

# Experiencing peace: Exploring South Sudanese and aid sector’s understanding of ‘peace dividends’

## CSRF Working Paper

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### Summary

The end of the R-ARCSS transition period and the possibility of elections make this a key moment for peace and stability in South Sudan. In many areas, despite an escalation of incidents of violence after R-ARCSS, increased government control in areas across South Sudan means that many state and county governments are actively pursuing an agenda of stability. Yet, for most South Sudanese, this current state of affairs is not what the Dinka could call ‘*dor*’ – a deeper, more stable peace that includes a fuller restoration of social and legal relations. The key challenge for aid actors currently is to use the opportunity of government-backed stability to create a more stable, resilient peace. Crucial for doing this is increasing the control that communities themselves have, as opposed to just the warring parties and politicians, to make the decision about whether it is a time of war or peace.

Since the 1990s, peace actors in South Sudan have invested in long-term, intricate processes that seek to bring communities together through dialogues and meetings over times. Agreements that emerge from these dialogues, however, have often not been fully implemented because of a lack of government and aid actor will and resources. If implemented, the agreements could have brought dividends and benefits from peace that may have deterred people from engaging in armed conflict or empowered them to be able to resist warring party demands. This raises the question of if and how other aid actors (aid actors primarily involved in humanitarian or development programming) might support peace programming that delivers a peace dividend. If aid actors seek to do this, they must think critically about what aid investments benefit the range of people needed to discourage armed conflict, and how these peace dividends impact conflict and power dynamics in the area.

### Introduction

The question of when and how the people of South Sudan will experience a ‘peace dividend’ has persisted over decades of peacemaking efforts. Prominent peace processes such as the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which paved the way for South Sudan’s independence, and the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) raised expectations around how resulting peace dividends will be experienced throughout society. As the timeline laid out for the R-ARCSS begins to draw to a close, there is an increasing focus on what South Sudan will look like once the end of the roadmap for the agreement has been reached.

Understanding of what constitutes a ‘peace dividend’ in the context of South Sudan is somewhat broad and has come to be associated with a number of areas, however it has generally been interpreted as demonstrating the benefits of peace over war. It is usually understood as the material and practical benefits of peace (for example, the ‘hardware’ of service provision, development, and economic growth), but broader interpretations may also link with social, political and psychological benefits as an outcome of a peace process (for example, wider elements of a ‘positive’ peace such as broader experience of social cohesion or the trust between citizens and the state). Furthermore, what a peace dividend may mean at all levels of society and across areas of South Sudan may also differ. Expectations around ‘peace dividends’ which are linked more directly to local peace processes may differ from

macro-level interpretations. From a conflict sensitivity perspective, intended contributions to peace need to be weighed against the risk of causing harm by applying conflict-blind approaches to delivering ‘peace dividends’.

South Sudan's citizens have lived through continuous conflict and instability, including decades of civil war with Sudan and internal fragmentation, the euphoria of independence and then brutal war two and a half years later, and years of efforts to build and consolidate a state. Expanding and consolidating the authority of the state creates winners and losers, especially given the complexity and entrenched nature of patronage systems both old and new, and the volatility around South Sudan's state-formation has often sat at odds with more localised peace, development and democratisation.

At the time of writing, a time of government-led stability appears to prevail, yet this also overlaps with continuing and sometimes escalating localised armed violence, and 2024 is an uncertain year as the R-ARCSS reaches the end of its current timeline. According to the R-ARCSS, the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU), as of February 2020, is supposed to govern for a 36-month period and is to be replaced by an elected government following General Elections to be held in December 2024. The elections, and the end of the transition period, were initially meant to take place in December 2022, postponed to 2023, and had been expected to be scheduled for December 2024. Discussions about the process and the elections themselves will rely on and test cooperative relationships between South Sudan's different groups and communities and could create incentives for armed violence.

South Sudan's politico-military leaders have a history of mobilising their followers and communities to either engage in conflict or

demand a cessation of conflict, based on what would best benefit leaders' political, social, and economic interests.<sup>1</sup> Where stability aligns with the interests of those in power, an area can be stable and relatively peaceful. It is often an illusion of stability, however, as conflict can and often does return, sometimes rapidly, if it serves the interests of powerful politico-military leaders. This leaves many South Sudanese fearful of the unpredictable and often uncertain nature of the ‘stability’ in their area. Nonetheless, peace in South Sudan is not solely dependent on the interests and participation of these leaders, and there are many different stakeholders who have continued to invest in and sustain peace, stability, reconciliation, social cohesion and/or safety despite the volatility of elite relationships and dynamics between armed actors. Therefore, aid actors (including UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs and civil society working across humanitarian, development and peace programming), donors and diplomats need to better understand ways to create a more stable, long-lasting, resilient ‘stability’ and peace.

The consequences of war in South Sudan have not only been economic or political in nature, as the war has also had social, moral, and spiritual costs. South Sudanese society has been divided and militarised, safety and security is rare in some areas, and the rising brutality of the violence in South Sudan has introduced new levels of moral uncertainty.<sup>2</sup> Aid actors, donors and diplomats often describe peace as meaningless if there are no peace dividends, and not surprisingly, there is also the expectation among South Sudanese that donors and aid agencies will finance and implement programmes that bring about the expected material improvements.<sup>3</sup> More aid actors increasingly see the relevance of engaging in peace-oriented programming, using an approach that provides economic benefits to targeted individuals and communities, as well the

<sup>1</sup> Pendle N (2023), *Spiritual Contestations - The Violence of Peace in South Sudan*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson SE (2001), ‘A Curse from God? Religious and political dimensions of the post-1991 rise of ethnic violence in South Sudan’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39 (2), pp 307–31; Hutchinson SE (1996), *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Jok JM, Hutchinson SE (1999), ‘Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and The Militarization of Nuer

and Dinka Ethnic Identities’, *African Studies Review* 42 (2), p 125; Pendle (2023), op. cit.; Cormack Z (2016), ‘Borders Are Galaxies: Interpreting Contestations over Local Administrative Boundaries in South Sudan’, *Africa* 86 (3), pp 504–27.

<sup>3</sup> Kariuki J (Ambassador) (2023), ‘Legislation Alone Will Not Deliver Sustainable Peace in South Sudan: UK Statement at the UN Security Council’, 20 June; Rolandson (2006), op. cit.

broader social, moral and spiritual benefits to society that are inherent in a 'positive' peace.<sup>4</sup>

This became a particular area of focus in the late 1990s (though also sought to build on much longer-term established customary peace mechanisms), when peace actors in South Sudan sought to invest in long-term, people-led processes, seeking to move beyond government-enforced stability to deeper, longer-term peaceful relations that cannot be so easily or speedily reversed.<sup>5</sup> These activities often provide communities with crucial opportunities to move away from fluctuating, often politically influenced, relationships with other groups and communities, delinking relationships from leaders' personal interests and instead re-focusing peace on communities' interests. A significant focus has been on trying to make the material benefits of peace so significant that the loss of these benefits would be too high a cost for people to support a return to conflict.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, both communities and individual South Sudanese often see material improvements as a key benefit and dividend of peace, especially because of long histories of material scarcity (though as what follows will show, material benefit is not the only anticipated dividend of peace). When agreements have not been implemented and material benefits that South Sudanese hoped did not materialise, this may also undermine the prospects for sustainable peace.

Finally, South Sudan is a long-term recipient of international assistance, particularly since the establishment of Operation Lifeline Sudan in the late 1980s. Historically, assistance in South Sudan has contributed to resolving violent conflict and delivering peace dividends, as well as fuelling violence and war.<sup>7</sup> According to the World Bank and OECD, in 2021 South Sudan received USD 2.1 billion in aid, with approximately 56% allocated to

humanitarian assistance, while 4%, 13% and 14% were for education, social infrastructure and health respectively.<sup>8</sup> Given the scale of material support provided through humanitarian and development actors, peace dividends constitute a key potential result from agencies effectively using the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus (also taking into account historic lessons and existing experience of integrated strategies and approaches in South Sudan with pre-date 'HDP nexus' terminology<sup>9</sup>).

Building a better understanding of expectations around 'peace dividends' and the aid sector's contribution to peace, alongside learning from concrete examples of how relevant actors have sought to support the delivery of peace dividends (e.g. government, development actors, the aid community), may offer important insights for both longer-term aid strategies at the macro level, and for aid practice at the local and subnational level, including towards more collaborative or HDP nexus approaches. Overall, these lessons and reflections should help to inform a more conflict-sensitive and contextualised aid response and contribute towards maximising the potential role that the aid sector could play in supporting the conditions for South Sudanese to experience the benefits of peace.

## Purpose of the Working Paper

This working paper explores what a peace dividend may be understood as in South Sudan, what this means for aid strategies and approaches, and poses questions aid agencies and donors should consider to ensure their programmes are conflict sensitive and actively contributing to longer-term peace in South Sudan.

It first outlines the methodology and research context before exploring South Sudanese

<sup>4</sup> Galtung J (1969), '[Violence, Peace, and Peace Research](#)', *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3), pp 167-191.

<sup>5</sup> Pendle (2023), op. cit.; Ryle J, Johnson DH (eds.) (2021), '[What Happened at Wunlit? An Oral History of the 1999 Wunlit Peace Conference](#)', Rift Valley Institute; Bradbury M, Ryle J, Medley M, Sansculotte-Greenidge K (2006), '[Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study](#)'. Rift Valley Institute.

<sup>6</sup> Rolandsen ØH (2006), '[In Search of the Peace Dividend: the Southern Sudan One Year after the Signatures](#)', International Peace Research Institute: Centre for Studies of

Civil War, Manuscript presented at the 7th International Sudan Studies Conference in Bergen, 7 April.

<sup>7</sup> de Waal A (2015), *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity).

<sup>8</sup> World bank, [Net Development Assistance – 2021](#), Accessed 24 March 2024; OECD, [Bilateral Aid to South Sudan – 2021-22 Average](#), Accessed 24 March 2024.

<sup>9</sup> CSRF, Chan N., Schmidlin (2023), [Towards a conflict-sensitive HDP nexus in South Sudan: A collection of lessons](#), Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility.

concepts of peace and expectations of what peace should deliver. It then discusses how aid actors conceptualise peace dividends in the South Sudanese context and key questions they should be considering when designing and implementing programmes. It highlights some reflections on how using conflict-sensitive approaches can contribute to achieving the peace dividends that many South Sudanese are seeking, before offering a conclusion that links to next steps for the CSRF.

### Method and research context

This working paper is based on data collected using qualitative methods in Rumbek and Yambio from 27<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, as well as publicly available, online grey literature by or on aid programming with a focus on peace and peace dividends since 2005. There was not a systematic review of literature, but knowledge of actors engaged in peace programming was used to search various sites for online grey literature. Qualitative discussions were chosen as a research methodology to provide more space to hear the perspectives and detailed analysis of those living through armed conflict. The four-person research team was divided into two, with one going to Rumbek and the other to Yambio. A total of 41 key informant interviews were conducted (Rumbek – 20, Yambio – 21), and 13 focus group discussions held (Rumbek – 6, Yambio – 7). In each location, key informants and focus group participants included state and local government officials, chiefs, religious and women leaders, youth and women groups, civil society organisations, and aid actors.

The selection of Yambio and Rumbek, the capitals of Western Equatoria and Lakes States respectively, as the study locations was based on several factors, including: (1) the contexts themselves and the different political alliances and experiences of armed conflict during the CPA and post-independence periods; (2) the different kinds of programming approaches which might offer relevant lessons, and; (3) practical constraints due to limited time available for field research.

Western Equatoria has had periods of open opposition to the SPLA/M, leading to government

vs. opposition-armed conflict, and the area was significantly affected by armed conflict in 2016. In the decade following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), Yambio had been relatively stable politically and it appeared to have a strong, popular independent state-level government. For many years, the main security threats faced by Western Equatoria residents were from Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and violence associated with the regular migration of the Ambororo through the area. A local defence force, the Arrow Boys, formed around 2009 and later disbanded, was able to drive LRA out of the state and provided protection to both the community and the government. In addition, tensions with the Ambororo reduced, allowing Western Equatoria to experience a relative level of stability. The perception of stability and state government legitimacy attracted significant investments from donors, who saw Yambio as a potential breadbasket for South Sudan and ripe for benefiting from programmes that would deliver 'peace dividends'.

In contrast, Lakes State has been largely SPLA/M aligned, has been consistently pro-government in recent years and has not experienced government vs. opposition fighting since 2013. In some instances, the population has actively resisted becoming entangled in conflicts between national political actors. For example, when the armed opposition fled Juba in early 2014 many opted to move north through Lakes State, and even though Lakes State was government controlled, some communities refused to attack them, unwilling to jeopardise relations with neighbouring communities aligned with the opposition forces. At the same time, the government has also been reluctant to use large-scale offensives in the state, as can be seen from its response to the attempted rebellion by Kerbino Wol Agok in 2020, launched from Lakes, where targeted killing played a role in addressing the threat he posed. At the same time, Lakes State has also experienced significant armed conflict between clans and sections since the CPA was signed in 2005, with many fuelled by shifting administrative boundaries and the increasing value of land, as well as revenge attacks by those who felt they were failed by the justice system and legal interventions.

While the selection of these two locations offers a useful starting point to examine the experience of South Sudanese communities and understanding of peace dividends in a more contextualised way, this working paper acknowledges the limitations of only focusing on these specific locations given that there will be many other useful lessons and reflections on peace dividends in other locations which would help to further illustrate diverse experiences and enable a more extensive national analysis. Nonetheless, the findings from these locations capture rich and relevant insights which provide useful and important considerations for aid agencies and donors.

### South Sudanese Conceptualisations of 'Peace'

In order to examine what 'peace dividends' may signify in South Sudan, conceptualisations of 'peace' itself in the context must be explored. Galtung famously made the distinction between a 'negative' peace – the absence of fear and violence - and a 'positive' peace - a long lasting peace based on societal attitudes and institutions and emphasised that achieving the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. For many South Sudanese, there is a desire for a long-lasting, more stable peace that is based on the repair of social and legal relations. Different terms and interpretations may capture elements of such a peace that are important for different communities across South Sudan (see box below). Many South Sudanese languages have a word for peace that entails much more than a cessation of violence and often involves reconciled relations, such as *zereda* in Azande or *mal* in Nuer. (The exact meaning and equivalence of these concepts is something that could be explored further in the future.)

For example, among the Dinka in Lakes State the word for peace is *dor*<sup>10</sup> and it is achieved when there is no longer an *ater* (a feud) and social

relations have been fully restored: people can again eat together, trust each other and inter-marry. While there can be a cessation of hostilities, such as the R-ARCSS transition period or a cessation of hostilities from a locally negotiated peace meeting or governor enforced lack of conflict, without *dor* this is not considered true peace. Similarly, in Western Equatoria, most respondents defined peace not simply as the absence of violence or gunshots, but as a complex state where individuals' civic and political rights are respected.<sup>11</sup> In their assessment, the failure to respect individual rights to freedom of expression, association and movement indicates there is not "a total peace".<sup>12</sup> Respondents also felt that peace can be undermined when basic needs are not being met and there are limited investments in or opportunities for socio-economic advancement, which reflects the expectation that maintaining peace also requires economic and political justice.<sup>13</sup>

Most South Sudanese would not describe the current national situation as *dor*, as many recognise that even if there is not active fighting, there is still an underlying *ater* that is dividing communities across the country. Many South Sudanese might not even describe the current situation as a 'negative' peace if they are in contexts of ongoing armed conflict, or if they still live in fear of arbitrary violence by the government or other warring parties. Yet there has been a decrease in national organised violence<sup>14</sup> and, as mentioned previously, a government-led stability appears to be prevailing, and many South Sudanese are happy to see this decline in violence even if it is not yet *dor*. There are also some communities' relations have that been restored to *dor*. A significant barrier to achieving *dor* is the horrific brutality that has characterised recent violent conflict in South Sudan. The deliberate targeting of civilians, the destruction livelihoods and assets, and the rise in rape and violence specifically targeting women

<sup>10</sup> Interviews and focus groups in Lakes State, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Focus group with seven women each from a different women's group in Yambio, Women Empowerment Centre, Yambio, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023

<sup>12</sup> Interview with a leader of an organization that supports youth and women in Yambio on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023, conducted by Zacharia

<sup>13</sup> Interviews and focus groups in Western Equatoria, December 2023

<sup>14</sup> WFP World Food Programme and CSRF (2020), [Adjusting Terminology for Organised Violence in South Sudan](#), Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility.

and girls have all led to deep seated resentment and animosity between South Sudan's communities. Some leaders have sought to gain political advantage from the lack of *dor* and used these tensions to mobilise communities, particularly young men, to further their own interests. For example, some leaders have actively discouraged judicial and spiritual justice and reconciliation which could end there being an *ater*. While the cessation of hostilities might allow beneficial opportunities, such as trade, to resume or bolster the ability of leaders to gain support during a vote, failure to invest in making *dor*, and sometimes active attempts to prevent *dor* at the local level, means that the *ater* will continue. In this context, it can be relatively easy for leaders to incite violence between communities, as the feud is ongoing. Failure to invest in *dor* can be seen as indicative of politico-military leaders lack of commitment to ending hostilities, a prerequisite for establishing long-term peace.

As a consequence, most South Sudanese live in a constant state of 'no war, no peace', and for many, 'peacetime does not equate with non-violence, and war cannot be defined as the mere opposite of peace'.<sup>15</sup> In Lakes State, for example, although the state is currently experiencing a period of relative peace, while the research was being conducted, there were still deadly clashes in one county, a government official had recently been shot dead in his office, and certain clans would not eat together. For many, despite the cessation of hostilities, the lack of *dor* leads to a reasonable fear that armed conflict might resume at any time.

Understanding how the 'no war, no peace' continuum plays out in South Sudan is essential to developing a more nuanced appreciation of how programming might contribute to achieving 'peace dividends'. Peace is not a discrete event, and peace-making may not immediately result in sustained improvements in individuals' or communities' material or social circumstances, or economic long-term changes; the benefits of peace may not be so clearly experienced.

Furthermore, some groups might gain significant benefits from armed conflict itself or from the short-term cessation of hostilities which can make them reluctant to risk seeking a *dor* itself, as it may not bring the same level of benefits. When local authorities use violence to impose a cessation of hostilities, without any efforts at reconciliation, many may still support this approach, as it does offer immediate safety and they know the potential deadly consequences of a return to open hostilities. In Lakes State, the members of the *gelweng* (armed cattle guard) interviewed raised some concerns over the governor's heavy-handed methods in 2022 and 2023 to end violent conflict between communities but were more vocal in praising him for bringing security to the area.<sup>16</sup> The *gelweng* accused the educated youth, safe in Juba, as being the ones who opposed the governor's violent methods of establishing security in the area because they have never had to personally face the dangers of violent conflict.

**Separated by a Common Language: Different understandings of peace**

A 2018 research paper entitled 'In it for the long haul?: Lessons on peacebuilding in South Sudan'<sup>17</sup> published by Christian Aid included a section which explores how peace may mean different things to different people in South Sudan. It states that:

"Interviewees in Akobo and Yirol were asked to define their understanding of the term 'peace'. In doing so they offered two kinds of response. Firstly, a list of practical indicators for interactions and transactions; and secondly the process of understanding and reconciling with the past. Both are important..."

South Sudanese may have varying reference points for 'peace', both within South Sudan according to South Sudanese's differing realities, as well as in comparison to international actors. Different priorities may generate tensions in

<sup>15</sup> Debos M (2011), 'Living by the Gun in Chad: Armed Violence as a Practical Occupation', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49 (3), pp 409–28: 410

<sup>16</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp in Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Milner and Christian Aid (2018), [In it for the long haul? Lessons on peacebuilding in South Sudan](#), Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility

peacebuilding programme design, which therefore emphasises how important it is for peace approaches, including those wishing to integrate peace dividends approaches, to be context specific and designed together with communities and local leaders.

Some examples of different interpretations of peace include:

- Peace is freedom of movement through the other’s territory without fear
- Peace is a security alliance
- Peace is maintaining social relations
- Peace is trading with each other
- Peace is being able to pursue livelihoods
- Peace is development
- Peace is respecting shared justice mechanisms
- Peace is washing away of grievances

**Peace Dividends in South Sudan: Intent vs results**

Peace actors in South Sudan have a variety of visions, principles and theories of change on how to support peace. The concept of ‘peace dividends’, first came into use globally in the 1990s following the fall of the Berlin Wall and initially focused on the economic benefits of peace.<sup>18</sup> As a term, it has been widely, if often vaguely, used in South Sudan for some time, particularly as powerful leaders and international diplomats have sought to translate peace on paper into a lived and sustaining daily reality. As this section will demonstrate, understanding the history of some of these interpretations and expectations can provide valuable insights to inform strategies moving forward, particularly as the timeline of the R-ARCSS implementation is due to end in 2024, and to help to apply lessons from the past.

**A brief history of expectations of ‘peace dividends’ from political peace processes**

Expectations around ‘peace dividends’ have often been cited in direct reference to political peace processes. The CPA brought much hope and investment in building South Sudan as a state. Southern Sudanese were supposed to receive peace dividends in the form of access to education, health, water and sanitation and other basic services to benefit from ‘peace’, which would in theory motivate them to vote for unity during the referendum.<sup>19</sup> However, the ‘peace dividends’ did not materialise and most southern Sudanese did not see promised peace and improved security and basic services materialise following independence. This is particularly true as fighting has never stopped in parts of the country (especially Jonglei), violence worsened in some areas of South Sudan following the referendum, and the collapse of the new country into a civil war in December 2013 all contributed to setting back many development gains made during the CPA years.

More recently, in relation to the R-ARCSS, high-level reference to expectations of ‘peace dividends’ have been increasingly tinged with tones of frustration, both towards South Sudanese political leaders and in turn towards South Sudan’s donor partners. Ostensibly, the R-ARCSS implementation was expected to contribute to ‘peace dividends’ in two main ways. Firstly, preventing further violence in order to allow the benefits of a more secure and stable environment to be experienced by ordinary citizens in the short-term. Secondly, the implementation of the R-ARCSS was also meant to shore up groundwork for more lasting benefits of peace, for example through a South Sudan Reconstruction Fund (Chapter III of the Agreement) and enabling better resource, economic and financial management (Chapter IV of the Agreement). While much of the spotlight has been on a national ceasefire, political roles

<sup>18</sup> Collier P (1999), ‘[On the Economic Consequences of Civil War](#)’, *Oxford Economic Papers* **51** (1), pp 168–83; Ben-Porart G (2005), ‘[Between “Peace Dividends” and Peace](#)’, *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* **6** (61).

<sup>19</sup> Moro L N, Santschi M, Gordon R, Dau P, Maxwell D (2017), [Statebuilding and legitimacy: experiences of South Sudan](#), Tufts University

and security arrangements, political leaders have also been criticised for a failure to ensure that the country benefits from its wealth of natural resources, potential for economic development and opportunity for investment which in turn were envisioned (particularly during CPA years) as providing the financial means to build a state and expand infrastructure and basic services. South Sudan qualified as a middle-income country when it became independent in 2011 due to its immense oil wealth, despite having some of the worst poverty and development indicators in the world. However, a recurring trend across both CPA and R-ARCSS years has been a failure to ensure that these revenues translated into an opportunity to build up national infrastructure, or state's contribution to basic public service delivery and social protection. Instead, little to none of the oil revenues go towards the national budget and the reforms proposed in R-ARCSS designed to combat corruption and build more accountable public finances have been either paid lip service to or ignored.<sup>20</sup>

Government representatives have also criticised donors and international partners for failing to provide the right kind of support to shore up peace dividends. For example, in a 2023 article, Undersecretary of Peacebuilding Pia Philip is quoted as saying: 'Does any partner in their hearts have a holistic approach for resolving the conflict in South Sudan? Or are their plans just a cosmetic approach to say we are doing something?', while expressing the perception that donors prefer to spend money on short-term dialogues rather than provide development support.<sup>21</sup> This trend reflects a more complex long-term picture, whereby the reluctance of many donors to commit funds to the Government of South Sudan is for the most part a consequence of historical policy decisions (e.g. in response to the genesis of the 2013 Civil War and the role of the government at the time, due to the vast amount of international aid funds spent on statebuilding and

basic services during CPA years, and due to the extent of corruption and a track record of a lack of commitment to public finances as outlined above). Nonetheless, the frustration of many South Sudanese around the lack of development and basic services remains. For example, according to a national survey on perceptions of peace in South Sudan published in 2022, public goods and services in the form of physical infrastructure, health and education emerged as second tier priorities after peace implementation and peace, alongside government efforts to fix the economy.<sup>22</sup>

### **Opportunities for 'peace dividends' informed aid programming and strategies**

During CPA years, expectations around transitioning from relief to development presented difficult dilemmas for the aid sector, as aid actors ended up going back and forth between early recovery and humanitarian modalities,<sup>23</sup> while fundamental barriers persisted. The 1999 Wunlit peace conference brought communities and chiefs together across warring factions and resulted in a peace agreement that emphasised the material and other benefits for individuals and communities if the agreement was implemented. Its apparent success prompted a group of peace-focused organisations, who began to focus on supporting negotiating and implementing local peace agreements.<sup>24</sup> One donor made funding available for 'rapid, flexible conflict resolution mechanisms and tangible peace dividends', which allowed peace actors to continue dialogues over time, support implementing local agreements, and deliver on the peace dividends highlighted as most important in these agreements.<sup>25</sup> When comparing the level of funding for these peace-related activities with the funding for humanitarian and development activities, it was at a considerably lower level. The outbreak of civil war in 2013 led much of this funding being paused as aid actors and donors struggled to adapt to humanitarian needs reaching catastrophic levels,

<sup>20</sup> International Crisis Group (2021), [Oil or Nothing: Dealing with South Sudan's Bleeding Finances](#), Africa Report N. 305

<sup>21</sup> Kleinfeld P, Francis O (2023), [No quick fix: The challenge of local peacebuilding in South Sudan](#), The New Humanitarian

<sup>22</sup> Deng D, Dawkins S, Oringa C, Pospisil J (2022), [Perceptions of Peace in South Sudan: Longitudinal Findings](#), PeaceRep

<sup>23</sup> Refugees International (2008), [South Sudan: Peace dividends or peace penalties?](#), Reliefweb

<sup>24</sup> Bradbury et al., op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> USAID (2002), [USAID: The OTI southern Sudan program](#).



and thus most funding being urgently diverted to emergency response. However, in subsequent years, due to the protracted nature of South Sudan’s conflict-driven humanitarian crisis and with a new internationally-shepherded peace process in the form of what became R-ARCSS, the links between conflict and humanitarian need were further emphasised and interest in peace-informed approaches increased once again.<sup>2627</sup>

**Lessons on ‘peace dividends’ from the Wunlit People-to-People process**

The Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference developed out of dialogues facilitated by the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), building upon lessons and experience of other ‘People to People’ dialogue conferences. The conference took place between Nuer and Dinka groups in Wunlit, a village in what is now Warrap State, near the border with what is now Lakes State and Unity State. This followed years of violent conflict between communities following their mobilisation by warring South Sudanese factions. Preparations for the conference took months, involving shuttle and elevator diplomacy, exchange visits, preparatory negotiations, confidence-building activities, and even building an entire village to host up to 1200-1500 people. It culminated in the delegates signing a Covenant on 8 March 1999, with an immediate impact on local conflict and relations. While focused on a bottom-up approach, it also required high level buy in and had national level implications; it was also unique in combining traditional and Western approaches to conflict resolution. It illustrates the importance of peace being understood as a process rather than a one-off event.

On the first anniversary of Wunlit in April 2000 there was a review of the impact of the Covenant involving the communities represented at the meeting. Among other reflections, the report expressed concern at the lack of a peace dividend (i.e. practical assistance for reconstruction). The Wunlit

Agreement had listed numerous, tangible benefits that the community hoped for, including, for example, the re-establishment of courts to hear inter-community cases. There was frustration that these tangible changes had not happened. In subsequent NSCC organised peace conferences, mostly concentrated in eastern and western Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal, the NSCC concentrated on the consolidation of existing peace agreements through dialogue and the provision of material ‘peace dividends’ (with support from faith-based organisations) and support for good governance.

Wunlit established a style of meeting (based on its ‘people-to-people’ approach), and was followed by at least fifty more between ethnic groups or sub-sections. Since 2002, the NSCC coordinated its peace work with a consortium of agencies funded by the Sudan Peace Fund (SPF), which arose as a direct legacy of the People-to-People initiative. The consortium offered a broader peacebuilding framework that included peace dividend projects, in complement to the NSCC focus on dialogue and mediation.

One area of frustration articulated by the NSCC was that a willingness to fund conference was not matched by funding for the implementation of peace accords, which included locally defined priorities or sustaining peace through development. There were some complex reasons for this, and this and other important details on the complexity of the process are elaborated on in a Rift Valley Institute publication<sup>28</sup>. This further illustrates how as people-to-people became more routinised and part of a wider field of aid programmes, it also carried a greater weight of expectation for aid to come in at the right time and the right way to play a critical role in consolidating the peace.

The lessons from the people-to-people approach and efforts to link peace processes with peace dividend projects are still very

<sup>28</sup> Bradbury M, Ryle J, Medley M, Sansculotte-Greenidge K (2006), ‘[Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study](#)’. Rift Valley Institute.

relevant for newer efforts to connect peace processes with peace dividends.

More recently, aid actors are increasingly highlighting the need to embed peace dividends in broader peace building processes. One organisation's principles stated that 'progress in social relationships can only be sustainable with the realisation of substantive peace dividends', defining peace dividends as 'relevant and meaningful livelihoods opportunities' and part of a broader process that empowers South Sudanese communities to negotiate and take responsibility for lasting peace.<sup>29</sup> Donors have continued to invest in dialogue processes, recognise that progress on implementing peace dividends is part of the follow-up after a dialogue, and encouraging these processes to be more inclusive and ensure that peace directly benefits a wider group of people, including youth and women.<sup>30</sup>

Peace-focused actors often do not have the funding or programming experience needed to implement programmes or projects that address the significant gaps in access to social services, livelihood and employment opportunities, and basic infrastructure that could make a significant, material, change in the lives of ordinary South Sudanese. This requires a level of investment and coordination that can only be achieved when peace actors work collaboratively with humanitarian and development actors. With the rising interest in the HDP nexus (though as mentioned earlier, this kind of thinking is not new), many of the larger humanitarian and development actors (even if they have not historically worked on peace) have shown an increasing awareness that their programmes could, and should, contribute to delivering peace dividends and reducing humanitarian needs in the form of improved social cohesion, better access to quality basic services and improvements in governance, even if only at the local level. This requires, however, that agencies collaborate more effectively, and consciously use a conflict-

sensitive approach in both the design and delivery of programmes.<sup>31</sup>

Given the sheer size of the country, the deteriorating economy, the absence of basic infrastructure and services in many rural communities, a high level of financial resources will be needed to make a significant material change in the lives of South Sudanese. To support this, in 2018 and 2019 two multi-donor and multi-agency mechanisms were launched, and both used an area-based approach to consult with communities, coordinate activities and identify funding needs. Through focusing on specific subnational areas, some associated projects have sought to link material support more explicitly to local peace processes and the implementation of local or subnational peace agreements.<sup>32</sup> Overall, an area-based approach that draws on ongoing community consultation and prioritisation challenges aid actors to consider how their activities are drawing on and supporting local dialogues and agreements.

This working paper now focuses on the field research conducted in and around Rumbek and Yambio, with reflections which aim to help to illustrate what may constitute a 'peace dividend' from the perspectives of South Sudanese living in these areas, as well as lessons based on previous relevant aid strategies and approaches which have been applied in these areas. The reflections are based around questions which help to illustrate important context-specific dynamics and expectations, and which can further inform thinking about how peace dividends may usefully influence aid approaches.

## Peace Dividends: Reflections from Rumbek and Yambio

### Who benefits from peace dividends?

Who actually benefits from peace dividends is often not well understood by aid actors, as they mainly focus on 'who *should* benefit from a peace dividend?', based on violence-related needs and

<sup>29</sup> Peace Canal, '[Our approach to peacebuilding](#)'.

<sup>30</sup> DT Global (2021), '[Shejeh Salam \(Promoting Peace\) Quarterly Report: 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021](#)'.

<sup>31</sup> CSRF and Morris R (2022), '[Better Together? Prospects and Lessons for Improving Coordination and Collaboration](#)

[between Humanitarians and Peacebuilders in South Sudan](#)', Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility Learning Paper, July;

<sup>32</sup> South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) (n.d), '[Lessons Learned from Jonglei RSRTF Programming](#)'. Accessed 4 March 2024.

vulnerabilities. Questions related to the influence, political and economic power of conflict actors, such as ‘who needs to benefit from a peace dividend in order to reduce armed conflict?’, are often overlooked or ignored. While answering the former question can lead aid actors to clear programming options, in the case of the latter, it can raise difficult issues about why known conflict actors should be directly benefitting from aid agencies peacebuilding programmes. As not everyone can make peace: who should peace dividends benefit?; what could those benefits be?; and what is the aid sector’s role in delivering these benefits?

### Armed youth

In Rumbek and Yambio, people rely upon armed community youth for their security and the safety of their property, and study respondents described how the police, and even army, had failed on many occasions to protect the lives and property of their community members.<sup>33</sup> In this context, community defence forces are seen as providing a key public service that national, state and local governments also benefit from, especially when the authorities and community share a common security risk. When the LRA threatened the government and communities in Western Equatoria, a community defence force, the Arrow Boys, was formed to protect their communities and bolster the capacity of government security forces.<sup>34</sup> In Lakes State, the *gelweng* have intermittently been a key pool of recruits for various national military forces, again overlaying personnel skills for community security with government security. Community-based militias requires armed and organised youth who can be quickly mobilised for deadly armed conflict, and many South Sudanese young men regularly face the prospect of armed conflict and violent injury or death. For example, at the height of conflict in Lakes State, up to a hundred people (mainly young men) could be killed in one day.<sup>35</sup>

Life for the *gelweng* (armed, cattle keeping youth) in Lakes State, especially during periods of armed conflict, can be full of tension, very precarious and even the ammunition needed to protect cattle and their communities can be hard to come by. One NGO worker in Lakes State described how, when he was visiting a cattle camp in 2019, a fight nearly broke over accusations of one stolen bullet.<sup>36</sup> When asked about peace dividends, the *gelweng* were explicit that the main peace dividend for them was not dying. Many of the young men the researchers spoke to talked about seeing their brothers or close friends killed, and how they are tired of fighting and dying. For them, the main benefit of peace is being alive and safe.<sup>37</sup> After years of armed conflict between clans and sections, the last couple of years have been relative secure and peaceful in their area and older youth, who are experiencing this for the first time since they were children, see how this brings a new sense of security for themselves, families, and friends.<sup>38</sup>

In Western Equatoria, although the community dynamics were different, there were similarities related to the militarisation of youth and government’s reliance on them to provide security and protection to communities. The Arrow Boys, drawn from youth in Western Equatoria, were mobilised to fight and to protect their communities from the LRA, after it became apparent that both the national and state governments were unable, or unwilling, to prevent LRA attacks against communities along the DRC border.<sup>39</sup> According to those the researchers interviewed, area politicians mobilised youth to form the Arrow Boys, who proved very effective against the LRA. Legitimised by their newfound fighting prowess and nursing grievances, the Arrow Boys soon became a source of insecurity in the state, citing the failure of Western Equatoria’s political leaders to provide the promised incentives for driving away the

<sup>33</sup> Informal conversations in Lakes State, November 2023

<sup>34</sup> Interview with community member, Yambio, November 2023

<sup>35</sup> Senior government official for Lakes State, Rumbek Town (Lakes State), 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>36</sup> NGO worker, Rumbek Center, (Lake State), 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp in Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023; Focus group discussion, cattle camp youth in Rumbek Centre, Lakes State, November 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with *gelweng* and cattle trader, Rumbek cattle auction, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Focus group with eight youths from a different youth group in Yambio, November 2023

LRA.<sup>40</sup> Although the Arrow Boys were ultimately demobilised, they did not feel they directly benefitted from driving the LRA out and making peace on behalf of the government.

### *Governments*

Since oil income reduced and the economic downturn began in 2015, South Sudanese state and county governments have received little funding from the national government, and there has also been less cash available to national politico-military leaders to buy loyalties. Instead, loyalty is now being rewarded with payam, county, and state-level positions and the implicit permission from the central government that the office holder can make money through the sale of resources in the area, as well as through tax collection. While violent conflict can be used to gain control over an area, stability might be needed to maximise this income. Undertaking programming to provide peace dividends in such a situation can result in aid actors incentivising violent conflict as a means of ‘attracting’ such programming. Discussions with communities, authorities, and other groups in the area about what they consider to be peace dividends and how they should be distributed could help to deepen aid actors’ understanding of the conflict dynamics and how peace-making programmes could be used or manipulated by authorities to ‘reward’ communities or individuals they consider loyal, while excluding those felt to be disloyal.

### *Shared peace dividends*

It is not always possible to neatly categorise who benefits from peace and what those benefits are, as they are rarely equally shared or quantifiable. Broad agreements on what peace dividends are and who should directly benefit can help to extend or make permanent cessation of hostilities’ agreements or continue to ease the tensions driving violence. Ensuring this consultation includes representatives from a broad cross section is critical and should be based on in-depth analysis of the political economy of the area.

### New markets

An example of how peace in one area often benefits more than those living the area is in Lakes State, where the two-year cessation of hostilities has led to a rapid expansion in the state’s grain exports. Until recently, Juba was dependent on imported grain, much of which was imported from Uganda and elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> With the depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound, it has become more expensive to import grain, leading to an increased reliance on domestic grain production.<sup>42</sup> Lakes State has become a significant domestic producer and a key supplier to Juba’s grain market, largely due to its proximity to and transport links with Juba and its arable land suited to grain production. Residents, including local youth, have used uncultivated spaces to start new cooperative farms, seeking to maximise the land under production.<sup>43</sup> Without peace and relative stability, it would not be possible to either grow the grain or transport it to Juba. In addition to producers, transporters and consumers, state authorities have also benefitted from the revenue generated by taxes levied on the production, sale, and transport of grain.

With the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and the impact this could have on the quantity of oil exported from South Sudan, there is a possibility of further depreciation of the South Sudanese pound and of growing demand for domestic food sources. Further research is needed into the possible links between the growing grain trade, benefitting traders, local youth, county and state authorities, and the impact on the cessation of hostilities and peace. While our research has noted growing grain production in Lakes State, South Sudanese are also having new conversations about increasing grain production in other states, such as Unity State, and questions about the possibility of opening old, and long unused Nile ports, such as Meshra el Rek (on the Warrap – Unity State border). These projects will bring questions of peace, development and potentially aid together, and understanding the political economy and implications for peace is an important question for future research.

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<sup>40</sup> Focus group with eight youths from a different youth group in Yambio, November 2023

<sup>41</sup> Uchalla 2020

<sup>42</sup> Uchalla 2020

<sup>43</sup> Interview with NGO worker from Lakes State, Rumbek, December 2023.

## Cattle auctions

Cattle trading in South Sudan can be incredibly profitable and for decades the Rumbek cattle auction has been a key contributor to Lakes State's economy and been a key link in the trade and export of cattle in South Sudan.<sup>44</sup> Over time the market has grown in size and economic importance, and youth from as far away as Jonglei and Northern Bahr el Ghazal bring cattle to the market. As one cattle trader said,

*'Today, I have all the contacts across South Sudan because if someone need cattle, I organise for them and send them cattle'.<sup>45</sup>*

The cattle business has become a way of positively engaging the *gelweng* and discouraging them from engaging in cattle raiding: any cattle sold through the auction must have papers authenticating ownership and demonstrating they were not raided. Not surprisingly, *gelweng* have realised that it is no longer feasible to raid cattle with the intention of selling them. They are not able to sell cows without the proper paperwork, and if they are caught with a stolen cow, 'you can be killed by the government', and many young people 'don't want to risk it,' noted a young cattle trader in Rumbek.<sup>46</sup> In addition, cattle owners also reported being able to borrow the money, at no interest, needed to pay medical bills or schools fees from cattle traders, and later bring cows from the cattle camp to repay their loans. A benefit of peace identified during one interview was the increased money circulating in the community.<sup>47</sup> Related to this is also the increased tax revenue that the auctions generate for local authorities, which are increasingly dependent for income on their local tax regimes.

The growth of auctions can also increase competition between authorities at the state, county and payam levels over controlling the tax

revenue they can generate and can lead to armed conflict. Aid actors working with auctions and markets to support peace-making need to be sensitive to which groups are benefitting and who is being excluded. In their report on local responses to conflict in Lakes, Ryle and Amuom quoted Telar Riing Deng, who described how competition over financial resources fuelled mistrust and conflict.

*'It started with division of counties. There was a conflict between the commissioner and the SSPDF/SPLA commanders that went down to the average person. That [was what] sparked off the fight. It was not about [the demarcation of county] borders. It was about resources. Government resources were controlled by the commissioner. Other commanders [wanted] a share. There were no salaries then.... There was only money from court fines and auction centres. And we had children and families to support. That sparked the division. There was mistrust...with resources all going to the county headquarters'.<sup>48</sup>*

## **Power and local agency: Whose authority is being supported?**

Aid and peace building activities can influence how the authority of actors involved in peace and conflict, including military actors, government and rebel leaders and religious leaders, is exercised: is it inclusive? Do their actions support a deeper peace?<sup>49</sup> De Waal argued that following the signing of the CPA, the South Sudanese government built power and a form of stability by using its oil income to buy the loyalties of potential rebels and include them in the government and its payrolls.<sup>50</sup> While this did provide potential rebels with significant incentives to not return to war, de Waal argues that this also fuelled conflict, as groups or individuals outside of government used this as a

<sup>44</sup> King and Mukasa-Mugerwa 2002

<sup>45</sup> Interview with *gelweng* and cattle trader, Rumbek cattle auction, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with *gelweng* and cattle trader, Rumbek cattle auction, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with cattle trader, Rumbek Center, Lakes State, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024

<sup>48</sup> Ryle J, Amuom M (2018), '[Peace Is the Name of Our Cattle-Camp: Local Responses to Conflict in Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan](#)', Rift Valley Institute: South Sudan Customary Authorities Project, p 34.

<sup>49</sup> Pendle (2023) op. cit.; Kirk T, Allen T (2021), '[Public Authority in Africa](#)', in Onyango G (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy in Africa* (London: Routledge), pp 57–67

<sup>50</sup> de Waal A (2014), '[When kleptocracy becomes insolvent: Brute causes of the civil war in South Sudan](#)', *African Affairs* **113** (452), pp 347–69; Johnson DH (2014), '[Briefing: The crisis in South Sudan](#)', *African Affairs* **113** (451), pp 300–309; de Waal A (2015), *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity).

tactic to persuade the government to include them on their list of ‘supporters’. For politico-military leaders, the benefits to be gained from both peace and armed conflict can change over time, increasing incentives for stability and peace, or for mobilisation and armed conflict. Efforts to build peace in South Sudan often use moral and spiritual claims to challenge military leaders’ authority to mobilise youth for armed conflict.<sup>51</sup>

### Local government

Militarised local and state officials are commonplace in South Sudan, and governing authorities often gain popularity, legitimacy, and authority when they make peace. A significant dilemma for aid actors working on peace in South Sudan is how to engage with officials who are also trying to create relative security (even if not *dor*) but are using extra-judicial violence and displays of military strength to do so.<sup>52</sup> Public opinion of militarised local and state leaders is often divided, and a common perspective among those directed engaging in or affected by conflict is that those living in Juba and the state capitals, often more educated and not fighters themselves, are more likely to oppose the brutal tactics used by military leaders. On the other hand, those individuals and groups who have directly engaged or been affected by armed conflict are often more willing to accept militarised and extra-judicial authority, if it reduces violent conflict and helps keep them safe.<sup>53</sup>

During the field work in Lakes, most respondents credited Governor Rin Tueny Mabor with the peace and stability in the area, while others have also claimed credit for the peace, including spear masters, NGOs and other civil society groups.<sup>54</sup> Rin’s government has sought to punish perpetrators of violence and provide justice to the victims, although the tactics used have not always been in line with the rule of law. Respondents described instances of extra-judicial

disappearances involving those suspected of being engaged in conflict, which has discouraged fighting, and communities are worried that Rin was not creating a peace that would last beyond his tenure.

What is crucial is that aid actors understand that in South Sudan, peace is seen as a key public good and the ability to make peace is a source of authority.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, when peace is established following prolonged conflict, actors may seek to claim they made all the difference, in an effort to bolster their claims of power and legitimacy. To effectively engage with peace processes, and the variety of actors involved, aid actors will need to be aware of the political and economic interests of the individuals and communities affected. Peace processes can reinforce the authority and legitimacy of leaders who are not genuinely interested in the long-term benefits of peace, but rather are focused on the short-term, often personal, benefits they can secure.

### The role of women

A key peace dividend found in more stable areas across South Sudan, not just in the study areas, is women’s economic empowerment. During an FGD, one woman recalled how *‘I first saw a dollar note in 2005 because of the CPA, I use[d] to sell tea to SPLM big leaders.’*<sup>56</sup> Peace processes offer aid actors the opportunity to bolster the capacity and authority of social groups who have been marginalised or overlooked, such as women. Including women in peace building processes contribute to increasing their authority and influence in the community, which should be complemented by efforts to improve their economic standing. An example of this was provided to the research team, where the Peace Economic Project targeted 2,000 households, including women-headed households, from Rumbek East and Wulu.<sup>57</sup> Projects such as this one support women’s economic independence, which

<sup>51</sup> Pendle (2023), op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Pospisil J (2023a), [‘An Iron Fist in Lakes State: Law, Order, and Volatility on the Margins’](#), Human Security Baseline Assessment/Small Arms Survey, July; Pospisil J (2023b), [‘Changing Lakes State? Rin Tueny’s Inclusive Deterrence Approach in Practice’](#). Briefing Paper, Human Security Baseline Assessment/Small Arms Survey, November.

<sup>53</sup> Informal conversations in Lakes State, November 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with two local NGO workers working for a peacebuilding NGO, CSO, Rumbek, Lakes State, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023; Interview with spear master, Rumbek, Lakes State, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Pendle (2023), op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Focus group with eight women each from a different women’s group in Lakes State, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023

<sup>57</sup> Interview with NGO worker, Rumbek Center, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

is tied to wider recognition and influence in their community that, in turn, bolsters their ability to actively take part in peacebuilding activities.<sup>58</sup> The women who can pay for household services such as food, health bills and school fees often enjoy improved status, and are able to act as peace ambassadors. Finally, as women take on family responsibilities, their husbands and other males relatives are more respectful and try to shield them from other abuses such as gender-based violence – a peace of mind for women.

In Lakes State, in recent years, women have become key partners in the maintenance of peace and preventing conflict.<sup>59</sup> Women sit on peace committees and one woman respondent highlighted women's role in conflict early warning: women will alert chiefs and local authorities to intervene if the women hear about youth moving in groups, the making of alcohol or a potential elopement.<sup>60</sup> However, the role of women is not always positive. Many of the women interviewed in Lakes spoke openly about some women actively encouraging youth to mobilise by composing songs encouraging them to fight, and shamed youth who did not fight by refusing to cook for them. Attitudes however are changing. For instance, the researchers were told about one woman whose husband, three sons and three sons-in-law had been killed during intra-communal fighting. She had composed many songs encouraging the *gelweng* to enact revenge for the deaths of her family members. Since the peace agreement ended the fighting that killed her family members however, she has become pro-peace and now composes songs against drinking alcohol. After interacting with other community members, she realised that there are many other people with stories similar to hers.

### Are the target beneficiaries free to choose to not engage in conflict?

Any programme is based on various assumptions and a key assumption for many peace dividend focused programmes is that individuals, particularly young men in rural areas, have a choice about whether they engage in violent conflict. Many South Sudanese, especially young men, do not feel completely free to choose not to engage in armed conflict. Freedom not to fight is far removed from their personal experiences and the community expectation that young men will protect members and their property. Not surprisingly, many South Sudanese feel powerless to stop armed conflict, even the young men who are directly engaged in committing violence, and there are continued reports of some young men being forcefully recruited into armed groups.<sup>61</sup> Yet, even when young men are not forcefully recruited, they experience intense social pressure to conform to social expectations of masculinity, including participation in community defence forces.<sup>62</sup>

The researchers spoke with nearly two dozen armed youth who had been directly engaged in armed conflict.<sup>63</sup> In the last couple of years, there has been relative peace in Lakes, and the *gelweng* spoke eagerly about the benefits they had experienced. When they were asked 'if peace was so beneficial, why had they only recently stopped fighting?', one group discussed their answer amongst themselves before sharing it with the team. The group said they had 'not had permission to stop fighting', and it was only when communal leaders and cattle owners in Lakes and Juba said the fighting could stop did they cease hostilities.<sup>64</sup> The *gelweng* explained that if they stopped fighting without permission, their opponents might see them as weak or afraid, and the *gelweng* would not be as effective a deterrent

<sup>58</sup> The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2020

<sup>59</sup> Focus group discussion with five women, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, Rumbek, Lakes State, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Focus group with eight women each from a different women's group in Lakes State, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Kindersley N, Majok JD (2019), op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> Jok JM (2017), 'Introduction: The State, Security and Community Defence Groups in South Sudan', in *Informal Armies: Community Defence Groups in South Sudan's Civil*

*War*, Saferworld, February

(<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1108-informal-armies-community-defence-groups-in-south-sudan-civil-war>)

<sup>63</sup> Interviews and focus groups in Lakes State, December 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp in Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023

against future offensives.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, if leaders ordered them not to fight, then their ending violent conflict was about obeying orders and authority, and not out of weakness or fear.

Meanwhile, in Western Equatoria, an NGO supported the formation of the Ikpiro Women Protection Team, a group consisting of Azande Women and Dinka women who are working to change the mindset of men who have been engaging in armed conflict.<sup>66</sup> Following the conflict in 2013 and 2016, protection teams of youth and women formed across the community to provide counselling and build resilience during hard times. This highlights the importance of providing youth with outside support that gives them permission to stop fighting, and the role that aid actors can have in supporting this. It also highlights two questions around who has the authority to stop armed conflict, and how they benefit from peace.

### Is peace more beneficial than war?

Considerable scholarship since the 1990s has highlighted how war economies can be incredibly profitable in South Sudan.<sup>67</sup> Through war, governments and warring parties have gained access to valuable resources through armed conflict, as demonstrated by the Sudan government's clearing populations and securing control over access to the oilfields in southern Sudan in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>68</sup> In southern Sudan during the same period, there were documented instances of the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance being manipulated to benefit South Sudanese politico-military leaders and their supporters.

A paradox that aid actors and South Sudanese promoting peace face is that the level of aid resources provided to areas considered peaceful are often lower than those provided for humanitarian purposes to areas and communities

affected by ongoing armed conflict. In Lakes, respondents highlighted the decline in armed conflict over the past two years in the State has been accompanied by a decline in the amount of aid the area receives. Given the importance of aid resources to the local economy, a local official noted that peace could be seen as bringing economic decline,<sup>69</sup> a view echoed by others interviewed,<sup>70</sup> as the jobs and procurements linked to a large humanitarian footprint are reduced. With the declining value of government salaries in real terms, and governments' history of not being able to regularly pay salaries, aid worker salaries have often been the main source of income for many families and communities.<sup>71</sup> As a result, for many South Sudanese, the most important aspects of aid is the level of support being provided and its contribution to the local economy, rather than the objective of the assistance being provided. As a government official in Lakes State noted, somewhat ironically,

*'When we stop fighting, you take away the little that we have. When I ask where the money has gone, aid workers say that there is fighting in Ukraine, so it has gone there. Are you telling us to fight again?'*<sup>72</sup>

The official is describing a reality in South Sudan: in more stable areas, where peace and development-oriented activities can contribute to delivering peace dividends, there are usually less aid available than for humanitarian assistance to areas or communities affected by armed conflict. There was no suggestion by respondents that people engage in conflict to attract aid. It is important, however, for aid actors seeking to support peace dividends to understand the area's history with aid and appreciate that communities might be disappointed by the level of support offered. Investing in more 'stable' areas is critical for building wider support for long term peace,

<sup>65</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp in Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023; Focus group discussion, cattle camp youth in Rumbek Centre, Lakes State, November 2023.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with a leader of an organization that supports youth and women in Yambio on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023

<sup>67</sup> Kaldor M (2013), 'In Defence of New Wars', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2 (1), Art 4; Keen D (2008), *Complex Emergencies* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity).

<sup>68</sup> European Coalition on Oil in Sudan (2010), '[Unpaid Debt: The Legacy of Lundin, Petronas and OMV in Block 5A, Sudan 1997-2003](#)', European Coalition on Oil in Sudan, June.

<sup>69</sup> Senior government official for Lakes State, Rumbek Town (Lakes State), 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Informal conversations in Lakes State, November 2023

<sup>71</sup> Senior government official for Lakes State, Rumbek Town (Lakes State), 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

<sup>72</sup> Senior government official for Lakes State, Rumbek Town (Lakes State), 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023.



the Dinka concept of *dor*, and aid needs to be part of this longer-term process.

**Is justice or rule of law a key peace dividend?**

Justice is not always explicitly considered a peace dividend in South Sudan, as can be seen by the evolution of the situation in Lakes that eventually lead to armed conflict. The violent conflict, which became worrisome to many, was primarily driven by a sense of injustice that many communities in Rumbek felt. This injustice is long standing and dates back to the liberation struggle, when local SPLM/SPLA (at the time) civil-military commanders were accused of failing to ensure the administration of justice. The absence of justice over many years allowed resentments to build up, as communities engaged in cycles of revenge killings and violence. The focus on preventing revenge killing and holding perpetrators accountable has contributed to the easing tensions and preventing new cycles of violent conflict. Nonetheless, as one Executive Chief in Lakes lamented,

*“A society cannot strive, progress or achieve peace, stability and justice without the hand of responsive government, something that is missing in our country today.”*<sup>73</sup>

**Peace Dividends: Reflections on implications for conflict sensitive aid**

**Aid programming and peace dividends: Lessons on conflict sensitivity**

**Peace dividends and conflict sensitivity**

Why is it important for peace dividends approaches to be conflict sensitive? Firstly, agreements that lead to the cessation of violent conflict are often built on delivering short-term benefits to the warring parties, but often do not

deliver benefits to the wider population that would build support for a longer-term peace. As a result, even in ‘peacetime’, South Sudan’s politico-military leaders are incentivised to maintain an easily mobilisable force that could be used to secure additional short-term benefits in the future peace negotiations.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, it is crucial that aid actors, working closely with communities, think critically about what ‘peace’ means in South Sudan, and what form of peace is being supported by dividends.

Secondly, it highlights that when discussing peace dividends, aid actors need to have a nuanced and realistic understanding of the political economy of aid and peace dividends in South Sudan. As noted above, in 2021 net official development assistance to South Sudan was more than USD 2 billion, compared to the estimated USD 500 million South Sudan earned through its exports, of which more than 90% came from oil production.<sup>75</sup> During the CPA period, the government was able to use the sizable income from oil production to offer to its supporters in exchange for their loyalty. Over the last decade, however, the economic downturn has meant that the South Sudanese government no longer has this option available. Instead, in some instances, the government and other warring parties have allowed their supporters to exploit resources, including aid, to secure their loyalty, which has led to increased grievances and demands for armed conflict.<sup>76</sup>

When it comes to the aid sector’s role in South Sudan, expectations around ‘peace dividends’ have both indirectly and directly informed strategies and approaches. However, there is some history in South Sudan of aid allocations inadvertently undermining peace and fuelling violent conflict, leading to humanitarian crisis.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Interview with executive chief, Rumbek Center, November 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Pendle N (2015), *“They Are Now Community Police”: Negotiating the Boundaries and Nature of the Government in South Sudan through the Identity of Militarised Cattle-Keepers*, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* **22** (3), pp 410–34; Pendle N (2018), *“The Dead Are Just to Drink from”: Recycling Ideas of Revenge among the Western Dinka, South Sudan*. *Africa* **88** (1), pp 99–121.

<sup>75</sup> Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), *South Sudan Country Profile – 2021*, Accessed 24 March 2024. 1

<sup>76</sup> Dan Maxwell, Santschi M, et al (2017). *Trajectories of International Engagement with State and Local Actors: Evidence from South Sudan*.

<sup>77</sup> CSRF (2023), *Aiding the Peace: Revisiting Key Lessons from the CPA Years for International Engagement in South Sudan*, Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, October; Bennett J, Pantuliano S, Fenton W, Vaux A, Barnett C, and Brusset E (2010), *Aiding the Peace: A Multi-Donor*

Of particular concern is the potential for economically focused peace dividends to be seen as the ‘spoils of war’ and thereby encourage armed conflict so that the protagonists can negotiate a ‘peace’ and access the resulting economic benefits.<sup>78</sup> People in more stable areas can also feel punished for their stability. CSRF research after the escalation of civil war in 2013 highlighted how people in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, a stable state at the time, felt neglected and punished by aid actors as aid was focused on humanitarian aid in contexts of conflict. During this research, many people in Lakes State also lamented and felt confused by the decline of aid to their state since they have become more stable.

As noted in *Aiding the Peace*, the 2010 multi-donor evaluation of peacebuilding programming during the CPA period, much of this programming was based on an assumption that the key root cause of violent conflict was South Sudan’s underdevelopment. Delivering ‘peace dividends’, in the form of tangible improvements in the quality of and access to social services, could ‘reduce social tensions’ by addressing the inequalities fuelling grievances that were causing armed conflict.<sup>79</sup> In the donor community at the time there was a strong commitment to work with and build the new South Sudanese state, to support the government to fulfil the social contract between the citizens and the state, while the UN Peacebuilding Fund supported programmes sought to reduce horizontal inequalities.<sup>80</sup> Subsequent research and surveys have found, however, that the investments in livelihoods and services during the CPA period did not automatically create a citizen-state social

contract, nor mitigate violence.<sup>81</sup> While improvements in basic service provision were needed, conflict drivers were ‘... more often found in ethnic divisions, land and cattle disputes, and disaffected youth – variables that are in many cases outside the influence of socioeconomic forms of assistance’.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, no correlation was found between the relatively larger amounts of aid being provided to regions and the occurrence of or reduction in violence’.<sup>83</sup>

More worrisome, however, was that some aid activities in the post-CPA era that were meant to support peace instead caused harm and fuelled violent conflict. Kindersley, Majok and Thomas have documented how the marketisation and monetarisation of South Sudan, which aid actors have supported, has contributed to the militarisation of society and increased armed conflict.<sup>84</sup>

Since the colonial era, the ‘development’ efforts of outsiders, often pursuing national and/or international interests, has often resulted in extreme violence being used against local populations.<sup>85</sup> Following South Sudan’s independence there was increased focus on creating a conducive legal and administrative environment for international investors. This was in-line with the ideas of world-leading development institutions and included starting to reform and update South Sudan’s land tenure system. Both the anticipated and actual changes in the control over, ownership of and value of land and natural resources fuelled new armed contestations over land ownership and administrative borders.<sup>86</sup> Much of South Sudan’s

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[Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005–2010](#) (UK: ITAD Ltd.); Pendle (2023), op. cit.

<sup>78</sup> CSRF and Morris, op. cit.

<sup>79</sup> McCandless, op. cit, p 22.

<sup>80</sup> McCandless E (2012), [‘PEACE DIVIDENDS AND BEYOND: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIAL SERVICES TO PEACEBUILDING’](#), UN Peacebuilding Support Office.

<sup>81</sup> Maxwell D, Gordon R, Moro L, Santschi M, Dau P (2016), [‘Livelihoods and Conflict in South Sudan’](#), Briefing Paper 20, Institute of Development Studies: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, October.

<sup>82</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp youth in Rumbek Centre, Lakes State, November 2023.

<sup>83</sup>Bennett et al., op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas (2015), op. cit.; Thomas E (2019), [‘Moving Towards Markets: Cash, Commodification and Conflict in South Sudan’](#), Rift Valley Institute; Kindersley N, Majok JD (2019), [‘Monetized Livelihoods and Militarized Labour in South Sudan’s Borderlands’](#), Rift Valley Institute; Kindersley N (2022), [‘Military Livelihoods and the Political Economy in South Sudan’](#), in Bach JN (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa* (London: Routledge), pp 180–88.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas E (2015), *South Sudan: A Slow Liberation* (London: Zed Books).

<sup>86</sup> Cormack, op. cit.; Leonardi C, Santschi M (2016), [‘Dividing Communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda: Boundary Disputes and Land Governance’](#), Rift Valley Institute; Pendle (2023), op. cit.

contemporary armed conflicts are entangled in these reforms, not only because of land's economic value, but also because access to and ownership of land is often intimately tied up in people's own confidence in their citizenship and the protection of their rights more generally.<sup>87</sup> For many communities, independence has not been a time of peace but rather a period of increasing lack of security and political influence, unintentionally sparked by technically sound, but conflict blind, initiatives.<sup>88</sup>

Large-scale, post CPA infrastructure projects are a good example of how an intervention which was conceptualised as providing a peace dividend and in some contexts supported peace, in other contexts brought harm if poorly conceived or executed, particularly with disregard for the wider political economy. South Sudan's roads are notoriously poor, and there have been concerted efforts to build roads to improve transport links for trade, access to services and enhance connections between communities. Yet in many cases the roads which have been built have brought increased contestation over the collection of road-related taxes, facilitated the predatory state expanding its reach into communities, and allowed illegal economic activities to become more entrenched.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the use of some roads in practice are limited to oil companies' vehicles and government trucks moving weapons.<sup>90</sup> Another problem has been the 'unending incompleteness'<sup>91</sup> of some road projects which are poorly built, quickly deteriorate, or are never finished, to the extent to which their very lack of permanence or the cyclical nature of how roads may be built, abandoned and rebuilt may reinforce a political order and help to expand coercive state power.

Such cautionary tales provide illustrative examples for how, despite best intentions, programming and aid strategies designed based on assumptions of causal links (e.g. the link between peace and socio-economic benefit or

perceived 'peace dividends') or based upon generic global toolkits can have unintended negative consequences. This is true of any intervention, and the next section describes principles and approaches which can help to mitigate such outcomes. However, despite these lessons from the past, peace-informed approaches can provide greater opportunity for aid interventions to contribute to long-term peace in South Sudan. In particular, peace dividends informed approaches may help to further create or make the most of linkages between humanitarian and development programming and long-term everyday peace outcomes that are experienced by South Sudanese communities across the country.

### Considerations based on the research

The important questions which have arisen from the above research focusing on 'peace dividends' in the two locations in and around Yambio and Lakes highlight the complexity of how expectations around benefits of peace, conflict dynamics, and aid interventions and strategies intersect. The research also enables us to highlight some key considerations to help inform conflict sensitive aid.

#### 1) Consider how decisions are made to mitigate the risk of exacerbating conflict

The lack of transparency around the location where humanitarian and other aid is allocated can prompt speculation around how beneficiaries were selected, how much money is received and by whom. This can undermine trust, which is needed for any peace-related process to be successful. In Yambio, an aid organisation supported the formation of women's groups to promote unity. The community's confidence in the groups was undermined, however when a community leader associated with them was accused of corruption, in part due to the lack of

<sup>87</sup> Lund C, Boone C (2013), 'Introduction: Land Politics in Africa – Constituting Authority over Territory, Property and Persons', *Africa* **83** (1), pp 1–13 (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S000197201200068X>)

<sup>88</sup> Pendle (2023), op. cit.

<sup>89</sup> Schouten P, Bachmann J (2017), '[Road to Peace? The Role of Infrastructure in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States](#)',

Danish Institute for International Studies/United Nations Office for Project Services, January.

<sup>90</sup> Bachmann J, Pendle NR, Moro L (2022), '[The Longue Durée of Short-Lived Infrastructure – Roads and State Authority in South Sudan](#)', *Geoforum* **133** (July), pp 176–84.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

transparency over how much support the groups were receiving.

There is always a tension in aid programming over where decisions are made and by whom. Since the CPA, more aid actors have prioritised including community identified peace dividends in wider peace-making processes and dialogues. This approach requires budget flexibility and for external actors to empower communities during decision making processes. An example was mentioned during a visit by the researchers to a cattle camp in Lakes. The current peace in Lakes has resulted in a significant reduction in the use of guns and an increased presence of wildlife in the area.<sup>92</sup> People spoke of seeing wild animals that they had not seen for years, with many delighted by their return. This has also meant that it has become more difficult to control predators, such as hyenas, who pose a threat to their livestock. The *gelweng* described how one international NGO had asked them what would secure their commitment to peace, and they asked for poles and wire to build a strong, movable fence around their camp that would protect their cattle from wild animals. The NGO provided the cattle camp youth with food for work to help them collecting poles, and the completed fence now protects livestock and the cattle camp itself from wild animals or night-time attacks and raids.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, such a fence around the cattle camp can also deter such night-time assassinations.

Designing aid programming around communities and their priorities based on what constitutes a peace dividend, as illustrated in the example above, can help to mitigate the potential harm of the former approach based on a lack of community engagement and clear accountability. This also requires the adaptability and flexibility to be responsive to such opportunities and emerging needs.

### 2) *Understand perceptions of aid*

Services provided by aid actors can also create tensions in communities, as demonstrated by the experience of a health centre in Western

Equatoria with an ambulance. According to Nzara-based respondents, tensions often arise over which patients are being picked by the ambulance, particularly who is being pick first, and the stationing of people at the hospital from outside the County.<sup>94</sup> In Lakes State, the research found some level of resentment towards humanitarian workers, who are perceived as having access to more money and resources due to their jobs with NGOs. This has sparked tensions and resulted in humanitarians being seen as ‘wealthy’ and more suited for marriage, as they can afford a higher bride price or dowry. Uneducated youth and government workers also expressed the feeling that aid workers often capitalise on the power and influence that comes with humanitarian salaries. Given the backdrop of the economically precarious context in the country, this can further fuel jealousy and resentment. The respondents interviewed suggested that peace and stability could allow youth to build the in-demand skills, in areas such as masonry, as an electrician and plumbing, needed to secure jobs and start small businesses.

The potential for aid to drive resentment and negative perceptions must be understood, particularly in relation to specific local relationships and conflict dynamics. This will help aid actors to counterbalance this with better community engagement and approaches, which ensure inclusion and responsiveness to the specific needs of marginalised groups.

### 3) *Ensure better collaboration and complementarity over a long period*

Supporting material improvements that benefit entire communities (peace dividends), rather than selected individuals (intentionally or unintentionally), requires levels of funding and investments across a variety of sectors that is beyond the institutional or financial capacity of any single donor or aid agency. The research, however, found examples of where a variety of infrastructure improvements, implemented by different agencies, facilitated rebuilding or

<sup>92</sup> Focus group discussion, cattle camp in Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023

<sup>93</sup> Interview with cattle camp youth and elders, Bahr el Naam cattle camp, Rumbek East, Lakes State, November 2023

<sup>94</sup> Focus group with seven women each from a different women’s group in Yambio, Women Empowerment Centre, Yambio, 29th November 2023

maintaining good social relations, while also improving the material lives of community members, demonstrating the benefits of peace and discouraging armed mobilisation and violent conflict.

One example, from 2012, can be found in Amokpiny (Rumbek Centre), where an NGO supported the construction of a market and cattle auction. At the same time, and in the same area, one UN agency invested in police posts, while another built a large feeder road, and yet another organisation provided radios and motorbikes to the local government. During the same timeframe, the Dinka chief returned to the area and married a woman from the neighbouring Nuer communities in Unity state. One goal of building the market was to promote trade between the Nuer-Dinka across the Lakes – Unity State border, using the rationale that if people from both communities could benefit from trade, they would be disinclined to break the local Nuer-Dinka peace. The positive influence of the market many spoke about was the fact that this market has flourished over the last decade with only occasional interruptions due to tensions and has been a hub for trade between government and SPLA-IO controlled areas.<sup>95</sup> Confidence in using the market is demonstrated by Nuer herders willingness to send their cattle from Unity state to the market in Amokpiny, where they are collected into larger herds and then moved on to Rumbek or via the Nile for sale in Bor or Juba. During periods of extreme hunger in Unity State, the market has been a crucial source of livelihoods and goods need to keep people alive.<sup>96</sup>

While this may not necessarily have been due to a deliberate long-term strategy, the positive influence of combined interventions over a longer-term period help to illustrate how the result can be impactful in supporting sustained benefits which shore up peaceful relations and coexistence through shared mutual economic benefit. More strategically understanding and investing in better collaboration and complementarity between aid strategies would

help to further support long-term benefit which are tailored to specific local contexts.

## Conclusion

It is widely recognised that delivering peace dividends is key to solidifying a lasting peace. Peace processes can take years to resolve the underlying drivers of conflict, and those peace actors who make the long-term commitment to accompany and invest in these processes can have a significant impact. Nonetheless, the level of funding and organisational capacity needed to improve the material lives of South Sudanese across a wide area is beyond the capability of any single donor or aid organisations. This then means that in order to deliver the peace dividends expected by South Sudanese, peace actors will need to actively engage and collaborate with development and humanitarian actors. As described previously, the increased interest in how the material benefits of humanitarian and development interventions can shore up peace could provide particularly timely opportunities. For example, a large humanitarian agency recently advocated that food security interventions should be understood as a peace dividend, highlighting the importance of food when people are struggling to survive.<sup>97</sup> This forced them to consider how they can work productively with peace processes and the role, if any, of peace processes in shaping food distributions.

Greater thinking around specific programming frameworks and approaches which could support this would be particularly beneficial. For example, the following framing for more deliberately taking peace dividends into account was offered over the course of this research:

- **A peace dividend as a by-product of an aid or peacebuilding intervention:** peace dividends may arise because of conditions created by interventions and/or approaches, however they are not

<sup>95</sup> Conversation with chiefs, including Chief of Ampokpiny, Rumbek (Lakes State), November 2023.

<sup>96</sup> The market, however, has not benefitted all equitably. The tax revenue from the market and auction has benefitted local government authorities significantly, while

the traders have also become very wealthy. When hunger in Unity State was very high, in 2015-2017, the traders in Lakes were accused of taking advantage of the situation, which increased tensions between the two communities.

<sup>97</sup> Delgado, op. cit., p 25.

necessarily the explicit objective of said intervention and/or approach.

- Clarity on these in a given context could potentially inform better quality indicators for MEL, and where a dividend naturally arises in a certain context as a function of peace, it could raise a question whether this naturally arising dividend could be intentionally pursued in a comparable context to stimulate the peace.
- **A peace dividend as a discrete, targeted intervention:** these arise because a need/gap has been identified and is specifically targeted for investment, and that investment is possible because of the peace and/or supports peace (e.g., it might be a dividend of an initial step in a peacebuilding process but is also an ‘input’ into further stages of the peace process).
  - Clarity on these in a given context could inform a better understanding of what interventions tend to work and why, in relation to community perceptions of what constitutes peace and ‘peace dividends.’
- **An approach to peace dividends:** this more relates to the manner in which actors construct their overall intervention strategy, and specifically to what extent is it based on: a) requests from communities, b) market analysis, c) the levels and nature of community contribution, d) economic factors, e) on social factors, and so on.
  - Clarity on these could inform more appropriate heuristics for programme design. The contextual complexities highlight the impossibility of responses to be transposed across contexts. However, the development of an approach based on heuristics could be potentially then contextualised in the specificities.

The quest for peace and stability in South Sudan is not limited to aid actors and local community members, and it is important that this process

also engages South Sudan’s key actors, such as its politico-military leadership, all levels of government, business elites, other civil society groups, and regional and international agencies, to name a few. To ensure that their engagement is conflict sensitive, it is important for aid actors to understand the national, state, and local political, economic and social interests that can both support peace and encourage violent conflict. Programmes that provide life-saving support, support the rule of law and good governance, and promote equitable and inclusive socio-economic development are all contributing to peace and deliver peace dividends, in the form of material improvement, to affected populations. The more challenging aspect of building a peaceful future for South Sudan is re-establishing positive social relations between communities and groups, as encapsulated by the Dinka term *dor*. Linked to this was the expectation voiced by respondents in Yambio, that peace would also bring respect for and protection of individuals economic and political rights, which is often based on the rule of law and good governance practices.

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