "increased [their]

⁶ World Bank (2022) The World Bank in South Sudan. Overview. 21 April 2022. [Link](#)

⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics and South Sudan. Ministry of General Education and Instruction (2018) Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: South Sudan country study. [Link](#)

⁸ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo (2019) Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20: Tracking sustainable peace through inclusion, justice, and security for women. Washington, DC: GIWPS and PRIO. [Link](#)

⁹ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo (2021) Women, Peace, and Security Index 2021/22: Tracking sustainable peace through inclusion, justice, and security for women. Washington, DC: GIWPS and PRIO. [Link](#)

¹⁰ Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). National Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2019). [Link](#)

disposition to use violent means to compensate for not being able to live up to the societal expectations of masculinity.”¹¹ While the report focuses on Pibor, rigid gender norms are likely replicated across Wau and Pariang, with ingrained characteristics of masculinity shaping male experiences of structural violence and impacting opportunities to resolve and mitigate conflict.

The numerous ongoing peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts by both national and international actors have been heavily male dominated. The low participation of women in peacebuilding stands in contrast to the well-documented importance of their participation in peace and conflict resolution at the local and national level for durable solutions.¹²¹³ Whilst progress has been made in including women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, most of the literature also points to the significant challenges and gaps in spaces for women to take part in these processes. The foremost barrier to their participation is the patriarchal nature of South Sudanese society, where the role of women and men is defined by traditional social norms. Women are relegated to traditional duties such as childbearing, domestic chores and taking care of their husbands. Furthermore, research indicates that about 80 per cent of South Sudanese women are illiterate¹⁴ and with an estimated population of 11.4 million, very few women can take active roles in peacebuilding in an official capacity at the national level.

The projected population of Wau County for 2020 stood at 314,949 and the projected population of Pariang stood at 127,465 for the same year.¹⁵ Wau is ethnically diverse, with Balanda Viri, Balanda Bor, Luo/Jur Chol and Dinka communities. The majority of the host community and IDP populations in Pariang are Dinka, with the county also hosting refugees from Sudan.¹⁶

In Wau and Pariang Counties, women are similarly faced with a highly patriarchal society, which severely limits their decision-making roles and overall agency and autonomy. Their economic opportunities remain very restricted, and they have little to no say in reproductive decisions.¹⁷ Women in Wau - particularly those who are single, widowed, divorced, older and/or live with disabilities - also face socio-economic violence with regard to land rights, as access to land is still regulated largely by traditional male elders.¹⁸

Further, the legal system in place to ensure free and safe participation of women in not just peacebuilding and conflict resolution, but also in other spaces, such as advocacy against SGBV, is inconsistent. While the Penal Code prohibits rape and sex with anyone under the age of 18, it does not prevent spousal rape, including of a spouse, who is a minor. However, the Transitional Constitution, the Local Government Act and the Child Act do prohibit sex with minors, and as the Transitional Constitution overrides all other

¹¹ Oxfam. (2018). Toxic Masculinity as a Driver for Gender-Based Violence: Findings from Research in Pibor, Boma State. p.7.

¹² Wasara, S., S. (2018). Entry Points and Opportunities for Women's Participation in Decision Making Relating to Peace Building. Catholic Relief Services. Pp.48-51. [Link](#).

¹³ Pelham, S. (2020) Born to Lead: Recommendations on increasing women's participation in South Sudan's peace process. *Oxfam International*, 29 January 2020. [Link](#); Mai, N. J. H. (2015) The Role of Women in Peace-building in South Sudan. *Juba: The Sudd Institution*. [Link](#).

¹⁴ Borgen Project. (28 March 2021). The Equal Rights and Access for the Women of South Sudan Act. The Borgen Project. Available at: [Link](#). Accessed on 15 March 2022

¹⁵ Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility South Sudan. Available at: https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county_profile/wau/

¹⁶ Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility South Sudan. Available at: https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county_profile/pariang/

¹⁷ Kane et al. (2016) Social norms and family planning decisions in South Sudan. *BMC Public Health*. Vol.16(1183). [Link](#).

¹⁸ Antonio, D. et al. (2020) Working to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals Through Enhancing Women's Access to Land in Post Conflict Context: the Case of Wau State in South Sudan. *Fig Working Week 2020*. [Link](#)

legislations, any laws that are inconsistent with this are therefore void.¹⁹ Moreover, the government of South Sudan signed and ratified the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2014. However, the implementation of the convention has been lacking with persisting GBV cases and low representation of women in the political and peacebuilding space.

In support of CARE International's two-year project 'Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls as a Catalyst for Peace' that seeks to promote gender-responsive stabilization and recovery of conflict-affected women, men, girls and boys in Wau and Pariang, Bodhi Global Analysis undertook research to assess and map the current conflict dynamics and gender norms, actors and networks involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and their inclusion of women and youth, the roles, and activities designated to women and youth in peacebuilding and structural barriers to respond to GBV and participation in peacebuilding processes. This research piece will help to identify existing networks, mechanisms and activities for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in South Sudan with a focus in Wau and Pariang counties, and the inclusion of women and youth in these networks and mechanisms. Specifically, the study critically examines gender roles and the power dynamics in conflict resolutions and local peacebuilding processes as well as the roles and capacities of WROs to respond to GBV. The study aimed to address the following research objectives:

1. What are the sources and drivers of conflict and community gender norms?
2. What conflict resolution and local peace building networks for women and youth exists?
3. What mechanisms exist in the communities for conflict resolution and how are women, youth and vulnerable groups involved?
4. What areas of conflict resolution and peacebuilding work are assigned to or do women and youth take part in? What decision-making/leadership roles do women assume?
5. What are some of the structural barriers both formal and informal that limit women and youth's participation in the peace building process.

III. Methodology

To meet the objectives of the study, a mixed methods research approach was adopted making use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Additionally, both primary and secondary data were used to inform the findings and to develop the recommendations.

The research team at Bodhi Global Analysis completed a comprehensive systematic analysis of literature from South Sudan, Juba, Wau and Pariang including international and national news sources, academic literature, reports from (I)NGOs and other government agencies.

In addition, the team also undertook primary data collection across two counties, outlined below:

- **Western Bahr el-Ghazal:** Wau County
- **Ruweng Administrative Area:** Pariang County

¹⁹ Human Rights Initiative. (2017). Legal Provisions Relating to Gender Equality and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in South Sudan. p.6. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Legal%20Provisions%20Gender%20Equality%20and%20SGBV%20in%20South%20Sudan%202017.pdf>

III.a Data Collection

In-person data collection took place between 5th January - 22nd February 2022. Across the two counties, 18 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), a household level survey involving 847 (562 surveys in Wau and 285 in Pariang) participants and 32 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted. In addition to the above, six Organisational Capacity Assessments (OCA) were conducted with women’s organisations across Juba and Wau to investigate the activities, needs and gaps for WROs. For Do No Harm and research ethics purposes, the survey only targeted people above the age of 18. The data were integrated with findings from the desk review.

The household survey was a non-probabilistic survey that utilised systematic random selection of respondents. The study team was provided a list of Payams and neighbourhoods in which CARE was prioritising focus, and then initially allocated interviews proportional to the Payam population. This initial allocation was then revised, due to operational limitations (See [VII. Limitations](#)).

To that end, the survey is not representative or generalizable to the County population. Within target neighbourhoods, households were selected using a randomly selected starting point and fixed interval household selection from this starting point. Within households, respondents were selected using the Next Birthday method. The survey demographics follow.

Table 1: Survey demographics by Location

Demographic		Wau	Pariang
County	Frequency	562	285
	Percentage	66%	34%
Sex			
Male	Frequency	292	134
	Percentage	52%	47%
Female	Frequency	270	151
	Percentage	48%	53%
Education			
None	Frequency	129	173
	Percentage	23%	61%
Up to Primary	Frequency	259	85
	Percentage	46%	30%
Up to Secondary	Frequency	140	20
	Percentage	25%	7%
Other	Frequency	34	5

	Percentage	6%	2%
Employment Status			
Salaried	Frequency	67	74
	Percentage	12%	26%
Irregular	Frequency	112	80
	Percentage	20%	28%
Self-employed	Frequency	208	68
	Percentage	37%	24%
Unemployed	Frequency	67	31
	Percentage	12%	11%
Other	Frequency	107	34
	Percentage	19%	12%
Displacement Status			
IDP/Refugee	Frequency	169	3
	Percentage	30%	1%
Host	Frequency	393	279
	Percentage	70%	98%
Refuse/Don't know	Frequency	0	3
	Percentage	0%	1%

Table 2: Focus Group and Key Informant Interview Sample by Location

Focus Group and Key Informant Sample			
	Wau	Pariang	Total
Focus Group Discussions	Women's Organisation x 1 Female Youth x 3 Female Adult x 1 Total: 5	Female Adult x 4 Female Youth x 3 Male Adult x 5 Male Youth x 1 Total: 13	18
Key Informant Interviews	4 x Boma Chief 1 x UN Women 1 x Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare 1 x Ministry of Peacebuilding (Juba) 1 x Wau Police (SPU) 9 x Women's Organisations	1 x Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Commission 1 x Peace and Reconciliation Commission 5 x Boma Chief 1 x Ministry of Education 1 x Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare 1 x Ministry of Information 2 x Teachers (primary & secondary)	32

	Total: 17	1 x Religious Leader 1 x Women's Leader 1 x Youth Leader Total: 15	
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IV. Findings and Discussions

IV.b Sources and drivers of conflict and community gender dynamics

The drivers of conflict in South Sudan are multifaceted and to an extent interconnected. Youth, particularly women and girls are often at the centre of both the drivers of conflict and the impacts of violence nationally and across Wau and Pariang. While at the national level there is a perception of relative peace from a security perspective, internal conflicts linked to cattle raiding and revenge killings continue to cause large-scale displacement at the community level in Pariang, triggered by high bride prices (dowry).²⁰ Findings from the household survey found that three-quarters (76 percent) of respondents in Pariang identified cattle raiding as the most common cause of conflict. Young men are often those involved in fighting or crime, dropping out of school in order to be able to afford bride prices due to early or forced marriage. Early marriage persists across both Wau and Pariang with a UNICEF publication noting that 52% of girls in the country get married before the age of 18 years.²¹ Key informants noted that early marriage is driven by the need for bride price²² with girls as young as 10-12 years old being married off for wealth or to enable families to afford food. This has reinforced attitudes in which women are seen as property/wealth.

At present, there is limited space to change attitudes by encouraging women to reject bride prices borne from cattle raiding, given the limited credibility afforded to female perspectives across the communities. Other drivers of conflict were related to stealing (71 percent in Wau and 66 percent in Pariang), adultery (23 percent in Wau and 60 percent in Pariang), GBV (34 percent in Wau and 15 percent in Pariang) and tribal disputes and tensions, often linked to land conflicts and encroachment from neighbouring communities over access to grazing areas, water points and fishing areas (see Figure 1).

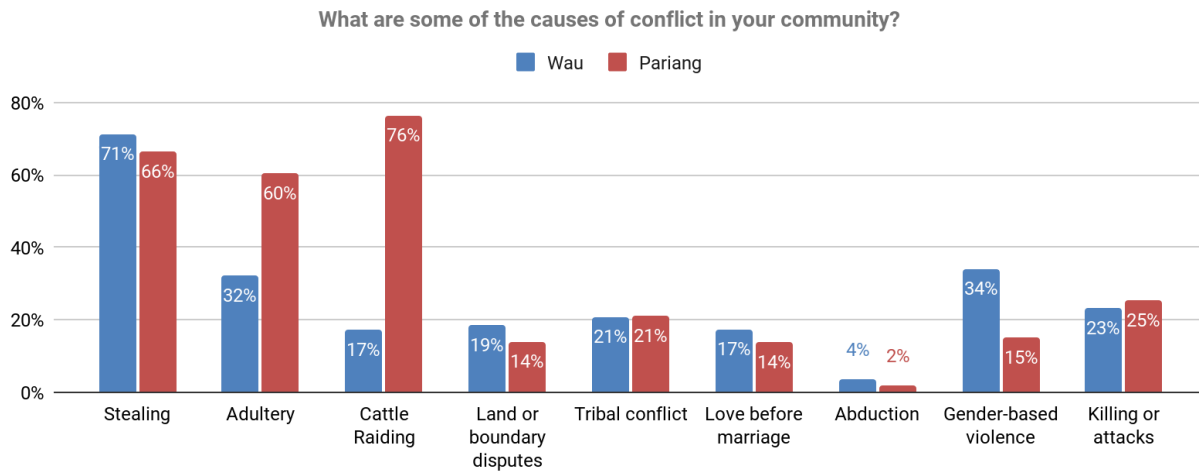
In Wau, women were more likely to report tribal conflict (27 percent vs. 15 percent of male respondents), stealing (78 percent vs. 66 percent of males) and killing (29 percent vs. 18 percent of males), less likely to report land or boundary disputes and less likely to state conflict does not occur. In Pariang, male and female respondents largely identified the same causes of conflict in their communities, with one notable exception: women were more likely to report adultery than male respondents (64 percent vs. 56 percent).

²⁰ UNDP (2020) Understanding Youth Subcultures in South Sudan: Implications for Peace. Available at: [Link](#)

²¹ UNICEF. (2020). Some things are not fit for children – marriage is one of them. UNICEF. Available at: [Link](#)

²² KIIs held in Juba AIWE, Juba; KII Women for Change

Figure 1: Causes of conflict in Wau and Pariang²³



At the household level, violence against women and girls (VAWG) is pervasive and is generally seen to have increased in both Wau and Pariang, coinciding with heightened tensions over cattle-raiding at the time of data collection (see Figure 2).²⁴ Besides the direct impact of cattle-raiding, pre-existing traditional norms and gender roles intersect with increased financial pressures on households, leading to instances of IPV. The findings indicate that this takes multiple forms, including fighting between parents over shifting cultural practices and changing roles and responsibilities of children²⁵, disagreements over lack of resources to pay for school fees and increased dependency of women on their husbands to pay for goods, e.g. sanitary products not provided for by their families.²⁶ These dynamics raise the risk of exposure to abuse by their partner. Increasing reports of drug and alcohol abuse are seen to exacerbate violence in the home with women exposed to beatings when their husbands are drunk. Drug and alcohol issues are believed to have become more widespread due to vested interests of state officials and public authorities in the alcohol industry companies. Women are also seen to play a less passive role in driving conflict, particularly in relation to cattle-raiding where they may motivate children to go cattle-raiding, throw celebrations for successful cattle raids or provide tacit support for fighting by providing water to young men and husbands who are going to take part in fighting.²⁷

²³ Household level data collection conducted between 17 January and In Wau, n=562, in Pariang, n=285

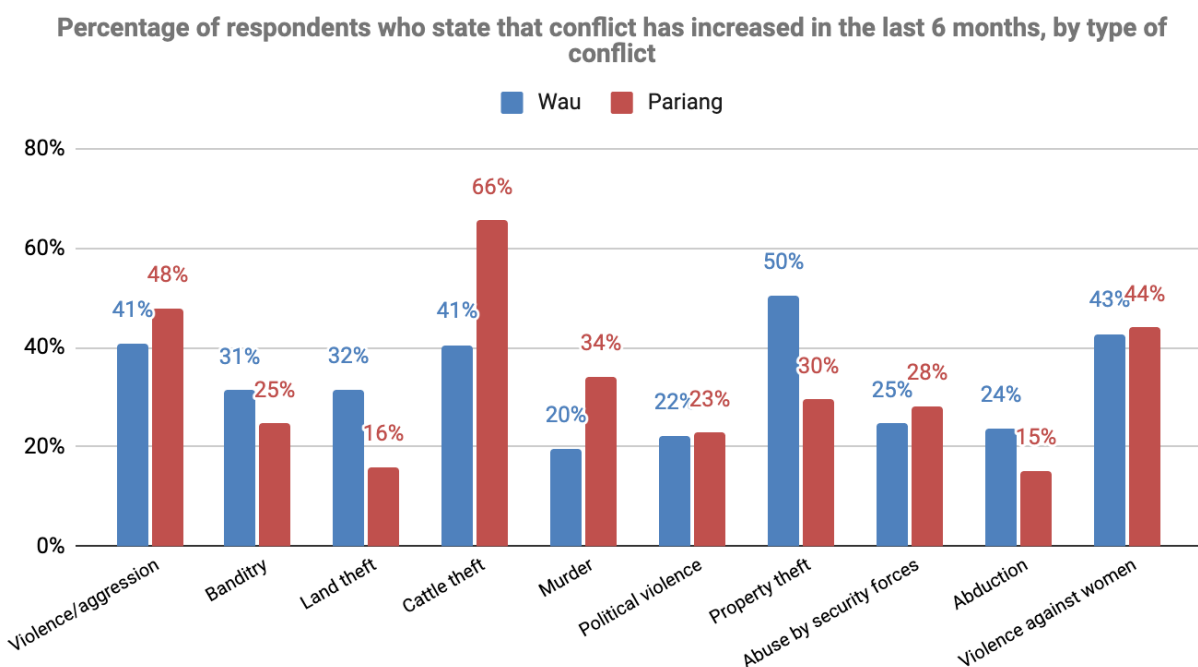
²⁴ Data collection in Pariang was delayed due to an escalation in inter-communal violence that led to increased restrictions on freedom of movement and heightened insecurity and instability.

²⁵ For instance, boys moving to towns and no longer fulfilling their expectation of tending to cattle, girls dropping out of education due to pregnancy, fathers disinclined to send their daughters to school for fear of 'spoiling them' and refusal to do domestic duties and chores at home.

²⁶ FGD Female. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022.

²⁷ KII. HRSS. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

Figure 2: Changes in conflict dynamics in Wau and Pariang in the last 6 months²⁸



Across both Wau and Pariang, female respondents were significantly more likely to report that most forms of violence had increased compared to male respondents. In particular, murder/killing, political violence, abuse by security forces, abduction and violence against women were reported at much higher rates in Wau while property theft, abuse by security forces and abduction had the highest differences in Pariang (see Table 5).

Table 3: Percentage of respondents who state that conflict has increased in the last 6 months by gender and type of conflict

	Wau / Male	Wau / Female	Pariang / Male	Pariang / Female
Violence/aggression	36% (72)	46% (93)	46% (52)	50% (58)
Banditry	27% (43)	37% (45)	19% (16)	31% (24)
Corruption	35% (72)	40% (72)	39% (41)	47% (54)
Land theft	30% (57)	33% (53)	13% (13)	19% (20)
Cattle theft	37% (35)	45% (34)	64% (83)	67% (100)
Murder	11% (11)	29% (24)	33% (36)	35% (46)
Political violence	14% (15)	33% (29)	17% (16)	28% (29)
Property theft	49% (111)	52% (120)	23% (23)	36% (42)
Abuse by security forces	16% (26)	37% (41)	21% (17)	35% (30)
Abduction	11% (7)	35% (24)	7% (4)	24% (12)
Violence against women	37% (83)	49% (112)	41% (43)	47% (56)

²⁸ Household level data collection conducted between 17 January and In Wau, n=562, in Pariang, n=285

Table 4: What impact does violent conflict have on women in your area?

		Wau / Female	Pariang / Female
Death or killing	Percentage	45%	49%
	Frequency	119	73
Displacement from home	Percentage	44%	52%
	Frequency	116	77
Death of family member/loved one	Percentage	30%	47%
	Frequency	79	70
Displacement from livelihood activity	Percentage	24%	18%
	Frequency	63	27
SGBV	Percentage	42%	23%
	Frequency	111	34
Fear of leaving home	Percentage	31%	46%
	Frequency	82	68
Other	Percentage	16%	2%
	Frequency	42	3

Sexual violence is the most prevalent form of GBV in Wau and there have been reported cases of women being raped when they go out of their homes, camps/PoC sites to collect firewood.²⁹ Forced and early marriage and controlling women's access to resources have also been identified as common forms of GBV in Wau.³⁰ Perpetrators of GBV marrying their victims has been noted to encourage 'violence and impunity, and denies victims their right to pursue justice'.³¹ In Pariang, the main forms of GBV reported in focus groups were restricted access to work or livelihood opportunities due to insecurity in the area and large distances travelled to reach cultivation areas, displacement - which leads to greater vulnerability for pregnant women due to regular movement and insecurity, sexual violence including rape, limited joint decision-making,³² forced and early marriage due to decisions being taken by men, assault and killing of young women and girls and fleeing homes.

³³Traditional gender roles remain deeply ingrained. A report by CARE International in 2021³⁴ highlights how cultural and gender norms create an unequal playing field where men have an unfair advantage in the participation in peacebuilding. This manifests primarily through the division of labour within communities that relegates women's roles to the domestic arena whereby they are responsible for fetching water, cooking, taking care of children, teaching children, collecting firewood and cultivating and cutting grass while men look after cattle, build farming infrastructure and mobilise for community protection. As heads of household, the expectation is that men make final decisions in most matters of daily life.

²⁹ Saferworld. (2020). "It is like another war": confronting GBV amid COVID-19 in South Sudan. SaferWorld. Available at: [Link](#)

³⁰ Saferworld. (2019). Addressing peace and safety concerns in Wau, South Sudan. Saferworld. p.3 Available at: [Link](#)

³¹ Ibid p.3

³² Joint decision-making in other countries has been shown to reduce IPV, see Zegenhagen, Ranganathan and Buller (2019): [Link](#)

³³ Female Adult and Youth FGDs, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022.

³⁴ CARE International (2021) WORKING PAPER ON PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTH SUDAN. [Link](#)

Women in Pariang are excluded from making decisions over marriage or the sale of cows, both of which are key dynamics underpinning cycles of GBV. Within agriculture, women are excluded from certain practices, for example cultivating cash crops such as tomatoes and sweet potatoes, instead they are assigned cultivation of crops for consumption for the family. This indicates the extent of male control over means of production with implications for self-sufficiency and financial independence.³⁵ This is corroborated by prevailing social attitudes in the household survey which found that 69 per cent and 89 percent of respondents in Wau and Pariang respectively believe that women’s most important roles are to take care of the home and children.

Prevailing social attitudes around women feed into and shape beliefs around the normalisation of GBV. Across Wau and Pariang, there was strong agreement among communities surveyed that women should sometimes tolerate violence in order to keep her family together (73 percent agreement in Wau and 82 percent in Pariang) (Table 7).

Table 5: “Women should sometimes tolerate violence in order to keep her family together”, by location and gender

		Wau / Male	Wau / Female	Pariang / Male	Pariang / Female
Agree	Percentage	75%	71%	82%	82%
	Frequency	220	191	109	125
Disagree	Percentage	24%	28%	18%	17%
	Frequency	70	75	24	26
Don't know	Percentage	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Frequency	3	3	0	1
Sample Base		293	269	133	152

Some exceptions to traditional gender norms roles were identified, though changing roles of women and youth in communities were often met with mixed reception. Notable deviations and developments to the dynamics identified above were highlighted throughout Wau and Pariang. For instance, in cases where the husband is not available at home (due to death or long periods of time spent away from the homestead) women/wives can take charge of household tasks that are traditionally designated to men/husbands.³⁶ In Pariang, a FGD noted that this often occurs through the expressed devolution of responsibility from the husband to the wife, requiring approval from men, though there is some evidence to suggest a more equitable division of roles takes place on an ad-hoc basis with both men and women sharing roles that were traditionally designated to a certain gender.³⁷ One KII noted that “nowadays the world has changed and I cook for the children when my wife is away”.³⁸ There are women leaders (see [IV.d Roles and Inclusion of Women and Youth](#)) denoting a change in attitudes and increased participation/shift in participation of women in roles traditionally undertaken by men.

Local chiefs acknowledged changes to the role of women and youth in their community, though usually from a negative perspective where they no longer performed their expected roles and responsibilities. For

³⁵ KII WDG. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

³⁶ Male adult FGD. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

³⁷ Male Adult Community Members FGD. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

³⁸ KII. Community Leader. Wau, South Sudan. February 2022

example, boys leaving the boma to stay in towns results in them no longer tending to cattle, education was reported to make it more difficult for men in the community to fulfil their roles as boys would not support in income-generation,³⁹ and education was a double-edged sword - girls dropping out of schools causes conflict within families but several male participants highlighted how schooling 'spoiled' girls.

IV.b Conflict resolution and peacebuilding actors and networks

At the national-level, women's involvement during the R-ARCSS negotiations and their representation through platforms and commissions established to oversee the implementation of the Revitalised Peace Agreement by the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) is well documented.⁴⁰ A report by Oxfam (2020) documents six modalities by which women engage in national-level peacebuilding processes, each with varying implications for the quality of meaningful and transformative participation. These are namely: observer status, direct representation at negotiations, consultations, inclusive commissions, high-level problem-solving commissions and mass action.⁴¹ Despite the progress made in assigning roles and positions of leadership to women at the national level, concerns abound over the developments in equitable social norms and structures that are simply not gender-sensitive but respond to and transform the underlying distributions of power that act to marginalise women's voices and experiences. Feedback from the R-RARCSS process identified concerns over mediation that failed to prioritise space for the contribution of women groups, continuous sexual harassment during negotiations and competition for international funding.

Beyond the national level, across South Sudan, there are limited government structures for peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the local level, with community members navigating a network of grassroots actors to access justice for GBV and to develop community-level peace. The presence and activity of these actors and networks in Wau and Pariang are presented below and the degree to which they respond to and incorporate the views and experiences of women are assessed.⁴²

Local/boma chiefs

Local chiefs⁴³ have played a central role in local peacebuilding efforts, often being identified as the entry-point for local community peace programming. However, boma chiefs have experienced reduced legitimacy, limited state support and often straddle complex positions in either facilitating conflict or in

³⁹ FGD. Male Community Members, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

⁴⁰ Examples include the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring and Verification mechanism Board (CTSAMM), Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Joint Military Ceasefire Committee (JMCC) and Joint Transitional Security Committee (JTCS), the latter two offering no female representation. Oxfam (2020)

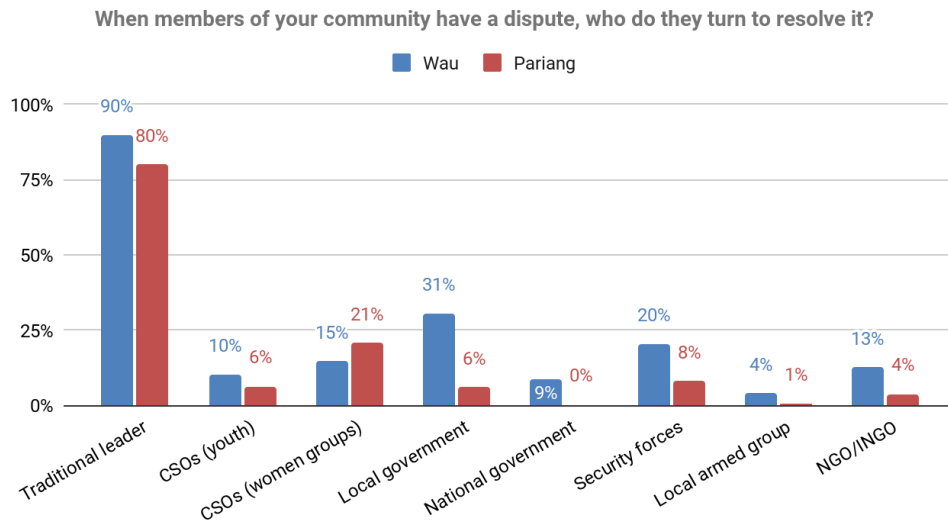
⁴¹ Soma, S. (2020). Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's National Peace Processes, 2005 to 2018. Oxfam, UN women and Born to Lead. Available at: [Link](#)

⁴² For the purposes of this report, peacebuilding and conflict resolution networks refers to the actors on-the-ground in Wau and Pariang who are responding to community-level violence and GBV. This includes local chiefs and customary courts, religious leaders, youth leaders, police forces, NGOs, women's rights organisations (WROs), healthcare facilities and educational facilities which were identified by CARE International in their key informant stakeholder list shared with the consultant. Broader national level networks, campaigns and forums such as South Sudan Women's Coalition for Peace (SSWC) and Youth Peace Network fall outside the scope of the assessment.

⁴³ This report interchangeably refers to local community chiefs as boma chiefs, community leaders and sultans.

reducing or responding to violence.⁴⁴ Communities are heavily reliant on boma chiefs to resolve local disputes and conflict, with 90 percent of respondents in Wau and 80 percent of respondents in Pariang identifying local chiefs as the actor they turn to in order to resolve disputes (see Figure 3). Chiefs in Wau and Pariang are responsible for directly addressing complaints, arresting perpetrators of violence, mediating with public authorities such as Mayors, dealing with youth issues such as the rising use of drugs and alcohol abuse, responding to GBV and raising awareness amongst the community to reduce community and GBV.

Figure 3: Actors the community turn to for conflict and dispute resolution



Local Chief seats account for female positions and a degree of gender parity in appointments though emphasis remains on dealing with women-specific issues. Many of the Chiefs offices in Wau and Pariang were mixed gender. For example, in Bazia Jadid, the Chief’s office has eight members, three of which are female positions. Across several research sites, women were designated as deputy chiefs, while in other cases they held more administrative roles such as treasurer or secretary (see Table 2). Mirroring developments of women’s inclusion in national-level institutions, it is unclear the degree to which these roles are transformative, with findings indicating that women are often earmarked to handle women’s affairs and family issues in which male chiefs feel less equipped to respond to. Furthermore, the positive role of women in chieftain seats was often referenced in relation to the impact it had on the ability of the male chief to execute his work, e.g. in one boma in Wau, a newly instated chief remarked that female community members were instrumental in advocacy on behalf of his chieftaincy position during divisive community elections. Notwithstanding, there was evidence of capacity building and more substantial engagement of women in chief roles, for example during invitations to engage in training the chief would divide the roles equally among men and women to attend and participate in the training.

⁴⁴ McCrone F. & Bridge Network. (2021). The War(s) in South Sudan: Local Dimensions of Conflict, Governance, and the Political Marketplace. *The Conflict Research Programme*. The London School of Economics and Political Science and the Conflict Research Programme. Available at: [Link](#)

Table 6: Composition of local chief courts in Wau and Pariang

County	Boma	Composition of local chief court	Roles designated to female members
Pariang	Guengalath	5 chief court members (2 females and 3 males)	Women have decision-making and ruling power in chief courts
Pariang	Kumagone	7 chief court members (3 females and 4 males)	Experienced issues with members dropping out
Pariang	Man Aguer	15 chief court members (6 females, 9 males)	Women hold treasurer and secretary positions (controlling finances) and also contribute during rulings, though it is unclear if this is only on matters concerning other women.
Pariang	Wau Kok	5 chief court members (3 females and 2 males)	Support conflict resolution and one female member supports by managing finances for the committee. Women's inclusion is perceived to assist in resolving issues more easily.
Pariang	Kong	2 female court members	Enforcing laws, community rulings
Wau	Agok	2 females + 1 deputy	Deputy chief assists in mediating disputes though with specific reference to women-specific issues, while the other two positions have no specific activities (mainly attributed to lack of resources)

Chiefs' capacities to address gender inequality and GBV is limited by a) limited engagement with government actors b) lack of finance to mobilise communities for awareness raising on gender or youth issues and c) severe capacity gaps at all stages of the GBV referral mechanism in Wau South, e.g. in police stations and healthcare centres. During the KIIs, the majority of the chiefs in Wau and Pariang mentioned strained relationships with public authorities and state institutions, for example a lack of support from city councils, mayors and state ministries such as the Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare (MoGCSW) when addressing GBV. Government was seen to assign work for local chiefs in the

community but without clear rules and guidelines on how to handle cases. The ‘invisible hand’ of discrimination at the state level appears to play a role in the ability of chiefs to address gender inequality. In non-Dinka areas, local chiefs highlighted how they had organised to draft a local policy on rape and sexual abuse that was submitted for approval but the state legislative assembly had not been formed during the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) and the documents had not been passed. This has led the chiefs themselves to adopt it as a guiding framework without institutional backing.

The paucity of funding and government engagement has acted to impede activities to empower women, manage instances of GBV or coordinate with other peacebuilding actors to mitigate violent conflict in the region, resulting in over-reliance on support received from humanitarian actors. For example, a deputy chief in Wau noted how they had the idea of working with chiefs from other locations but the main challenge is that they don’t have space for other chiefs to come for meetings and discussions. Without the infrastructural support for chiefs to gather, coordination is largely left to the individual efforts and initiative of local chiefs who offer their personal houses for meeting spaces or utilising women and girl friendly spaces (WGFS) where they exist. Instead, chiefs work with NGOs like CARE International to teach community members to stop harmful traditional practices and advise on eliminating discriminatory practices. Similarly, chiefs noted the lack of cash to support youth project development. In the absence of youth centres to tackle youth ‘idleness’, chiefs were concerned about escalations in drug abuse and harm when youth are not enrolled in schools or vocational skills training. One Boma Chief reported speaking to the Mayor of Wau about this twice, but without results.

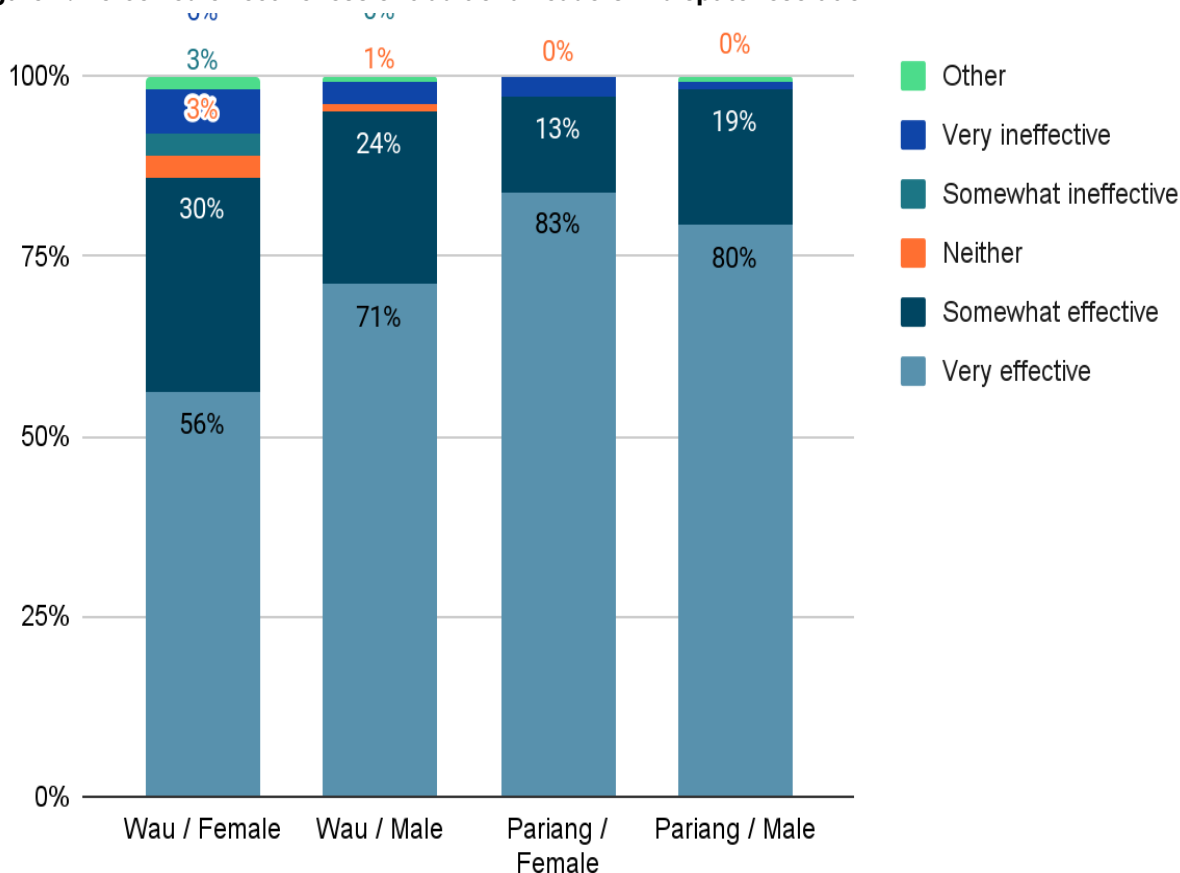
Furthermore, while overall sentiment towards the MoGCSW was generally positive by local chiefs, the relationship is limited. In the absence of a specific budget line for MoGCSW implementation, their activities are greatly limited to site visitations. The Director General of the MoGCSW acknowledged that the ministries “activities are a drop in the ocean” due to severe restrictions on their mobility and funding gaps.⁴⁵ This causes delays in responding to GBV cases reported by chiefs. GBV hotlines were seen as a critical element for the timely reporting of rape cases in Jebel Kher and Agok, Wau South, as at present, cases that occur at night time were reported to police stations in the morning (see section below on [Police](#)) and chiefs had established direct communication with ambulance drivers at health facilities.

Findings from FGDs indicate that female community members have a relatively high degree of trust to and feel supported by local chiefs: “In most cases, chiefs stand by our side and support us with social problems. If the case needs to be referred to the high court in Wau, the chief will show us the procedures to follow”.⁴⁶ This is supported by findings from the household survey whereby 82 percent of respondents in Pariang and 64 percent in Wau find traditional leaders ‘very effective’ in resolving community-level conflict. However, female respondents in Wau were less likely to feel that traditional leaders and community elders were *effective* in resolving community-level conflict and peacebuilding (56 percent of female respondents compared to 71 percent of male respondents reported that traditional leaders were ‘very effective’ in resolving conflict).

⁴⁵ KII interview with Director-General of Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare. Juba 25 January 2022.

⁴⁶ FGD Female Youth, Bazia Jadid, Wau. 22 January 2022

Figure 4: Perceived effectiveness of traditional leaders in dispute resolution



This is likely impacted by weaknesses in the referral pathway system for reporting GBV, whereby police forces, court systems, healthcare provision and state authorities experience significant capacity gaps in ensuring justice is achieved once the issue has been raised by the chief. Women in Wau noted that the community does not know when or where to report GBV cases: “it [reporting of GBV] used to happen but people don’t know how to report the cases. The agencies need to carry out a massive awareness raising activity in Bazia Jadid to ensure women in the boma are familiar with GBV cases. Only Hai Kosti has a WGFS and we need one so we can conduct awareness raising here.”⁴⁷

Churches and religious leaders

Consistent with findings from USIP (2019), religious actors are seen as holding legitimacy and influence in working towards peace in South Sudan.⁴⁸ Respondents in the household survey overwhelmingly identified religious actors, institutions and faith-based actors as the most important actors for bringing peace, across both Wau and Pariang (see Figure 5).

⁴⁷ FGD Female Youth, Bazia Jadid, Wau. 22 January 2022

⁴⁸ In USIP’s 2018-2019 study on religious actors and institutions in South Sudan, 82 percent of respondents reported that they turn to religious leaders for guidance when they have a problem. [Link](#)

Figure 5: Perceptions of the most important actor for bringing peace to South Sudan by location

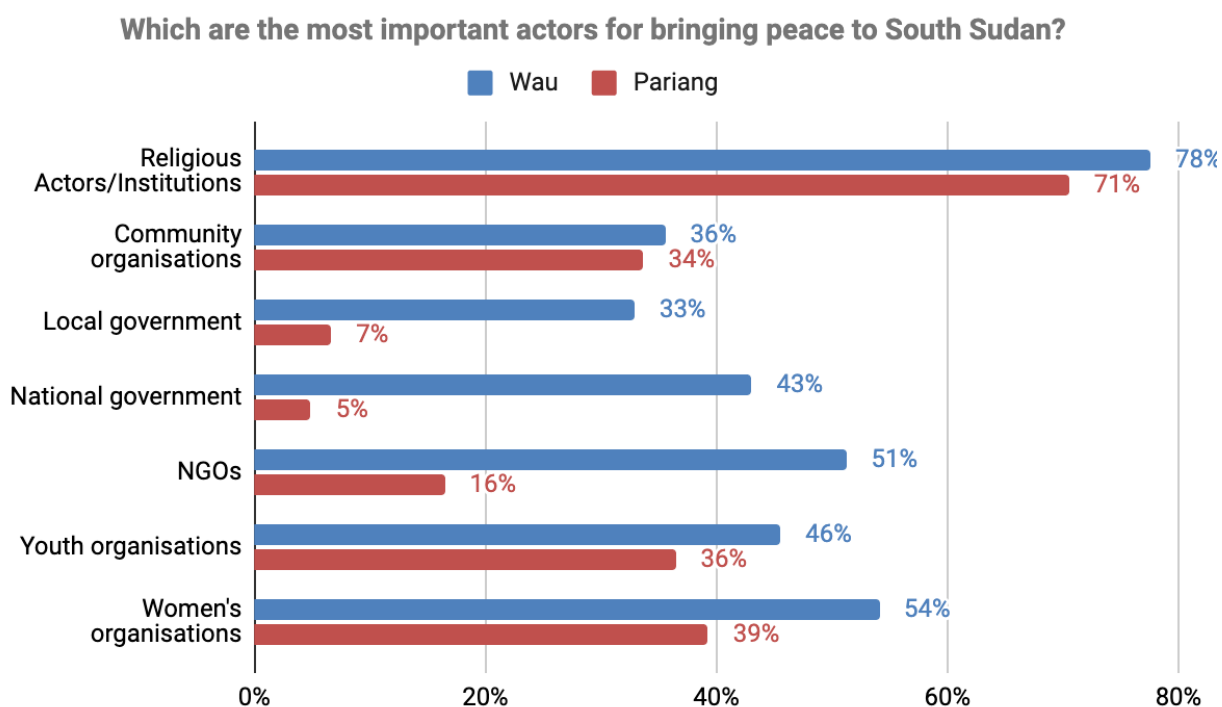


Table 7: Perceptions of the most important actors for bringing peace to South Sudan, by location and gender

		Wau / Male	Wau / Female	Pariang / Male	Pariang / Female
Religious actors	Percentage	83%	72%	68%	72%
	Frequency	243	194	90	110
WROs	Percentage	41%	68%	40%	39%
	Frequency	120	183	53	59
Youth organisations	Percentage	45%	46%	38%	36%
	Frequency	132	124	51	55
Community organisations	Percentage	28%	44%	35%	32%
	Frequency	82	119	47	49
Local government	Percentage	35%	30%	8%	6%
	Frequency	73	81	11	9
National government	Percentage	44%	42%	5%	5%
	Frequency	129	113	7	8
NGOs	Percentage	59%	43%	13%	20%
	Frequency	173	116	17	30
Sample Base		293	269	133	152

Religious leaders advise the government on peace and reconciliation and mediate between communities when there is conflict. In general, religious actors appear well connected to the local landscape of peacebuilding actors, with established links to the national level and an array of outreach activities on community peace. In an interview with a religious leader in Pariang, their activities range from working through, and confronting, community elders and traditional leaders when issues arise over peace, conducting awareness in communities, and counselling in schools in regards to early and forced marriage, involvement in training on psycho-social support (PSS) to enhance community members ability to deal with trauma and the effects of war, the spreading of peace messages to wider communities and encouraging women's empowerment by introducing them to micro-finance (in 2013 by offering them tailoring services) and adult education for women.

Religious leaders at the community level in Pariang receive training from the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) in Juba, retaining a connection between local and national level peacebuilding efforts. The SSCC operates through individual churches at the grassroots level and faith-based humanitarian organisations in affected areas. The inter-church committee (ICC) sits beneath the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) and are in effect the implementing partner of SSCC at the regional level for community engagement and advocacy of peacebuilding.⁴⁹ Inter-church committees have an office on women's union who preach peace within communities. The degree to which religious leaders within Wau are connected to the SSCC was not established during fieldwork.

A number of challenges were identified in their peacebuilding work and addressing GBV. Firstly, while religious leaders have been involved in training chiefs on peace and conflict resolution, a religious leader in Pariang identified that this was a less successful initiative given the incompatible role of chiefs as leaders of conflict at the same time as mobilising non-violent responses to conflict. Second, different religious beliefs were seen to present challenges in understanding peace concepts across religious groups. Furthermore, and consistent with other actors at the grassroots level, religious actors and the ICC cited the need for mobility and financial support from NGOs to address limited transport to spread messages of peace, particularly in hard-to-reach or 'overlooked' areas such as remote cattle camps. While they received training and support at the national level from the SSCC, limited on-going support at local level through training materials etc. has hindered their ability to operate effectively, with limited engagement from the Chief Administrator to overcome these issues.

Police forces

A significant number of respondents in both FGD groups and KIIs identified the police as a conflict resolution actor. However, the general consensus on the role of the police is that they act as peacekeepers rather than conflict mediators. In theory, their role includes arresting offenders and suspects and maintaining peace through their presence in the area. The police station in Wau established a Special Protection Unit (SPU) which responds to violence against women and girls, as well as arresting perpetrators, working to ensure accountability and responding to survivors of GBV in coordination with health facilities and NGOs.

⁴⁹ South Sudan Council of Churches. (29 April 2021). Formation and Training of Inter-Church Committee in Bentiu. South Sudan Council of Churches. Available at: [Link](#)

Of the 24 police officers in Wau police station, three female officers in the SPU were receiving on-the-job training on how to deal with GBV issues and women's concerns when they presented at the police station. While some progress on meaningful integration of women in positions of leadership were evident through Wau police station, coordination issues, funding gaps and capacity challenges restrict the extent to which they are responsive to resolving conflict and building peace for women in the community.

Firstly, some FGD and KII participants noted the absence of police posts in their areas as an issue of concern, particularly in Wau where police presence at night time was seen as non-existent. This created challenges for local chiefs to respond to rape cases or domestic violence that occurred at night time, leading to lapses in the medical examination of victims within 72 hours. Widespread corruption and bribery, driven to some extent by lack of resources, was also presenting issues for women to access assistance and justice to GBV, with reports of officers seeking payment for nominally free-of-charge services such as case management or apprehending perpetrators.⁵⁰ In other instances, the police arrest suspects of SGBV only to release them later due to limited detention space, though there were also noticeable perceptions of discriminatory practices along ethnic lines whereby community members felt that Dinka perpetrators were more likely to be released as the police leadership is concentrated with Dinka people.

Moreover, the lack of a GBV hotline where cases can be directly reported to the police was noted by some KIIs in Wau. In these instances, structurally inadequate service provision hinders the agency of women to seek recourse for injustices, reinforcing normative power dynamics where women are seen as vulnerable and overly empathetic.

Local NGOs/CSOs and WROs

More recently, to advance issues on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda across South Sudan, women's rights organisations (WROs) have mobilised and are increasingly establishing networks to empower women, seek enhanced protection for women, advocate for women's rights and achieve sustainable peace at the local and national level. They range from well-established civil society organisations (CSOs) operating a headquarter in Juba with offices and programmes across the Counties, to small-scale community-based organisations (CBOs) and initiatives such as the Wau Women's Association. Their activities range from peacebuilding training and workshops with young women and adults on leadership, conflict resolution and mediation through community dialogue on mental health and psycho-social support (MPHSS), mentorship programmes, lifesaving services to survivors of GBV e.g. provision of shelter to victims of domestic abuse, awareness raising and dissemination of the peace agreement at grassroots level and monitoring of the implementation of the peace agreement at national level.⁵¹

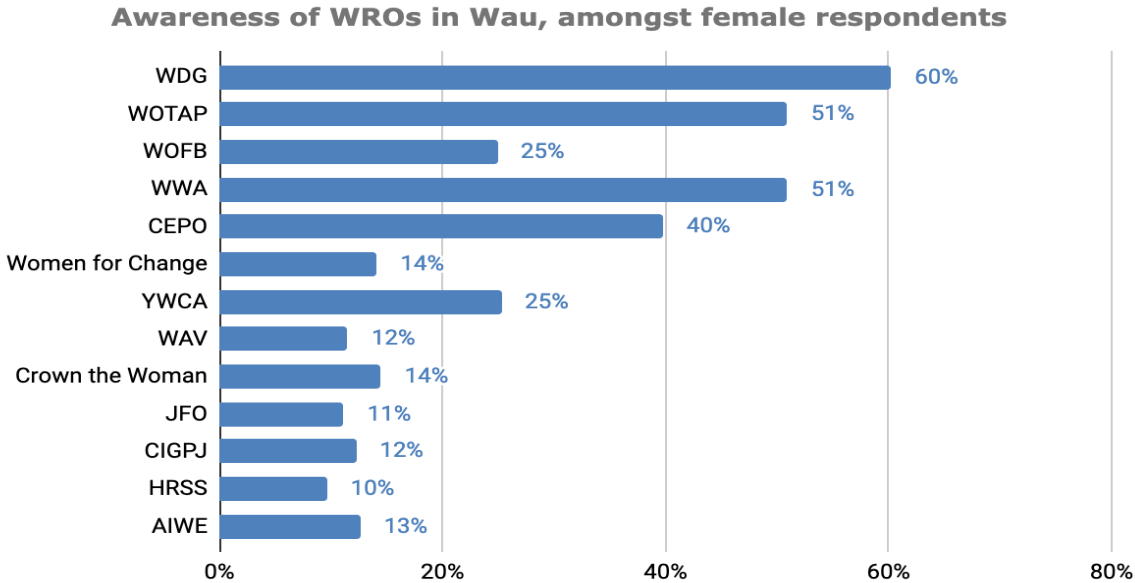
Across Wau, there are numerous WROs including Women's Development Group (WDG), (WOTAP), Wau Women's Association, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Hope Restoration South Sudan (HRSS) and African Indigenous Women's Empowerment (AIWE). Most of the WROs captured in this study collaborate with other organisations (national and international) to implement programmes, including

⁵⁰ FGD. Female. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

⁵¹ KII, WROs across Juba and Wau, South Sudan. January 2022.

SGBV, education, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, economic empowerment and livelihoods and advocacy. WROs are well integrated with a multitude of on-the-ground actors including boma chiefs and payam leaders, schools and head teachers, security forces and healthcare providers, providing effective entry-points for NGOs and the international community to reach women across South Sudan. Across Wau, a number of these WRO's have good visibility within communities (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Awareness of WROs in Wau by female respondents



Most of the WROs interviewed were founded by women with female executives, directors, coordinators and technical staff. Across organisations interviewed, many identified economic empowerment initiatives as having the most positive impact on women and girls, including savings and investment groups and support for starting businesses. YWCA highlighted the success of integrating women into their peacemakers work that brings people together across different tribes - possibly reflecting the strong position of women to bridge identity divides through existing practices of inter-community marriage. However, it was also noted that women’s participation in these networks and organisations was subject to a high rate of relapse, especially when root causes of exclusion are not tackled.

This burgeoning landscape of WROs in Wau is not without divisions, capacity and funding gaps, competing priorities and limited coordination reported.⁵² These hamper the ability to, a) extend outreach services to a greater proportion of women at the local level; and, b) create a disjointed platform for engaging stakeholders in the national level peace process. However, a total absence of WROs was reported in Pariang.

Schools/teachers

Schools play a crucial role in the peacebuilding process in South Sudan, offering civic space for development. Protracted conflict has resulted in more than 2.2 million school-aged children dropping out

⁵² For a fuller explanation of these divisions and capacity gaps, please refer to CARE International’s ‘Women’s Inclusion and Participation in Peacebuilding’ Report.

of school, with girls disproportionately affected.⁵³ One of the primary locusts for youth engagement is through education where schools and education facilities provide a space for children from diverse backgrounds to build social cohesion, bridge divides and learn messages of peace and develop peacebuilding skills.⁵⁴

Schools are encouraging peacebuilding initiatives by holding Sports for Peace competitions and events, supporting girls and boys to compose peace songs on peace, facilitate debating clubs, drama clubs and peace clubs to help promote youth inclusion in peacebuilding and spread awareness of peace to students.⁵⁵ These activities are aimed at occupying young people to prevent them from engaging in violence and can help develop leadership e.g. in peace clubs or through youth leaders. A teacher in Pariang noted how youth involved in peace club leadership can respond faster during conflict situations in sharing ideas for conflict resolution and development. Some WROs are actively engaging head teachers, head boys and girls to become reform champions.

Parents and elders must play a greater role in advising youth away from violence and conflict through the encouragement of school attendance. While FGDs frequently highlighted the challenges of paying school fees, culturally the focus on the 'immediate value' of girls has acted to undermine the importance of longer-term education.⁵⁶ This has resulted in early marriage being seen as a source of wealth generation for families (through high dowry prices) and a way to reduce exposure to sexual violence or prevent the 'spoiling' of daughters.

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Commissions

The Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Commission in Pariang works to solve disputes within the community in Pariang. The Commissioner coordinates with community leaders (chiefs) and commissioners of the area to solve disputes. In an interview with the Conflict Resolution Commissioner, he noted that women are involved in the activities of the Commission with female members within the department. These roles were identified as spurring some incremental changes over the past few years in terms of women's participation in peacebuilding, whereby the representation of women in offices has encouraged other female community members to speak out. However, in terms of transformational roles for women, the interview revealed that gendered stereotypes and cultural norms of women's vulnerability appear to pervade the work of the commission. In times of conflict when clashes take place, the Commissioner stated that "women have no power and also women are too emotional as they empathise too much. For this reason, they are only given office roles like Ministers".⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Commissioner reiterated other community member views of women's inclusion in conflict resolution, whereby women's inclusion in peace talks are seen to prolong peace talks as female leadership was viewed as slow and causing delays. The Commission lacks financial support which has curtailed implementation and planning for trainings and demonstrates limited awareness of gender-responsive policies.

⁵³ Orgocka, A. (n.d). Building Peace Through Education in South Sudan. Education Cannot Wait. Available at: [Link](#) Accessed on 15 March 2022

⁵⁴ IIEP/UNESCO (2018) 'In South Sudan, 'school is part of the peace-building process'. 23 February 2018. Available at: [Link](#)

⁵⁵ KII. Teacher. Pariang, South Sudan, February 2022

⁵⁶ Novelli, M. et al. (2016). Exploring the Linkages between Education Sector Governance, Inequity, Conflict, and Peacebuilding in South Sudan. UNICEF ESARO. Available at: [Link](#)

⁵⁷ KII. Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Commission. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

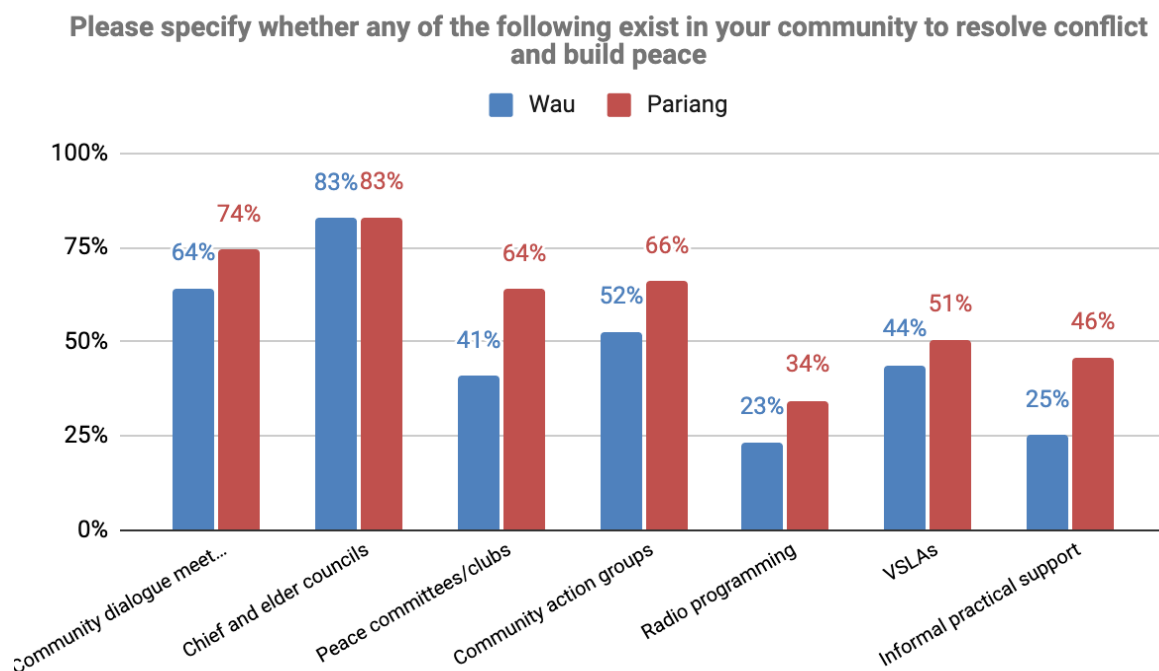
South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC) was established to “provide a framework for the implementation of reconciliation activities”.⁵⁸ It works to reduce violence in communities, improve intercommunal relationships and create and foster peaceful coexistence. The commission coordinates with neighbouring government counterparts in Unity State and also counties through peacebuilding meetings, organises workshops and peace conferences e.g. between Unity and Ruweng (pending) and with other states held in Juba for seven days, engaging and communicating with community chiefs, youth and women

IV.c Mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding

Mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Wau and Pariang range from formal mechanisms, like statutory courts, to indirect conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms, like VSLAs and drama, songs, and radio talk shows. Chief and elder councils and community dialogue meetings are the conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms most widely found in communities in both Wau and Pariang. Eighty-three percent of respondents in both locations stated that chief and elder councils exist in their communities to resolve conflict and build peace, and 74 percent of respondents in Pariang and 64 percent of respondents in Wau stated that community dialogue meetings are held in their communities with the same purpose. While 64 percent of survey respondents in Pariang reported the existence of peace committees in their communities, the figure stood at just 41 percent for Wau.

⁵⁸ Sansculotte-Greenidge, K., Yanaki, E. and Gogok, N. (2013) Reconciliation without Regret National healing and reconciliation in South Sudan. *Accord*. Policy & Practice Brief. Issue 27. November 2013. [Link](#)

Figure 7: Mechanisms for conflict resolution in Wau and Pariang



In general, there is high reported awareness of community-based mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding across Wau and Pariang. More than three-quarters of respondents agreed that if they had a dispute with a member of the community, they know of an organisation that could help resolve it (78 percent in Wau and 75 percent in Pariang). In terms of awareness of specific mechanisms, respondents in Pariang were slightly more likely to report being aware of conflict resolution mechanisms (see Figure 7). The main mechanisms identified were chief and elder councils, community dialogue meetings, community action groups, peace committees and VSLAs, with informal practical support identified by just under half of respondents in Pariang.

Customary and Statutory Courts

South Sudan operates a dual and often opaque court system. Codified under the Local Government Act of 2009, customary courts have jurisdiction over matters relating to customary disputes, though in practice will often hear criminal cases related to theft, assault or murder where the cases overlap with customary matters, where claimants prefer going to them over statutory courts or where there is no alternative to access justice.⁵⁹ While statutory courts also apply customary law for cases involving family issues and compensation⁶⁰, they tend to be more prevalent in larger towns leading to customary courts playing a vital role for justice and filling gaps in rural areas.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Musila, G. (2018) The Rule of Law and the Role of Customary Courts in Stabilizing South Sudan. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*. SPECIAL REPORT NO. 4: ENVISIONING A STABLE SOUTH SUDAN. [Link](#)

⁶⁰ CSRF (2020) Justice in South Sudan. [Link](#)

⁶¹ WhatWorks. (2017). No Safe Place: A lifetime of Violence for Conflict-Affected Women and Girls in South Sudan. WhatWorks. [Link](#)

Desk review findings indicate that customary courts are heavily male-dominated, making women uncomfortable and thus reducing the trust women have in these systems.⁶² The highly centralised role of local chiefs can act as a barrier to reporting GBV cases, if women don't wish to meet the chief.⁶³ The normal practice for GBV cases or social problems are to be raised with the chief who will call both parties together to resolve it at their level. This creates the conditions for a highly restrictive environment in which social relations dictate the handling of cases. For example, a FGD participant highlighted that "at the sultan [chief] level, you may find that military personnel has committed a rape case or other social problem and one of his colleagues may come and tell the chief to release him. You will later be informed that he [the military officer] has been released and is no longer in the area and nothing happens." In traditional courts [mostly male chiefs], male chiefs are seen as biased in favour of men and as a result women have committed suicide or burn themselves with their husbands as a result of the mistreatment.⁶⁴ A KII identified the need for greater documentation and understanding of customary law to ensure women's rights were adequately observed, noting that "the chiefs don't understand that chiefs should not handle rape cases in the customary court,"⁶⁵ with clearer dissemination of information on customary laws to ensure better access to justice for women.

There are some indications of progress in women's representation at the level of the traditional court, with KIIs noting that more women are coming onboard as women chiefs, and while limitations persist, e.g. they are responsible for handling issues of GBV or are limited to speaking on women's issues (domestic issues), in some instances they are allowed to discuss other issues concerning peacebuilding or issues at the community level.⁶⁶

Furthermore, formal courts are more inaccessible than informal courts. Inaccessibility is mainly caused by geographical proximity, with those in remote areas finding it hard to reach formal courts (mainly located in towns).⁶⁷ However, primary data collection identified several other concerns over access to formal justice, particularly in relation to the referral of GBV cases to the court in Wau. Respondents were concerned about cases going from chief-level to judges and courts when the issue couldn't be dealt with within the community. This is because courts were seen as highly exclusionary to women, with judges often being biased towards men in rape cases, acting in a corrupt manner and demanding payment for services which most community members were unable to afford. Furthermore, while women groups in Wau mentioned how chiefs show them the procedures for accessing courts, some participants mentioned that their cases won't go to the courts if they don't want to meet the chiefs, indicating some level of discomfort with chiefs leading to a drop-off in reporting. Prosecution of GBV cases through these systems is low e.g in Wau town, one study notes that of the 10 cases of sexual assault that were reported, only two perpetrators were captured temporarily and later released.⁶⁸ This erodes the trust that women have in these systems, reduces

⁶² Willems, R & Deng, D.K. (2016). Access to Justice: Perceptions of and Experiences with Violent Crime in South Sudan. *Intersections of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan*. South Sudan Law Society, University of Peace and PAX. Available at: [Link](#)

⁶³ FGD Female Youth, Agok, Wau. 22 January 2022

⁶⁴ KII. WDG. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ KII. WOTAP. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

⁶⁷ FGD Female adult, Bazia Jadid; SFCG Evaluation Report, 2018 pp.14-15)

⁶⁸ Willems, R & Deng, D.K. (2016). Access to Justice: Perceptions of and Experiences with Violent Crime in South Sudan. *Intersections of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan*. South Sudan Law Society, University of Peace and PAX. Available at: [Link](#)

the number of cases reported and consequently reduces the efficiency and significance of the systems/mechanisms.

“Most of the lawyers in Wau have been bribed and so if you can't bribe them to facilitate your case then it won't be taken forward. For those who have money (i.e. perpetrators) they bribe the lawyers and the lawyer will turn the case to their side.” FGD Female, Agok - Wau.

Overall, local chiefs and elder councils were the most identified mechanism for conflict resolution across both counties with a total of 83 percent of survey respondents from both counties highlighting the mechanism. A significant majority of both KIIs and FGD participants also mentioned using chiefs and elder councils as their first point of contact for conflict resolution. Most of these councils are made up of both men and women as previously observed. A report by the African Centre for Strategic Studies argues that customary courts, overseen by local chiefs/community leaders, were created to solve 'customary disputes.'⁶⁹ However, the report continues to argue that these courts continue to 'determine a wide range of cases' including theft, robbery, homicide and rape because they are, i) the only conflict resolution mechanism in the area, or ii) they are the preferred mechanism by 'litigants.'⁷⁰ The report further continues to observe that a majority of the cases, between 55 and 90 percent, that reach the courts are decided at the customary level by chiefs⁷¹ which is in line with findings from KIIs and FGDs.

The role of chief councils/courts in both Wau and Pariang in conflict resolution is the same as those undertaken by those from other counties in South Sudan. The main role of these courts as mentioned is to solve customary disputes that include SGBV, disputes between neighbours and disputes between children and their parents. In peacebuilding, chiefs mobilise communities on awareness of killing, rape and mistreating women. Inaccessibility of statutory mechanisms has made local councils a significant mechanism where communities can access justice and one of the sources of awareness on the aforementioned issues.

Community dialogue and peace committees

Local community peace committees, community meetings and dialogue aim to reunite divided groups. Women are sometimes given the opportunity to say how they feel in these forums but respondents felt this often resulted in negligible impact through implementation. Women's voices at best were given 'consideration'. In Pariang, the DG of MoGCSW noted that accessibility to conduct dialogues has deteriorated and flooding has hindered peacebuilding relationships.

Community dialogue and peace committees are formed by individuals at the community level through their own efforts or through assistance from (I)NGOs like in the cases of 'Peace Committees and Peace Clubs' by CARE international and 'Community Action Groups' (CAGs) by Saferworld.⁷² These can be formed in coordination with women-led organisations (WLOs), with Women Development Group (WDG) establishing CAGs in 7 locations in Wau town with support from Saferworld⁷³, each CAG consisting of 30 members based on gender balance of 50% female and 50% male. A 2020 report by CARE highlights the success

⁶⁹ Musila, G. (2018). The Rule of Law and the Role of Customary Courts in Stabilizing South Sudan. *African Centre for Security Studies*. [Link](#)

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Care International. (2020). Working Paper on Peace in South Sudan. Care International. p.6 Available at: [Link](#)

⁷³ Capacity Assessment Form, WDG, Wau, South Sudan, February 2022

stories of these mechanisms arguing that conflict resolution and peacebuilding have been achieved through the use of peace committees and peace clubs. The report further mentions that:

*'Peace committees champion dialogues, mediate and resolve disputes between individuals and communities, they monitor the fair and peaceful use of communal resources and report crimes to law enforcement agencies.'*⁷⁴

Economic Empowerment: Village Savings Loan Associations (VSLAs) and small-businesses

Empowering women economically was seen as a key mechanism for durable solutions to sustaining peace. Supporting women to earn an income was seen to address the interlocking root causes of GBV through poverty and traditional gender norms. A degree of financial independence acts to reduce the incentives to obtain high dowry prices through forced marriages in order for families to provide food. Furthermore, engagement in livelihood activities helps promote good practices to younger women (i.e. through mentorship and attitude-change).

The success of economic empowerment initiatives for women is contingent on concerted efforts to involve men, either indirectly through awareness raising or directly through workshops that act to shape positive attitudes about the changing role of women and skills-based development. Without this, the underlying issues remain unaddressed. As one KI noted, 'for livelihood training, they must also include men to show that women are not taking over their power or going against them so men appreciate the work of women. If women can send their girls to school - this is transformative'.⁷⁵

WROs identified a stepwise process for the successful implementation of training on business skills. Firstly, practical skills must be communicated to engage in the business activity (e.g. tailoring). Then business skills should be taught to educate women and young women on how to negotiate or deal with business competition. Once these skills have been acquired, VSLAs should be established with groups formed for regular contributions and financial redistribution.

In terms of youth empowerment, job creation is also one mechanism to address the underlying causes of violence and to resolve social and economic hardships such as high pride prices and unemployment. To help youth overcome their challenges peacefully WROs create job opportunities for youth, e.g. WDGs protection project, in partnership with UNHCR established ten groups of skilled youth, provided them necessary tools and engaged them in construction of shelter for the returnees in Wau. The youth constructed about 300 permanent shelters and renovated about 400 damaged shelters.⁷⁶

Drama, songs and radio talk shows

Actors in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding space have been known to make use of creative means to pass messages of peace, create cohesion, resolve conflict and encourage and initiate participation/dialogue in peacebuilding. In South Sudan, some of the actors discussed above under

⁷⁴ Ibid p.6

⁷⁵ KII. Women For Change. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

⁷⁶ KII. WDG. Wau, South Sudan, January 2022

'conflict resolution and peacebuilding networks' section make use of these creative means, including WROs.

School teachers both in primary and secondary schools make use of sports, drama and songs for peacebuilding with a secondary school teacher from Pariang mentioning the use of games and sports to keep youth busy.⁷⁷ A primary school teacher from Pariang also noted that boys and girls have been involved in peacebuilding through composition of peace songs and playing sports for peace.⁷⁸

Radio talk shows for peacebuilding is a popular mechanism adopted by mostly INGOs working with national and grassroots organisations in South Sudan. Since the start of the civil war in 2013, there have been several radio programmes on peace and social cohesion aiming to break stereotypes, more so tribal stereotypes, reach different communities with messages of peace, and promote positive inter-communal relationships. Radio talk shows such as the *Sawa Shabab* (Together Youth) by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Free Voice South Sudan⁷⁹, and the Communication for Peace in South Sudan by Search for Common Ground and the Catholic Radio Network are some notable examples of such initiatives.⁸⁰ The Catholic Radio Network's show was broadcasted in over 18 languages in local radio stations and aimed to 'support a stronger basis for constructive dialogue, enhance conflict transformation and peacebuilding' as well as build diversity and social cohesion among individuals.⁸¹

IV.d Roles and Inclusion of Women and Youth

The imbalance of power in gender norms at the community level continues to prevent women from meaningfully taking part in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Whilst women play a critical role in peacebuilding, their participation remains low with a majority of women in Wau not taking part in peacebuilding processes. Findings from the household level survey found that 77 percent of female respondents in Wau reported not participating in community level peacebuilding activities.⁸² ⁸³ By contrast, just 28 percent of female respondents in Pariang reported not participating in local level peacebuilding efforts, though FGD findings indicate that women are almost entirely excluded from decision-making and the quality of that participation is lacking given the closed space for decision-making power by men.⁸⁴

Interestingly, perceptions of other women's involvement was noticeably higher. In Wau, 86 percent of female respondents and in Pariang 90 percent of female respondents believe women to be active in the community-level conflict resolution and peacebuilding in their area, with between one-half and two-thirds

⁷⁷ KII. Secondary school teacher, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

⁷⁸ KII. Primary school teacher. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

⁷⁹ USIP. (n.d). *Sawa Shabab*, A Peacebuilding Radio Drama for Youth in South Sudan. United States Institute of Peace. Available at: [Link](#)

⁸⁰ SFCG. (2014). *Communication for Peace in South Sudan*. Search for Common Ground. Available at: [Link](#)

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² 65 percent reported not participating; 11 percent reported being unable to participate. n=269

⁸³ The findings of the survey corroborate previous findings in which a report by CSR found that 36 per cent of respondents reported taking part in peace and reconciliation, 14 per cent took part in conflict mitigation and 23 percent noted that women did not often take part in justice systems. These findings are in line with national reports of low participation of women in peacebuilding despite documented importance of their participation. However, they stand in contradiction to UNDP's (2021) study that found 96% of female focus group respondents said they are involved in peacebuilding in their local communities.

⁸⁴ CARE. (n.d). *Power and Gender Framework*. CARE International. Available at: [Link](#) Accessed on: 15 March 2022

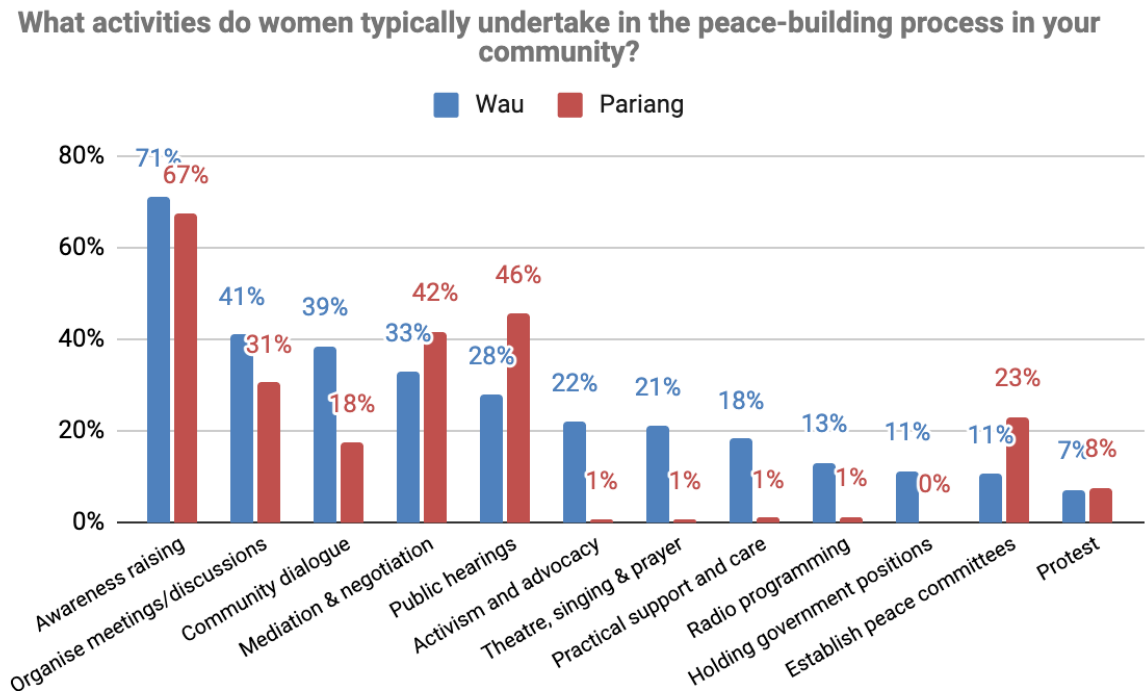
believing them to be 'very active'. Women in Wau were more likely to state that women's involvement in peacebuilding has decreased over the past 12 months (28 percent vs. 10 percent in Pariang).

Traditional views and social expectations sideline women from many decision-making roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. As a result, they engage in a largely passive and non-transformative manner, by raising awareness and carrying out support services required during peace talks such as collecting water and cooking. The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that women are predominantly involved in awareness raising followed by organising meetings and discussions and attending public hearings (see Figure 8). Limited evidence was found to suggest that women directly participate in the peace talks and are primarily there to listen. Findings from the FGDs reveal that 'active' participation, i.e. that which goes beyond tokenistic attendance at community meetings, is often ring-fenced with women responding to women's issues and family matters by organising community meetings amongst themselves. Women are involved in advising other women on conflict avoidance within the family - providing knowledge on how to deal with family disputes and mitigate violence from their husbands. This appears to be in situations where the male voice is not concerned, where husbands are not aware of the activity or where men do not prioritise the issue as needing their attention or decision. This 'siloing' of responsibilities fails to challenge underlying gender roles and disparities as they align with current societal expectations around women's capacities and have limited direct engagement with men. This is further corroborated by the main reasons identified for women being unable to participate, namely a lack of awareness of peacebuilding activities (40 percent), a lack of time to participate (20 percent) and prioritisation of other livelihood activities (10 percent).⁸⁵

While women do call for the coming together of warring parties in disputes, during peace talks in Pariang, women were most frequently cited as carrying out the services needed in the peace talks, for example collecting water and cooking food or providing care to injured members of the community reinforcing the subordinate position of women in decision-making.

⁸⁵ These findings are taken from respondents who reported being unable to participate in Wau (n=30)

Figure 8: Activities women undertake in the peace-building process in Wau and Pariang⁸⁶



Respondents in Wau and Pariang identified the most active role for women in conflict resolution is at the household level, resolving family tensions and disputes, though they are still highly dependent on assent from men. Despite persisting barriers, women’s participation in conflict resolution at the household level in South Sudan is relatively more pronounced than at the community, local government, state and national level (see Figure 9), with some women participating in advising their children, and making decisions concerning certain areas of the household. Final decision making at the household level is mainly made by adults of which most are made by men, particularly concerning marriage. Female FGD members in Pariang argued that “we are allowed to make decisions sometimes but not to the extent of being fully considered in the community; we are only given chances concerning issues of children who have conflict in the family.” Women’s participation in conflict resolution at the household level is also observed by other female participants from the same county who argue that they give advice on family disputes.^{87 88} Women are involved in advising their children and resolving disputes between children with a participant noting that some women at the household level are even called to advise neighbour’s children.⁸⁹ The role of women in conflict management was noted as being heightened in some households where fathers have alcohol issues or drink excessively, as children are more likely to turn to the mother for advice/guidance.⁹⁰ In some households, women advise their husbands not to get involved in fights, though it was not possible to determine the extent to which this occurs.⁹¹

⁸⁶ n=562 in Wau and n=285 in Pariang. Responses account for answers from both male and female respondents.

⁸⁷ FGD. Female Youth Community Members. Pariang. February 2022

⁸⁸ FGD. Female Adult Community Members. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

⁸⁹ FGD. Female Community Members. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

⁹⁰ Ibid

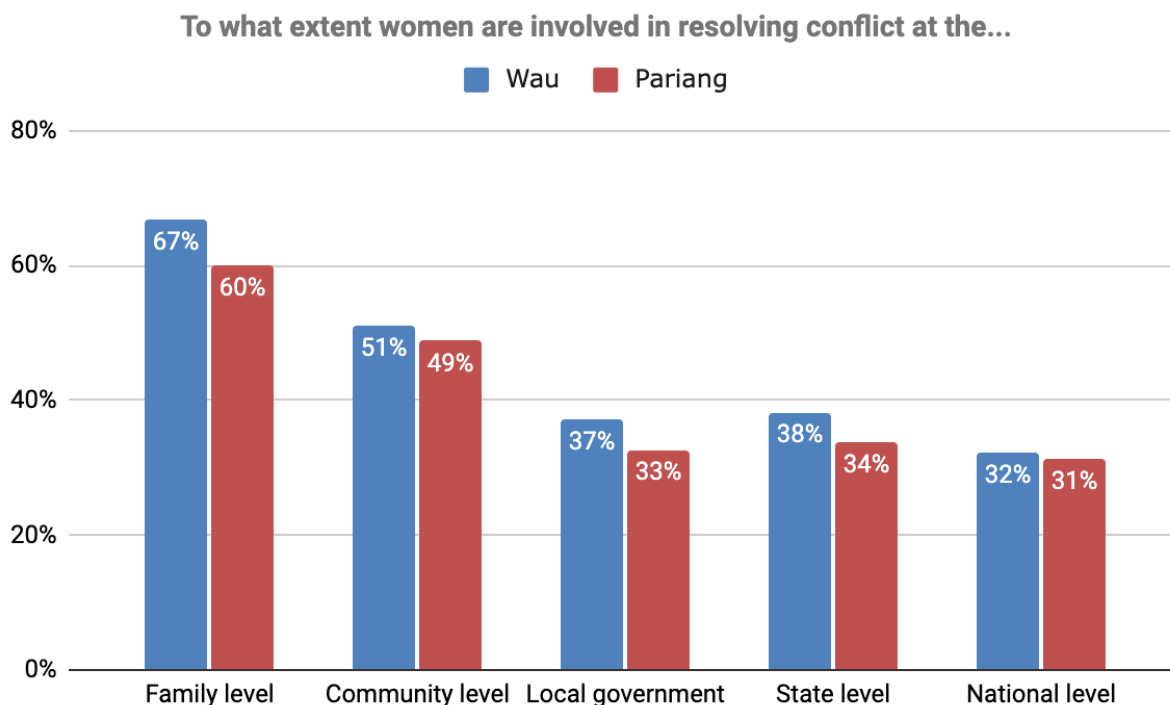
⁹¹ KII. Ministry of ICT & Postal Services. South Sudan. February 2022

In Pariang, women are responsible for getting the thatch that is required for housing, selling surplus to meet their needs, something that was seen by FGD participants as a decision-making activity of women. Other than decisions over thatch, women were predominantly identified as having decision-making power at the household level. Some women reported having the power to make decisions concerning schools and school materials at the family/household level (focused on children) but are not given chances at the community or national level. They also argued that their voices may be heard but does not translate into tangible implementation, therefore primarily women provide advice. Female FGD participants from Man Aguer in Pariang reported mixed views on the level of participation of women in decision making at the household level. They argue that whilst there are no cultural barriers that prevent women from taking part in some activities, like going to health facilities and school, sometimes they cannot make these decisions without the approval of their husbands.⁹² This is also clear with findings that indicate that in the household, women make decisions in so far as their opinion is asked by their husbands. While women's role in conflict resolution and decision-making at household level is growing, in most instances they lack the power for decision-making unless given the chance to express their opinions by their husbands.

Boys and girls in the community are not allowed to make decisions, with a majority of FGD participants agreeing that decision-making is left to adults. Adults are also responsible for solving disputes that occur, while boys and girls are expected to report any transgressions. Neither the desk review nor the primary data provide evidence of children's involvement in decision-making at any levels from the household to the national level.

⁹² FGD. Female Community Members, Pariang, South Sudan. February 20221

Figure 9: Women’s involvement in resolving conflict at family, community, state and national level.



The active participation of women in peace talks is mixed - ranging from outright exclusion, calling for peace talks, and fringe roles in dealing with women-specific issues, to overseeing decision-making in customary courts as local chiefs. Ultimately, final decision-making power remains with male community members. Women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in South Sudan is heavily limited by cultural norms that lead to their exclusion. However, a number of KII and FGD participants noted that there have been some positive changes in women’s participation over the past few years. This participation, while still very limited compared to men’s participation, and without significant transformative results, still indicates progress. However, this progress is marked by differences in the level of women’s participation at the household, community, and national levels. As previously discussed, a significant proportion of women participate in decision-making and conflict resolution at the household level, although this is still dependent upon men’s willingness to permit it. Moreover, the number of women participating in decision-making declines moving up through the community and national levels.

At the community level, women are also taking part in peace processes at varying degrees from those of men. In Wau Kok for example, women are still excluded from taking part or attending community peace resolution activities as their families prevent them from going - “there is no need for women there.”⁹³ A KII from Wau also notes that women have no role to play in conflict resolution there and often travel in groups to protect themselves while fetching firewood.⁹⁴ In an FGD discussion in Wau Kok, while some agreed that there are benefits to including women in peacebuilding, some provided reasons against it: including women

⁹³ FGD. Female Community Members, Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

⁹⁴ KII. Deputy Chief. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

lead to leaking of secrets as women ‘don’t keep secrets’; and they (women) prolong talks since there are different agendas involved.⁹⁵ When invited or allowed to take part in peace processes, women’s participation is mostly indirect where they are involved in activities such as cooking or standing at the doors while men take part in discussions. While these significant barriers exist at the local level, a majority of survey respondents reported taking part in conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the local level. Women also take part in conflict resolution at the customary level as part of chief councils/courts. Furthermore, supported by I(NGOs) and grassroots organisations, some women are taking part in peace processes more at the informal level. Women create committees and peace groups, join religious groups and advocate for peace at the household level.⁹⁶

At the national level, there is high exclusion of women in the peacebuilding space. While some women hold ministerial positions, these roles are not transformative. Some KIIs mentioned that women ministers tend to rotate between a select number of ministerial roles, highlighting the lack of opportunities to get appointed due to widespread nepotism.⁹⁷ ⁹⁸ National level peace processes are also often inaccessible to women who lack the financial means to travel to Juba or abroad.

Male participants noted some gradual improvements through female engagement in micro-businesses and income-generating activities while women focused more on the need for greater training. Male FGD respondents in Wau Kok, Pariang noted that young women have started small businesses in markets. Men in Man Aguer noted that women’s involvement in income generating activities was a peaceful initiative and that it pleased them as it has brought improvements to families and the community. It has also created dual responsibilities between husband and wife, due to enhanced income and financial stability in the household reducing family conflict. Noticeably, female FGD respondents were less likely to mention economic activity in their roles in peacebuilding and were more likely to focus on the *need* for vocational training and empowerment through business skills and for greater awareness amongst women of these opportunities to increase uptake. The survey found that 58 percent of female respondents in Wau and 45 percent of female respondents in Pariang reported that VSLAs existed in their community to build peace. In contrast to the findings of this research, a research study commissioned by the Catholic Relief Services in 2018 found that women in Wau do not actively participate in economic development. The study found that only 9 percent of the respondents noted they took part in economic activities.⁹⁹ This is likely to have been impacted by the armed clashes that took place between 2016-2019 in Wau and rampant instances of SGBV and suggests that small amounts of positive progress have been made.

However, in both Wau and Pariang, the changing role of women in the economic sphere has created tensions which require a conflict-sensitive approach to programming. Firstly, redressing the balance of power through female financial empowerment requires careful sensitisation to avoid triggering violence by men in the household, who may harbour insecurities due to their own financial struggles. As noted in an FGD in Pariang, “women can feel more powerful themselves when they’re educated and when the man is

⁹⁵ FGD. Male Youth Community Members. Wau Kok, South Sudan. February 2022

⁹⁶ These have been discussed in their appropriate sections

⁹⁷ KII. YWCA. South Sudan. January 2022

⁹⁸ KII. AIWE. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

⁹⁹ Wasara, S., S. (2018). Entry Points and Opportunities for Women's Participation in Decision Making Relating to Peace Building. Catholic Relief Services. p.48 Available at: [Link](#)

not financially stable in a family".¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, several participants noted that business leadership for women can "lead to loneliness of both the children and their daddies."¹⁰¹ In the short-term though, it is seen to decrease dependency on male household members and ultimately reduce instances of GBV.

Limited participation of women in economic development within Wau has been accredited to violence and conflict that has led to an uncondusive environment for economic activities.¹⁰² The impact of conflict on women's economic participation includes:

- GBV cases in Wau are a threat to freedom of movement for women, where cases of women being raped and sexually and physically harassed have been reported. GBV makes it unsafe for women to walk alone at certain times of the day and in certain areas of Wau. For example, cases of women being raped during firewood collection in Wau continue to be reported.
- Economic empowerment opportunities are centralised in accessible locations: most of the available economic empowerment programmes are located in Wau city and other urban/semi-urban areas alienating women who live in remote rural areas.
- Limited to no economic opportunities within IDP camps. A 2019 Oxfam publication cites an internally displaced woman who argues that before conflict when they were outside camp, they did not receive any aid and were independent but have now been forced to depend on NGOs.¹⁰³
- Negative coping mechanism: Due to limited resources and economic opportunities, women in Wau have resorted to survival sex to 'sustain' themselves.¹⁰⁴

Several leadership roles for women were identified at the household, community, state and national level, including female chiefs, members of peace committees and female ministers. Greater inclusion remains stifled by structural barriers to education and social-cultural and normative attitudes. At the national level, women have been assigned positions in the executive and cabinet, including Minister of Defence and Deputy Speaker for the Council of State, with a number of female MPs at state level. At county level, the Minister for Local Government, Minister of Political Affairs and Minister of Health are women as well as in administrator roles such as the Director-General for Gender, Child and Social Welfare in Wau and the Deputy Town Mayor in Pariang. In these roles, they have been conducting awareness raising on hygiene, encouraging children to study and engage in peacebuilding.

The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan has created space for women's participation in government positions at all levels. While quotas for women have improved representation, women have often been limited to 'low-level' roles due to other structural barriers such as the low literacy rate, poor quality education, and lack of opportunity.¹⁰⁵ As noted by several key informants, low education levels create barriers for further appointments, as in order to elevate women

¹⁰⁰ FGD. Male Community Members, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022.

¹⁰¹ FGD. Male Community Members, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022.

¹⁰² Ibid p.48

¹⁰³ Buchana, E. (2019). No Simple Solutions: Women, Displacement and Durable Solutions in South Sudan. Oxfam International. p.15 Available at: [Link](#)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p.23

¹⁰⁵ Roddy-Mullineaux, C. & Kumalo, L. (2019) Sustaining peace: Harnessing the power of South Sudanese women. East Africa Report No. 30. Institute for Security Studies. Available at: [Link](#)

beyond participation to decision-making positions, they require qualifications, experience and capacities. Low levels of education and negative perceptions of women's capacities serve to lock women out of greater involvement, and intersect with normative barriers to women's participation in schooling and education. At the national level, concerns were raised over the utility and function of female representatives, with limited evidence for the transformative impact of these appointments. For example, of the four Director-General posts held by females, respondents in Juba noted how the same four women rotated across the posts and often towed the party line. Furthermore, the Ministry of Gender noted that "You cannot give posts to women who are not educated. But technical posts require education. Women are not going to schools. Some political parties are not having enough women to chair. Some parties have women, others don't have women - because the political view of women is poor."¹⁰⁶

Although women do take part in leadership at the local level, the number is still limited. A Key Informant from Wau (WDG) observed that most women do not take part in decision making. Another Key Informant observed that the number of women taking part in leadership positions in different capacities such as chiefs has been on the rise¹⁰⁷. In general, attitudes towards female positions of leadership at all levels revolved around education:

- 'Learned women take part in judging.'¹⁰⁸
- Reasons for exclusion include that women are seen as uneducated.
- One FGD identified that not all women are accessing activities that empower women because they haven't understood the meaning of the activities, suggesting that further information dissemination activities and sensitisation are required.
- Young women are excluded from decision-making as they are seen as not having the rights to make decisions. There is a similar attitude towards boys and girls.
- Women are excluded from taking part in some dispute resolution activities as the community is perceived to be ignorant of women's voices. Men are seen as the head of households and they see themselves as superior/stronger to act in any way they want.
- Women are excluded from 'tough ideas' and cattle keeping decisions as men are head of household and are responsible for cattle-keeping.
- Women are also seen as being bad at keeping secrets, which is used as justification for exclusion from peace talks.
- Some see greater disrespect from women towards men (when educated or engaged in income-generation), as they may not listen to men's ideas as much.

Youth voices are mostly excluded from conflict resolution despite their active involvement in conflict.

Young people have played, and continue to play, significant roles in peacebuilding in South Sudan. Conciliation Resources note the instrumental role youth played in securing a 98% vote for independence from Sudan in 2011.¹⁰⁹ However, youth continue to be excluded in national level peace processes (e.g. in the 2018 peace agreement where only a few 'handpicked' youth attended) and there is a lack of organised

¹⁰⁶ KII Ministry of Gender, Juba, South Sudan, January 2022.

¹⁰⁷ KII. WOTAP. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁰⁸ FGD Male. Wau. February 2022

¹⁰⁹ Conciliation Resources (2018) Youth perspectives on peace and security: South Sudan.

and credible platforms where young people can express their views and take part in peacebuilding at the local level.

These limited opportunities for youth to take part in peacebuilding are compounded by limited economic opportunities, insecurity and limited capacity building, which leaves them more vulnerable. Youth value non-political means of social cohesion such as livelihood/development of product markets and introduction of communal games¹¹⁰. The non-political means to social cohesion is one way in which young people (both men and women) can informally take part in peacebuilding.

Youth leaders are working to enhance the participation of youth in peacebuilding efforts with limited results. Their activities are heavily dependent on financial resources, and engagement from ministries and organisations takes place when politically-expedient to do so. A Youth Leader in Wau noted how “we just sit and wait for activities to come our way,”¹¹¹ noting the challenges faced in raising youth voices. Their activities revolve around capacity building, with training and workshops to share youth views on leadership with elders, organisations and government representatives. At the local level, youth organisations also arrange sports events and tournaments, and inter-Payam dialogues to bring youth together. However, critically, respondents noted how youth need leadership skills, stating “We are the leaders of tomorrow, but not the leaders of today. It is about capacity building.” Without the requisite skills to be involved in ministries or mentorship and experience, youth are beset by the same challenges as women, in that they feel unprepared to occupy positions of leadership.

IV.e Structural barriers

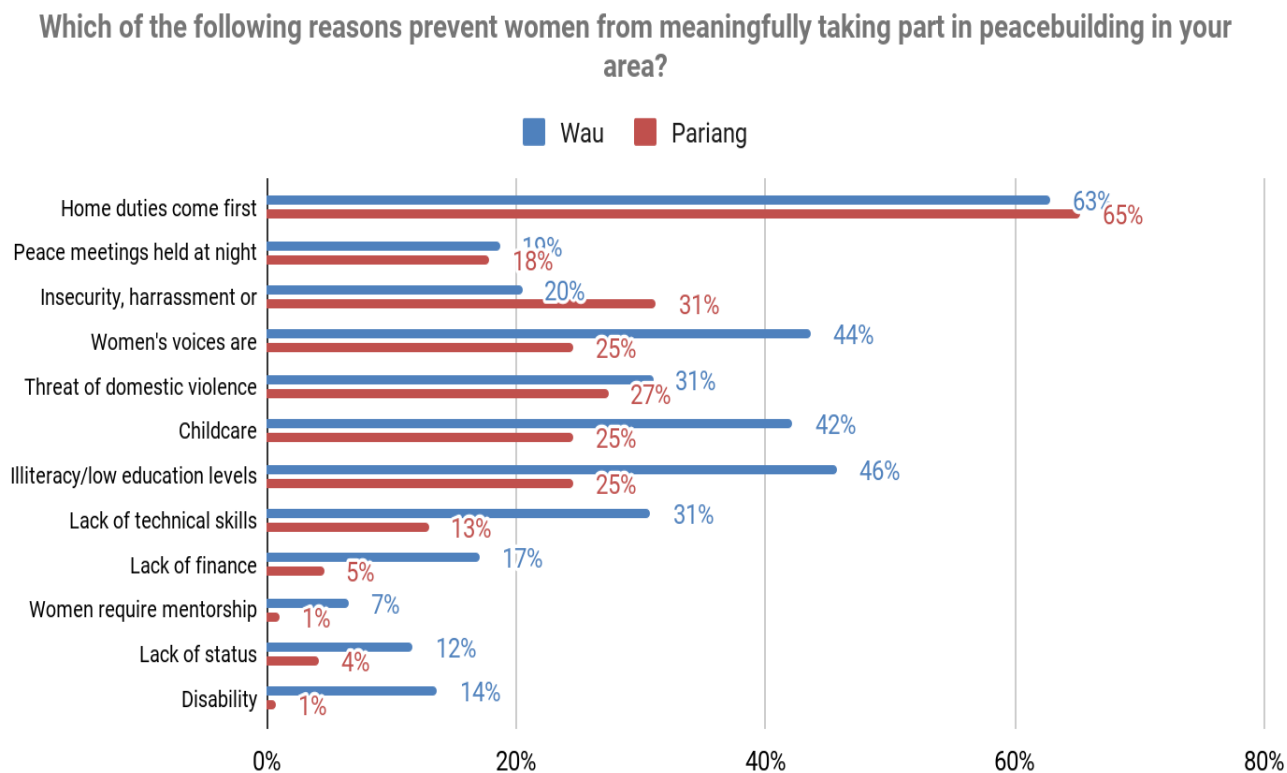
There are multiple, overlapping barriers to accessing justice, socio-economic and political opportunities and effectively participating in peacebuilding activities in South Sudan. Findings from the household survey indicate that across both counties, traditional gender roles (household chores, duties and childcare), the subordination of women’s voices in favour of men, lack of education/illiteracy and limited technical skills were the most cited reasons preventing women from meaningfully contributing to peacebuilding (see Figure 10).

Across the two counties, some divergence in barriers were identified. In both Wau and Pariang, the primary barrier reported was that home duties were prioritised over participation (63 percent and 65 percent respectively). However, distinct from Pariang, respondents in Wau were more likely to report low education levels (46 percent vs 25 percent), the subordination of women’s voices (44 percent vs 25 percent), and childcare (42 percent vs 25 percent). Further, they were more likely to report a lack of technical skills and lack of finance, yet less likely to report insecurity, harassment or intimidation (20 percent vs. 31 percent) (see Figure 10).

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹¹ KII. Youth Leader, Wau, South Sudan. January 2022.

Figure 10: Most cited reasons preventing women from meaningfully taking part in peacebuilding in Wau and Pariang



No barrier was more likely to be identified by female respondents than male respondents across Wau and Pariang. However, men in Wau were more likely to state ‘home duties come first before peace efforts’ than women (70 percent vs. 55 percent), indicating a deeply ingrained gendered perspective that justifies the exclusion of women in peacebuilding activities.

Traditional beliefs and norms

Both desk and primary data findings indicate deep rooted cultural beliefs and norms that perpetuate the exclusion of women from certain activities including peacebuilding, economic and political participation. A publication by the GESS project argued that socio-cultural attitudes and practices prevent girls from enrolling, staying and completing school and notes that girls’ and womens’ worth is seen in the size of bride price they can fetch.¹¹² Below are some of the other most common and notable cultural norms and what they mean for women’s access and participation in activities:

Men are the head of the household and main decision maker: References to women’s inability to take part in certain social and economic activities, including marriage and dowry discussions, and their lack of decision making power within households is observed in both primary and secondary data. As noted earlier, a majority of men make decisions in households regarding the aforementioned activities while also acting as heads of households to provide for their families. FGD participants from Pariang observed that naturally,

¹¹² de Garang, A. (19 Sep 2019). Challenges for Women’s and Girls’ in Education in South Sudan and the Way Forward. Girls’ Education South Sudan. Available at: [Link](#)

men are heads of households.¹¹³ A KII mentions that women can be prevented from taking part in peacebuilding by their husbands who force them to stay home and take care of the family.¹¹⁴ This is further corroborated by female FGD participants who argue that men make final decisions in the household.¹¹⁵ There are few exceptions to this, including in households where there are no husbands with women acting as heads of households.

Gender roles perpetuate power inequalities between men and women and affect women's access to decision making and peace processes in South Sudan. KII and FGD findings indicate clear divisions of roles and responsibilities for men/boys and women/girls at the household level and for men and women at the community/national level. Both men and women, to a large extent, continue to take part in traditionally masculine or feminine roles with both FGDs, KIIs and the desk review literature identifying significant divides in roles. The exception is in female-headed households where women make decisions and undertake duties that would normally be left to husbands. The effect of division in gender roles and power inequalities at the household level is that men decide on which activities women can take part in outside their assigned roles (household chores e.g cooking, taking care of children and fetching water and firewood). In turn, the women may not be allowed by their husbands to leave the households to take part in meetings but rather tell them to stay home and do household chores.^{116 117}

Women are considered as emotional and thus unable to take part in peacebuilding: Several interviewees felt that women are seen as too emotional and empathise too much to be effective in substantial decision-making roles. Women's involvement in conflict resolution was thus seen to delay the efficient conclusion of matters. This was also an attitude expressed for why women were predominantly given office roles in ministries¹¹⁸

Early/forced marriage: As noted earlier, slightly more than half of girls in South Sudan are married before turning 18 thus placing South Sudan as one of the countries with the highest early marriage rates in the world. High dowry/bride prices and poverty have been linked to early and forced marriage with a KII arguing that girls are 'sold' for money in order to access food for the family.¹¹⁹ A significant number of KIIs mentioned early marriages as a barrier to accessing peacebuilding and conflict resolution spaces. Furthermore, these dynamics intersect with systemic poverty that push women into sustaining abusive relationships with their abusers. For example, FGD participants noted how families were sometimes unable to provide material support to their daughters, preventing them from accessing basic necessities such as sanitary products. This has acted to push some women into seeking support from their male counterparts in order to finance purchasing these products, reinforcing a cycle of violence and unequal power relations within communities.¹²⁰

Stigmatisation of victims of sexual abuse: Cultural attitudes make it difficult for women to voice the issue. "Keah", meaning to become 'second-hand' is a term used to refer to women who have been raped. Families

¹¹³ FGD. Female Adult Community Members. Pariang, February 2022

¹¹⁴ KII. YWCA. South Sudan. January 2022

¹¹⁵ FGD Female Youth. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

¹¹⁶ KII. Crown the Woman. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

¹¹⁷ KII. YWCA. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

¹¹⁸ KII. Conflict Resolution Commission. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022.

¹¹⁹ KII. Women for Change. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022.

¹²⁰ FGD Female. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022.

play a central role in determining whether the police are contacted - for example, one respondent noted that family members may wait for the outcome of sexual abuse and if the woman is pregnant they may choose to say she was raped. In lieu of supportive family structures that cut across cultural norms, victims are not speaking out because of fear that they will be labelled as 'second hand'.¹²¹

Poverty

While poverty was identified as a main driver of conflict by a good number of KIIs, some of them mentioned that poverty is also a barrier to accessing peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts.^{122 123} While poverty on its own does lead to exclusion including inability to travel to take part in peace processes, it indirectly leads to and/or supports other barriers that lead to exclusion as highlighted:

- Leads to low levels of school enrolment and completion for boys and girls due to inability of parents to afford school fees.¹²⁴ While the country's constitution prescribes that basic education should be free, this is not always the case as there are other indirect costs for school uniforms, books and levies that make it harder for girls and boys to access education.¹²⁵ Additionally, poverty makes it hard for girls to access sanitary products and as such, girls, lacking these products, can be forced to drop out of school or are slowed down creating a shift in balance between boys and girls' access to education.¹²⁶
- Leads to marrying off of girls early to obtain dowry prices¹²⁷ which, as discussed, denies girls access to social, economic and political empowerment.¹²⁸

Lack of education

A 2020 publication by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that the literacy rate for South Sudan was at 27 percent, placing the country among one of those with lowest literacy rates.¹²⁹ A significant 70 percent of those above 15 years are also illiterate, a majority of whom are women.¹³⁰ Low levels of education are driven by intersecting multiple factors such as early marriage, high drop-out rates due to teenage pregnancy, lack of prioritisation of girls' education, and low quality of education. Another critical point of intersection between education and other factors is poverty. At both the household and institutional levels, poverty is preventing women from accessing education. A publication by the Girl's Education South Sudan (GESS) project notes that poverty has affected the quality of education in the country, pointing to the effects of violent conflict and the subsequent low investment in

¹²¹ KII, AIWE. Wau, South Sudan, January 2022

¹²² KII. Ministry of Gender. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022.

¹²³ KII Ministry of Information. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022.

¹²⁴ SIHA Network. (11 Dec 2018). #16DaysOfActivism: SIHA distributes dignity kits to school girls in Wau, South Sudan. SIHA Network. Available at: [Link](#)

¹²⁵ de Garang, A. (19 Sep 2019). Challenges for Women's and Girls' in Education in South Sudan and the Way Forward. Girls' Education South Sudan. Available at: [Link](#)

¹²⁶ SIHA Network. (11 Dec 2018). #16DaysOfActivism: SIHA distributes dignity kits to school girls in Wau, South Sudan. SIHA Network. Available at: [Link](#)

¹²⁷ KII. Women for Change. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

¹²⁸ Doctors with Africa. (uploaded 2020). Teenage pregnancy in South Sudan. Doctors with Africa. p.1 Available at: [Link](#)

¹²⁹ UNESCO. (15 Sep 2020). South Sudan commemorates International Literacy Day (ILD). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Available at: [Link](#)

¹³⁰ Ibid

the sector as 'leaving a lot to be desired.'¹³¹ The publication further notes that as a result of this low quality education, parents, who are already faced with heavy financial burden, find no incentive to take girls to school as they 'are not learning anything much.'¹³²

Women in the country have a low literacy rate, which prohibits them from participating in or successfully participating in social, economic, and political activities. A lack of education has been recognised as a barrier to women's participation in peacebuilding at both the local and national levels by a number of KIIs. Women's low levels of education have led to their exclusion from peacebuilding and other activities, as stated in the next paragraph.

Some female KIIs and FGD participants from Wau mentioned that women do not have the necessary education to take part in peacebuilding. This finding is also confirmed in Pariang where KII and FGD participants noted that lack of education acts as a barrier. It was mentioned that women feel suspicious and feel they cannot lead (as they have been raised to believe they are just to be at home taking care of children).¹³³ Below are some ways in which lack of education impacts women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution:

- Limited awareness of opportunities to engage in peacebuilding processes and low awareness of rights and empowerment among women¹³⁴
- Both real and perceived capacity and skills gaps to fill leadership positions, particularly at the state and national-level. Several KIIs indirectly referenced the 35% provision in R-ARCSS noting that *meaningful* engagement could not take place without education and technical skills.
- Prevents or makes it difficult for women to access and effectively participate in formal peace processes as access to them requires a certain level of education. High levels of illiteracy among women directly leads to missing out on roles like judges, ministers and other government positions, and roles within (I)NGOs in the peace and conflict resolution sector.
- A KII argued that women should get education so that they can make informed decisions about their lives¹³⁵ suggesting that lack of education acts as a barrier to informed decision making.

While the lack of education among women acts as a significant barrier to their participation in peace processes, lack of education among men carries the same risk for women as well. With about 70% illiteracy rate among those 15 years and above, illiteracy rate among men is also high. This translates to lack of knowledge on women's rights and lack of empowerment on gender equality. As one key informant noted, "our country is a patriarchal society, so when a woman is doing something, it will make men uncomfortable; [it will make them think] who is she to do this...?"¹³⁶

¹³¹ de Garang, A. (19 Sep 2019). Challenges for Women's and Girls' in Education in South Sudan and the Way Forward. Girls' Education South Sudan. Available at: [Link](#)

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ KII Local Chief, Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹³⁴ Conciliation Resources (2018)

¹³⁵ KII. CSCV. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹³⁶ KII. HRSS. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

Limited technical capacity for national-level engagement

While WROs are attempting to provide sufficient technical capacities to women in communities to engage in peacebuilding at both the local and national level, not everyone has skills for advocacy, public speaking, or communication skills.¹³⁷ Furthermore, WROs identified challenges they face in undertaking activities, including capacity building, that translates to few women actually receiving any capacity building training. A UNDP report observes that training on capacity building and peacebuilding specifically is 'oversaturated' in big towns while rural areas, where about 80%¹³⁸ of the population live, receive 'little to no training.'¹³⁹ The UNDP report goes on to argue how participants in their study recognised the contribution of insecurity challenges in limiting access to rural areas.¹⁴⁰ No matter the reasons for the uneven distribution of capacity development trainings, the outcome remains the same: those living in rural areas are left on the margins of national-level peacebuilding processes looking from afar.

Challenges in the GBV referral system that sustains systemic abuse against women

Access to justice for SGBV victims at the local level is hampered by an inconsistent and broken referral system. Survivors of sexual assault, particularly in Wau, have experienced severe challenges accessing support when it comes to reporting cases as a result of inefficient referral system between hospitals and the police.¹⁴¹ A lack of understanding over what constitutes an emergency and unclear guidelines on dealing with it have led to unnecessary loss of life and poor management of trauma. For instance, in 2020 a GBV victim died after being told to go to the police to report the case while enroute to the hospital, rather than police officers attending the hospital to respond to the victim.¹⁴²

Actors within the GBV referral network are chastened by significant capacity challenges. In Wau Police Station, interviewees acknowledged that police resources are stretched, receiving cases from bomas outside of Wau up to the border with Warrap State. However, limited means of transportation, stationery and delays in acquiring necessary documentation have led to an accumulation of cases. Victims of SGBV are required to fill out several forms, including Form 6 (arrest and prison referral form) and Form 8 (medical form) in order for SGBV cases to be referred and for healthcare facilities to assist in investigations. However, the police station lacks a designated office for the Special Protection Unit to conduct sensitive work and office equipment to print the forms. In the absence of sufficient funding or support from the Ministry of Gender, forms are printed in a shop nearby at personal expense to the officers in charge. This has led to costs being recouped through other means, having a knock-on impact on the families of and victims of SGBV. FGD and KI participants noted that police officers charge fees in order to respond to cases in order to cover the costs of transport and form processing, which many families cannot afford, preventing victims from seeking medical help and justice.¹⁴³ Similar challenges were noted at health centres, where victims were charged up to 1,000 SSP to receive a stamp for the Form 8. While initiatives by UNMISS/UN

¹³⁷ KII. Crown the Woman. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022.

¹³⁸ Trading Economics. (n.d). South Sudan - Rural Population. Trading Economics. Available at: [Link](#) Accessed on 15 March 2022

¹³⁹ UNDP. (2018). Study on the Traditional and Changing Role of Gender and Women in Peacebuilding in South Sudan. United Nations Development Programme South Sudan and Sweden Sverige. p.26 Available at: [Link](#)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Willems, R & Deng, D.K. (2016). Access to Justice: Perceptions of and Experiences with Violent Crime in South Sudan. *Intersections of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan*. South Sudan Law Society, University of Peace and PAX. p.35. Available at: [Link](#)

¹⁴² KII. AIWE. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴³ Ibid p.35

Women sought to address this lack of resource by providing papers and advocating against payment, actors have transferred the cost of payment from the form, to the stamp required. Multiple KIIs mentioned the lack of or unreliable hotline for referring SGBV victims which impacts access to medical help and justice for victims. Specifically, a Boma Chief from Wau emphasises that there is a need for a police station in place and hotline that is available 24/7.¹⁴⁴

Insecurity

The safety of those in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts determine their level of participation, including women and activists. Women and activists are often caught in situations that threaten their personal safety either due the nature of the work they do or due to overall insecurity in the country. Adult female FGD participants from Bazia Jadid, Wau observed that there are no female friendly spaces (WGFS) where they can meet to discuss or raise awareness. A KII from a WRO pointed out how the safety of those working to advance the rights or seek access to justice for women put them at risk of being victimised, due to harassment and intimidation of staff.¹⁴⁵

A boma chief in Wau mentioned that since the eruption of conflict in 2016, the majority of people from Jebel Kher moved to a PoC site but have since returned and with no police station in place, sexual abuse keeps happening at night.¹⁴⁶ The chief further argues that he has tried to ensure there is a police station but he has not received any feedback.¹⁴⁷ The lack of security affects freedom of movement and thus their ability to effectively take part in activities including economic empowerment and peacebuilding which is corroborated by female youth FGD participants from Agok, Wau.¹⁴⁸ They mention that they used to collect firewood and cut grasses to sell but now they cannot due to insecurity.

At the national level formal peacebuilding processes, women have faced 'insecurity, intimidation and sexual harrassment' with a report by Oxfam/Born to Lead (2020) mentioning women's ordeal during ARCSS and R-ARCSS peace process.¹⁴⁹ The report observes that how women who were involved in the ARCSS process reported sexual harrassment while those involved in the R-ARCSS 'feared arrest, intimidation and harassment by the authorities' after coming back from the negotiations held in Ethiopia and Sudan.¹⁵⁰

Lack of funding capital (e.g. for micro-business activity)

There is limited funding for individuals, organisations and ministries in South Sudan to implement or take part in socio-economic activities. Years of conflict, the subsequent stagnation in national economic development and strained international funds into the country has meant that there is insufficient funding capital to engage in businesses, for ministries to effectively execute their mandate and CSOs to implement

¹⁴⁴ KII. Boma Chief. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴⁵ KII. AIWE. Juba, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴⁶ KII Boma Chief. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴⁷ KII. Boma Chief. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴⁸ FGD. Female Youth Community Members. Agok, Wau South, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁴⁹ Pelham, S.. (2020). Born to Lead: Recommendations on increasing women's participation in South Sudan's peace process. Born to Lead and Oxfam. p.13 Available at: [Link](#)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid p.13

activities or even retain staff. The effects of limits are even more detrimental for women, women's organisations and ministries working with women or implementing women-focussed activities.

Individual: Lack of capital places restrictions on women who want to engage in business activities¹⁵¹ which alienates and marginalises them, denies them autonomous or joint decision-making power, while at the same time denying them of their economic agency. Lack of capital and thus lack of source of income decreases autonomy and increases over-dependency of women on men for their daily needs. A male FGD participant also argued that when women take part in economic activities it decreases dependency on them [men] 'since both can work.'¹⁵²

Organisation: Desk and primary data indicate that organisations working in South Sudan, more so national and grassroot organisations - especially WROs - face financial difficulties and irregular funding. A significant number of WROs were interviewed indicating lack of financial resources as a challenge that prevents them from implementing activities. Some of the organisations discussed how they are having a hard time retaining staff who leave to join INGOs that have the capacity to pay salaries. They also discussed how they are working as volunteers within these organisations as there is no money to pay salaries.¹⁵³ A KII working with a WRO says that "we are seeing ourselves, always as losers" where in 'most cases, we work as volunteers, we train people and we then lose them'.¹⁵⁴ For a full analysis on WRO capacities, refer to Women's participation and inclusion in conflict resolution and peace building at community and national level paper.

Ministries: South Sudanese government ministries lack capacity and funding to undertake activities and effectively meet their objectives. The Ministry of Gender for example lacks funding despite plans to implement awareness raising through the counties, training on micro-business and construction of WGFS/Women Centres. Two KIIs from the Ministry of Gender argued that while they have plans for women's inclusion in their activities, there are no funds to support the plans.¹⁵⁵

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

Conflict in South Sudan is multi-layered and complex in terms of the actors to the conflict, peacebuilding and conflict resolutions. Since 2013, the country has experienced a protracted political conflict between the government and opposition parties; SPLM and SPLM-IO. However, there are other multiple small conflicts and tensions driven by interconnected factors such as cattle raiding, high bride prices, power relations between men and women, land disputes including farmer-herder conflict, and ethnic tensions. The report finds that youth, particularly women and girls are often caught in the centre of these conflicts.

¹⁵¹ KII. Women leader. Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

¹⁵² FGD. Male Adults. Kumagon, Pariang, South Sudan. February 2022

¹⁵³ KII. WOTAP. Wau, South Sudan. January 2022

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

¹⁵⁵ KII. MoGCSW. South Sudan. February 2022

Across Wau and Pariang the drivers of conflict relate to stealing, adultery, cattle raiding and GBV. A common characteristic of these drivers of conflict is that they revolve around women and girls, who are in turn, at the centre of the impacts of violence. Communities in both Wau and Pariang perceive violence against women and girls (VAWG) to have increased over the past six months, alongside cattle theft in Pariang and property theft in Wau. VAWG is preserved by deeply ingrained traditional gender roles and highly divisive roles and responsibilities for women and girls across both communities. Women's roles are largely confined to the domestic arena whereby they are responsible for fetching water, cooking, taking care of children, teaching children, collecting firewood and cultivating and cutting grass while men look after cattle, build farming infrastructure and mobilise for community protection. Women are excluded from decision-making positions that could act to undercut high rates of GBV, including decision over the sale of cows, some forms of cultivation and decisions over marriage.

Some progress has been made in shifting attitudes and practices around traditional gender roles - through participation in income-generating activities, shared roles between men and women and community-level decision-making positions across institutions, e.g. gender units in Wau police station and female chiefs. However, community life remains heavily male dominated and sustained female participation contingent on assent from husbands.

Several conflict resolution and peacebuilding actors/networks exist within communities, though very few challenge existing gender roles and relations. The study explored local/boma chiefs, customary and statutory courts, churches and religious leaders, police forces, local NGOs/CSOs and WROs, schools, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding commissions to assess how accessible they were for women. In general, while several acknowledge gender differences and are responding to violations against women, few were adapted to meet the needs of women and youth as their structures and practices mirror community-based gender norms.

Actors within the GBV referral mechanism face some of the greatest challenges in responding to women's needs given a lack of resources and institutional government support. Local/boma chiefs act as the main focal point for conflict resolution and peacebuilding within the bomas and have made several efforts to improve GBV service access for female community members. While an increasing number of women are being nominated in chieftom seats, customary and statutory courts remain male-dominated structures, severely impeding women's access to justice. Police forces in Wau, which are directly involved in the protection of women, have similarly taken steps to improve access to peacebuilding mechanisms for women, through the Special Protection Unit and training female officers. Yet acute resourcing issues result in exclusion of women downstream due to corruption and bribery.

Churches and religious leaders are highly trusted peacebuilding actors with connections to both the local and national level, enabling them to facilitate activities for women's empowerment. However, their outreach activities are limited by minimal oversight support at the community level and challenges operating through local chiefs who are both responders to and initiators of violence. Schools/teachers work to build positive peace by integrating peacebuilding activities into children's education, promoting youth leadership through debate and fostering collaboration between boys and girls. However, community elders and parents need to be engaged further to encourage greater school attendance through education on the importance of girls' long-term education to counter their perceived immediate value as a source of wealth.

WROs provide both leadership opportunities for women in their organisational set up and through programming that actively engages men, women and girls in transforming underlying gender dynamics and addressing women and youth-specific issues. WROs in Wau are well positioned to engage and mobilise women at the grassroots level, coordinate through local level peacebuilding networks such as local chiefs and duty bearers in the GBV referral pathway and play a larger role in advocacy efforts at the national level. However, many continue to struggle with sustainable operations due to limited funding and burdensome administrative processes and require strategic partnerships for longer-term capacity building.

The report identified chiefs/chief councils as the most widely used mechanism for resolving conflict at the community level. There is a high awareness of conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the community level in both Wau and Pariang, with the majority of the research participants in both locations demonstrating awareness of where to report disputes. Chiefs in both Wau and Pariang have councils made of both men and women where they undertake dispute resolution following customary laws. In instances where a dispute cannot be resolved by the chiefs, they are forwarded to commissioners and formal/statutory courts. Chiefs also take part in peacebuilding through awareness campaigns. Police forces were identified primarily as responders to conflict incidents rather than mediators themselves, therefore, playing a more important role in peacebuilding and access to justice, with significant gaps identified in their capacity and resources to respond effectively to GBV cases.

Drama, songs and radio shows are creative pathways for youth involvement in peacebuilding through which messages of peace and hope are diffused. However, their use as conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms in Wau and Pariang has been limited to date and it is unclear the impact this has on fundamentally transforming intergenerational dynamics that act as underlying drivers of conflict.

Lack of awareness and limited time were the primary reasons cited by women for low participation in community-level peacebuilding. Community and peace dialogues remain highly exclusionary, with those women who do participate assigned more passive roles, such as awareness raising and providing support services during peace talks, such as collecting water and cooking. In instances where women have been designated a more active role, they are often in response to women-specific issues, where male counterparts are less knowledgeable or interested.

Limited leadership positions for women is driven by perceptions of low education levels. As such, the primary locus of peacebuilding was seen to take place at the household level, focused on containment of violence and managing family disputes. While there are a few leadership positions for women at the national and state level such as ministerial positions, and women have taken part in both the ARCSS and R-ARCSS process as both delegates and observers, their participation continues to be viewed as largely symbolic or co-opted by wider political interests. Normative attitudes towards low education levels of women create barriers for further appointments as in order to elevate women beyond participation to decision-making positions, they require qualifications, experience and capacities.

Despite initiatives driven by youth leaders and youth organisations, the youth remain largely invisible and silent in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. Inter-generational divides and limited implementation of UNSCR 2205 have rendered youth organisations largely impotent in making significant contributions to peacebuilding efforts. A lack of leadership skills, mentorship and experience create significant barriers for youth leaders to position themselves to influence national-level peace processes

and engage elders and government representatives, instead focusing on informal mobilisation through cultural events with other youth.

Addressing root causes of violence against women (i.e. poverty and socio-cultural norms) is crucial to ensure effective, meaningful, and transformative participation of women in formal and informal peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. A multiplicity of factors serve to exclude women in peace and conflict resolution processes, many stemming from expectations at the household level. Some of the most impactful barriers identified in this report include, low literacy among women, traditional gender roles, poverty, lack of or limited decision-making power among women, insecurity, lack of funding or access to capital, limited capacity to take part in national-level processes, and early/forced marriage.

Potential for more transformative peacebuilding outcomes identified by respondents was through economic empowerment initiatives. Women appear to increasingly engage in micro-businesses and income-generating activities with VSLAs and small businesses seen to reshape gender roles at the household level. This was more prevalent in the findings in Wau, while male respondents in Pariang noted the positive benefits this could bring to their communities. Programming around economic empowerment must be cognisant of the underlying distribution of power and employ conflict sensitivity in order to avoid exacerbating violence against women when traditional male roles are challenged. For example, research respondents highlighted how the inclusion of women in economic empowerment activities, and the positive financial benefits as a result of participation can lead to tensions at the household level between husband and wife, triggering violence by men who may harbour insecurities due to their own financial struggles or who may have expectations of the traditional role women should play (i.e. not leaving the house).

Recommendations

Short-term

1. **Hold community level conflict management workshops, designed to help participants to identify the early warning signs of conflict, and identify and implement conflict mitigation and prevention measures.** These workshops should be context specific, and include equal numbers of male and female participants. Following the initial workshop, regular follow-ups and refresher sessions should be held, to address new challenges and to further adapt training sessions to communities' specific needs. All sessions should involve practical application of techniques learned, with participants presented with realistic conflict scenarios that they need to address.
2. **Develop gender-sensitive conflict sensitivity indicators.** These should include both context and interaction indicators designed to monitor changes in the context in areas of programme implementation, and interactions between the programme intervention and the context, as well as indicators to evaluate whether conflict sensitivity was taken into account throughout the programme. A guide to conflict sensitivity indicators developed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and International Alert in Myanmar provides two types of indicators based on the nature of the project - context indicators and interaction indicators. Context indicators "provide information and measure change in the broader context at the level (e.g. national and subnational)

relevant to the project”¹⁵⁶ while interaction indicators “provide information and measure change in the two-way interaction between the project and its immediate target area”.¹⁵⁷ Following the establishment of baseline figures, these indicators should be monitored to establish whether the programme has resulted in intentional or unintentional positive or negative changes. This will ensure that any negative impacts of the programme can be addressed in a timely manner.

3. **Address impacts of GBV at the household level by empowering women and men with skills to manage and mitigate conflict with husbands.** This would include engaging with men and women from the same household on an individual level, to understand the causes of conflict between them, and then bringing them together to share perspectives and identify solutions, where this seems feasible and will not put women at risk.
4. **Continued advocacy and awareness raising among local leaders and authorities on GBV in Wau,** focusing specifically on:
 - a. Funding and resource management support for the designated gender units/special protection units in Wau police station to address resource gaps, with the aim of reducing instances of police soliciting bribes from victims of GBV and their families.
 - b. Developing platforms in the form of WhatsApp Groups or meeting spaces for chiefs to support coordination between different community leaders, including religious leaders and WROs. The purpose of these platforms would be to share information, issues and best practices on GBV, thereby strengthening the position of local chiefs as first-responders to GBV in communities. Building relationships between community leaders will also enable them to better respond to community-level conflicts and to develop coordinated approaches to conflict resolution and mediation, including at the domestic level. CARE staff should initially facilitate these meetings/groups to help foster relationships between the stakeholders involved, subsequently transferring ownership of the process to those involved.
 - c. Addressing gaps in GBV referral pathway in Wau South to create reliable assistance for victims of GBV by establishing accessible and sustainable GBV hotlines in communities. This should be done by facilitating coordination between healthcare facilities, police stations and local chiefs, to ensure clear guidelines on response mechanisms and community ownership to reduce delays in survivors receiving life-saving treatment.
 - d. Establishing Women and Girl Friendly Spaces (WGFS) for women to organise and discuss issues within communities to reduce insecurity, and to provide access to psychosocial support services.
5. **Undertake activities to increase equality and diversity within schools.** This should involve:
 - Engaging parents in educational and awareness raising activities on the importance of school attendance for young girls that highlight the long-term benefits, beyond the immediate value of girls in fixed gender roles. Creating space for teachers and parents to

¹⁵⁶ International Alert/UNDP (2017). *Conflict Sensitivity: Indicators for local and community development programming in Myanmar*, p. 9. United Nations Development Programme Myanmar and International Alert. London: International Alert. https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/UNDP_ConflictSensitivityIndicators_EN_2017.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

interact will help promote greater community acceptance for girls' access to education and improve intergenerational cohesion.

- a. Peace clubs should be established in more schools in Wau and Pariang, with efforts made to involve parents in some activities, to ensure cross-generational impact.
 - b. CARE should work with WROs to undertake advocacy on mainstreaming gender-sensitive peacebuilding in the school curriculum.
6. **Conduct advocacy to increase access of women to legal services.** Supporting WROs to establish dialogue with local chiefs and partnerships with South Sudanese lawyer associations and advocates of women's rights will serve to increase access to justice and build trust in court systems. Mapping of potential male change-agents within the justice sector could further build on some initial successes of WROs in using male champions to improve access to justice. Emphasis should be on ensuring women's access to legal advice on land rights, divorce, and GBV.

Long-term

1. **Develop mentorship and capacity-building programmes for identified youth and women with requisite education to gain leadership experience at the state or national level.** This would involve financially supporting educated young women to undertake internships within key ministries, followed by subsidising their salaries for a fixed period, should ministries be willing to offer them employment. After that period the government would take full responsibility for their salaries and career development.
2. **Capacity building of local organisations to enable them to better meet the needs of women and girls affected by conflict.** Focus should be on:
 - a. Identifying and supporting WRO's with the technical capacity to expand their reach and operations into Pariang, in order to increase access to life-saving assistance and women's rights services (see Women's Inclusion Paper). This would include support in developing funding proposals, building M&E capacity, and training on conflict sensitivity.
 - b. Supporting youth organisations to engage decision-makers by facilitating inter-generational dialogue where children and youth can share their experiences, discuss their issues and break down social divides that position youth as instigators of community-level conflict. Youth radio and inter-generational dialogue are two mechanisms that can work to break down social divides by building social cohesion and influencing social norms while providing a platform for youth to engage decision-makers at the community level.
3. **Expand economic empowerment activities for women, alongside (1) household conflict management workshops between husbands and wives and (2) intergenerational dialogues with families/parents to reshape the 'social value' of women and girls and the status of young men beyond their marital status.** Form VSLA groups in areas where these currently do not exist, provide microfinance, vocational training, or small-scale business initiatives to empower women that also

include male counterparts (husbands) to showcase the added value of women's participation in economic activities. Parallel awareness raising for women and young women on the purpose of economic empowerment will help to increase awareness of women's rights and potentially influence greater uptake and participation of women, particularly in Pariang.

- a. Provide economic opportunities to women in a conflict-sensitive manner and in tandem with community-level and household level conflict management workshops that incorporate sessions on joint decision-making on the use of finance. This will work to address the dependency on male household members to provide essential products or needs (such as education) and by increasing the number of household members contributing to the financial base of the family to reduce family tensions and exposure to GBV.
 - b. Develop intergenerational dialogue forums that highlight the impact of leadership skills and business activities of women and young girls that aim to reshape perspectives on the value of women and girls in terms of their contribution to the family. This second approach will need to move beyond sensitisation with husbands and involve family members/parents to break intergenerational dynamics that drive the demand for high dowry prices to pay for household provisions such as food.¹⁵⁸
 - c. Programmes should seek to mainstream conflict-sensitive approaches by acknowledging the perceived impact of changing gender roles on male agency to mitigate further violence against women, e.g. domestic abuse.
4. **Pursue strategic partnerships with WROs to enable them to extend their services to female and male community members in a sustainable fashion.** Engage donors to provide flexible, multi-year funding and reduce administrative procedures to fund staff salaries and build capacity of WROs to more formally engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the national-level through attendance of events and advocacy.

VII. Limitations of the study

1. Administrative delays in processing fieldwork permissions and organising field enumerators in Juba resulted in a curtailment of planned fieldwork activities in Wau and Pariang. As such, in Wau, a reduced number of focus groups were achieved, with no male participants interviewed. Data collection in Pariang was overseen by staff at CARE International in the absence of consultant supervision in the field.
2. The initial sample frame for Wau was updated based on consultations with the CARE International field team in Wau. The sample frame was expanded to include bomas in which CARE is currently, or has previously, implemented GBV-programming. Given administrative delays in Juba and conflict and instability in Pariang during data collection, the final sample size for household data collection in Pariang was adjusted downwards to reflect logistic, financial and security

¹⁵⁸ Mudat, K. K. (2020) Determinants of Early Marriage and Construction of Gender Roles in South Sudan. *Journal of Black Studies - Original Research*. April-June 2020. 1-9. [Link](#); Cordaid (2015) 'A girls' value in cattle. 16 September 2015. [Link](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020922974)

considerations. In all locations, enumerators faced challenges in interviewing male respondents given gendered dynamics in the household and intercommunal fighting which led to lower visibility of males in study locations. Therefore, findings from the quantitative survey should be interpreted with caution.

3. A significant drop-off in response rate is observed in Pariang for 'code-to-fit' and multiple choice response options. As direct field supervision by the consultant was only possible in Juba and Wau this was only identified at the quality control and data cleaning stage. Therefore, for some answer options the validity of responses is unable to be verified. Similarly, identified responses to household level survey indicators in Pariang do not appear to conform to qualitative findings, calling into question the validity of results.
4. Limited reliable secondary data: Existing literature is predominantly focused at the national-level in South Sudan. While there is available information on WROs and peace building activities in Wau, there was limited availability of literature on community-based peace building, especially in Pariang. However, the desk review was supplemented with primary data collected to enable triangulation of findings.
5. Given the sensitive nature of the project and research questions, focus group participants were reluctant to provide in-depth details on gender norms and values towards women in the household and community.
6. A number of key informants were either unavailable for either in-person or remote interview throughout the duration of the research cycle.
7. The consultant was not provided contact details for donor representatives to be interviewed for the research assignment. Therefore, the perspectives and priorities of German MoFA are not considered in writing this report and developing recommendations.

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IX. Appendices

Table 8: Causes of conflict in communities

Type of Conflict		Wau	Pariang
Stealing	Frequency	399	188
	Percentage	71%	66%
Adultery	Frequency	179	171
	Percentage	32%	60%
Cattle raiding	Frequency	95	217
	Percentage	17%	76%
Land or boundary disputes	Frequency	107	40
	Percentage	19%	14%
Tribal conflict	Frequency	118	59
	Percentage	21%	21%
Love before marriage	Frequency	95	40
	Percentage	17%	14%
Abduction	Frequency	22	5
	Percentage	4%	2%
Gender-based violence	Frequency	191	43
	Percentage	34%	15%
Killings or attacks	Frequency	129	71
	Percentage	23%	25%
Sample Base		562	285

Table 9: Has this type of conflict happened more often or less often in the last 6 months?

Type of conflict	Frequency	Wau	Pariang
Violence/aggression	More often	41%	48%
	No change	25%	4%
	Less often	34%	46%
	Sample Base	402	230
Banditry	More often	31%	25%
	No change	15%	8%
	Less often	49%	62%
	Sample Base	281	162
Land theft	More often	32%	16%
	No change	17%	9%
	Less often	48%	72%
	Sample Base	352	207

Cattle theft	More often	41%	66%
	No change	18%	5%
	Less often	35%	30%
	Sample Base	170	279
Murder	More often	20%	34%
	No change	14%	4%
	Less often	58%	60%
	Sample Base	179	240
Political violence	More often	22%	23%
	No change	12%	4%
	Less often	58%	65%
	Sample Base	193	197
Property theft	More often	50%	30%
	No change	19%	7%
	Less often	29%	60%
	Sample Base	458	220
Abuse by security forces	More often	25%	28%
	No change	18%	5%
	Less often	56%	61%
	Sample Base	271	167
Abduction	More often	24%	15%
	No change	16%	6%
	Less often	54%	70%
	Sample Base	131	105
Violence against women	More often	43%	44%
	No change	22%	4%
	Less often	34%	47%
	Sample Base	451	225

Table 10: Actors the community turn to for conflict and dispute resolution

		Wau	Pariang
Traditional Leader	Percentage	90%	80%
	Frequency	506	228
CSOs (youth)	Percentage	10%	6%
	Frequency	56	17
CSOs (women groups)	Percentage	15%	21%
	Frequency	84	60
Local government	Percentage	31%	6%
	Frequency	174	17
National government	Percentage	9%	0%
	Frequency	51	0
Security forces	Percentage	20%	8%
	Frequency	112	23
Local armed group	Percentage	4%	1%
	Frequency	22	3
NGO/INGO	Percentage	13%	4%
	Frequency	73	11
Sample Base		562	285

Table 11: Perceived effectiveness of traditional leaders in dispute resolution

		Wau / Female	Wau / Male	Pariang / Female	Pariang / Male
Very effective	Percentage	56%	71%	83%	80%
	Frequency	131	191	99	86
Somewhat effective	Percentage	30%	24%	13%	19%
	Frequency	70	65	16	21
Neither effective nor ineffective	Percentage	3%	1%	0%	0%
	Frequency	7	3	0	0
Somewhat ineffective	Percentage	3%	0%	0%	0%
	Frequency	7	1	0	0
Very ineffective	Percentage	6%	3%	3%	1%
	Frequency	14	3	4	1
Not involved in resolving conflict	Percentage	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Frequency	2	2	0	0
More likely to cause conflict than resolve it	Percentage	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Frequency	0	2	0	0
Don't know	Percentage	1%	0%	2%	0%
	Frequency	2	2	1	0
Sample Base		234	269	120	108

Table 12: Conflict Resolution Mechanisms by County

		Wau	Pariang
Community dialogue meetings	Percentage	64%	74%
	Frequency	360	211
Chief and elder councils	Percentage	83%	83%
	Frequency	466	237
Peace committees/clubs	Percentage	41%	64%
	Frequency	230	182
Community action groups	Percentage	52%	66%
	Frequency	292	188
Radio programming	Percentage	23%	34%
	Frequency	129	97
VSLAs	Percentage	44%	51%
	Frequency	247	145
Informal practical support	Percentage	25%	46%
	Frequency	141	131
Sample Base		562	285

Table 13: Peacebuilding Activities Women are involved in, by County

		Wau	Pariang
Awareness raising	Percentage	71%	67%
	Frequency	399	191
Organise meetings/discussions	Percentage	41%	31%
	Frequency	230	88
Community dialogue	Percentage	39%	18%
	Frequency	219	51
Mediation and negotiation	Percentage	33%	42%
	Frequency	185	120
Public hearings	Percentage	28%	46%
	Frequency	157	131
Activism and advocacy	Percentage	22%	1%
	Frequency	124	3
Theatre, singing and prayer	Percentage	21%	1%
	Frequency	118	3
Practical support and care	Percentage	18%	1%
	Frequency	101	3
Radio programming	Percentage	13%	1%
	Frequency	73	3

Table 14: Women's involvement in resolving conflict at family, community, state and national level

		Wau	Pariang
Family Level	Percentage	67%	60%
	Frequency	377	171
Community Level	Percentage	51%	49%
	Frequency	287	140
Local Government	Percentage	37%	33%
	Frequency	208	94
State Level	Percentage	38%	34%
	Frequency	214	97
National Level	Percentage	32%	31%
	Frequency	180	88
Sample Base		562	285

Table 15: Barriers to women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, by County

		Wau	Pariang
Home duties come first	Percentage	63%	65%
	Frequency	354	185
Peace meetings held at night	Percentage	19%	18%
	Frequency	107	51
Insecurity, harassment or intimidation	Percentage	20%	31%
	Frequency	112	88
Women's voices are subordinate to men	Percentage	44%	25%
	Frequency	247	71
Threat of domestic violence	Percentage	31%	27%
	Frequency	174	77
Childcare	Percentage	42%	25%
	Frequency	236	71
Illiteracy/low education	Percentage	46%	25%
	Frequency	259	71
Lack of technical skills	Percentage	31%	13%
	Frequency	174	37
Lack of finance	Percentage	17%	5%
	Frequency	96	14
Women require mentorship	Percentage	7%	1%
	Frequency	39	3
Lack of status	Percentage	12%	4%
	Frequency	67	11
Disability	Percentage	14%	1%
	Frequency	79	3

Sample Base		562	285
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