

# Sustaining peace

## Harnessing the power of South Sudanese women

Liezelle Kumalo and Cassie Roddy-Mullineaux



South Sudanese women have always participated in peace processes but usually not at the front lines of negotiations. Despite considerable challenges, their bottom-up approach and collective action at grassroots level have led to greater representation in the formal peace processes and the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity. However, to achieve positive peace in South Sudan, women must have access to justice, resources and meaningful representation in positions of power.

## Key findings

- ▶ National and political trends exacerbate communal violence.
- ▶ Domestic violence is widely accepted by both men and women.
- ▶ Legislative reforms aimed at eradicating gender inequality have not improved the lives of South Sudanese women and girls.
- ▶ While the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan process allowed for women's participation, the quality of their involvement was insufficient.
- ▶ South Sudanese women are linked to many of the drivers of communal conflict. Women can be antagonists as much as protagonists. They can also be vigilantes instead of vigilant, and exclusionary rather than inclusive.
- ▶ They are however uniquely placed to organise across ethnic lines to de-escalate ethnic tensions.
- ▶ In terms of gender-responsive budgeting, defence and security still take the bulk of government spending, while health and social services are severely underfunded.
- ▶ Technical committees require a level of capacity that most South Sudanese women can't provide due to lack of literacy and other skills.
- ▶ While the 35% representation of women in transitional justice processes bodes well for women's ability to shape these processes in a gender-sensitive manner, the delay in establishing relevant mechanisms is worrying.
- ▶ Local-level monitoring allows grassroots women to offer local knowledge, access to communities, and capacity and expertise.

## Recommendations

- ▶ Seek to better connect formal and informal tracks of diplomacy, including through effective transfer mechanisms.
- ▶ Ensure more donor funding is directed towards addressing gender equality programmes in South Sudan.
- ▶ Invest in addressing structural barriers such as women's lack of access to education, resources and skills as well as underlying power structures detrimental to women's advancement.
- ▶ Enact a domestic violence act that can also deal with addressing unequal power relations that exist in the country.
- ▶ Seek to introduce a gender-responsive budgeting process that is transparent, participatory and inclusive of women's voices.
- ▶ Ensure more support (including financial support) for grassroots women's activities and greater recognition of the key role they play in rebuilding society.

## Introduction

The active involvement of women in peace processes not only supports peace efforts, but ensures that a broader spectrum of societal needs are considered and valued. This is because women take a collaborative approach that cuts across ethnic divides. The United Nations Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda seeks to promote the participation of women in peace and security institutions, processes and decision-making structures.

The security of women is linked to the security of states. Women's insecurity is part of a broader continuum of violence that transcends narrow militarised definitions of peace and security, and is exacerbated during conflict.

September 2018 ushered in a new period of hope in South Sudan's peace process when the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediated the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The agreement engendered optimism that it would pave the way for sustainable peace. In addition to the parties to the conflict, 16 stakeholders from civil society organisations signed the agreement.

Achieving sustainable peace necessitates inclusive engagements that respond to the local drivers of the conflict. Women's participation in peace processes increases the chances that the community will buy into the process and that the root causes of the conflict will be addressed, particularly as women can bring a different perspective to that of warring factions regarding what peace and security mean. Women's participation also increases the likelihood of stability and social and economic recovery.

South Sudanese women can play a major role in establishing peace. However, they continue to be subjected to a number of human rights violations and have limited engagement in political and peace processes.

The United Nations (UN) peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions<sup>1</sup> recognise the importance of enhancing efforts to link what happens at the national and local levels.

This report explores the role of women in formal peace processes and informal peace processes in South

Sudan. It reflects on the challenges women face and on the local resilience established through their partnerships with stakeholders as they work together towards peace.

The report is based on desktop research, and on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa in January 2019 and Juba in June 2019. The interviews were conducted with 22 civil society organisations and international, local and donor institutions.

## Justification for women's inclusion

The UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 recognises the differing conflict experiences of women, men, boys and girls and the important role women play in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

It underscores the need for gender-sensitive approaches to restoring peace and stability in post-conflict contexts and for incorporating a gender perspective into all aspects of peace operations.

Sustaining peace is defined as 'a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are considered, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development'.<sup>3</sup>

The sustaining peace agenda and UNSC Resolution 1325 are particularly relevant to South Sudan given the country's fragile context, high levels of gender-based violence, and ongoing peace processes.

While women play an important role in grassroots peacebuilding, they are often excluded when peace processes advance to more formal levels.<sup>4</sup> The call for women's inclusion centres around three main claims:

- They have the same right as men to be included.
- Their inclusion is critical for the foundation of just and transformative societies.
- Their inclusion will lead to better outcomes for sustainable peace.

This is backed up by research showing agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years<sup>5</sup> and

roughly 65% less likely to fail when women are involved.<sup>6</sup> However it should be noted that it's not just women's involvement but also the comprehensive nature of peace agreements (which represent the culmination of all previous negotiations and agreed-upon terms) that makes securing peace more likely.<sup>7</sup>

There is also evidence that agreements with female signatories have more provisions for political, economic and social reform. In women's absence, agreements are mostly military-focused.<sup>8</sup>

The sustaining peace agenda recognises that without the full participation of women in society, neither peace nor prosperity can be ensured. Meaningful participation of women in leadership roles strengthens protection efforts and deepens the effectiveness of peacebuilding.

The inclusion of women in peace and security efforts results in more effective interventions with fewer risks and better outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Yet despite a growing body of empirical research showing the benefits of women's participation, women remain on the periphery and mostly still operate informally.

Women account for over 60% of South Sudan's population and so their inclusion brings greater legitimacy to the negotiation process. However, there is a difference between merely counting women and ensuring women count.

Thania Paffenholz cautions against giving too much weight to the numerical presence of women in formal negotiations, saying the focus should be on assessing women's activities and their degree of influence over decision-making bodies during negotiations.

This is because it is women's influence that correlates with the likelihood that gender-specific provisions will be adopted in peace agreements as well as with the degree of implementation.<sup>10</sup>

## Women in South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan became the world's newest nation on 9 July 2011. It has some of the worst development indicators in Africa and globally, with more than half the population living below the poverty line.<sup>11</sup>

In South Sudan, gains in institutional development since independence have been lost mainly due to the internal power struggle within the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>12</sup>

The explosion of violence in December 2013 set aid and development projects back several years. Violence in the country has become increasingly rural. The economic situation has deteriorated and the South Sudanese pound has been devalued which has led to soldiers hiring themselves to the higher bidders.<sup>13</sup>

The country contains more than 60 cultural and linguistic groups, each of which has a stronger sense of citizenship and belonging to their tribe than to the nation itself.<sup>14</sup> The glue that bonded the country's multiple ethnicities together was their historical struggle for freedom and their collective opposition to the north.

However, following the independence of South Sudan and the ensuing relative peace between the two countries, divisions emerged along ethnic and clan lines in South Sudan.

South Sudan is a highly patriarchal society in which women have a very low status. Violence against women and the lack of recognition of women's rights as human rights are key features of South Sudanese society. Although consolidated data is scarce, it is clear that South Sudan's conflict has gender dimensions as women and girls suffer disproportionately from the impact of conflict and displacement.

South Sudan is a highly patriarchal society in which women have a very low status

Structural dimensions of women's inequality also manifest in their lack of access to basic education and primary healthcare, and their lack of ownership or control over property and access to information, while remaining responsible for the bulk of the household workload. High illiteracy rates coupled with these prevailing cultural norms, especially in the countryside, effectively bar women from participating at all levels of political activity or decision-making.

The prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan remains unknown. An estimated 57% of women who experience sexual and gender-based violence do not report it or share it with others.<sup>15</sup> More alarming is that sexual and gender-based violence is used as a tactic of war by all parties in South Sudan.<sup>16</sup>

Forms of violence against women that are an endemic problem in South Sudan include domestic violence, forced marriage, child marriages, dowry-related violence, marital rape, sexual harassment, intimidation at work and in educational institutions, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilisation, girl compensation and forced prostitution.

National and political trends affect the dynamics of conflict across South Sudan and exacerbate communal violence resulting in explosive tensions within communities. Issues related to bride price – including cattle raiding and violence in the home – remain a primary source of inter-communal conflict in many areas.

Women in South Sudan have always participated in peace processes but usually not at the front lines

Societal acceptance of domestic violence is widespread amongst both women and men in South Sudan, and early marriage is very common – 45% of girls are married before they reach 18 years old and 7% of girls are married before they are 15.<sup>17</sup> In Aweril, 43% of people have experienced violence in the home.<sup>18</sup> Research also shows that women in South Sudan are just as likely as men to believe violence can solve conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

These factors, combined with a lack of access to legal recourse, and customary practices, further marginalise women.

While there have been legislative reforms aimed at eradicating gender inequality and discrimination against women,<sup>20</sup> due to discriminatory traditional practices the lives of South Sudanese women and girls have not substantively improved.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, while quotas have helped to boost women's representation in South Sudan's public sphere, women are often limited to low-level roles due to the

presence of structural barriers such as poor literacy, low-quality education and the lack of opportunity.<sup>22</sup>

Since the resurgence of conflict in July 2016, South Sudan has been plagued by increased insecurity and continuous outbreaks of violence against its civilian population. Women have suffered disproportionately. Many women have been displaced, lost family members and had their livelihoods destroyed, further entrenching their political and economic marginalisation.

A culture of impunity, attributed to a lack of political will and weak institutions,<sup>24</sup> means that perpetrators are unlikely to be brought to justice.<sup>25</sup> The international humanitarian group CARE also recognises that violence against women and girls persists because of the unequal power relations between men and women, especially the hyper-masculine norms that normalise the use of violence to solve conflict in the country.<sup>26</sup>

Building sustainable peace in South Sudan will require a careful balancing of establishing rule of law and building a common vision for the future. To achieve sustained peace the needs of all population segments must be taken into consideration.

### **Women's roles in South Sudan's peace process**

Women in South Sudan have always participated in peace processes – including the most recent revitalisation process – but usually not at the front lines of negotiations.<sup>27</sup> This is unfortunate because women's effective engagement in peace-making processes, beyond symbolic representation, is essential to finding sustainable resolutions to conflict.

There were two main reasons that women didn't engage meaningfully during the 2015 and revitalised peace negotiations – fear and a high illiteracy rate among women.<sup>28</sup>

### **Formal peacebuilding roles**

Globally women's participation in peace processes tends to be low. Between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators, and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes.<sup>29</sup>

South Sudan's peace processes follow this global trend and its processes from 2013, particularly in the

early stages, were largely co-opted by the warring parties. In the interviews conducted, one respondent stated: 'Women woke up late, things were done too fast, we were not prepared so we could not set the agenda'.<sup>30</sup>

Although women's groups were present during the later stages of peace negotiations, they were not well represented in the early stages. (This is unfortunate as research shows that women's inclusion during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases paves the way for their inclusion during the implementation phase and in newly established institutions.<sup>31</sup> Conversely, if women are not included in the early stages, they are unlikely to be included later on in the peace process)

During the latest round of negotiations, South Sudanese women held consultative meetings to consolidate women's voices and influence the peace talks

When conflict erupted in South Sudan in December 2013, IGAD immediately called its 23rd Extraordinary Summit, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 27 December 2013, in order to discuss the South Sudan situation. Three envoys – all men – were appointed to head the South Sudan peace process. They were assisted by a team of political and technical advisers (eight women and 24 men) based in the IGAD Secretariat in Addis Ababa.<sup>32</sup>

During the first phase of the peace negotiations in 2013, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM-IO) 10-person negotiating team included three women. The delegation of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to the peace process consisted entirely of men (mostly government officials, ministers, generals and parliamentarians). Women made up 9% of the witnesses to the peace negotiations.

Progressively, in the second phase, the government added three women to its negotiating team – this was the result of both sustained advocacy from civil society in South Sudan and international pressure. However, women still only made up 7% of witnesses to the peace negotiations and 8% of the negotiating teams in the second phase.

During the talks leading up to the 2015 peace deal,<sup>33</sup> women lobbied for 40% representation in all institutions of the Transitional Government of National Unity, including ministerial positions. They were granted 25% representation within the national assembly. They were also granted ministerial posts and presidential advisers' positions but these were considered to be of cosmetic value, as they could not influence decision-making process.<sup>34</sup>

However, due to continued violations of the peace agreement, including the outbreak of new violence in the Equatorias in 2016, it became evident that the peace agreement had failed. To bolster the defunct 2015 peace agreement, the IGAD mediation of the High-Level Revitalisation Forum (HLRF) started in June 2017 and concluded in September 2018.

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WOMEN ONLY MADE UP

7%

OF WITNESSES TO THE  
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

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The subsequent peace agreements<sup>35</sup> were signed in 2018. During the latest round of negotiations, the women of South Sudan held several consultative meetings to consolidate women's voices and influence the peace talks. In one of the consultations with IGAD, these groups demanded an immediate inclusion of at least 25% of South Sudanese women in the peace process.<sup>36</sup>

IGAD promoted gender parity and encouraged the participation of women. During the first phase (December 2017) nine women participated in the peace process. During the second phase (February 2018) 17 women participated. By May 2018, 27 women were participating in the peace process and the South Sudan Women Coalition (comprising over 50 women-led organisations) deployed a Technical Team of South Sudanese woman experts.<sup>37</sup>

However, despite progress in numbers, the influence women were able to wield was still limited.<sup>38</sup> Those representing party positions during discussions and to the media were mostly men, and woman delegates were relegated to less active participatory roles. None of the chairpersons or spokespersons were women.<sup>39</sup> In general, while there was some improvement in women's involvement in peace processes, the quality of their involvement remained insufficient.

## Women are linked to many drivers and occurrences of communal conflict in South Sudan

The National Dialogue,<sup>40</sup> first launched in December 2016, is another important high-level peace process taking place in South Sudan. The leadership structure includes three women out of its eight members. However, a critical challenge for this process is the non-inclusion of significant stakeholders.<sup>41</sup>

For example, the various parties to the conflict have so far declined to participate in the process. Reverend Canon Clement Janda, a prominent religious figure, was asked by President Salva Kiir Mayardit to sit on the dialogue's steering committee but he declined to participate due to its perceived lack of credibility.<sup>42</sup>

Despite – and perhaps because of – the lack of interaction from high-ranking officials, the National

Dialogues are viewed as the first truly nationally owned and countrywide opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions. Citizens are also given the opportunity to engage in a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding.<sup>43</sup>

However, respondents said the lack of security meant that women specifically did not feel free to discuss some issues: 'Due to their feeling insecure, women pulled back and kept a low profile. They are trying to keep safe. If the rest are scared there is a probability that whatever is being pursued will relapse to zero.'<sup>44</sup> Again, this is problematic as the engagement of all relevant stakeholders was one of the key reasons for launching and developing the National Dialogue.

### Informal peace works

While South Sudanese women have been underrepresented in formal peace negotiations, they have been active in informal peacebuilding. They have responded to the conflict's impacts through self-organisation and the establishment of grassroots women's organisations.

However, women are also linked to many drivers and occurrences of communal conflict in South Sudan. Women can be antagonists as much as they are protagonists, vigilantes instead of vigilant, and exclusionary rather than inclusive.

Helen Kezie-Nwoha and Juliet Were's research<sup>45</sup> into women's informal peace work in South Sudan documents the work of local grassroots women's organisations. The grassroots work is particularly impressive because organising and mobilising for peace in a militarised context presents a major challenge and there are difficulties in securing international funding.

Many organisations provide practical support such as food, shelter, healthcare services, education and economic empowerment to women. They run discussion forums on issues affecting women such as insecurity caused by rebel groups. Grassroots women are uniquely placed to organise across ethnic lines.<sup>46</sup>

They de-escalate ethnic tensions in local communities and establish peace committees to heal divides. They fast for peace and organise interfaith prayer meetings, and provide care for orphans and other victims of war.<sup>47</sup>

Women are also increasingly focused on establishing peace committees to enable them to live free from exploitation, violence and discrimination. The committees consider the root causes of the conflict and how they can be addressed within communities. They also focus on localised issues and ways to address these at the national level.<sup>48</sup>

The South Sudan Women Coalition acts as a conduit for dialogue between grassroots activists and women involved in formal processes and enables activists to influence the formal peacebuilding process.

In 2017 it helped develop a joint South Sudan Women Position on the Promotion of Durable Peace and Reconciliation to guide the engagement of the women at the table and to remind them about key concerns and their accountability to a broader group of grassroots activists, leaders and women.<sup>49</sup>

In May 2018, during the formal peace talks, the South Sudan Women Coalition also released a statement calling for 35% representation for women – a request which was granted in the R-ARCSS.<sup>50</sup>

Other women's groups and coalitions such as the South Sudan Women's Peace Network (SSWPN)<sup>51</sup> insisted that all agreements be translated into local languages and worked to educate the public about their contents.<sup>52</sup>

Women have also been involved in broadening the negotiation agenda. For example, due to the influence of South Sudanese woman leaders within civil society, the 2017 ceasefire agreement expressly prohibited sexual violence in conflict and included strong commitments to protect civilians and reunify women and children.<sup>53</sup>

In 2017, hundreds of women staged a mass action by marching in silence through Juba to express their anger to South Sudan's leadership and to demand an end to South Sudan's war. They protested against the continued rape and killing of civilians, displacement and lack of humanitarian services for people in need, and demanded accountability for atrocities.<sup>54</sup>

### **Bridging the gap**

In South Sudan, as in other conflicts, the further away from the formal peace process the more women there are. Connecting the various tracks of negotiations to

enable a better flow of communication between formal and informal processes will be crucial to redressing this imbalance.

The work of groups like the South Sudan Women Coalition shows that women can have an important influence, even from outside the official talks. Ensuring the existence of effective transfer mechanisms between informal and formal processes is essential.

This can involve the sharing of documents with representatives of formal processes or it can happen through public reports and press statements. There is evidence that women's groups who use a variety of different transfer strategies are more likely to increase their influence.<sup>55</sup>

Sustainable peace in South Sudan requires an inclusive approach involving multi-track diplomacy and interaction between formal and informal peace processes. A holistic approach to peace is needed that is more inclusive of the multiple voices in South Sudan and in particular of women's lived realities, including the rampant human rights violations visited upon them during the conflict.

Peace processes will need to both respond to local drivers of conflict and incorporate these into the solutions. If women are not incorporated into local and national peacebuilding efforts, half of the population's needs will remain unaddressed.<sup>56</sup> As one respondent stated: 'Some legislation [doesn't] address women's [interests]. And in some cases, [it doesn't] even address people's [interests].'<sup>57</sup>

### **Women's inclusion post-agreement**

A peace agreement is not the end of a process, but rather the beginning of building lasting peace. While agreements are not the litmus test of whether there will be greater stability or security, they are indicative of a transition from war to peace, and of the type of society that will be built. To achieve truly positive peace in South Sudan, women must have access to justice, resources and positions of power.

On the face of it, the R-ARCSS suggests that gender equality and women's rights are a major component of South Sudan's post-conflict society. It carves out positions for women through gender quotas and lists the Women's Bloc of South Sudan and the Women's Coalition as stakeholders to the agreement.



It also calls for the creation of economic,<sup>58</sup> judicial<sup>59</sup> and governing institutions to remedy the issues women face. However, whether or not women and their rights are meaningfully included in the new transitional period will demonstrate if these provisions are worth more than the paper they are written on.

Financing gender equality is one main way to move from commitment to action. According to UN Women, a budget is ‘the most comprehensive statement of a government’s social and economic plans and priorities’.<sup>60</sup>

Gender-responsive budgeting involves thinking about the gender impact of budget decisions at all stages of the budget process – and making concrete investments to tackle gender gaps. For instance, sectors such as roads are often considered to have limited gender relevance – but road and transport access is central to women’s economic empowerment.

Such analysis is also a step towards greater public transparency.<sup>61</sup> The Women’s Budget Group and Oxfam have developed a useful chart detailing possible actions that different actors (government, civil society, international NGOs) can take at different stages.<sup>62</sup> This includes mapping out the budget cycle, research and analysis into budget proposals, and using the findings to transform the budget to ensure gender equality commitments are realised.

As it stands, South Sudan’s budgetary process is neither inclusive nor transparent,<sup>63</sup> meaning that women’s needs and interests are unlikely to be adequately addressed in the transitional period. The gender minister receives a small budgetary allocation compared with other institutions.

Gender-responsive budgeting involves thinking about the gender impact of budget decisions at all stages of the budget process

Although the education budget was increased in 2018-19, defence and security spending still takes the bulk of South Sudan’s expenditure.<sup>64</sup> The health and social services sectors, areas that affect women and girls, are also severely underfunded.

Donor funding is also essential to rebuild a society post-conflict and supporting gender equality must be a primary objective. The United Nations Development Programme says there can be ‘no peace without development, no development without peace’.

Research shows that women’s empowerment and gender equality contribute to state stability and prevention of violent conflict<sup>65</sup> and that countries see better overall development when women’s rights are a priority.<sup>66</sup> Since the signing of the CPA, hundreds of millions of dollars in donor funding from a multitude of actors have flowed into South Sudan.<sup>67</sup> It is not possible to assess the gender component of every programme but most of them did not have a gender component.<sup>68</sup>



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South Sudan's R-ARCSS contains gender-positive provisions such as the 35% quota for the executive and transitional justice mechanisms as well as the proviso that one of the vice presidents must be female.

This is a critical step forward in a country whose public and political sphere has been traditionally dominated by men. There is evidence that high levels of women's participation in public sector positions improve service delivery for communities and advance stability and post-conflict recovery.<sup>69</sup>

However, the lack of a gender quota across the board for all institutions hampers women's meaningful influence. For instance, the quota does not extend to the key pre-transitional institutions that have been established, including the National Pre-Transitional Committee which oversees the implementation of the agreement during the pre-transitional period.

As a result, there is only 10% women's representation on the committee, something that has attracted much criticism.<sup>70</sup> Nor does the quota cover the legislative branch or the judiciary despite the UN Secretary-General's statement that a gender-responsive legal and judicial system constitutes one of the building blocks of a resilient society.<sup>71</sup>

Even if the 35% quota did extend to other institutions, it would not be easy to meet it due to the structural barriers' women face. Much of the work of the committees is technical in nature and requires a level of capacity outside the reach of most South Sudanese women, especially given women's low literacy rates.<sup>72</sup>

There is also the possibility of violence against women if they participate in these processes. The rural/urban divide is another exacerbating factor. Gender norms and biases mean that women are excluded from peace and security matters.

Yet these gaps should not be viewed as a reason to continue excluding women. Rather they highlight the critical need to devote time and resources to address these barriers. In so doing, it is essential to consider the underlying power structures perpetuating women's subordinate position – including discriminatory cultural practices that treat women as property.<sup>73</sup>

However, while it is crucial to address underlying power structures and discriminatory practices, these

are complex issues with no easy solution. Although many legislative reforms are taking place, including reform of the penal code, South Sudan has no legislation that deals with domestic violence. Enacting such legislation could be the first step to addressing unequal power relations.<sup>74</sup>

Transitional justice is central to a post-conflict society's journey towards positive peace, and ensuring women's access to justice for the harm they have suffered is essential. There needs to be a gender perspective in implementing the framework to address women and men's different experiences during the conflict,<sup>75</sup> particularly as South Sudanese women bore the brunt of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.

While the 35% quota bodes well for women's ability to shape these processes in a gender-sensitive manner, the overall lack of progress in establishing transitional justice institutions is worrying. The initiative to set up a specialised sexual and gender-based violence court system is promising though. It is crucial for women to be involved in setting up this court to avoid re-traumatising victims and to ensure real justice is delivered to the women who have experienced this type of violence.

### Transitional justice is central to a post-conflict society's journey towards positive peace

Monitoring and evaluating peace agreement implementation are crucial activities,<sup>76</sup> particularly as gender-focused provisions are notoriously difficult to implement and tend to be overlooked. South Sudan's Transitional Constitution for example originally provided for 25% women's representation at all levels of government (now increased to 35% under the R-ARCSS), but there were gaps in how this quota was implemented.<sup>77</sup>

Research shows that formalising monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within a peace agreement results in improved chances of influencing implementation and ensuring that gender-sensitive provisions – where they exist – are put into practice.<sup>78</sup>

M&E activities need to receive more scrutiny from the international and local communities, especially as

women's roles in M&E tend to be weak.<sup>79</sup> As such, the activities of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee established under the R-ARCSS are particularly important as this committee is tasked with monitoring and overseeing the overall implementation of the agreement. That the R-ARCSS specifically provides for women's roles within the committee is welcome.

This committee has been vocal about the need for women to be represented in the various levels of government. It has also convened workshops with female journalists on their role in promoting women's representation and participation in the dissemination and implementation of the R-ARCSS<sup>80</sup> and sensitised them on the need to push for the implementation of the 35% quota.<sup>81</sup>

Gender-sensitive reporting from the media can help bring about a wider cultural shift within South Sudan regarding women's place in society, and serve to combat limiting beliefs. However the only gender reporting in the nine-page report by the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee from December 2018 was the alleged rape of several women in Bentiu.

Alongside formal monitoring and evaluation activities, there is also a role for women and women's rights organisations in informal monitoring of the R-ARCSS. Research shows local-level monitoring allows grassroots women to offer local knowledge, access to communities, and capacity and expertise.

Gender-sensitive reporting can help bring about a wider cultural shift regarding women's place in society

They can also contribute to the legitimacy of monitoring due to their non-partisan or bipartisan status.<sup>83</sup> Data gathered by women's rights organisations for advocacy purposes can also contribute to effective monitoring.<sup>84</sup>

South Sudanese women have recently launched a petition calling for more inclusivity in implementing the outcome of the R-ARCSS.<sup>85</sup> They are also calling for important ministerial posts<sup>86</sup> to be allocated to women in the upcoming transitional government, not just so-called periphery posts.

Ultimately, women at all levels, including grassroots women, must be involved in ensuring the R-ARCSS is fully implemented and to advocate greater women's representation across South Sudan's institutions.

## Conclusion

National hostilities have decreased but continued communal violence threatens South Sudan's fragile peace. Women continue to suffer from a litany of human rights abuses and their multiple roles, including as peacemakers, is still underestimated. Despite numerous international and national laws to enhance the protection and participation of women in peace processes, concrete results for women are lacking.

Applying a gendered perspective and including women will ensure the greater effectiveness of peace and security actors. Greater involvement of women in South Sudan's reform processes will also ensure that laws, policies, programmes and operations are more responsive to the needs of the majority of its society.

During the new transitional period, there must be a deliberate effort from both government and civil society to actively involve women in South Sudan's peace and security architecture. A peace agreement needs the buy-in of the whole of society – including its women – to have a real chance at securing lasting peace.

Local and international communities must place greater importance on monitoring the R-ARCSS's implementation. Provision of funding will be necessary to ensure women's involvement (at all levels) in monitoring and evaluation activities, and women's engagement at sub-national and community levels should be strategically planned for and supported.

The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee should consult with local grassroots structures as much as possible – and IGAD must keep a watchful eye over this. Women themselves must continue to network and lobby for their inclusion in the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

It will be important to seek the introduction of a gender-responsive budgeting process that is transparent, participatory and inclusive of women's voices. IGAD can play an important role in putting pressure on government, parties and leaders to make the necessary shift.

Recent developments – such as the provision of training to government officials and members of parliament so they can develop their awareness and capacity to deliver gender-responsive budgeting<sup>67</sup> – are welcome, and such efforts should be supported and expanded.

Recommendations for the inclusion of women in peace processes for the Revitalised Transitional Government of South Sudan:

- Seek to better connect formal and informal tracks of diplomacy, including through effective transfer mechanisms.
- Ensure more donor funding is directed towards addressing gender equality programmes in South Sudan.
- Invest in addressing structural barriers such as women's lack of access to education, resources and skills as well as underlying power structures detrimental to women's advancement.
- Enact a domestic violence act that can also deal with addressing unequal power relations that exist in the country.
- Seek to introduce a gender-responsive budgeting process that is transparent, participatory and inclusive of women's voices.
- Ensure more support (including financial support) for grassroots women's activities and greater recognition of the key role they play in rebuilding society.

## Notes

- 1 The UN Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions (S/RES/2282 – A/RES/70/262) were passed in 2016 by the UN Security Council and General Assembly and further endorsed in the Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in January 2018 (A/72/707- S/2018/43).
- 2 UNSC Resolution 1325, 2000, S/RES/1325 (2000), <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325>.
- 3 UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282).
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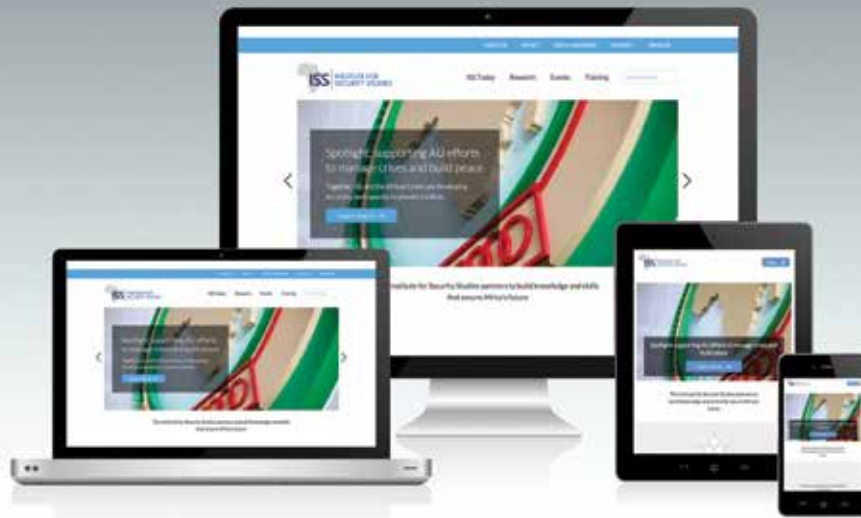
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### About the authors

Liezelle Kumalo is a researcher in the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Division of the Institute for Security Studies. Her work experience includes gender, peace and security, and peacebuilding. She has an MA in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Cassie Roddy Mullineaux is a lawyer, currently undertaking her Masters in International Human Rights Law at NUI Galway, Ireland. Her work with ISS was part of her Diploma in Development Practice at Trinity College Dublin. She previously completed research for Oxfam Ireland on women's political participation and representation in various sub-Saharan African contexts.

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