

POLICY BRIEF

Aiding the Peace

A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005-2010

The evaluation concludes that support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding has only been partially successful. Donor policies and strategies did not fully take into account key drivers of violence resulting in an overemphasis of basic services and a relative neglect of security, policing and the rule of law, which are essential in state formation. Ongoing insecurity compromised effectiveness and sustainability of basic services and livelihood development. Supporting state building in Southern Sudan requires an inclusive approach.

Sudan is at a critical stage in its history. In the referendum of January 2011 citizens of Southern Sudan voted for independence, six years after the peace agreement that ended the civil war with the North. The process towards forming a new country will not be easy. This is not only one of the poorest regions of the world, but also one in which violent conflict and the spread of arms is rife. To establish itself as a viable and legitimate state authority, the new government, with the help of the international community, will need to diffuse the potential for violence among the many disparate forces on the ground.

In 2010 an independent evaluation was conducted on behalf of the largest donors in Southern Sudan¹. The central question was: to what extent has the international community contributed to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB) in Southern Sudan since the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and what needs to be done now as the country enters a new era? The evaluation was conducted in the lead up to the referendum by a multidisciplinary team of international and Sudanese evaluators. It also aspires to improve the practice of evaluation in the complex field of CPPB.

The evaluation looks at funding levels and the type of activities supported by donors in Southern Sudan under the main CPPB themes of socioeconomic assistance, governance, justice,

and local peace building – all activities that are designed to have an influence in reducing violence as well as strengthening the cultural and institutional resilience necessary for managing conflict without violence. The evaluation used a mixed methodology, but was anchored in a conflict analysis that contrasted the key drivers of conflict in 2005 with those identified by the evaluation team in 2010.

The evaluation consisted of a literature review, analysis of the policies, strategies and aid portfolios of the donors involved in the evaluation, followed by field verification in Southern Sudan covering 7 of the 10 States. The report provides a comprehensive ‘storyline’ of the dynamics of conflict in the region and the role of the international community as a whole.

Dynamics of conflict

In 2009, Sudan as a whole ranked 150th (of 182) in the world in terms of human development indices. Sudan’s economic growth over the last ten years has been remarkable; yet throughout its history the southern region of the country has been cut-off from mainstream development owing to political and physical isolation. Only since 2005 has Southern Sudan, through the CPA, been in receipt of about half of the country’s new-found oil wealth, receiving approximately USD2 billion per year.

After the signature of the CPA donors began a policy of engagement with the newly created Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS). The prevailing paradigm was ‘post-war reconstruction’ in which much of the conventional apparatus of aid came to the fore. However, despite the CPA the situation was

¹The evaluation was commissioned and guided by a steering committee comprising the evaluation departments of bilateral donors whose programmes are assessed (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States) and multilateral agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNV, UNHCR, UNOCHA, WFP). The committee also included a representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning of the Government of Southern Sudan.

closer to a ‘suspended war’ during which local conflicts erupted frequently. This led to a serious underestimation of the residual and often complex triggers of violence. At the same time donors felt obliged not to prejudge the outcome of the referendum. This made it difficult for them to focus their aid efforts in Southern Sudan, especially in relation to governance, when they could not make any assumptions about the future.

The evaluation undertook a conflict analysis of its own to complement and summarise those undertaken by several specialist agencies over the last 6 years. The table below presents a synthesis of the major conflict factors that have, or should have been addressed by donor-supported interventions. In bold are the factors that did not exist or were secondary in 2005 but which have gained prominence since. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather a broad-brush reference to the major fault lines that continue to threaten peace in Southern Sudan. Above all, what it reveals is the increasing importance of tensions at the sub-State level. Hitherto, donors have given too much emphasis to North/South issues, missing a more nuanced and informed approach that would reveal underlying problems in the South itself.

Violence manifests itself in different ways – for example, youth alienation and specific tensions around water and land have been exacerbated by poor progress over reintegration of demobilised soldiers and the enormous return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees since 2005. In the absence of fundamental reform, the

legitimacy and acceptance of government institutions, especially the security apparatus (police and army), is brought into question. This is particularly the case in local government and in the ten States of Southern Sudan where capacities and resources are very low. The key concern of the people of Southern Sudan has been the security and protection of their families against various predatory forces, and the lack of adequate state mechanisms to forestall these.

The border between North and South Sudan has yet to be fully defined and is still subject to sporadic conflict. The contested area of Abyei, one of the ‘Three Areas’ along the North/South divide, is traditionally an area of cattle owning groups: the Dinka (from the South), and the Missiriyya (from the North). Abyei holds a vast amount of Sudan’s oil and was supposed to be the litmus test for a united Sudan and for the wealth- and power-sharing arrangements set out by the CPA. The Abyei referendum, on whether Abyei should remain in Southern Kordofan State in Northern Sudan or join Bahr el-Ghazal State in Southern Sudan, was to take place at the same time as the Southern Sudan vote. However, the referendum is delayed with no future date being set.

Conceptual confusions

A degree of confusion has emerged around the underlying assumptions of aid to Southern Sudan. The region is frequently depicted as ‘marginalized’. On the ground this is understood to mean political isolation combined with military domination.

Key Conflict Factors to be addressed by Interventions

Reform of justice and security institutions	Culture of justice, truth and reconciliation	Good governance	Socioeconomic development
Reintegration of demobilised soldiers is insufficient	Uncertainty about the future and rising, sometimes unrealistic, expectations	North/South disparities, and intra-South marginalisation	Status of the Three Areas. International attention diverted from the Three Areas
Undeveloped police and justice systems	Hardening of ethnic identities	Tensions around centralisation and weak structures at State levels	Migration of armed pastoralists; discontented and under-employed youth
Incomplete disarmament among the population	Unresolved issues of access to natural resources	Lack of representation	Returnees want access to resources. Return destabilises communities

Most often this implies dominance by the North, but in the South itself political patronage can lead to favouring of certain ethnic groups or geographical areas above others, with those in positions of power having unregulated access to resources. It can thus include elements of deliberate exclusion.

Donors have re-configured the term to emphasise ‘lack of development and services’, and by doing so have implied that this is a major cause of conflict. Local conflict may arise from disputes over access to resources, but these can escalate either because of historical factors or because of political manipulation. Lack of development might, at most, be a cause of disaffection that contributes to tension in such cases but it cannot be cited as either a sole or significant cause of conflict.

A dominant ‘theory of change’ resulting from this conceptual assumption is that ‘all development contributes to CPPB’, encapsulated in the term ‘peace dividend’. The logic seems to be that development is not only a reward for peace (the CPA) but that failure to deliver a ‘peace dividend’ could lead to conflict. The evidence for such a claim is derived from studies on CPPB conducted in other parts of the world, but the causal link between delivering services and abating violence is not found in Southern Sudan, despite this being the dominant paradigm that informs the aid operations. In Southern Sudan a more precise identification of the causes of conflict is needed.

Donor interventions

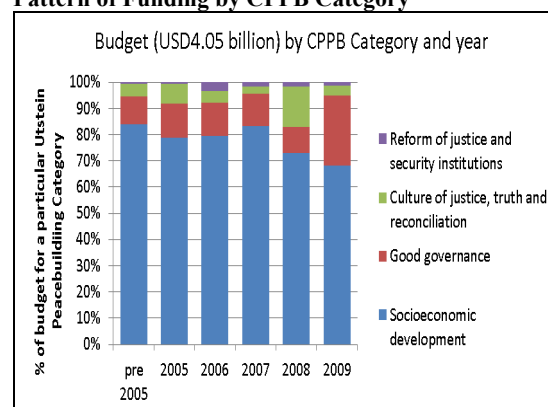
Some donors have commissioned independent studies on conflict in Southern Sudan since 2005, but the findings have not always translated into changes in strategies and the design of aid programmes. A more rigorous application of conflict analysis would have isolated those causal factors that could be dealt with by donor programmes, and ensured that there was a common understanding among donors over how to address these. Donor coordination mechanisms tend to be limited to sharing information, and rarely is there a joint donor approach to addressing the immediate causes of violence.

The reasons are threefold. First, high level donor meetings have taken place mainly in Khartoum or at international conferences, where the

particularities of local conflict are lost to more strategic pan-Sudan concerns around the CPA. Second, most of the joint mechanisms are primarily concerned with harmonising aid around a recovery/development agenda negotiated with GoSS. GoSS flagged security as a priority but was unable to formulate a donor-friendly strategy around this. Third – and perhaps the most crucial factor inhibiting the application of conflict analysis – is that flexible localised responses can rarely be accommodated by aid programmes built around relatively rigid three to five-year plans. The predictability of funding makes longer-term programmes attractive, but the execution of these programmes can entail a long, drawn out process of procurement and capacity building that ultimately prevents any rapid change in approach or geographical location.

The efforts of donors have nevertheless been consistent and continuous. Over a five year period (2005-2009) the total budgeted allocation to Southern Sudan from the donor portfolio analysis amounts to about USD4.1 billion. About half of this has gone towards humanitarian activities (including the Three Areas). Together with the estimated contributions assigned to the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in the same period (averaging about USD1 billion/year), this would bring the total to above USD8 billion (including UNMIS contributions from non-DAC donors). Although the proportion of aid to Southern Sudan from the donors involved in the evaluation cannot be known with accuracy, it will be over 85% of the total from all donors.

Pattern of Funding by CPPB Category



The figure above depicts how the donors under review have allocated funds with respect to the CPPB categories. Reflecting the predominant assumptions about the conflict – that a services-

related 'peace dividend' is a top requirement – between 65–85% of funds was used for 'socioeconomic development' (including humanitarian) over a five-year period. The second largest category of expenditure was 'good governance' which covered a multitude of projects relating to local governance, the justice system, and activities in reconciliation and community mobilisation. As the severity of the absence of government capacity became most fully appreciated, funds increased in these sectors. In 2009, there was a substantial increase in funds for good governance (accounting for 27%). With the 2009 Juba Compact, wherein donors have redoubled their efforts to ensure transparency and bolster governance, funding for that sector is likely to increase again.

Some donors (notably the United States) have preferred to work bilaterally through large programmes, using contractors or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the same time, most donors have used the various pooled funding mechanisms in Southern Sudan that emerged after the April 2005 Donors' Conference in Oslo. One of the largest has been the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) administered by the World Bank. Generally this has performed poorly in terms of disbursements, as have some of the pooled funds administered by the United Nations Development Programme. There have been seven major pooled funds, and there is evidence to show that those managed by contractors have performed more efficiently.

Performance by aid category

The evaluation covered the key categories of the Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities² – socioeconomic development, good governance, reform of justice and security institutions, and culture of justice, truth and reconciliation. Within each of these overriding categories it looked at the most important subcategories (sectors) assisted by international donors, treating gender and capacity building as cross cutting issues.

The conflict analysis highlighted the importance of linking development activities to local peace building in three respects: the recognition of key

drivers of violence; the appropriate geographical placement of assistance in areas most prone to violence; and the institutional support necessary to uphold peaceful relations within communities.

In respect of **socioeconomic** forms of assistance (including infrastructure, basic services, and livelihoods) the results are mixed. The continuing presence of pockets of insecurity, the low capacity of the new government at all levels, and the slow and, in some cases, ineffective implementation of pooled funding mechanisms, hampered efforts to rapidly scale up basic service delivery in Southern Sudan. Some progress has been made in establishing government structures and systems, but access to basic services remains very limited with considerable regional variations.

Since 2005, over two million refugees and IDPs have returned to Southern Sudan, many suffering secondary displacement since returning. The initial focus was on the large-scale and logistically demanding 'organised' return processes spearheaded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration despite the fact that the vast majority were 'spontaneous' returnees who arranged their own transport and resources. Longer term integration was given relatively less attention. There was, for example, a lack of a clear agenda and coordination over land issues, and geographical coverage of support has been inconsistent. Funding service provision (usually by international NGOs) through humanitarian budgets introduces risks over sustainability, especially while GoSS is still unable to take over these responsibilities. Most donor and NGO support has focused on capital investment, equipment and, especially training while avoiding recurrent costs such as salaries, essential supplies and maintenance.

In the most conflict-affected States the challenge is in ensuring security before access to basic services can be realised. Inter-tribal conflict has contributed to delays in rolling out services and deterred NGOs and others from investing. Effective disarmament, a focus on the building of a trained and credible police force, the building of roads, and programmes targeting youth are the key priorities that will create an enabling environment for the delivery of basic services. Which interventions should be prioritised, and how programmes should be implemented in each state, should be based on an

² OECD/DAC (2008) Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities, OECD/DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation and the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

analysis of the particular drivers of conflict at State and county level. Overall there has been a dearth of activities focused specifically on supporting young people's livelihoods and/or employment opportunities.

In the **governance** sector, the rapid decentralisation of decision making and budgets to State and sub-State levels in Southern Sudan has created problems in the management of public finances. Donors were slow to provide support in this respect, and governance programmes have tended to be over-ambitious and over-technical. Too much emphasis has been given to formal institutions without linking this to existing customary law.

In supporting the **reform of justice and security institutions**, results have been more positive, particularly towards the end of the period covered by the evaluation. Security sector reform, despite limited funding, has made considerable progress. There are still concerns over the timing and inter-relationship between reforming the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and bolstering the police forces which are still unable to fully take over civil security. Building an independent judiciary has been crucial, but donors mainly focused on rule of law as a component of long-term state building, without specifically targeting areas affected by violence. Meanwhile, UNMIS has failed to adequately address issues of civilian security, despite recent improvements in deployment.

Community reconciliation and peace building efforts have largely been isolated events, rarely linked to national initiatives, and beset with problems of poor monitoring and follow-up. NGOs now are moving increasingly towards longer-term engagement, including the involvement of local government. The absence of a formal justice system has created a significant barrier. Although the 2009 Local Government Act seeks to extend the formal justice system to county level, the unclear boundaries and tensions between this and customary law will remain for as long as there is insufficient training and integration of chiefs and sub-chiefs.

As regards **gender** equity, there are a number of valuable initiatives, accompanied by growing guidance among aid agencies. The evaluation concludes, however, that the legacy of years of conflict, the link between gender related issues

and wider violence, and the opportunities of gender sensitive programming, are still not fully understood. **Capacity building** was always a major priority, but remains focused on training rather than resource supply and funding. The assumption of donors that GoSS would be able to quickly assume responsibility for effective local government turned out to be a serious error.

Conclusions

In dynamic conflict settings, an analysis of the political economy of the transition from war to peace must be continuously revised. In Southern Sudan the government and donors have not produced a convincing and consensual model of what Southern Sudan as a 'state' would look like in say, ten years. In part this reflected a tendency to approach the challenge purely as a technical exercise in capacity building and service delivery. Much of the evaluation's critique is directed towards an over-use of 'good practice', particularly with respect to ownership and harmonization, at the expense of field knowledge and engagement that was required. CPPB, in particular, requires in-depth knowledge and field presence. While none of the prevailing priorities, such as harmonisation, coordination and alignment, are contradictory to CPPB, they are not sufficient responses to state fragility.

International interventions cannot always address, or be responsible for, conflict deeply embedded in the fabric and history of Southern Sudan. Nevertheless, aid is not a neutral constituent, and some donors have been wrong in trying to separate aid from political dialogue. There are certain sectors – security, policing, rule of law – where international support is of greater priority than basic services. This is not only because of the importance of these functions in the formation of a legitimate state, but also for the reason (often stated by government and community respondents) that the effectiveness and sustainability of basic services are compromised by insecurity.

The extensive use of pooled funds and multilateral programmes has minimised the number and divergence of interventions. But several of them have been highly inefficient. High transaction costs and disbursement delays have detracted from CPPB objectives. By contrast, bilateral interventions – notably the substantial US programme – have provided the most effective support towards CPPB, based on

frequent monitoring and, most importantly, sufficient number and continuity of staff on the ground.

The donor community acknowledges that insufficient assistance has been given towards preparing Southern Sudan for secession. Circumstances have been almost unique – the creation of a new state almost from scratch and within six years. If state building is the objective, the challenge is to identify where, when and how conflict factors are likely to undermine the enterprise. The legitimacy of the state rests on its ability to appropriately respond to security alerts, and not simply with reactive military strength. A more inclusive approach to CPPB – including support to civil society, customary law and bridge building between communities and the nascent state – is one that donors should now strongly endorse. This has only just begun.

Main recommendations

- 1) Ensure that conflict analysis links wider dynamics to those specific to an area of operation, and is continually refined over the programming cycle. Always monitor funded activities for CPPB as well as more conventional output/impact indicators. Although multi-year commitments should be encouraged, the disbursement of funds – bilateral, multilateral or through pooled funds – should be dependent on frequent updates of events on the ground.
- 2) Reach agreement over oil wealth sharing in accordance with the provisions of the CPA. This includes significantly upgrading GoSS's capacity regarding oil sector management and capacity at both Juba and State levels.
- 3) Allocate additional resources towards creating and maintaining livelihoods programmes for young men who are currently too easily drawn into criminal activity.
- 4) In the most conflict-affected States, work closely with local (State and county) authorities in assessing and addressing security priorities before access to basic services can be realised. This might involve, for instance, follow-up programmes to disarmament, a focus on the building of a trained and credible police force, the building of roads, and programmes targeting youth. Ensure that decision making includes a dialogue not only with local government but also with civil society, including local chiefs.
- 5) Focus capacity building and support on decentralised levels of government and increase the level of performance monitoring. At the same time, further encourage a medium-term capacity 'provision' and technical assistance programme that uses civil service skills from neighbouring countries, and ensure adequate longer term funding.
- 6) Ensure that the urgent training of the judiciary at State and sub-State levels is always in tandem with dialogue with chiefs and those responsible for customary law. Apply a consistent procedure to ensure that the parameters of responsibility for each party are mutually understood and in accordance with the country's Constitution. In particular, this applies to gender equity.
- 7) Enable traditional authority (chiefs) to address root causes of conflict (including disputes over land or bride wealth) at their customary courts by providing capacity building programmes for these courts.
- 8) In order to promote accountability and transparency in decision making and operational law enforcement, support the development of effective oversight mechanisms to monitor the security agencies. Such mechanisms should include civil society groups.
- 9) Strongly encourage the UN Security Council to further strengthen the civilian protection mandate of UNMIS and its operational capacity to fulfil the mandate. This should include the deployment of more human rights officers across Southern Sudan, especially in disputed border areas and areas prone to frequent communal conflict, and the provision of regular public reporting on human rights violations.
- 10) Provide long-term support for gender mainstreaming in governance. For example, GoSS should be encouraged to establish structures that involve women in the promotion of gender equity in land matters and ensures their greater representation on land committees. Support should be given to national processes that collect gender-disaggregated data that can be used to assess progress.

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The evaluation report is available at
www.minbuza.nl/iob
www.oecd.org/dac