

The Role of Women in Peace-building and Lessons Learned from Southern Sudan



30th June 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 30th of June 2016, the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) in partnership with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), hosted a dialogue entitled *The Role of Women in Peace-building: Lessons from South Sudan*. This event highlighted the challenges women face in South Sudan's peace process and the opportunities for greater inclusion. The dialogue was part of the build-up to the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum, aimed at providing a platform for 'conflict resolution and peace-building in Africa' which was held on 12th August 2016.

Divided into two sessions, panellists included representatives from the South African government, Foreign Diplomats and South African Civil Society Organisations. The dialogue was enhanced by the participation of non-governmental organisations, youth, and academics. In his opening remarks Mr. Nacerodien of MSPRAU highlighted that the organisation focuses on mediation support and foreign policy research as its key pillars. He argued that Britain's exit from

the European Union (EU) will have an impact on globalisation and greater integration of the region, including the global diffusion of power.

Mr. Nacerodien further pointed out that this would have an impact on the struggles waged all over the world, such as the 'One Percent', the 'not in my name' and the 'occupy' campaigns. He argued that these include among them the strong voice speaking of the role of women and gender parity. He concluded by stating that the role of women and the need for their recognition is at the centre of South Sudan's social and political analysis. Mr. Nacerodien argued that this is aimed at enhancing, from a cultural and traditional perspective, the representation of women at a national level.

FIRST SESSION

Mr. John Simon Kor, Deputy Head of Mission, South Sudan Embassy in SA

Mr. Kor opened his presentation by highlighting the significance of having women in peace-building and their contributions to nation building. He argued that there is a growing concern that the current international law largely represents the male voice and suppresses the female. It is from this that the United Nations (UN) has developed various instruments to address this issue and these include:



- ❖ The UN Charter 1, Article 1(3) outlines the objective of attaining fundamental freedoms without discrimination on the basis of sex and this also addressed the importance of a concern for women
- ❖ The UN Commission on the Status of Women was authorised to address the issue of development of the rights of women

These have led to:

- The development of a convention on the political rights of women and the status of married women
- The declaration on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which represents a cornerstone of the convention that addresses the global issues of women

According to Mr. Kor, women in conflict areas have a unique role, this relates to their experience during these time as they suffer most. He pointed out that women are affected by sexual violence,

rape, mass displacement, and economic deprivation during conflict situations, hence it is crucial that, during peace-building, women are afforded more rights and protection.

Highlighting some of the developments that have shaped South Sudan's transitional government, he pointed to the Interim Constitution of Sudan in 2005 where there was arrangement that was made and implemented. In it, there were special considerations and affirmative actions that were for women. This arrangement guaranteed women's contribution and involvement in various aspects of governance. This covered roles in the legislative, executive, and judicial spheres of government, including the private companies and NGOs. According to Mr. Kor, these agreements continued after the independence of South Sudan in 2011. He called on the global community to reflect on the fact that women are not treated equal to men and that this phenomenon needs to stop.

Sally Ramokgopa, Chief Directorate - East Africa, DIRCO

Ms Ramokgopa stated that women are amongst the most vulnerable victims in war and conflict situations, yet they are also often the ones that seek peace mechanisms. It is thus important to ask the following: What exactly is a woman's role in conflict resolution and peace-building, and how can women be involved more in peace-building processes?



She argued that South Africa remains fully committed to the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan and to ensuring sustainable peace through dialogue. The South African government, together with the African Union (AU), is ready to empower the South Sudanese women to realise their rights. Therefore, in its quest for the realisation of peace and stability in South Sudan, South Africa is:

- ❖ Committed to continue supporting the South Sudan Transitional Government of National Unity
- ❖ Committed to the programmes that support women in development, through sharing and experience
- ❖ The SA Special Envoy, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, continues to engage within a broad mandate of the inter-party dialogue.
- ❖ SA remains ready to play a part in the post-conflict reconstruction and development of SS and assist in addressing the immediate priorities, such as security sector reform, institution building and economic development.

Ms Ramokgopa appreciated South Sudan on forming the Transitional Government of National Unity as a foundation towards achieving lasting peace and stability. She argued that this makes provision for women's participation in the peace process. She concluded by expressing concerns about the economic crisis situation of South Sudan which has led to the prices of basic commodities sky-rocketing. However, she appreciated how women have shown remarkable resilience and self-reliance by going back home to cultivate their fields.

Ambassador Trine Skymoen, Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy to South Africa

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Skymoen highlighted the role of Norway in peace and reconciliation initiatives. She pointed out that, as part of Norwegian foreign policy priority, Norway has been engaged in a number of peace processes, including the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Somalia, and South Sudan. She argued that Norway has mostly been behind the scenes in these conflicts; sometimes acting as facilitators and, at times, supporting efforts led by others such as the UN, AU, SADC, IGAD, and other actors.



Ambassador Skymoen pointed out that Norway believes peace and stability is essential for development. Women need to be part of the peace-building process, because women constitute half of the population and during conflict they tend to suffer most. According to Ambassador Skymoen, the absence of women at the negotiating table tends to limit discussions on issues that impact women and girls; issues such as sexual violence, abuse by security forces, and maternal healthcare. She argued that when women negotiate, they do not only speak for women, but they also address issues that are important to the entire population. As Norwegian civil society continues to support South Sudanese counterparts towards lasting peace, women's participation in the political process has been a priority in their engagement. Ambassador Skymoen pointed out that humanitarian assistance towards South Sudan by Norway has been aimed at alleviating the suffering of the people by trying to reach those most vulnerable. This is done by prioritising education for girls, protection, and efforts to stop gender-based violence.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Contributions and question from the floor:

- ❖ The religious communities are the major role players in terms of doctrinal issues and how customary law is affected; what efforts have been done to ensure that the religious community participates?
- ❖ It is important to ensure that chiefs and other traditional leaders are trained.
- ❖ There is a need to ensure that everyone is included and that uneducated rural people understand the policies and laws.
- ❖ Has South Sudan considered signing the Declaration of the UN Security Resolution 1325? If so, how is the implementation going?
- ❖ The last peace negotiation in South Sudan excluded women and youth. Can there be a belief that the peace agreements can bring lasting peace for the country?
- ❖ Are there any other processes, sensitisation processes, within the rural community? Because instruments such as CEDAW only sit at a national level and don't trickle down to the people that are suffering from peace and security issues.
- ❖ There is the AU, Participatory Community Risk Assessment [PCRA] that talks about women, peace and security, the CEDAW, and also Resolution 1325 and other instruments. How can all these instruments be synchronised for the sustainable implementation on peace and security?
- ❖ What is the role of the European Peacekeeping? Are they still needed?
- ❖ Who is funding the programme on the emancipation of women and what outcome do they want to see? Is it in the interests of the South Sudanese?
- ❖ What could be the key proposals towards the permanent solution of the situation in South Sudan?

RESPONSE FROM PANELISTS

John Simon Kor

Mr. Kor argued that civil society in South Sudan has a significant role in enhancing the development of women. Currently, there is a Civil Society Act which provides a range of activities to all the NGOs and civil society organisations. Regarding the role of educating the traditional leaders, he stated that the current sources of SS legislation is customary law and, therefore, traditional leaders have to be trained on democratisation and other international instruments created to enhance the role of women. He argued that this would ensure participation and enhance the development of women. Rules regarding legal inheritance also need to be changed and or developed in order to address disputes over this issue.

Mr. Kor pointed out that, currently, there seems to be an inclusion of women as part of the peace process. The short-comings on the issue of implementation on the international instruments are due to conflict of interest, but there are efforts to ensure implementation of commitments. Mr. Kor argued that there are a number of interrelated instruments and protocols that aim to achieve peace, development, and equality. These are vital for implementation and need to be recognised by the South Sudanese government.

Chair: Fadl Nacerodien

In closing of the first session, Mr. Nacerodien mentioned that South Africa has prioritised women’s role in foreign affairs. There is definitely a consciousness about ensuring that there is gender parity when it comes to selecting Ambassadors as envoys. He also expressed that DIRCO has also undertaken a programme with Norway as an important partner with regards to training centred on mediation and negotiation skills, specifically for women. DIRCO is conscious of the need to ensure that future diplomats, future envoys, and future special envoys would include women.

SECOND PANEL

The second panel was chaired by Molly Dhlamini, SALO’s Projects and Stakeholder Relations Manager, SALO.

Justice Ajonye Perpetua Paya, Deputy Chairperson, Law Society of South Sudan



Justice Paya pointed out the challenges facing South Sudan. She argued that like any country, South Sudan would like to have sustainable long-lasting peace and have a banner that reads “*a better Republic of South Sudan, a better South Africa, a better Africa, and a better World.*” She expressed that women have suffered through all the wars in SS. In addressing the ‘*Role of Women in Peace-Building: Lessons learned from the Republic of South Sudan*’, she spoke of the provisions and the arguments of the Compromise Peace Agreement (CPA). She stated that there have been two

CPA’s, namely:

- ❖ The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Compromise Peace Agreement
- ❖ The Agreement to Resolve the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS)

The government of national unity in SS has currently established the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary are still to be reinstated. She stated that women of SS want security for the citizens and for the people living in SS to be guaranteed as a human right. Women recognise that without an effective security sector reform, it will be difficult to restore the rule of law and consolidate democratic institutions at all levels of government in SS.

The emergence of a democratic, peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive SS depends on security sector reform. Therefore, women of SS demand:

- ❖ Human security, which includes freedom from violence, including sexual violence; secure livelihoods
- ❖ Economic empowerment
- ❖ Access to justice
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Health services
- ❖ The full implementation of the Chapters of the ARCSS
- ❖ Comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement, with the recommendation that women must be included in the substantive planning and implementation of the Strategic Defence Security Review Board (SDSRB)
- ❖ Women to participate equally in the Transitional Security Arrangement and Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) in shaping of the architecture and policy of the security strategy. This will ensure that women are not excluded from hard security discussions
- ❖ Women have to be consulted on matters of peace-building and the restoration of security for all citizens
- ❖ There has to be at least a twenty-five to thirty percent representation of women, which is based on quality and competence and a composition of the bodies of justice and accountability to observe that this is adhered to
- ❖ Women want to be involved, to be part of the constitution-making process
- ❖ Chapter Five that emphasises transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing, and this has to be implemented and for women to be part of the process
- ❖ Women should be part of deciding on policies, on how to manage the land, to ensure that their interests are covered. Title deeds of women's rights to land must capture the following rights:
 - to use the land
 - to exclude unauthorised people from the land
 - to control how land will be used

- to derive income from the land
- protection from illegal expropriation of the land
- to transmit a right on land to one's successor
- to alienate all rights to the entire holding through sale or the portion of holding, especially in the town areas where there are leaseholds, and
- A residual right to the land and then also look at alienated run lapses

She expressed her hope that with the presence of the SS Embassy representative at the dialogue, these things would reach SS and the whole system would get the message so that there is sustainable peace through the involvement of women.

Zeinab Yassin Hagelsafi, Chairwoman, South Sudan Women's General Association



Ms Zeinab Yassin stated that the women of South Sudan have greatly suffered from the bombings. She spoke of the South Sudanese women, expressing that women are a peaceful people. She thanked IGAD and the AU for standing with and supporting peace processes in South Sudan. She indicated that in SS, the youth are on the streets as they are not in school, especially in the rural areas. She indicated that SS women want to see good governance. She argued that women should not be without training and education relating to how they can address their problems and challenges.

She indicated that South Sudanese women held three different workshops on peace-building and the number of women trained increased per workshop, which is an indication that women of SS are ready to be educated and build for the peace process.

Venetia Govender, SALO Associate; Director, Crisis Action Southern Africa

Ms Govender stated that women want a SS that is more equal and not consistently under threat of violence. She expressed that there is also loss of faith and patience with the peace process from ordinary South Sudanese. She indicated that solidarity is important as a way of moving away from a formal peace-making process. She argued that it important to look at how to move forward and

how South Africans and anyone from any other part of the world can contribute towards SS. There is a need to look at ways to expand this peace process and stretch it across, beyond the elite, so that ordinary people have an ownership of it as well.

There is a need through solidarity to begin to look at how to assist in developing and building local institutions in SS. Ms Govender noted that there is a need to introduce alternative mechanisms for people to engage. She argued that the whole notion around support for building local infrastructure is extremely important. She

concluded by stating that patriarchy knows no religion, no race, it knows no faction and no tribe or caste and it remains a problem. The biggest hope, and the greatest prospect and potential, is a women's movement. The architecture, the infrastructure of the laws, the protocols, and peace deals mean nothing if the minds and the hearts of people remain unchanged. It is behaviour and attitudes that need to change, she argued.



John Simon Kor

Mr Kor thanked SALO for providing this forum and also thanked the Norwegian Ambassador. He stated that Norway have given their support since the late 1970s and continue to contribute to the UN Mission in SS. He acknowledged that conflict is still continuing in SS and urged the international community and those that are supporting SS to continue their support until peace is completely attained. He expressed that SS is very rich in terms of both human and mineral resources.

He also thanked SA for the role it has played since 2005. He mentioned that the SS and SA bilateral relations are contributing to the enhancement of peace and the development of women in SS. He urged SALO to continue with forums such as this, to ensure that people are informed and aware of the challenges facing South Sudan; and how best the South Sudanese can benefit from the experiences of SA, the region, and of the international community.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Contributions from the floor included the following:

- ❖ There were reports early this year (2016) on the allegations that the South Sudanese army was being allowed to rape women for rewards. What are South Sudanese women and women's organisations doing in terms of engaging these allegations on the ground and at a higher level? How far have they come in terms of the investigations as well?

RESPONSES FROM THE PANEL

Zainab Yassin Hagelsafi

Regarding rape crimes by the soldiers, she stated that nobody is sending them but it is true and it is happening, not just in SS but all over the world. She indicated that the government has tried to assist and women are raising their voices regarding the issues of the violence against women. She also expressed her gratitude to SA for training most of the SS leaders.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In his closing remarks, Bishop Rubin Phillip thanked the South Sudan speaker for giving an informative and insightful presentation about South Sudan, which Bishop Phillip noted was a great yet also very complex country. He argued that the presentation spoke to the heart and mind. There is a need and longing for peace, healing, reconciliation, partnership, to work together, and for transformation. He expressed his hope that South Africans, Government, NGOs, and civil society will deepen solidarity with the people of South Sudan and will continue to pledge support for change there.



One of the points that came out from the panelist was that there is a need for self-reflection and introspection and that real change will come when there is change in behaviour, mindsets, and attitudes. There was an acknowledgement that women are in charge of the social fabric of society through the control over families and it is, therefore, in women's hands to teach adherence to policies, traditions, and customs that go against the very grain of that which women are.

There are negative practices within some cultures and religions, and reforms cannot be made on these without a collaborative effort. International cooperation and support can thus help fill the gaps to address the issues of women. It is important to protect and promote women's human rights and come up with measures to prevent violations, and measures to provide appropriate redress must be strengthened as required under International Human Rights Law.

The voices of women should sound not only in the peace-making processes but transcend to the post-transitional period in order to ensure that sustainable peace and development becomes a reality in SS. Coordination is also very important in order to bring various women's organisations together to talk peace. Therefore, there must be a more structured women's forum that coordinates the interaction between these women.

No country in the world can reach optimum economic development without the participation and inclusion of all women. SS has a very low skills base and should introduce measures that will improve its human capital development. Women and girls should not be left behind and should be

equal beneficiaries to the skills development drive. Women should therefore be involved in the conceptualisation, planning, implementation, and monitoring of strategies and programmes, both economic and political.

The post-conflict face of reconstruction and peace-building must include women and the integration of gender into every aspect of institutional justice, governance, security, and development for reform. Gender perspectives in the disarmament processes must be mainstreamed. Gender perspectives must be mainstreamed in the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, resettlement, and integration activities if they are to be efficient and equitable.

Humanitarian assistance, protection, and security for women and girls are essential components to fulfilling the needs of protecting the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Promoting women's equal access to aid distribution mechanisms, and especially those dealing with the specific needs of women and girls, is also essential in all relief recovery efforts.

When talking about equality, it is important to remember that it's not about counting women, it is about making women count. Women have the same right to influence their future as do their fathers, brothers, and sons.

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Dialogue Report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:

The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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