



Working to prevent violent conflict

BRIEFING

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People's Perspectives on Peace-making in South Sudan

An initial assessment of insecurity and peacebuilding responses in Warrap State

Even since the end of the civil war, residents of Warrap State have continued to face violence, insecurity and a range of human security threats. Similar to other parts of South Sudan, access to health care and education is limited; there are severe deficits in basic service delivery and a complex array of social and political tensions impede economic development and stability. Communities living on the border with Abyei have also had to deal with influxes of refugees when insecurity breaks out, placing additional strain on the scarce resources that exist. Counties bordering Lakes and Unity states are plagued by cross-boundary tensions some of which have ethnic dimensions and some related to rebel militia activity.

Warrap State Profile

- The main ethnic group is the Jieng Dinka and minority tribes include the Luo and Bongo
- Total land area of 31,027 km² with a population of approximately 1 million people
- 6 counties – Tonj South, Tonj East, Tonj North, Gogrial East, Gogrial West and Twic
- 42 *payams* and 129 *bomas*
- 114,464 returnees recorded between 2005 and 2010
- 35% of the population faces food insecurity
- 20 primary health care facilities and 4 hospitals
- Maternal mortality rate: 2,173/ 100,00
- Under five mortality rate: 176/1,000
- Primary school enrolment rate: 21,9%

Figures at June 2010, <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/Referendum/Warrap.pdf>

It is into this complex environment that the government of the new state with the support of international partners are implementing peacebuilding measures. The purposes of this paper are to:

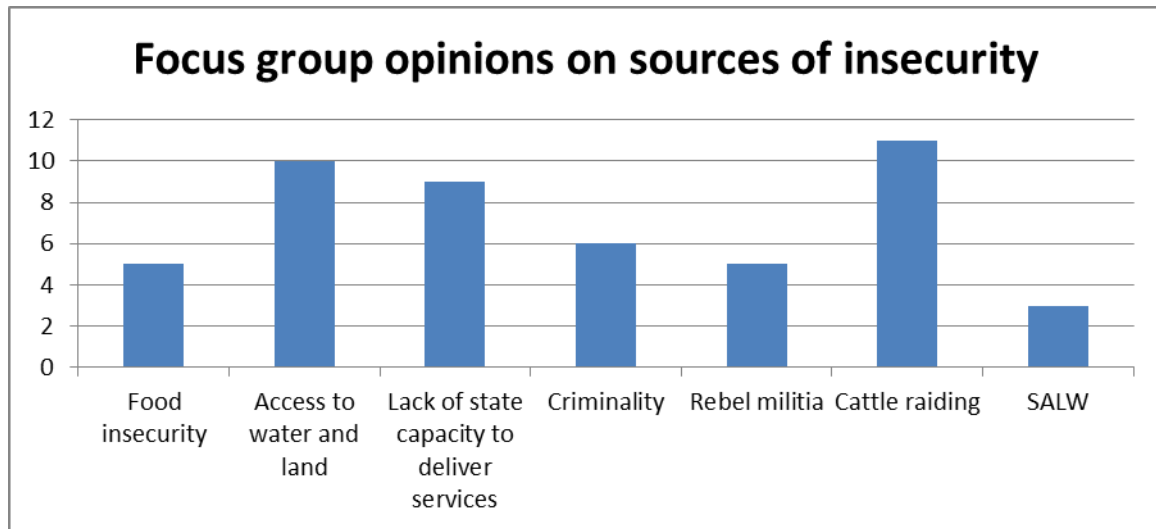
- Outline some of the key sources of insecurity in Warrap State
- Present public perceptions on security and development responses
- Propose implications for future programming

This paper is based on field research conducted in Warrap State in May and June 2011. Primary data was collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews in Kwajok, Gogrial West and Lounyeker, Gogrial East. Fourteen focus group discussions were conducted with elders, women, men and youth¹. The data gathered from the focus groups was complemented by 26 key informant interviews with political leaders, state representatives, traditional authorities, security service providers, civil society representatives and international actors. The focus groups and key stakeholder interviews sought to establish perceptions on insecurity and peacebuilding.

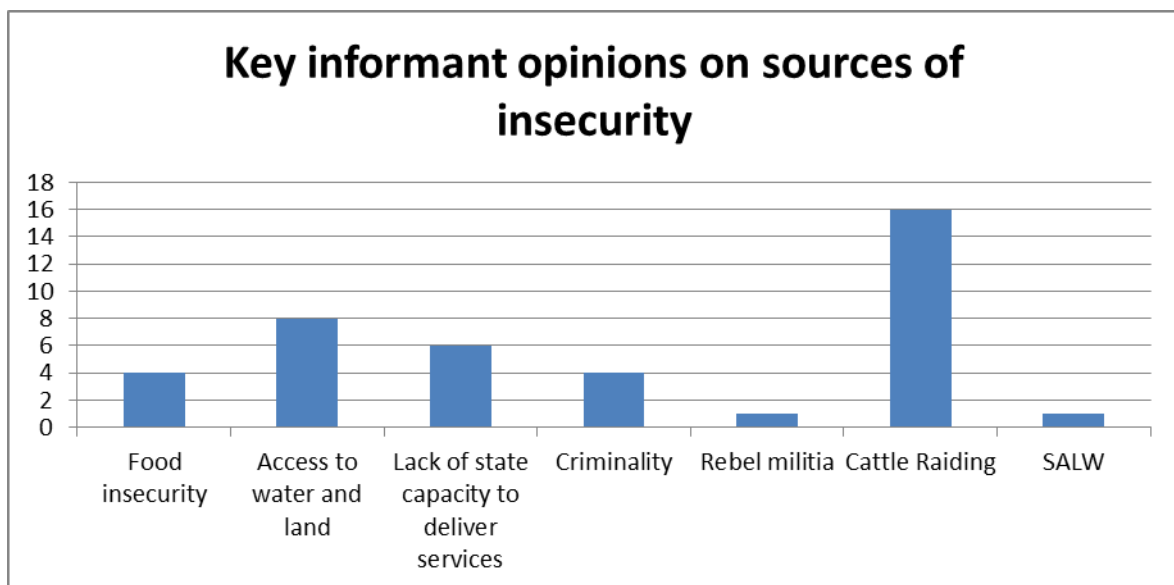
¹ A total of 137 people participated in focus groups of which 34 were female and 103 were male.

Key sources of insecurity in Warrap State

From the focus group discussions, the following key issues were identified as sources of insecurity:



The above chart captures the number of groups that mentioned the specific issue as a source of insecurity. In all of the 14 groups, participants mentioned more than one source of insecurity and all these responses are captured above.



The above chart captures the number of key informants that mentioned the specific issue as a source of insecurity. Most of the 26 people interviewed mentioned more than one source of insecurity and all these responses are captured above.

The data indicates that **cattle raiding and access to land and water** are the most prevalent sources of insecurity. These issues are closely related as people compete for scarce grazing and water resources for their cattle and raiding increases when there is more pressure on land and water resources (mostly during dry season). Insecurity around water points was highlighted as a key concern.

Food insecurity has long haunted populations in South Sudan due to the long-running conflict and displacement, the harsh environmental conditions and a social proclivity towards pastoralism with little subsistence or commercial agriculture. However, many of the respondents tied food insecurity to

the behaviour of international humanitarian actors. Some examples extracted from focus group interviews include:

- Humanitarian actors gave food supplies to the Abyei refugees that some thought should have been distributed to the local population
- Competition for food leads to insecurity around points where food supplies are stored; during distribution there is insecurity because the demand for food is higher than the supply
- International actors do not distribute enough food leading to tensions between people

Regarding lack of **state capacity to deliver services**, respondents specifically highlighted problems with the police, prison service and military. However, the lack of health care and poor facilities and resources at hospitals and clinics was underscored by a group of youth as a source of insecurity as some illnesses become fatal without adequate care. Also a group of traders in the market in Lounyeker, Gorgrial East pointed out a link between the poor hygiene in the market, illnesses and lack of health care as a source of insecurity.

Several respondents expressed concern about poorly constructed prison facilities because in some areas there is only a temporary structure made of wood and grass) and prisoners may easily escape leading to potential insecurity in the communities. It was also noted that people do not have faith in the formal justice system and often go to the prison to enact revenge. In addition, lack of infrastructure at police posts has made them vulnerable to attack as people come to free prisoners and/or steal weapons.

The behaviour of the army and the police was also raised by some respondents. Returnee populations in particular expressed concerns about harassment and torture by the army and police (including reports of drunkenness, immersion in stagnant water and beatings). Some chiefs also expressed concern about the irregular pay of soldiers as there have been incidents when soldiers not receiving pay have caused disturbances in the market and on the roads.

The perception of high rates of **criminality** is also tied in some ways to deficits in the state's capacity to deliver police services. Respondents noted that not only is harassment by state security officers a problem on some roads but that there are thieves and bandits operating in some areas, which is not being effectively addressed by state authorities. Key routes mentioned were the roads leading to and from Kwajok town specifically the road to Wau and the Abyei-Twic roads. In Kwajok town, security in and around the market was highlighted as an area of concern. This related mostly to theft in some instances involving street children.

Gorgrial East County borders Mayom in Unity state. Rebel leader Peter Gadet Yak's South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) has been operating from Mayom County since April 2011. Respondents raised concerns about cross-border **rebel militia** activity including the involvement of militia groups in cattle rustling. On 3 August 2011, Gadet signed a ceasefire agreement in Nairobi. There remain concerns, however, that not all forces loyal to the SSLA have followed Gadet into the ceasefire and there are estimates that of up to 1200 armed men remain in the Mayom county area².

Respondents also indicated that instances of insecurity often turn violent because of easy access to **small arms and light weapons (SALW)**. This was only highlighted in two of the focus group discussions indicating perhaps that the people are very accustomed to weapons possession and do not necessarily see a link between SALW possession and violence at societal levels.

Other issues raised during consultations on the sources of insecurity in Warrap related to girl elopement, revenge attacks and tensions between host communities and returnees. Both girl elopement and revenge attacks are tied to deeply embedded social and cultural practices. The payment of bride price in cattle is an obstacle to some young men wanting to get married. Young men turn either to cattle raiding as a source of cattle to be able to get married or the bride can elope (by choice or kidnapping) thus denying her family a source of income. Family feuds over the payment of bride price can lead to violence. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic violence in Warrap, as in many parts of South Sudan, often becomes intractable because of the importance of conducting revenge attacks

² See for example: 'South Sudan rebels stress only 35 joined Peter Gadet' in *Sudan Tribune*, 13 August 2011 online <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-rebels-stress-only-35,39828>

to appease victims, functioning as a form of redress, but continuing cycles of violence. Although cattle raiding is related to competition over land and water resources, there are deeply engrained social and cultural norms that perpetuate the practice. It occupies a central position in social hierarchies, reinforcing both masculine and feminine identities and defining gender roles in communities³. Elopement, revenge attacks and cattle raiding are closely related and form part of a socio-cultural behavioural construct that considers violence as a legitimate expression of social aspirations. This is exacerbated by the availability of SALW and the lack of developmental alternatives.

Security and development responses

A key part of the community security dynamics in Warrap and other parts of South Sudan are the complex linkages between violence, politics, social constructs, identities and values and developmental needs. In many instances however, when speaking about responses to this complex security environment, the respondents immediately turn attention to the expected providers of security services: the police, military and prison services. An interesting dichotomy is created in which the sources of insecurity are more complex and multi-dimensional but there is an expectation of action from the police and military. This leads in some ways to a false expectation of state capacity being able to address socially constructed sources of insecurity.

Furthermore, there seems to be a distinct difference in how people perceive the role of the state and that of the international community. The state is looked towards for security service provision and international actors are seen as primary providers of social services including health care, education and infrastructure development. International actors are positioned as an alternative to the government and in very few instances did respondents indicate an expectation from the state to deliver on basic social services. There is a historical association of international support to social services as part of emergency and humanitarian response and this remains a relatively new and challenging task for the government to assume such responsibilities given the scope of the needs and the vast areas that require coverage.

A third tier of actors positioned as security and development responders are the traditional authorities. Customary law systems continue to be an intricate part of the dispute resolution system across South Sudan provided legitimacy both by the state and by the people that they serve. Taken together, the state, international actors and traditional leaders make up the primary actors that citizens look towards. The following sections present some of the people's perspectives on the different actors as service providers.

Government

The South Sudan Police Service (SSPS) and Sudan People's Liberation Army⁴ (SPLA) are the primary security service providers that respondents referenced when talking about the state capacity to provide services. Although some negative opinions about the SPLA were expressed by displaced people and returnee groups, other residents called on the greater deployment of SPLA officers to secure border regions, particularly the borders with Abyei and Unity State. In relation to Abyei, at the time that this research was conducted there was tension between the local population and the refugees fleeing from the violence that had erupted in Abyei in May 2011. This tension related to increased competition over food and water as well as increased fear of host populations becoming vulnerable to attacks from northern forces that were operating in Abyei. Some respondents interviewed felt that the SPLA are expected to protect the border and prevent people from Abyei from being able to seek refuge in the South. The relationship with communities from Abyei is complex as there are close ties and allegiances – socially and politically – between southerners and Abyei residents. However, at local level, in times of hardship and scarcity the influx of refugees places additional strain on communities and access to resources.

³ See for example Michael L. Fleisher, *Kuria Cattle Raiders: Violence and Vigilantism on the Tanzania-Kenya Frontier*. Ann Arbor MI: Michigan University Press, 2000; *Cattle rustling among the Pokot and Karamojong in Uganda, The impact of gender relations on the conflict* Online <http://www.irenees.net/fr/fiches/experience/fiche-experience-655.html> (accessed 14 September 2011)

⁴ The SPLA will transform into the national armed force with a new name during the transitional period.

It was interesting to note the perception that the SPLA should be deployed to curb cross-boundary inter-ethnic conflicts between states – particularly between Warrap and Unity. On one hand this is related to the activities of rebel militia, the countering of which has a military component. On the other hand, seeking military engagement on inter-ethnic conflict which manifests largely as cross-boundary cattle rustling is looking for a military solution to a non-military problem. This may be based on a perception that they are the only security agency that is seen to be able to effectively take action; and have the ability to intervene in ethnic conflict, even though there have been allegations of ethnic preference within their ranks. Further, that the SPLA is a protector against attack from different ethnic groups in distinctly south-south conflict indicates a historic continuity of the association of the SPLA with internal conflicts and a failure to shift perception from a domestically oriented armed force into non-partisan, national military.

The SSPS is a fledgling police service created only in 2005. Although there was widespread acknowledgement of the need for policing and a desire for increased police presence, many respondents were critical of the SSPS. Key critiques included that the SSPS (in order of frequency expressed):

- Lack sufficient training
- Lack sufficient personnel
- Are too old
- Lack equipment
- Are often drunk

Lack of training was the most common cause associated with the perceived inability of the SSPS to respond to instances of insecurity. This included lack of knowledge of the law, lack of understanding of their jobs and a general weakness to deliver services that make people feel more secure. Primary data indicates a lack of trust between civilians and the police. Respondents acknowledged some of the critical challenges faced by the SSPS including the lack of equipment, such as vehicles and communication equipment as well as personnel shortages. Police professionalism was thought to be compromised by irregular pay making the police disinterested in doing their jobs; and public drunkenness.

From the data gathered, there seems to be a great expectation that with more personnel, training and equipment, the SSPS will play a crucial role in improving people's security. In the key informant interviews, respondents were asked what the main obstacle to security and development is for people in Warrap state. Fifty percent of respondents mentioned the lack of law enforcement capacity as the main obstacle followed by lack of infrastructure (twenty percent), lack of military presence (twelve percent), lack of education (twelve percent) and corruption (six percent).

Improved policing can curb criminality and increase faith in the government. But given that criminality was only the fourth highest source of insecurity, this will not fundamentally address the insecurity dynamics. Without improved communication and information sharing between citizens and police, the resultant delivery gap could cause unnecessary tensions and aggravate existing grievances further stunting state-building endeavours.

International actors⁵

In the key informant interviews, nineteen of the twenty-six respondents indicated a positive perception of the role of international actors in improving security and development. The remaining 7 respondents either did not answer or misunderstood the question. This positive perception of international actors is based on years of primary service delivery and the provision of humanitarian aid. Respondents noted that international actors saved lives and provided essential food, shelter, education and health care. There is an undeniable sense of dependency on international actors notable in some of the following responses:

- "We would have died without international help because the government is unable to provide for us"
- "International agencies are better than the government"

⁵ For the purposes of this discussion, international actors includes the range of bilateral and multilateral agencies as well as internationally based civil society groups and non-governmental organisations.

- “They are the providers, we are the receivers”
- “Internationals are a good alternative to the government”
- “International organisations have taken the role of the government”

What is also noticeable in these responses is that international actors play the role of basic service provider that should be assumed by the government. This creates expectations that international actors should continue to provide such services and extend the reach of what has been humanitarian response into more sustainable service delivery. This in some ways releases the government from obligations to ensure improved basic service delivery and puts international actors in a difficult position where humanitarian aid becomes the basic service delivery norm. Transitioning from this relationship of dependency to responsive state-based action is going to be difficult.

During the key informant interviews, some critiques of international actors were also expressed. The need to coordinate and consult more with local actors and the need to work more closely with civil society organisations was noted by the majority of respondents. Some other critiques included: the lack of employment of local staff and dependency on foreign national workers; the language barrier with international actors relying on English and most South Sudanese speaking Arabic; the lack of accountability to local stakeholders; and the tendency towards extraction of information and a perceived lack of follow through on responses.

The issue of hiring practices, especially in relation to non-governmental organisations, is becoming increasingly important in South Sudan as there are many NGOs, employing many international staff and contributing to sustaining a dual economy with excessive disparity. In addition, opinions expressed in Warrap noted a need for greater accountability of international organisations; that they should declare their project budgets and allow for closer monitoring by national actors.

The association of international actors with the extraction of information without any further follow-up or implementation of projects also requires further attention. The shift in development and post-conflict reconstruction rhetoric towards greater local ownership and more context-specific interventions has spurred a reliance on community based assessments, participatory analysis and generally extractive information gathering processes targeting key stakeholders and recipient populations. Given the range of international actors and the level of international assistance that South Sudan receives, this translates into multiple assessments and the development of consultation fatigue on the part of communities. Some respondents expressed frustration at being asked about their problems and then not receiving any additional support. This frustration extends to perceived delays in implementing projects and a slow rate of overall development.

Traditional authorities

An interesting observation emerging from the data gathered is that the state is perceived as the primary security service provider, international actors are positioned as the primary basic service providers and traditional authorities play a dispute resolution role. Although some respondents noted weaknesses with the formal justice sector, there were no specific questions relating to where citizens would seek mediation, negotiation or dispute resolution services. In conversations about peacebuilding and conflict mitigation in the focus groups, participants commented on the important role of traditional leaders to intervene in inter-ethnic or inter-communal conflicts to seek negotiated settlements.

However, it was also noted that the power of the chiefs and elders has been eroded by the war and their authority is no longer respected. There seems to be an increasing legitimacy deficit regarding the role of chiefs as arbiters of community authority with respondents citing the lack of power of the chiefs to influence the youth, corruption and bribery, bias and nepotism and lack of predictability and uniformity in decisions. There remains a perception that traditional authorities have an important role to play and that they need to be supported especially relating to the ability to host peace meetings.

Implications for programming

The primary purpose of this analysis is to provide recommendations for the programming of international actors based on the perceptions of some of the recipient populations. A range of interesting findings have emerged; some of which are specific to Warrap and others that bear

significance across geographic boundaries.

1. **Preventing a security service delivery gap** – there are high expectations that increased capacity of the SSPS, in particular, will result in tangible security dividends. However, increased capacity of the SSPS is a long-term agenda what requires greater relationships to be forged between police and communities. Support to the development of community policing initiatives will enhance the development of stronger ties between police and the communities they serve and improve access to and delivery of policing services. Similarly, through the defence transformation process, civil-military relations programming will need to address roles, responsibilities and expectations of internal deployments of the SPLA. More consultation on defence policy formation and more inclusive processes to define the expectations of the SPLA in an independent, democratic state is required. Additionally, programming needs to start focusing on mechanisms for accountability at local levels so that the police, military and prison services can be held to account when not maintaining standards of professional behaviour. This can be done through for example having a code of conduct and civil society monitoring mechanism, internal complaints and investigative mechanisms and through national and state-level parliamentary oversight committees.
2. **Improving international relations** – international actors can improve their programming, utilise more local staff and invest in more meaningful local ownership and coordination. Changing the dynamics of the provider-receiver relationship means supporting national initiatives and investing in national capacities through more skills development and job creation programmes. In terms of coordination, a clear issue emerging from this research is that international actors could make better use of available information and assessments and utilise information better. The potential for a single open information repository could be further explored.
3. **Supporting primary dispute resolution** - inter-communal and inter-ethnic violence will continue to hinder stability and development. There is the potential for traditional authorities to resolve disputes and negotiate settlements. There is scope for more community mediation initiatives and improved reconciliation and relationship building between conflicting groups.

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