

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

In July 2016, almost a year since the signing of the ARCSS in August 2015 between President Salva Kiir, and Vice-President Riek Machar, within the Government of National Unity, the agreement had failed to stem the perpetual violence in Juba, while felt this raised questions relating to the leadership and credibility of the Transitional Government of National Unity, the ongoing tensions caused yet more trauma for women and children. The exclusion of women from reconciliation and decision-making processes had left them vulnerable to horrendous human rights abuses.

With a 60% majority, South Sudan's population has more females than males, which is a consequence of decades of civil war. The African Union's Commission of Inquiry Report (2015) highlighted the systemic sexual and gender-based violence and discriminatory gender biases in society, which continued to prevent women from accessing their economic and political rights. Various stakeholders had in the past attempted to address gender issues in South Sudan, enunciated again in the ARCSS. However, the inability of the world's newest nation to embrace an inclusive and gender-sensitive style of governance in practice was not a unique situation. The domestication of international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace-building (2000), remains problematic across the globe. In the precarious phase of post-conflict reconstruction and development, South Sudan was confronted with the dilemma of whether the women's agenda should be considered as secondary to the execution of the ARCSS in relation to other issues and if so, how the exclusion of women affected the prospects for peace. In exploring the South Sudanese experience with peace-building, specifically relating to the women's agenda, state actors and civil society could draw significant lessons for application in interventions elsewhere.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH SUDAN

The impact of civil war on the women and children in South Sudan has been catastrophic. Women became the nucleus in keeping families together whilst the men were deployed to engage in the war. Patriarchy, exemplified by South Sudan, showed that violence against women was both a cause and a symptom of the conflict. In order to debilitate the opposition's mental and physical strength, it was common in South Sudan to target civilians, in particular women and children, in turn provoking similar retaliation tactics and an endless cycle of violence. As a symptom of conflict, violence against women also inhibited women's traditional responsibility to nourish their families, which might include children, elderly parents as well as members of the extended family. South Sudan is one of the



Ms Venetia Govender, a SALO Associate and Director of Crisis Action Southern Africa. Speaking on the role of women in conflict and mediation

Ms Molly Dhlamini a representative of SALO chairperson at the workshop.

(left to right) Mr John Simon Kor, Deputy Head of Mission, South Sudanese Embassy, South Africa, Mr Fadle Nacerodien, Chief Director, Mediation Support, Policy Research and Analysis Unit, DIRCO, workshop Chair

least developed countries in the world with 4.6 million people reportedly food insecure, nearly 2 million people displaced inside the country and 600 000 in neighbouring countries.

Referring to one of the consequences of the conflict to life in South Sudan, Ms Hagelsafi explained that, since 1983, most South Sudanese had been dependent on their mothers for education. Older women of South Sudan experienced fair levels of education that were being put to good use through initiatives like small-scale farming. But these efforts by women were doomed without the corresponding rights to manage land, legal inheritance or economic empowerment. Affirmative action in the Interim Constitution (2005) had made provision for special considerations to guarantee the involvement of women in the legislative, executive and judicial functions of state. However, without a normative shift in approach to safeguarding their culture, predominantly by male traditional leaders, women's rights remained precarious in practice. As a result, speakers were adamant that South Sudan's peace negotiations and related initiatives had failed consistently to include women, thereby neglecting the rights and concerns of women and girls.

ARCSS FOR WOMEN

Both Ms Hagelsafi and Justice Paya, as representatives of women in South Sudan, insisted that the survival of the nation was in jeopardy without an expansive interpretation and application of human security in South Sudan's peace-building process, namely the freedom from fear and want. In the workshop, the female leaders from South Sudan recognised the economic, political and social commitments to women's participation to

which South Sudanese leaders had signed up in the ARCSS. They used the platform presented by the workshop at DIRCO to advocate for the full implementation of the ARCSS.

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The South Sudanese women emphasised it was vital to adhere to the provisions made in the ARCSS for representation of one woman from the Women's Bloc in each of the key mechanisms: the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), the Board of the Strategic Defence Security Review (SDSR) and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC).

The ARCSS confidently created a sense of ownership in the peace-building process via the inclusion of various groups in all processes (women, youth, church groups, civil society and NGOs). The Agreement also tasked the Transitional Government of Unity to review the ongoing permanent Constitution-making process and reconstitute the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC) to secure active participation by stakeholders, including women. These were positive gains for women because they contributed to creating a balance between what sometimes seemed to be competing

needs of national healing and reconciliation and the desire to hold people accountable for crimes against humanity and the violation of human rights. The ARCSS was crafted to recognise these important sensitivities.

The transitional justice programme described in the ARCSS focused on three institutional areas. Firstly, it made provision for the Commission on Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. It would be responsible for investigating, documenting and reporting human rights abuses over a predetermined period of time. The objective was to spearhead efforts to address the legacy of conflict and to promote peace, national reconciliation and healing. Secondly, the hybrid court under the African Union would be established to bring cases against individuals accused of violating international law, or applicable South Sudanese domestic law, during actions committed from 15 December 2013 through to the end of the transitional period. The hybrid court would consist of a combination of judges from South Sudan and the African Commonwealth member states. The inclusion of female judges were particularly prescribed by South Sudanese women to adjudicate cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Thirdly, the Compensation and Reparation Authority would be established to address the destruction caused by the conflict. Women wanted to be part of this body to ensure that the needs of internally displaced people were addressed, given the fact that displacement had rendered women and children particularly vulnerable. Certain women in South Sudan had stepped forward with the aspiration to carry out the mandate of these constitutional bodies. Though the ARCSS promoted a gender-sensitive democratic state, its implementation had as yet not occurred according to the allocated timeframe.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE FOR SOUTH SUDAN

Noting the international struggle to promote and uphold women's rights, Mr Kor recommended international cooperation to help South Sudan address the issues of women. This year (2016) was significant because it was the 60th anniversary of the march to the Union Buildings by the 20 000 South African women of different races and creeds who protested the oppressive laws and other human rights abuses.

Ms Ramokgopa reminded participants in the workshop of the powerful images of South African women's experiences and of the Truth and Reconciliation process. She reiterated South Africa's full commitment to South Sudan achieving sustainable peace, through dialogue. Within the broad mandate of inter-party engagement, South Africa's Special Envoy, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, continued to speak with the government of South Sudan, the ruling People of Sudan's Liberation Movement, leaders of the warring factions and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

(IGAD). South Africa commended the government of South Sudan for rising above sectoral interests in the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity as it would be fundamental to achieving lasting peace and stability. Moreover, the South African representative commended the ARCSS's provision for women's participation in the peace process. As a result, representatives of women's groups had become the torchbearers for peace and reconciliation. South Africa remains committed to security sector reform, institution building and economic development in South Sudan.

Ambassador Skymoene, noting the diversity of women's groups in Norway, cautioned that women's leadership in South Sudan, having had varying experiences, interests and needs, could not be assumed to represent the views of all the local women. Coordination among the women of South Sudan was thus critical in bringing various women's organisations together to talk peace. Norway's support to South Sudan was based on their formidable record in assisting states during times of conflict, often supporting efforts led by others – be it the United Nations (UN), regional organisations, the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) or other actors. Norway's emphasis was on the need for an inclusive governance process. They therefore invested in long-term, step-by-step projects to make women count. By way of example, Norway was supporting DIRCO's capacity building programme for women mediators. The ultimate objective was

to add them to an international list network of mediators whose skills would be utilised in mediation interventions. Norway also provided humanitarian assistance to South Sudan to contribute to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable people of South Sudan. Two of the priorities were education for girls and efforts to stop gender-based violence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender equality is a daily struggle and requires an inclusive, living peace-building process to make progress. The struggle for women's rights is complex and achieving these rights is multi-faceted but rewarding. The widest possible approach to human security ensures that peace-building becomes integrated into all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and development. Being the most vulnerable victims of conflict it follows that women should have a major say in conceptualising, planning, implementing and monitoring all strategies and programmes to secure peace and rebuild their nations. In addition, their involvement should encompass all phases of the process and all sectors of society - political, economic, social and so on.

The delegation from South Sudan drew encouragement from the lessons learned from the South African experience. They indicated that it strengthened their determination to be part of achieving peace in their country and overcoming the many obstacles in the process. After almost 63 years of war, they were convinced that their tenacity would be rewarded and hopeful that it would be happening soon.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **International solidarity with the women in South Sudan is strategic in ensuring the degeneration of peace is ring-fenced;**
- **Ownership of the peace-building process is key to ensure people feel the process is worth investing in and turn away from the war economy to development prerogatives;**
- **South Sudan requires international support for how it chooses to balance national reconciliation and justice;**
- **It is strongly recommended that South Sudan coordinates a structured women's forum for critical engagement in the developing peace-building process.**
- **The post-conflict phase of reconstruction and peace-building must include women in participation and the integration of gender into every aspect of institutionalized justice, governance, security and development for reform;**
- **Civil society in South Sudan and externally needs to be trained on the ARCSS's commitments to women's rights to ensure that firstly, the relevant opportunity is made available and secondly, capacitated women fill the role that thirdly, will be able to manage a diversity of women's interests;**
- **The ARCSS must be implemented.**

- The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.
- This publication is intended to inform, disseminate and stimulate dialogue on key international relations and events.
- Comments and contributions can be forwarded to, irdialogue@dirco.gov.za

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PEACE-BUILDING:

Lessons learned from South Sudan



(Top) Ms Sally Ramokgopa, Chief Director, East Africa, DIRCO, as a panelist during the workshop, speaking on behalf of DIRCO's South Sudan Desk on the position of South Africa regarding conflict in South Sudan

(Bottom) Ms Justice Ajonye Perpetua Paya, Deputy Chairperson of the Law Society of South Sudan (left) and Ms Zeinab Yassin Hagelsafi, Chairperson of the South Sudan Women's General Association (SSWGA) (Right) as guest speakers representing South Sudan civil society



Audience at a workshop on conflict and mediation on South Sudan titled "The Role of Women in Peace-building: Lessons learned from South Sudan". The workshop was hosted by the Chief Directorate: Mediation Support, Policy Research and Analysis Unit, DIRCO, 30 June 2016, Multipurpose Centre, OR Tambo Building, Pretoria

INTRODUCTION

ON 30 JUNE 2016, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), in partnership with the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO), hosted a workshop titled *The Role of Women in Peace-building: Lessons learned from South Sudan*. This event highlighted the challenges women in South Sudan face and sought to shed light on opportunities for women to be included in all spheres. To change the current situation in the country, the speakers called for the South Sudan Transitional Government of National Unity, together with some international assistance, to fully implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). Of particular importance was to support initiatives to raise awareness about the specific commitments towards women contained in the ARCSS. Moreover, the panellists spoke about the progressive positions held by South Africa and Norway, as well as the potential role for civil society to bring to fruition these commitments.

The panel discussion was structured into two sessions. The first included the following speakers: Mr John Simon Kor, Deputy Head of Mission, South Sudanese Embassy in South Africa; Ms Trine Skymoene, Norwegian Ambassador to South Africa; and Ms Selaelo Ramokgopa, Chief Director for East Africa, DIRCO. The second session was addressed by Justice Ajonye Perpetua Paya, Deputy Chairperson of the Law Society of South Sudan; Ms Zeinab Yassin Hagelsafi, Chairperson of the South Sudan Women's General Association (SSWGA); and Ms Venetia Govender, a SALO Associate and Director of Crisis Action Southern Africa.



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