

# CONFLICT TRENDS

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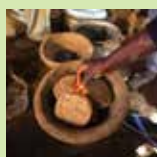
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Cover photo: Firewood is becoming more scarce in Mingkamen camp, Awerial County, South Sudan and families have to walk longer distances to find fuel for their stoves. Oxfam/Aimee Brown



# EDITORIAL

BY VASU GOUNDEN

Over the past several years, we have been engaging with a number of stakeholders and sharing with them our analysis of developments in Africa and our prognosis of what to expect over the decade from 2015 to 2025, and beyond. We believe that conflicts will characterise the landscape of both relatively stable and unstable countries, as well as countries that have sovereign control over their territories and those that do not.

During our engagements with stakeholders, we spoke of the exponential population growth, coupled with rapid urbanisation into unplanned cities, and the ensuing competition for scarce resources such as water, sanitation, housing, healthcare, education and jobs, and the violent conflict that this competition generates. We cautioned against blindly viewing the youth bulge as a boon for the continent without creating the necessary environment for young people to contribute to its economic transformation. Presently, few countries – if any – are winning the battle of matching job growth with the rising numbers of young people. We also warned that governments faced with growing unrest and violence would retaliate with force – and, oftentimes, the force meted out by unprofessional, inadequately trained and biased police forces would result in more deaths and greater instability.

We also spoke of countries that have lost sovereign control over their territory and the dangers related to the resulting vacuum in governance. We warned that the vacuum in these ungoverned territories would be filled by extremist and radicalised groups who collude with global terrorist and criminal syndicates as well as multinational companies to exploit the resources present in the territory under their control, to procure arms to advance their cause.

The first two weeks of 2019 have not been good for Africa and have, unfortunately, confirmed our prognosis. Food and fuel crises in Sudan and Zimbabwe respectively have set off a series of violent strikes and protests. This has been met with state force, leading to claims of brutal assaults and torture. Currently, there does not seem to

be any end in sight to these situations of unrest – both of which seem to call for the presidents of Sudan and Zimbabwe to step down. An important feature of these protests is that young, unemployed people were joined by professionals – lawyers, doctors, nurses and teachers – showing an alliance beyond class.

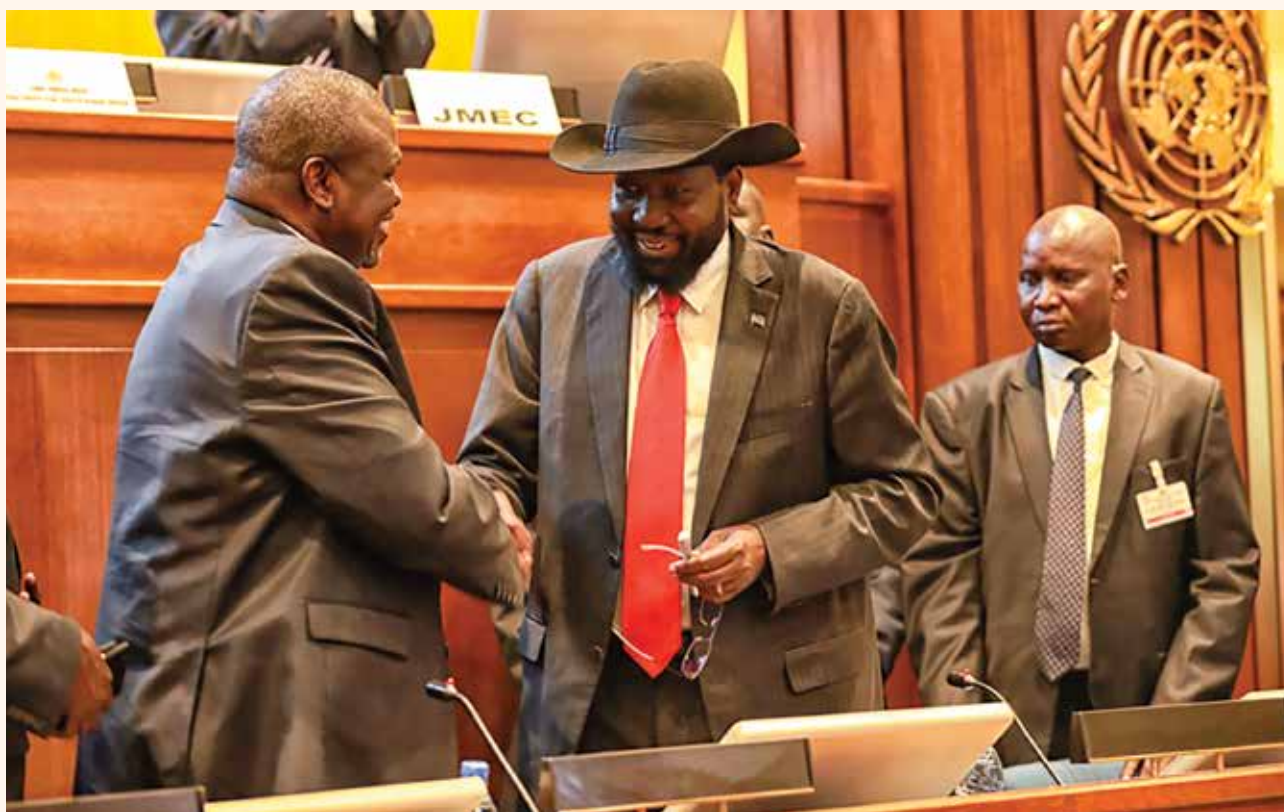
The year 2019 also started out with a terrorist attack in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. It took almost 48 hours to return the situation to normal. The brazen attack in the city centre is a stark reminder that those intent on using such methods of attack will always have the element of surprise, making it very difficult for governments to respond effectively to protect their citizens. Mali saw an attack on United Nations peacekeepers that resulted in the death of eight peacekeepers – a modus operandi prevalent over several years now, where non-statutory armed groups do not respect the laws and conventions that govern war. An attack by Boko Haram in Nigeria displaced several thousand people, who fled to Cameroon – only to be forcibly repatriated to Nigeria.

All these situations indicate that Africa is a continent that needs some serious reflection and quick action to begin a process of transformation. We warned that the slow pace of infrastructure and skills development – and, consequently, the almost stagnant transformation of economies from subsistence, agrarian economies to industrial and information economies – is at the core of Africa's challenges. Poor governance, corruption, financial mismanagement, capital and skills flight, and poor leadership, devoid of vision and a people-centred commitment to transformation, exacerbate the African condition. If our leaders in Africa do not act immediately to deal with poverty, unemployment and inequality, the first two weeks in Africa will become more the norm than the exception. **A**

**Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.**

# REVIVING PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN THROUGH THE REVITALISED PEACE AGREEMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE ENABLERS AND POSSIBLE OBSTACLES

BY CLAYTON HAZVINEI VHUMBUNU



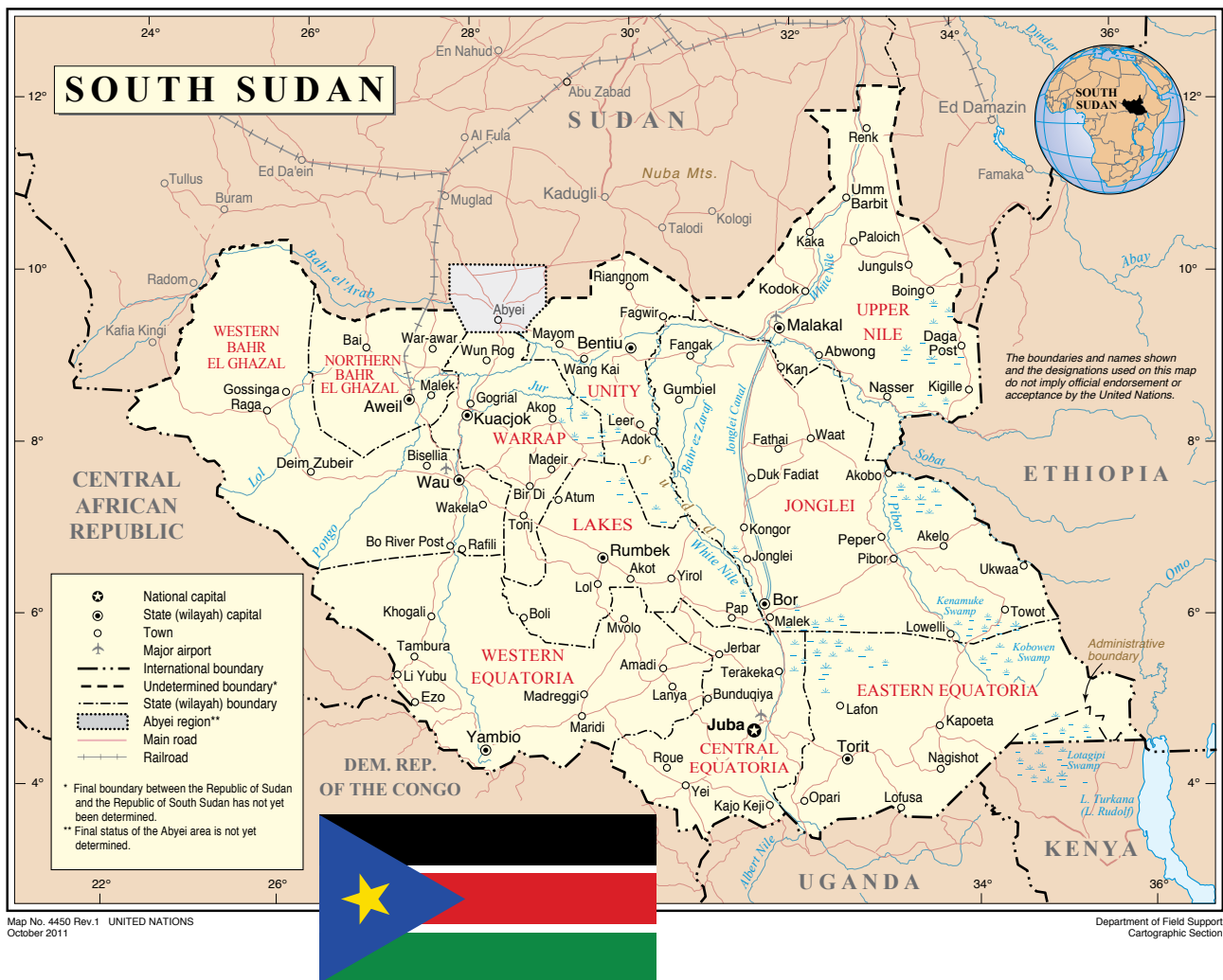
UNMISS PHOTO

## Introduction

The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by the warring parties in South Sudan, has been widely extolled and commended as a significant development signalling the dawn of peace. The peace deal is an attempt to revive the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) of 17 August 2015, which had apparently broken down as a result of the outbreak of civil war triggered by the violent confrontations that erupted on the night of 7 July 2016 in Juba. Whilst it is not very surprising that almost all South Sudanese, stakeholders to the conflict and commentators across Africa and beyond have expressed fervent hope, generous optimism and great expectations for

peace and stability, given the intractability of the conflict in South Sudan, it is equally important to undertake a timely analysis of the R-ARCSS – specifically the possible and probable interplay of factors that may have implications for the success, or otherwise, of the peace agreement. The idea is always to systematically and constructively

**Above: South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir (right) and his former deputy president, Riek Machar (left) shake hands in agreement of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (12 September 2018).**



identify critical issues that may be pertinent to consider as all relevant stakeholders invest efforts towards peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. This article therefore examines the R-ARCSS within the context of the South Sudanese internal and external conflict environment, and presents the key enablers and obstacles to the success of the peace agreement.

**Background to the R-ARCSS**

The R-ARCSS is an agreement that seeks to revive the ARCSS of August 2015, which had temporarily ended the first civil war of South Sudan that broke out on 13 December 2013. Between August 2015 and June 2016, the ARCSS played a noticeable role in constraining the key parties to the conflict from engaging in confrontations, until July 2016 when conflict ensued.

Since the resurgence of civil war in South Sudan on 7 July 2016, there have been efforts to ensure a return to peace in the country through various initiatives at national and regional levels. The establishment of the High Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) by the Inter-Governmental Authority on

Development (IGAD) – a seven-member regional bloc comprising Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda – at its Extra-Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan on 12 June 2017,<sup>1</sup> was instrumental in convening negotiating parties in South Sudan to revive the ARCSS.

The HLRF, after its launch in December 2017, managed to facilitate several negotiations for 15 months between President Salva Kiir Mayardit’s Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and Army in Government (SPLM/A-IG), Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon’s Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) and other opposition political parties, which ultimately culminated in the R-ARCSS. The R-ARCSS was preceded by five key agreements between the parties and stakeholders to the conflict in South Sudan:

1. Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, signed on 21 December 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
2. Addendum to the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, signed on 22 May 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;

3. Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties to the Conflict in South Sudan, signed on 27 June 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan;
4. Agreement on Outstanding Issues of Security Agreements, signed on 6 July 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan; and
5. Agreement on Outstanding Issues on Governance, signed on 5 August 2018 in Khartoum, Sudan.

### Overview of the R-ARCSS

The principal parties and signatories to the R-ARCSS are Kiir, as president of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU); Machar of the SPLM-IO; Deng Alor Kuol of the SPLM-Former Detainees (SPLM-FDs); and Gabriel Changson Chang of the South Sudanese Opposition Alliance (SSOA). The other six South Sudan signatories to the peace agreement were Peter Mayen Majongdit, representing the Umbrella Coalition of Political Parties; Kornelio Kon Ngu, representing the National Alliance of Political Parties; Ustaz Joseph Ukel Abango, representing the United Sudan African Party (USAF); Martin Toko Moyi, representing the United Democratic Salvation Front; Stewart Sorobo Budia, representing the United Democratic Party; and Wilson Lionding Sabit, representing the African National Congress (ANC). In addition to this, 16 stakeholders in the form of civil society

organisation representatives also appended their signatures to the agreement.

In terms of scope, the R-ARCSS covers issues relating to the Pre-Transitional and Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) governance structures and institutions; permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangements, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction arrangements; agreed frameworks for resource, economic and financial management; agreed principles and structures for transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing; parameters for guiding the permanent constitution-making process; reconstitution of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC); and operational and amendment procedures for the agreement.

The agreement provides for the establishment of a RTGoNU in South Sudan. This RTGoNU will be mandated to rule for a 36-month transitional period that will commence eight months after the signing of the R-ARCSS. Democratic elections will then be conducted 60 days before the lapse of the transitional period. The same agreement further provides for a single executive president (Kiir), first vice president (Machar) and four vice presidents, nominated by the incumbent TGoNU, SSOA, incumbent TGoNU and former detainees respectively. Whilst the first vice president is mandated to oversee the Cabinet Cluster on Governance Issues, the other four vice presidents will oversee their allocated Cabinet Clusters: the Economic Cluster, Service Delivery Cluster, Infrastructure Cluster, and Gender and Youth Cluster.

## DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS WILL THEN BE CONDUCTED 60 DAYS BEFORE THE LAPSE OF THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD



**Salva Kiir, president of South Sudan, signs the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan at a ceremony held in Juba, South Sudan (August 2015).**

UN PHOTO/SAG BILLY



**South Sudanese people stage a demonstration in support of the agreement between the South Sudanese government and armed opposition groups on sharing power and security regulations in Khartoum (August 2018).**

The Cabinet of the RTGoNU, as prescribed by the agreement, will have 35 ministers – 20 from the incumbent TGoNU, nine from SPLM/A-IO, three from SSOA, two former detainees and one from other political parties – and 10 deputy ministers (five from the incumbent TGoNU, three from SPLM/A-IO, one from SSOA and one from other political parties). The reconstituted Parliament is very bloated, with 550 members of parliament – 332 from the incumbent TGoNU, 128 from SPLM/A-IO, 50 from SSOA, 30 from other political parties and 10 former detainees.

### **Possible Obstacles to the Implementation of the R-ARCSS**

One of the most frustrating phenomena in South Sudan's conflict history has been the unwillingness of parties to peace agreements to implement what they agreed upon in good faith. More often than not, agreements are implemented partially, selectively and lackadaisically, for obvious political reasons. This a potential obstacle. A recent example is the announcement of Republic Order Number 17 on 27 September 2018 by Kiir. This decree ordered the chief of the South Sudan Defence Forces, General Gabriel Jok Riak Makol, to release prisoners of war and detainees, cease training of recruits and stop revenge or retaliatory attacks by SPLA forces, as provided for under Chapter 2 of the R-ARCSS relating to Permanent Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements.<sup>2</sup> Since the announcement, over 20 political detainees have reportedly been released by the government, despite delays,

including James Gadet Dak and William Endley<sup>3</sup> – although some political activists (such as Peter Biar Ajak) are yet to be released.<sup>4</sup>

Another potential hurdle is the apparent lack of urgency, determination, political will and political commitment in implementing even the easier objectives of the peace deal. Granted, it is just over two months after the signing of the agreement, but considering that the pretransitional period lapses on 12 May 2019 to pave the way for the RTGoNU, many outstanding activities could have been completed by this time in pursuit of the set targets outlined in the R-ARCSS Implementation Matrix 2018.<sup>5</sup> These outstanding issues include the ratification of the R-ARCSS by the Transitional National Legislature (TNL); the release of prisoners of war and political detainees; the formation of the Joint Defence Board (JDB); the reconstitution of the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission (JMCC); the disengagement and separation of forces by the parties to the agreement; the establishment of the Joint Transitional Security Committee (JSTC) by the parties to the agreement; the drafting of the Constitutional Amendment by the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC) to incorporate the R-ARCSS into the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (TCRSS); the establishment of a fund for the implementation of pretransitional period activities; the reconstitution of both the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) Board and the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) Commission by the National Pre-Transitional Committee

(NPTC); the creation of an implementation roadmap and budget for pretransitional period political tasks; and IGAD tasks that include the appointment of the reconstituted JMEC chairperson, the approval of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) terms of reference, the reconstitution of the NCAC, and the establishment of the Independent Boundaries Commission and the Technical Boundaries Commission.<sup>6</sup> At this pace, one may raise the legitimate fear that the provided 36-month transitional period, to be presided over by the TGoNU, may be too short to effectuate genuine institutional reforms that will stabilise the country and usher democratic elections.

Of course, it has to be acknowledged that progress has been recorded in some instances. For example, the SPLM/A-IO, FDs party and the SSOA managed to ratify the R-ARCSS on 22, 25 and 28 September 2018 respectively, consistent with the provisions of Article 8.1 of the agreement.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a number of confidence-building measures have been undertaken, as provided for in the R-ARCSS – including the meeting of R-ARCSS signatories and stakeholders in Sudan on 22 September 2018 to celebrate the signing of the agreement; the declaration of commitment to support the R-ARCSS by the TGoNU, SPLM/A-IO and SSOA; the convening of a workshop on Permanent Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements on 24–25 September 2018; the appointment of the NPTC on 25 September 2018; the reconstitution of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism Board on 27 September 2018; and the meeting of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements and

Verification Mechanism Technical Committee in Sudan on 9–11 October 2018.<sup>8</sup>

However, another possible obstacle to the implementation of the R-ARCSS may be the deep-seated mistrust and suspicion between and among the parties to the agreement, which cannot be masked. Such antagonism can be understood, given the prolonged rivalry that has manifested in experiences of horrendous and unpalatable intercommunal clashes between their respective followers across South Sudan. Since the outbreak of the second civil war in December 2016, Kiir has, on several occasions, declared his unwillingness and unreadiness to work with Machar, citing the latter's intransigence.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the parties to the R-ARCSS will inevitably suspect each other's intentions, motives and behaviours, especially when it comes to the design, constitution and operationalisation of historically controversial and politically sensitive provisions relating to the number and boundaries of states in South Sudan (Article 1.15), permanent ceasefire and transitional security

HOWEVER, ANOTHER POSSIBLE OBSTACLE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE R-ARCSS MAY BE THE DEEP-SEATED MISTRUST AND SUSPICION BETWEEN AND AMONG THE PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT, WHICH CANNOT BE MASKED



MINASSE WONDIMU HAILU/ANAPOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

**Senior diplomats of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) attend the Council of Ministers Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the South Sudan peace agreement, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (May 2018).**



arrangements (Article 2.4), transitional justice, reconciliation and national healing (Article 5.1), among others. This distrust may ultimately undermine the willingness of the RTGoNU parties to constructively engage, share information and cooperate. This usually minimises the potential of most transitional authorities and peace pacts.

Related to the previous challenge is the agreement's failure to address some of the root causes of the conflict in South Sudan. Some of the most serious root causes of the conflict, as also noted in the *Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan of 2014*, includes the lack of solid democratic institutions and the continued conflation of personal, ethnic and national interests, together with the inequitable distribution of resources in South Sudan.<sup>10</sup> Chapter 1 provisions on Transitional Institutions and Mechanisms, and Chapter 4 provisions on Resource, Economic and Financial Management – which collectively seek to address some of the root causes of the conflict – have for long been enshrined in previous peace agreements, but have not delivered any change. The R-ARCSS mediators needed to understand why this has been the case, and devise more innovative and creative interventions.

**SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND CIVIL WAR IN DECEMBER 2016, KIIR HAS, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, DECLARED HIS UNWILLINGNESS AND UNREADINESS TO WORK WITH MACHAR, CITING THE LATTER'S INTRANSIGENCE**

The abuse and manipulation of state institutions, as well as the perpetuation of patronage networks across all institutions and regions for political capital, especially security sector organs, remains one of the conflict drivers. Regardless of this phenomenon, Article 1.6 on the Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of the President gives carte blanche to the incumbent president, despite the relatively negligible and politically inconsequential accountability checks attempted through Article 1.9 provisions relating to “collegial collaboration in decision-making and continuous consultation”. The South Sudanese body politic may remain vulnerable and unshielded from the political risks and hazards of strongman politics, given the continued existence of an immensely powerful president. Although IGAD should be credited for allowing a revitalised JMEC to continue to monitor and evaluate the ARCSS, as well as to report implementation progress (and non-implementation) to both the RTGoNU and the IGAD chairperson, the reality is that the body remains burdened with huge responsibilities, without much

commensurate power. Its effectiveness is therefore dependent upon the goodwill and cooperation of the conflicting parties.

The expanded nature of the RTGoNU provided for in the R-ARCSS may present a stumbling block in pursuit of the agreement's objectives. One may easily understand that the expanded Presidium, Cabinet and Parliament were deliberately designed to pragmatically fit the Procrustean bed of South Sudanese political reality. However, the required budgetary resources to support and sustain a government of five vice presidents; 45 ministers (inclusive of deputy ministers); 550 members of parliament; and several transitional commissions, boards and committees will certainly be burdensome to a country already weighed with arrears in excess of 17 billion South Sudanese pounds (an excess of USD130 million), comprising “three months of national salaries, five months of state transfers and twelve months of embassies' salaries”, including members of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly.<sup>11</sup> With the previous peace agreement (ARCSS) having already used 1.6 billion South Sudanese pounds during the first three quarters of the 2017/18 fiscal year,<sup>12</sup> an additional financial burden would be strenuous and taxing against the backdrop of a debilitated



UN PHOTO/ICK BAJORNAS

**Riek Machar, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army in Opposition, is one of the principal signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.**



**In South Sudan's 2018/2019 National Budget Speech, it was admitted that the productive sectors like agriculture, livestock and fisheries have stagnated and that local and international investments have stalled.**

economy. This weakens the peace agreement implementation capacities and capabilities of the government. As admitted in the National Budget Speech of South Sudan for 2018/2019:

The productive sectors like agriculture, livestock and fisheries have stagnated; local and international investments have stalled. Consequently, the economy has been experiencing serious hyperinflation reaching triple digits (113%) since February 2018 [...] Unemployment has also reached unprecedented levels and so is poverty [...] Our oil and non-oil revenue performance has exceeded the budget estimates but the increase has not been sufficient enough to bridge our funding gap. Furthermore, we have been unable to raise new financing.<sup>13</sup>

With the competing national budget demands for social service delivery and development, the RTGoNU has to exercise economic discipline through tenacious frugality and thriftiness in resource use and expenditure to ensure that the R-ARCSS implementation activities are sufficiently funded. A delicate balance was needed to pursue accommodative objectives in the R-ARCSS whilst considering the fiscal realities.

The implementation of transitional justice, reconciliation and national healing provisions of the R-ARCSS may emerge to be problematic. Whilst the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH),

Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) and the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA) are sound initiatives meant to collectively promote and facilitate truth-telling, restorative and rehabilitative justice, reconciliation and national healing, compensation and reparation of victims of violence, and investigation and prosecution of those alleged to have committed crimes against humanity in South Sudan, the leaders are most likely to be reluctant to implement these, given the prospects of their liability and culpability. The *Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan of 2014*, which the R-ARCSS recommends as useful material for the investigation and prosecution of those alleged to have committed human rights violations and crimes against humanity, states that there was overwhelming evidence gathered through testimonies and field visits to the effect that the SPLM/A-IG, SPLM/A-IO and other opposition armed groups engaged in tragic human rights violations and abuses through abductions; illegal detentions; rape; sexual violence; systematic torture; cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of civilians; looting; property destruction; and indiscriminate killings using cluster bombs in various sites, cities, towns and villages in South Sudan.<sup>14</sup> What may be disturbing is the fact that the 2015 ARCSS had provided for the establishment of the HCSS by the African Union (AU) Commission, but it remains unimplemented – except the development (in 2017) of a draft statute of the court and

a memorandum of understanding between the AU and South Sudan on the establishment of the court, which were both unapproved by the country's Council of Ministers, as it emerged that a "number of key Ministers opposed the court".<sup>15</sup>

### **Key Enablers to the Success of the R-ARCSS**

Notwithstanding the possible obstacles that may frustrate the implementation of the R-ARCSS, there are a considerable number of factors which will ensure that the agreement delivers its overarching objective of laying a foundation for a united, peaceful and prosperous South Sudan.

In terms of content and substance, the R-ARCSS represents a solid pact as it contains the requisite procedural, substantive and institutional components expected of any sustainable peace agreement. This is an enabler. What will then be needed is political will and commitment to implement the letter and spirit of the agreement.

The fact that the peace pact is politically inclusive and representative – unlike its predecessor, the ARCSS – is a necessary condition for successful implementation. Whilst there are still arguments that a few influential individuals and armed groups – such as splinter factions of some parties like the SSOA – are opposed to the agreement,<sup>16</sup> the extent of inclusivity of the agreement should be commended as a basis for continuous engagement with non-signatory parties.

The legitimacy of the R-ARCSS is another enabler. Generally, there is substantial local ownership of the agreement, and regionally and internationally, there seems to be consensus that the peace pact is acceptable. Whilst the international community appears sceptical – understandably

so, given the historical trend of peace agreement violations in South Sudan – they have pledged to support the peace process. The Troika of the United Kingdom, United States of America and Norway expressed its "concern about the parties' level of commitment to [the] agreement",<sup>17</sup> but acknowledged that the agreement is key in addressing peace and security in South Sudan, whilst the United Nations spokesman for the Secretary-General on South Sudan welcomed the peace pact as "a positive and significant development".<sup>18</sup> Legitimacy will be an enabler of success, as it often assists to mobilise the necessary support for the durability and sustainability of peace agreements.

The implementation of the R-ARCSS provisions relating to the establishment of the CTRH, HCSS and the CRA will promote justice, unity, reconciliation and address impunity. This will enable the achievement of the agreement's goals and objectives, given the importance of justice, reconciliation and national healing in any peacebuilding process.

The effectiveness of IGAD will also determine the success of the R-ARCSS. It is necessary to recognise and anticipate that there are parties and individuals that are ready to undermine the R-ARCSS through covert and overt means in defence of their constituent interests, power and ideologies. The ability of IGAD to intervene effectively to manage peace spoilers or resisters will be critical in facilitating the smooth implementation of the peace pact.

Overall, building trust, cooperation and interparty collaboration in implementing the R-ARCSS will be the greatest facilitator of success. Whilst it is conventional wisdom that in protracted and intractable conflicts, distrustful parties often sign peace agreements under political pressure



MINASSE WONDIMU HALU/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

**The ability of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to intervene effectively to manage peace spoilers or resisters will be critical in facilitating the smooth implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.**

to end human suffering, the peace implementation process often presents an opportunity to reinforce and fortify not only overlooked or imperfect provisions in the peace pact, but also to detoxify political relations, transform political attitudes and re-establish unity of purpose. Thus, the commitment of R-ARCSS parties to invest in attitudes, institutions and structures that strengthen positive peace and build conflict resilience in South Sudan will be key. The leadership, in collaboration with all stakeholders, must work towards sustaining the central pillars of positive peace – that is, a well-functioning government, democracy and rule of law, an environment conducive for business, equitable distribution of resources, and human capital development. Most importantly, the ability to institute and capacitate peacebuilding structures and systems that will proactively prevent and peacefully manage and resolve future conflicts will be fundamental in the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Such tasks should never be assumed to be facile and simplistic, considering the history of South Sudan's conflicts and its current ranking as the most fragile state in the world.<sup>19</sup>

### Conclusion and Way Forward

The R-ARCSS has the potential to facilitate a return to peace, stability, reconciliation, unity and prosperity in South Sudan. Potential obstacles lie ahead in the form of lack of political will and determination, interparty distrust and suspicions, failure to address some of the root causes of the conflict, resource constraints, and the inevitable resistance by some parties to implement politically sensitive provisions of the R-ARCSS. Enablers that facilitate the successful implementation of the peace pact exist: a solid agreement in terms of content and substance, the inclusive and representative nature of the agreement, legitimacy, the role of IGAD, the ability to cultivate and sustain interparty trust and cooperation, and the effective implementation of provisions relating to justice, national healing and reconciliation. Faced with this reality, the R-ARCSS should present another opportunity for all parties to renew constructive working relations and unite their constituents at a time when the country is characterised by deeply rooted social divisions. This would require extensive and committed long-term efforts towards progressive trust and confidence-building measures as a foundation of engagement. For this to succeed, all citizens and stakeholders have to play their part. ▲

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# THE POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF PEACE AGREEMENTS: COLOMBIA AND MALI

BY BÅRD DRANGE



UN PHOTO/MARCO DORRINO

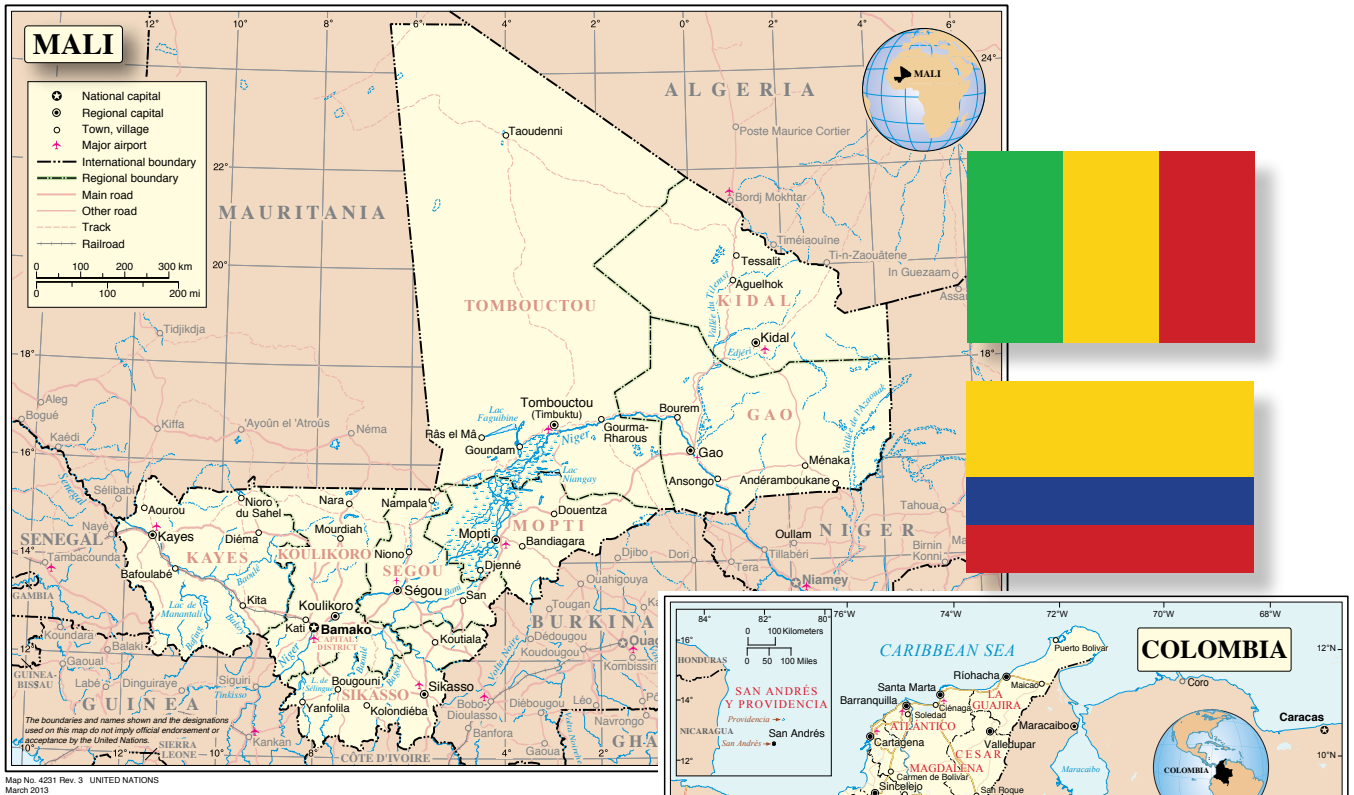
## Introduction

In most cases, political solutions to armed conflicts are professed by a plethora of local, regional and international actors. In practice, however, durable political solutions – typically symbolised through peace agreements – are scarce. While peace agreements may be signed, political willingness, as well as the ability to implement them, is often in short supply. Hence, many peace agreements remain words on paper, not actions in the field. This is also the case in Africa, where many conflict areas see peace agreements being signed, violated and forgotten.

This article examines the 2015 peace agreement in Mali and the case of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia. The 2015 Bamako Agreement for Mali – despite hopes to

end armed violence and provide a framework for peace – has had little impact on the ground and serves to illustrate some of the limitations of peace agreements. The case of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia illustrates some of their potential. Does the commonly considered successful case of Colombia shed light on the struggling Malian peace process? This article suggests that the Colombian peace process does provide useful insights into the challenges in Mali. This is discussed in the context of what, with whom and when to negotiate. Following this analysis, some lessons learnt are

**Above: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, president of Mali, addresses the signing ceremony of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Bamako (15 May 2015).**



identified, along with concluding remarks on how these two cases illustrate both the potential and limits of peace agreements.

**Background**

Both the Mali and Colombia conflicts started in the early 1960s. In Mali, various groups in the northern region have intermittently rebelled against the central authorities in the south. Typically, stated objectives include more autonomy, recognition and development funds for the north.<sup>1</sup> The latest rebellion was started by the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL) in early 2012. With help from temporary alliances with Islamic jihadist groups, the MNL effectively expelled the Malian Army from northern Mali and declared the Independent State of Azawad on 6 April 2012.<sup>2</sup> A political crisis in Bamako, triggered by a coup in March 2012, caused regional and international wariness, particularly from its former colonial power, France. In January 2013, as Islamic jihadist groups advanced towards Bamako, France intervened – at the request of Mali’s interim president, Dioncounda Traoré. French forces in cooperation with Malian troops, regional states and Western forces, halted the advancements on Bamako. Since then, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and smaller European Union training missions, have helped stabilise the country.

In 2014–2015, a peace process – conducted with neighbouring Algeria as key mediator – took place between the Government of Mali and approximately eight armed groups.<sup>3</sup> These groups were united under either the banners

of the Platform (considered pro-government militias) or the Coordination of Azawad Movements, henceforth Coordination (rebel groups against the state). The Bamako Agreement was signed in May and June 2015 – first by the Platform and later by the Coordination – but implementation has remained very slow.<sup>4</sup> In these last few years, however, the security situation



**Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (left) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) leader, Timoleon Jimenez (Timochoenko) shake hands during the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, in Bogotá, Colombia (November 2016).**

has worsened, and a variety of groups and weak Malian Armed Forces struggle for control and legitimacy in the northern and central regions.

The Colombian conflict also started in the 1960s, when several communist-inspired rebel groups were formed. The largest, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), put forth a political programme to fight against inequality in the Colombian countryside. The FARC grew stronger in the 1990s, helped by increased revenue from its involvement in cocaine production, and exerted significant military power in the late 1990s. Out of fear of a communist takeover in Colombia, the United States (US) supported the Colombian government in its counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency

**OUT OF FEAR OF A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN COLOMBIA, THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTED THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS COUNTER-NARCOTICS AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS**

operations. The war on the FARC, supported by the US and orchestrated by Colombian president Álvaro Uribe, significantly weakened the rebel group.

In 2010, newly elected president Juan Manuel Santos decided to pursue peace negotiations with the FARC. The peace process was secret during the two first years, and confidential during the next four years. In 2016, after a referendum in which Colombians narrowly rejected a first version of the peace agreement, the parties signed the agreement in November of that year. While armed conflict may be said to have ended, the peace process has faced significant obstacles with implementation and the security situation remains fragile, with several clashes between mostly criminal groups in previously FARC-controlled areas.<sup>5</sup> As the 2018 presidential elections showed, Colombia remains polarised, lingering between peace and war.<sup>6</sup>

Some key differences in conflict trends and trajectories demand attention. First, while the rebel groups in Colombia sought regime change, the Mali conflict has traditionally been a separatist rebellion. Moreover, while Mali has seen four large-scale eruptions of violence and three peace agreements, fighting has remained constant in Colombia, where three previous peace processes ended without agreement.

Also, Colombia dealt with several armed groups, including paramilitary groups and the National Liberation Army (ELN), a smaller rebel group. Still, the number of groups in Mali is significantly greater. Importantly, the FARC has remained intact and stable throughout five decades of armed rebellion, even during the military weakening in the 2000s. In Mali, to the contrary, armed groups seldom last long without changing names, leaders or alliances.

### Political Solutions and Peace Agreements

In this article, a political solution refers to the act of pursuing a negotiated way out of war and towards peace. It may start with intentions to reach a political solution; it may reach a key turning point with a peace agreement; and it may materialise through a variety of diplomatic, developmental and peacebuilding efforts over years and decades. Peace agreements, then, signed between at least two key actors, are more delimited in time. They may also provide the framework for peace that a political solution most often requires.

Engaging in a peace process and signing a peace agreement are, by definition, bilateral (or multilateral) acts. Continuing warfare to pursue military victory, on the other hand, is unilateral, as it does not require the other's consent. As peace negotiations require political compromises, terrorist

labels and the rejection of adversaries' political nature typically block such initiatives.

To explain why armed actors reach political solutions, scholars note political willingness as the most important factor.<sup>7</sup> A useful analytical vantage point is provided by readiness theory, in which Pruitt considers each actor's readiness to negotiate. Readiness is comprised of motivation raised by a "dysfunctional" conflict that does not move it towards its goals, and optimism about actually reaching an agreement with an opponent that can commit their party to the settlement.<sup>8</sup> In ripeness theory, Zartman presents a similar argument, in which parties find themselves in a "mutually hurting stalemate", where the military route is no longer perceived as viable and where pursuing a political route (through negotiations) is.<sup>9</sup> Some further requirements are typically some unity within groups, strategic political goals, and the ability to garner sufficient internal support to sign and uphold agreements.

### Analysis: Elusive Peace in Mali

Several factors help explain why a political solution to the conflict in Mali remains elusive, and why the 2015 Bamako Agreement has had limited impact on the ground. In the following section, while drawing on the Colombian



REUTERS/JOHN VIZCAMO

Colombians in support of the nation's new peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) stand under a banner reading "For Peace" during a march in Bogotá (November 2016).





**Drug trafficking, a key conflict driver in Colombia, is addressed in the peace agreement.**

peace agreement when pertinent, the discussion touches on some of these factors in the framework of three questions: What to negotiate? With whom to negotiate? When to negotiate?

**What to Negotiate?**

Peace agreements that seek transformation of a conflict must somehow address the underlying issues. In Mali, the northern rebel groups’ key claims have been discussed in previous peace processes: the north’s special status, the decentralisation of power, the decreased presence and recomposition of the Mali Armed Forces, and more economic development funds.<sup>10</sup> The Bamako Agreement from 2015 touches on these issues, but remains vague on how to solve them.<sup>11</sup> Some stipulations have also been suggested to be counterproductive: while the creation of regional assemblies may be desired, the dynamics within the northern regions, including the many intergroup and intragroup tensions and conflicts, may instead become further intensified with the regional assemblies.<sup>12</sup> Further, key issues such as terrorism and trafficking were barely touched on, and the agreement does not address two key parallel conflicts: the ideological challenge related to Islamist groupings; and intergroup and intragroup conflicts within the northern groups.<sup>13</sup>

In Colombia, the FARC’s key grievances, agrarian reform and political participation were negotiated. Drug trafficking, a key conflict driver, is also addressed in the peace agreement.

While some key topics were discussed in Mali, the agreement is more goal-oriented than process-oriented, making the implementation phase an arena for debate, which has served to prolong the process. That the agreement was not concrete and did not address key issues, suggests that the underlying political willingness was low – not that the negotiation process itself was necessarily responsible. Also, in Colombia, similar solutions had been proposed earlier, but it was only at the particular time that there existed considerable political willingness to compromise. This conforms with Zartman’s suggestion that in the right moment, parties “grab on to proposals that usually have been in the air for a long time and that appear attractive only now”.<sup>14</sup> Still, this does not render the process itself less important. Indeed, several elements from the Colombian peace process may help peace processes elsewhere: extensive learning from previous peace processes throughout the world, and hearing victims and civil society’s voices during negotiations.

**IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE 2015 BAMAKO AGREEMENT, THE ARMED ACTORS FREQUENTLY CHANGED LEADERS, NAMES AND ALLIANCES**



**Key jihadist groups were not included in the Mali peace agreement process.**

### ***With Whom to Negotiate?***

Two elements in this context help to explain the limited impact of the 2015 Bamako Agreement. The first is the fragmentation and infighting of the groups present at the table. In the lead-up to the 2015 Bamako Agreement, the armed actors frequently changed leaders, names and alliances. Personal agendas and rivalries, along with repositioning ahead of the Algiers peace process itself, made negotiations particularly challenging, leading to vague stipulations at best. The northern populations' feeling of inclusion was limited – and, hence, their support for the agreement followed similarly.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in the case of northern Mali, authorities “lack the means to impose their will on subordinate groups”, hence complicating any implementation of a political solution.<sup>16</sup> Compared to the various groups in Mali, the FARC's hierarchical nature facilitated negotiations. Leaders were able to negotiate and commit to political compromises, and post-agreement has been kept largely intact.<sup>17</sup>

A second element is the exclusion of key actors. While several groups behind the banners of the Platform and the Coordination were included, key jihadist groups were not. These groups include the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Anser Dine al-Mourabitoun and the Macina Liberation

Front.<sup>18</sup> Including them would have provided recognition that few actors are willing to give, and would have complicated matters in numerous ways. However, excluding them entirely from any type of negotiation may not be desirable either. In Colombia, the smaller guerrilla group ELN was excluded, but did not sabotage the peace process – partly because it had some interest in talks succeeding and because it exerted little military impact on the ground compared with the excluded actors in Mali. In Mali, engaging in even indirect talks with jihadist groups remains controversial, and formal negotiations are – per now – unthinkable. Some suggest, however, that some form of communication or dialogue may be advantageous,<sup>19</sup> and that better understanding of how jihadist groups operate and what role they play in local communities may enable different types of responses at the same time.<sup>20</sup> As Rupesinghe argues, by removing the terrorist label from jihadist insurgents, one may recognise their “multifaceted identities – some as legitimate social/political actors and local protectors to communities”. This again “would open up more policy responses, including dialogue, and traditional, bottom-up conflict resolution”.<sup>21</sup>

In Colombia, as in Mali, armed groups have had various labels – including rebel, terrorist and criminal. Some groups

may have multiple identities, and their labels may also change. In Colombia in the 2000s, President Álvaro Uribe was determined to defeat the FARC – a group he labelled narcoterrorists, suggesting it had no political agenda – militarily. In Colombia, the entry of Juan Manuel Santos into the presidency in 2010 mattered partly because, while rejecting its methods, he accepted the FARC’s political nature. This is not to say that actors such as the Mali government and France, its former colonial power, should necessarily include previously excluded groups in talks. However, there are reasons to reconsider a primarily militaristic approach,<sup>22</sup> and to consider a greater role for dialogue and reconciliatory measures.

In Colombia, a nationwide peace agreement was negotiated with considerable success between armed actors. In Mali, however, where conflicts are highly localised, this type of peace negotiations may not be best. While Mali may need some overarching peace agreement signed with key rebel groups able and willing to uphold it, implicit or secret agreements or arrangements with other actors, such as jihadist groups, may also be needed. Moreover, as with President Juan Manuel Santos in Colombia, a peace process in Mali may be supported by a leader who simultaneously takes a strong stance against terrorist acts and delimits issues to be discussed, and who carefully opens up a space in which some

form of dialogue may take place. To do so, secret phases – key in the first two years of negotiations in Colombia – may also prove fruitful in both dealing with various rebel and jihadist groups. In any case, what is needed in Mali is stronger engagement with the locals, and to deal with both larger issues – such as the origins of the Tuareg rebellions – as well as many micro-conflicts that fuel war in both central and northern Mali.

### ***When to Negotiate?***

When to negotiate is a potentially unanswerable question. Many scholars suggest there are certain ways to analyse the military power relations between armed actors to determine when they would be incentivised to negotiate. However, reliable information is often in scarce supply, both about conflict dynamics and actors’ military capabilities and intentions. Zartman suggests the parties ought to look for “ripe moments”, when they are in a costly predicament and find that negotiations may be the best means to pursue goals. However, the importance of subjective perceptions complicates this. Indeed, leaders’ subjective perceptions of conflict dynamics and the interpretation of adversaries make it difficult to prescribe when the right time to negotiate is. On the ground in Mali, the incentives to implement the agreement seem few, and “parties are more interested in the



UN PHOTOMARCO DORMINO

**The Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) meets with representatives of the Platform and the local government during his visit in Anefis, in northern Mali (15 September 2015).**



**Colombia celebrates the International Day of Peace, in Bogotá, by lighting candles for the 2769 lives estimated to have been saved during the first 10 months of the ceasefire between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (September 2017).**

process than in peace itself”.<sup>23</sup> When a peace process is seen as a tactical measure, not a strategic one, it does not bode well for reaching durable solutions.

However, a “ripe moment” also requires parties to perceive the political route as a viable means to reach some of its goals. In Mali, the political route has historically been pursued, but parties have seldom had much confidence in it. This relates both to high mistrust between parties and towards peace agreements. Indeed, the Bamako Agreement signatories in 2015 were marginally willing to commit to political compromises. This is evident in the few concrete agreements reached, where most substantial issues were left to be decided during implementation. The key role of external actors to push through the Bamako Agreement

**IN COLOMBIA, ARMED ACTORS INITIATED TALKS THEMSELVES, AND PRAGMATICALLY INCLUDED THIRD PARTIES TO MAKE THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS SUSTAINABLE**

suggests that the parties themselves did not have sufficient willingness to do so. The opposite was the case in Colombia – the key armed actors themselves initiated the process and brought it forward, with only facilitation help from external actors.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than when to negotiate, more important questions may be what measures to use at what time. When the most appropriate time is, however, is difficult to specify. In Colombia, armed actors initiated talks themselves, and pragmatically included third parties to make the negotiation process sustainable. Through a combination of secret phases and confidential ones, they managed to establish sufficient belief in the other parties’ intentions before making it public.


However, adapting such lessons learnt to Mali is not straightforward: the contexts, conflict dynamics and actors are very different. For example, including fewer parties at the negotiation table in Mali may neither be feasible nor constructive. Also, the long and formal peace process in Colombia may not be feasible nor desired in Mali; other processes at the national and local level are necessary. The Anefis process is one example, where leaders of the

Coordination and the Platform themselves, and with minimal international presence, engaged in talks to reduce violence after the Bamako Agreement.<sup>25</sup> In general, continuous adaptation to a changing conflict context is crucial, including for the external actors and mediators.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Mali's search for peace requires its own measures at the right time. Moreover, the nature of each group must be taken into account – treating jihadist and various rebel groups similarly is politically infeasible and probably not constructive. Going forward, then, the expanded and pragmatic use of various types of dialogue and local consultation processes may constructively accompany military measures to end Mali's conflicts.

## Conclusion

This article sought to explain the limited impact of the 2015 Bamako Agreement in Mali through an analysis of what, with whom and when to negotiate peace. It has, moreover, compared it with the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia and thus illustrated the potential and limits of peace agreements.

The 2016 agreement in Colombia has shown some of the potential of peace agreements. It was a strenuous process that attempted to deal comprehensively with root causes and provide a framework for peace. While implementation is slow, and security concerns remain high, it has been a milestone that may possibly provide the starting point for a decades-long process of peacebuilding, development and reconciliation.

The 2015 Bamako Agreement, on the other hand, has shown some of the limitations of peace agreements. Compared to the 2016 Colombian peace agreement, it has not served to substantially transform the conflict. Rather, the conflict landscape remains fluid, where even signatories' support and efforts to implement it remains limited. While the agreement provides a reference point in the work to end conflicts in Mali, actors continue to clash and operate without much regard for it. Distrust towards each other, and low confidence in the prospects of a peace agreement serving their interests and actually being implemented, provides little hope. Under such circumstances, the impact of peace agreements remains limited. 

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# NATIONAL ELECTION RESPONSE GROUPS AS INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE: EXPERIENCES FROM WEST AFRICA

BY REUBEN J.B. LEWIS

## Introduction

It is now commonplace that every election in any country across Africa is a defining moment for statebuilding or a potential source of conflict – and for countries coming out of civil war, the stakes are even higher. Therefore, systems and structures must be operationalised as a catalyst to prevent or avert political violence in times of elections. In West Africa, National Elections Response Groups (NERGs) are being developed as response structures to mitigate election-related

conflict, and their operationalisation is proving to be successful in a number of countries that have held elections – including, most recently, in Sierra Leone. NERGs are designed as infrastructures for peace, and serve as platforms for peaceful dialogue and shuttle diplomacy with political

**Above: West African countries have experienced a significant number of election-related conflicts, many of which led to large-scale violence.**



Map No. 4533 UNITED NATIONS  
October 2014

Department of Field Support  
Cartographic Section

parties during national elections. NERGs also respond to incidences of harassment, intimidation and violence; work towards keeping communities calm and organised; and engage with all political groups to keep the peace. This article discusses the development and operationalisation of NERGs as an infrastructure for peace during recent elections in some West African countries.

**HOWEVER, THERE ARE REPORTS OF INCIDENTS OF HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION, OR SMALL-SCALE CLASHES BETWEEN OPPOSING POLITICAL GROUPS, IN ALMOST ALL ELECTIONS THAT TAKE PLACE IN THE SUBREGION**

**Elections and Violence in West Africa**

West African countries have seen a fair share of election-related conflicts, some of which led to large-scale violence – such as in Nigeria in 2007, Guinea in 2010 and

Senegal in 2012 – and others that led to civil war – for example, in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010–2011. Other countries that have been embroiled in electoral violence in the subregion include Togo, during its presidential elections in 2005; Ghana in 2012; and, most recently, presidential elections in The Gambia in 2016.<sup>1</sup> These cases are notable for the scale of violence perpetuated by political opponents during the election cycle. However, there are reports of incidences of harassment and intimidation, or small-scale clashes between opposing political groups, in almost all elections that take place in the subregion.

Elections, rather than being a vehicle for peaceful democratic transitions, have also become a conflict-triggering factor as a result of deep divisions among various social and political groups that manifest in open confrontation and violence – including verbal, physical, psychological, structural and institutional violence – during periods of elections. There is always some act of violence at any given point before or during general elections, as well as after results have been announced. Added to this, deficiencies in the political, social and economic spaces



**Overstaying in power by the late president Lansana Conté of Guinea created political instability in the country, further fuelling conflict in the Mano River Basin throughout the 1990s.**

of communities in West Africa represent existential risk factors that have the potential to generate conflict during election cycles.

One of the major challenges for peaceful democratic transition of governments in the subregion – and even across other countries in Africa – has been the desire of incumbent leaders to hold on to political office.<sup>2</sup> In pursuing this agenda, they suppress and oppress opposition groups, kill and exile political opponents and undertake unconstitutional actions

**THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICA STATES (ECOWAS), SERVING AS THE SUBREGION'S INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODY, HAS WORKED ON NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND OPERATIONALISED POLICIES WITH MEMBER STATES TOWARDS THE PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION OF GOVERNMENTS**

that generate grievances and frustrations, which inevitably lead to violent confrontations during elections. A one-party system of government was the catalyst for the civil war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. Overstaying in power by the late president Lansana Conté of Guinea created political instability in the country, further fuelling conflict in the Mano River Basin throughout the 1990s. More recently, attempts were made by the long-term president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, to run for a third term in 2014, but he was unsuccessful after huge demonstrations during elections. Similar attempts were made in 2009 by President Mamadou Tandja of Niger to change the constitution and run for a third term. He was later ousted. Nigeria has attempted to remove presidential term limits and failed. Similar cases were evident in The Gambia and Togo.

The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), serving as the subregion's intergovernmental body, has worked on normative frameworks and operationalised policies with member states towards the peaceful democratic transition of governments. In certain instances, ECOWAS pursued diplomatic means to bring an





**The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) provides technical and financial assistance to all member states during their election cycle.**

end to electoral standoffs in some countries. The most recent case was the 2016 election in The Gambia. In December 2001, ECOWAS member states adopted the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. This protocol requires member states to take stronger measures that strengthen constitutional legitimacy for better democratic practices and presents a stronger case against unconstitutional accession to power, thereby establishing a new agenda for democratic governance based on the conduct of peaceful and credible elections that are free, fair and transparent.<sup>3</sup>

In 2006, ECOWAS established an Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) to provide technical and financial assistance to all member states during their election cycle. During elections in each member state, the ECOWAS Commission undertakes pre-election consultations with governments, political parties, election management bodies and other key stakeholders to assess the country's preparedness, as well as to provide needed technical support to scale up effective conduct of the election. On election day, ECOWAS observers are deployed, working with all political groups and the election management structures to ensure a peaceful outcome of the election process. One such structure that has emerged in recent years is the NERG.

### **Operationalisation of National Election Response Groups in West Africa**

A NERG comprises a group of institutions that converge to form a collaborative platform, tasked with the responsibility of responding to potential or existential threats of violence during the election cycle in a given state. It involves the coming together of state and non-state institutions and other relevant actors, including national civil society structures, to respond to potential or actual threats of violence during the organising and conduct of a general election. The group is usually inclusive of religious and traditional leaders, representatives of major civil society institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the security apparatus, international organisations working on election-related issues, the government and political groups.

A NERG is designed as a platform for collective action in responding to incidences that may create tensions and violence during and after election day. The idea of NERGs was developed by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), based in Accra, Ghana, as part of its thematic project on mitigating electoral violence through national early warning systems.<sup>4</sup>

A NERG does not operate in a vacuum. Before institutions are identified and converge to begin the process

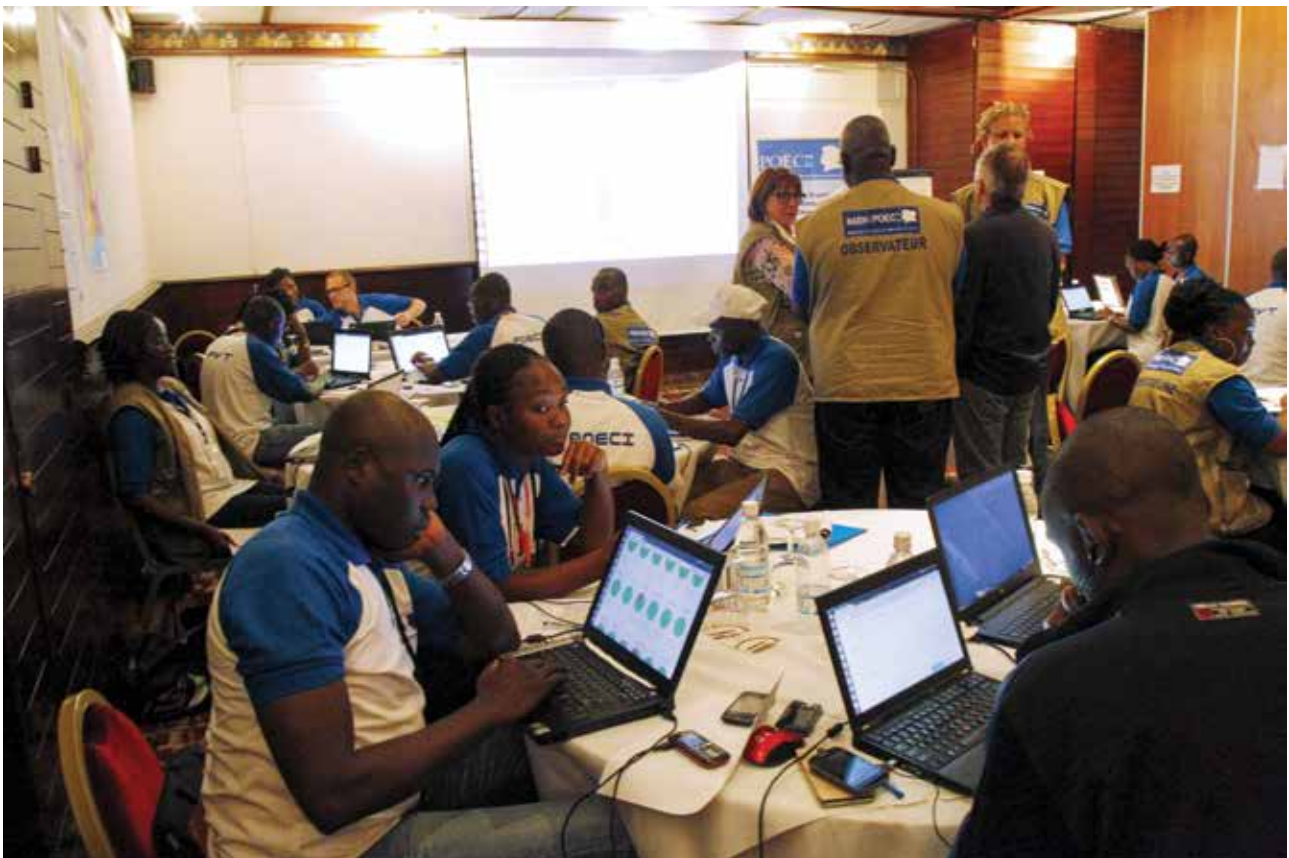
of mitigating possible election violence, election situation rooms (ESRs) are operationalised. An ESR includes monitors and observers, who report election-related incidences in communities. This information is collected and collated by an information-gathering team, who cross-check and authenticate the reports from observers. These reports are then evaluated by a group of analysts responsible for drafting various scenarios of outcomes related to the incidents reported and making recommendations on immediate steps to resolve the incidents peacefully. These recommendations are passed on to the NERG, to use its vast network of national and local institutions to respond to such incidents in a manner that will lead to political compromise and resolution.

In finding solutions, a NERG brings all its resources to bear. It meets political parties; alerts the police on security matters; requests information and clarification from the election management bodies geared towards preventing any form of electoral malpractice; requests the presence of heads of political parties to find solutions to election-related grievances; and engages in consultations with key international observer missions, such as the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS mission, in the management of

election-related incidences. Consultation, dialogue and mediation are some of the key conflict-handling mechanisms employed by a NERG in its pursuit of maintaining peace during elections.

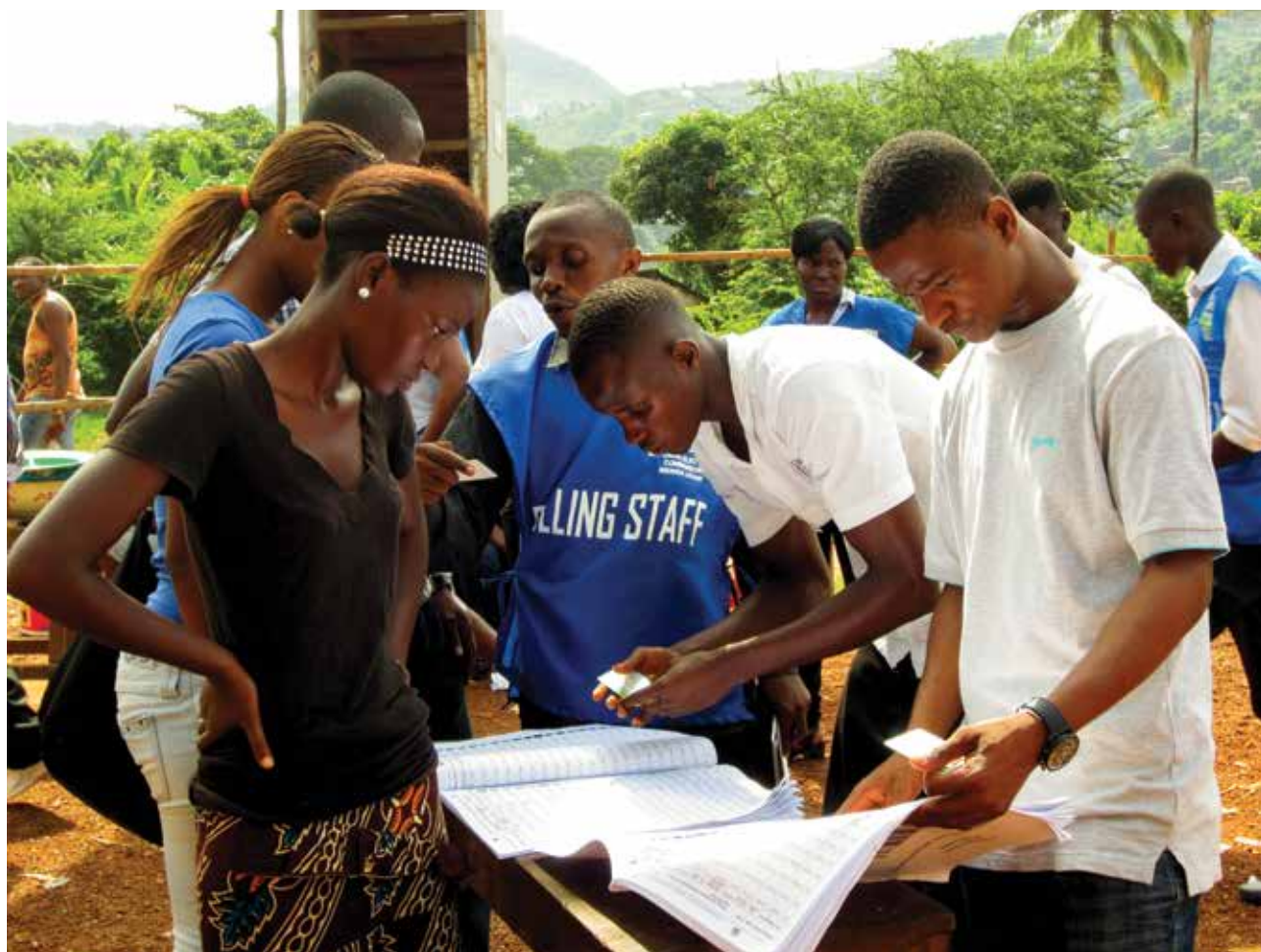
### **The National Election Response Group in Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone conducted four sets of elections in March 2018. These included presidential, parliamentary, mayoral and local council elections. This was also the first major election cycle that was fully funded by the Government of Sierra Leone with no major donor support since the start of its post-conflict democratisation process in 2002. The pre-election period was overshadowed by various controversial issues. The first issue was a constitutional review process, wherein an attempt was made to increase the presidential term limit – but this was quickly rejected by the review committee. In addition, there were reports of discrepancies over constituency demarcations a few months before the elections. The main opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), complained that the demarcation process was done in favour of the incumbent government of the All People's Congress Party (APC).



REUTERS/LUC GNAGO

**A National Election Response Group is operationalised through a situation room, with analysts and observers as part of its structure.**



**Sierra Leone conducted four sets of elections in March 2018. These included presidential, parliamentary, mayoral and local council elections.**

Also, a few months before the elections, the incumbent government interpreted a law in the constitution that prevents people with dual citizenship from holding political office. This includes contesting the presidency and holding ministerial and parliamentary positions. This law was brought to the fore to prevent some candidates from contesting the elections. This heightened political tensions and led to incidents of violent confrontation among supporters of the major political parties. In addition, divisive political campaigns based on ethnicity and regionalism was a cause for concern.

After mapping out the potential hotspots for electoral violence, WANEP and its civil society partners established a NERG and a District Election Response Group (DERG). In collaboration with the National Election Watch (NEW) of Sierra Leone, WANEP trained and deployed 500 accredited observers in prioritised risk areas across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone. The NERG in Sierra Leone is composed of civil society organisations (CSOs), government and non-governmental institutions, faith-based groups, security agencies, women and youth groups, and the media.

On election day, the NERG, with the support of observers and analysts within the ESR, deliberated and consulted with all political parties, the security apparatus and the National Electoral Commission, to respond to incidences of electoral violence. It also engaged in consultations with local communities to discuss their concerns as a way of mitigating violent confrontations between opposing groups. The election process concluded peacefully, with few incidences of violence, and with the election of Julius Maada Bio of the SLPP as the new president.<sup>5</sup>

**THE NERG IN SIERRA LEONE IS COMPOSED OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS), GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS, FAITH-BASED GROUPS, SECURITY AGENCIES, WOMEN AND YOUTH GROUPS, AND THE MEDIA**

### **Liberia Elections Early Warning and Response Group**

The election process in Liberia in October and December 2017 had its fair share of challenges. The first round of elections took place on 10 October 2017. The ruling Unity Party, led by incumbent vice president, Joseph Boakai, and the opposition Coalition for Democratic Change, led by George Opong Weah, failed to gain an outright majority, leading to a run-off election. However, on 6 November 2017, a day before the run-off election was to be held, the Supreme Court of Liberia ruled that the election should not go ahead until allegations of voter fraud and irregularities made by the third-placed Liberty Party were addressed. The Liberty Party requested a rerun of the first vote, but was dismissed by the court.<sup>6</sup> This heightened political tensions, with incidences of violent confrontations between supporters of the major

**LEEWARG HAD A SIMILAR STRUCTURE TO THE NERG IN SIERRA LEONE, WITH ACTORS DRAWN FROM FAITH-BASED GROUPS, SECURITY AGENCIES, MAJOR CSOS AND THE MEDIA**

political parties. After the announcement of a new date (26 December 2017) for the run-off election, WANEP – in collaboration with the government, civil society partners and the ECOWAS commission – operationalised the Liberia Elections Early Warning and Response Group (LEEWARG).

LEEWARG had a similar structure to the NERG in Sierra Leone, with actors drawn from faith-based groups, security agencies, major CSOs and the media. It was operationalised with an ESR stationed at the ECOWAS Commission office in Monrovia, and deployed 43 monitors – in addition to other accredited observers – in all 17 electoral districts across the 15 counties of Liberia. LEEWARG had representatives from the ECOWAS Commission, AU observer mission, National Traditional Council, National Civil Society Council of Liberia, Office of the Peace Ambassador of Liberia, Liberia Peacebuilding Office, the Elections Coordinating Committee, the National Security Council Secretariat, the National Center for the Coordination of Response Mechanisms and the Inter-religious Council of Liberia. All these institutions were part of an inclusive process that pursued preventive diplomacy, where incidences were reported of perceived or active confrontations between supporters of the major political parties.<sup>7</sup>



REUTERS/LUC GNAGO

**People wait to vote at a polling station in Kibi, in the eastern region of Ghana (7 December 2016).**



**An election situation room includes monitors and observers who report election-related incidences in communities.**

**National Elections Early Warning and Response Group in Ghana**

On 26 July 2016, almost six months before the general election was conducted in Ghana, a National Elections Early Warning and Response Group (NEEWARG) was launched in Accra by WANEP, in partnership with the National Peace Council (NPC) of Ghana, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme. Other institutional partnerships that formed the NEEWARG were Ghana’s Commission for

Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre, Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, and the Transform Ghana Network.

In operationalising the NEEWARG, an ESR was established in Accra, whilst satellite situation rooms were located in Kumasi to cover the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions and Tamale to cover the Northern, Upper-East and Upper-West regions of Ghana. From 6 to 10 December 2016, 750 accredited local observers were deployed in prioritised risk areas across Ghana’s 10 regions, whilst 75 personnel formed part of the operational team of the NEEWARG-ESR.<sup>8</sup>

The eminent persons group, led by the chairperson of the National Peace Council of Ghana, undertook shuttle diplomacy, reaching out to all political parties to consult and dialogue with them and their supporters to address incidences of irregularities in the voting process, as well as incidences of political tensions. A good example was a case in Kumasi, where the situation room worked with the Regional Peace Council in Brong Ahafo to calm tensions over the postponement of voting in Jaman North.<sup>9</sup>

THE EMINENT PERSONS GROUP, LED BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL OF GHANA, UNDERTOOK SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY, REACHING OUT TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO CONSULT AND DIALOGUE WITH THEM AND THEIR SUPPORTERS TO ADDRESS INCIDENCES OF IRREGULARITIES IN THE VOTING PROCESS, AS WELL AS INCIDENCES OF POLITICAL TENSIONS

**National Election Response Groups as Infrastructures for Peace**

Infrastructure for peace (I4P) is a fairly new concept in the domain of peace research and in the practice of

peacebuilding. It is an evolving concept that is slowly gaining wider currency. John Paul Lederach first introduced the concept in the 1990s in his pioneering work, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. He posits that an organised conflict transformation process must consist of a functional network of different sets of local and national actors, who forge collaborative interaction geared towards tackling the threat of conflicts and use their platform to constructively build peace in society.<sup>10</sup>

I4P is an organised system of interaction among and between institutions or groups forging ties of cooperation, and takes on activities and programmes that are responsive to crisis situations at its latent stage, during its escalation point and during its transformation to peaceful social relations. I4Ps do not only come about through institutional interaction, but can be developed by means of policies and institutional norms, rules and regulations that shape the actions and inactions of people, and through groups and communities that foster peaceful social relations in society.<sup>11</sup>

A NERG as an I4P is a collaborative approach in mitigating existential risk factors in times of elections, such as political tensions and confrontations between groups of major political parties, incidences of violence and complaints of voting irregularities on election day. Similarly, a NERG is a cooperative and inclusive process that brings together a broad range of actors and institutions to mitigate violence during election cycles to keep the peace.<sup>12</sup> Like I4P, a NERG is a structure that coordinates and supports constructive problem-solving processes through dialogue, consultations and shuttle diplomacy, linking local and national actors at all levels to reach common ground in responding to incidences that have the potential to disrupt the peaceful conduct of elections in any given state.

A NERG comprises of institutions as actors, undertakes dialogue and shuttle diplomacy as its method of engagement, and is operationalised through a situation room, with analysts and observers as part of its structure. It has a central body that takes a full leadership role, connecting national and local partners in peaceful dialogue during elections. A NERG also works with all political parties, the voting population, security agencies, the government and non-governmental institutions to keep the peace in times of elections.

### Concluding Remarks

Beyond the three country cases that have been discussed, NERGs have also been established in Niger and Burkina Faso, and plans are ongoing for their establishment in Nigeria and The Gambia for the monitoring and mitigation of election-related conflicts during the next election cycle

in these countries. With their successful operationalisation in West Africa, NERGs represent an inclusive, holistic, local mechanism that can be applied to mitigate violence in the conduct of elections across other regional subsystems in Africa. **A**

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# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN IN DARFUR THROUGH FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES

BY ZURAB ELZAROV



## Overview

The protracted conflict since 2003 in Darfur, Sudan, has resulted in massive loss of human lives and assets, disrupted livelihoods and led to severe food insecurity in some areas. Some 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) are registered as living in camps. For unregistered IDPs – that is, displaced people living in rural settlements and urban areas – estimates vary considerably, especially as there is no systematic registration of displacement outside of camps.<sup>1</sup> IDPs and their host communities have limited livelihood options and often rely on unsustainable coping strategies, such as unmanaged cutting of trees and shrubs for fuelwood and charcoal production. This places an additional burden on Darfur's fragile ecosystem and related livelihoods.<sup>2</sup>

Climate change in Darfur has disrupted people's lives by curtailing the availability of resources, thereby spurring greater competition and conflict. Confronted with the consequences of a brutal war, many people have embraced coping strategies – such as clearing forests to power the kilns for fire bricks – that have accelerated the impact of climate change and indirectly perpetuated a root cause of the conflict. Reversing this damage will be essential to Darfur's sustainability in the longer term. The United Nations can offer significant support for this process by promoting

**Above: People in Darfur have been clearing forests to power the kilns for fire bricks.**



better environmental management and empowering communities to confront climate-related vulnerability.<sup>3</sup>

Environmental degradation in Darfur has intensified in recent years, undermining the region's future prospects. This degradation is primarily driven by two forces: climate change, and human impact on the environment. The deleterious effects of climate change are seriously compounded by the impact of humans on the environment. To some extent, this impact is the predictable result of rapid population growth, as greater numbers of people consume more resources. The ecosystem in Darfur, however, is particularly ill-equipped to absorb such growth in the absence of significant adaptations. Without positive changes, human impact will combine with climate change to facilitate the collapse of rural livelihoods and place untenable pressure on urban areas.

Environmental concerns have often been at the root of conflict in the region as people, especially farmers and pastoralists, clash over access to natural resources. But the scale of recent degradation has eclipsed previous shortages, severely destabilising a fragile ecosystem that for generations had balanced the needs of diverse livelihoods. The implications include deteriorations in the quality of

life – such as access to water or forestry resources – as well as potentially irreversible damage to livelihoods and the likelihood of nearly constant conflict. Reversing this decline is critical to moving Darfur past the current crisis and ensuring its longer-term viability.

## WITHOUT POSITIVE CHANGES, HUMAN IMPACT WILL COMBINE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE TO FACILITATE THE COLLAPSE OF RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND PLACE UNTENABLE PRESSURE ON URBAN AREAS

Human impact on the environment is most visible in the area of deforestation, which constitutes a substantial threat. Some forests around major cities have disappeared entirely. Darfur has the last remaining substantial forest cover in northern Sudan. These forests face serious threats from agriculture, population growth and the effects of conflict. Before the war broke out, tree cover in Darfur was already declining, with forests contracting at an average annual rate



of over 1% between 1973 and 2006.<sup>4</sup> Overall, Sudan has lost more forest cover than any other African country, and Darfur is clearly a major contributor to this trend. In fact, some forests around cities such as Nyala and El Geneina have disappeared entirely.

The biggest culprit driving deforestation is the enormous demand for construction and firewood. Domestic firewood needs have resulted in highly unsustainable deforestation rates. In the Kalma IDP camp near Nyala, for example, IDPs could once find adequate firewood within 15 kilometres of the camp. Today, they must travel 75 kilometres for the same purpose, or rely on firewood merchants who travel to them.<sup>5</sup>

In rural areas, pastoralists and farmers have also played a role in fuelling deforestation. For example, farmers have often cleared forests to claim new land for cultivation, or have supplemented their income by selling firewood or charcoal. Similar pressures on pastoralists have led to the same results, and many pastoralists take advantage of nomadic lifestyles to transport wood to urban areas, where it is in short supply.

Urbanisation, population growth and the effects of climate change have increased pressure on Darfur's forests. But the conflict has intensified the toll on Darfur's trees at the precise moment that thousands of families need new

sources of income. Left unchecked, deforestation will likely intensify, and this calls for better forestry management.

#### **UNAMID's Work in Darfur**

The United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was established on 31 July 2007 with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1769.<sup>6</sup> UNAMID has the protection of civilians as its core mandate, and is also tasked with contributing to security for humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, contributing to the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, and monitoring and reporting on the situation along the borders with Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR).

**OVERALL, SUDAN HAS LOST MORE FOREST COVER THAN ANY OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRY, AND DARFUR IS CLEARLY A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THIS TREND**



OXFAM/AMIEE BROWN

**Farmers often clear forests to claim new land for cultivation, and supplement their income by selling firewood or charcoal.**



**As women and girls walk distances to collect firewood they are at significant risk for sexual and gender-based violence.**

In addition, based on the dire humanitarian situation in Darfur, UNAMID has been also implementing quick impact projects (QIPs)<sup>7</sup> and community-based labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) in the areas of water and sanitation, education, health, rule of law and livelihoods. Since 2007, UNAMID has implemented in all Darfur states over 500 QIPs, worth over US\$15 million, in the areas mentioned above.<sup>8</sup> A number of these projects have addressed the unsustainable exploitation of forest resources; increased conflict over scarce forest and tree resources; exposure of women and girls to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) while collecting fuelwood; the high cost of fuelwood and charcoal on the markets, if purchased, especially when used inefficiently; and health and safety risks associated with cooking on traditional three-stone fires.

**BECAUSE THIS OLD STOVE DESIGN DOES NOT SHIELD THE FIRE FROM BREEZES, THE FLAMES BURN STRONGLY, QUICKLY CONSUMING FIREWOOD AND SENDING UP SPARKS THAT CAN SET FIRE TO HOMES MADE OF WOOD, BAMBOO AND STRAW**

### **Implementation of Fuel-efficient Stoves in Darfur by UNAMID**

More than two billion poor people across the developing world depend on wood energy for cooking and/or heating.<sup>9</sup> In Darfur, firewood is by far the predominant source of household energy, especially in rural areas. Traditionally, people in Darfur living in villages are accustomed to having their meals cooked over the open fires of three-stone ovens, which are constructed as their name suggests: a pot is placed over three adjacent stones, with the fire burning below. Because this old stove design does not shield the fire from breezes, the flames burn strongly, quickly consuming firewood and sending up sparks that can set fire to homes made of wood, bamboo and straw.

In addition, because the firewood is consumed quickly in the old stoves, those cooking with them must collect wood regularly, making long trips to forested areas and putting themselves at risk in the process. Beyond the risks to property and people, open-fire stoves have broader environmental implications. The heavy reliance on firewood as a source of cooking has jeopardised Darfur's fragile environment, leading to deforestation and erosion.

In Darfur, the task of firewood collection falls to women. Reports of violent assault against women collecting firewood<sup>10</sup> have prompted UNAMID to devise innovative

solutions for protecting both women and the environment in Darfur. In May–October 2017, the mission’s Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison (PoC/HL) Section developed and implemented a project aimed at providing training to 800 rural and IDP women on the production of fuel-efficient stoves in one of the most conflict-sensitive areas in Darfur: Sortony, North Darfur.

These fuel-efficient stoves are specifically designed to reduce fuel consumption and provide a substitute for the traditional three-stone fire. They can be made of mud, clay or metal, and they can use different types of fuels, such as fuelwood, charcoal, briquettes, biofuels, liquefied petroleum gas or kerosene. In addition, they reduce the exposure of women and girls to CRSV and SGBV, since they collect fuelwood less often. Since fuel-efficient stoves can be made fairly easily from local materials, and since they consume less wood than their old-style counterparts, their popularity is increasing. According to the Sudanese National Forests Corporation, the amount of firewood saved by using fuel-efficient stoves in comparison to traditional open-fire stoves is more than 50%.<sup>11</sup>

## THESE FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO REDUCE FUEL CONSUMPTION AND PROVIDE A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE TRADITIONAL THREE-STONE FIRE

There is one very important aspect of general insecurity in many – if not all – areas where IDPs have settled. In some situations, danger lies just outside the camp limits. Armed persons from the groups that were responsible for forcing people to leave their homes in the first instance are present in the vicinity of the camps, creating fear and anxiety among the camp inhabitants. In spite of this danger, people are in desperate need of wood to cook their food. Women and girls – who are the traditional fuelwood gatherers – thus venture out of the camps and risk being attacked and abused by armed men.<sup>12</sup>

Fuel-efficient stoves are widely known for their potential to reduce the consumption of wood (or charcoal), if used



UN PHOTO/ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

**A woman fires a fuel-efficient stove near Tawila, North Darfur.**



**Reports of violent assaults against women collecting firewood have prompted UNAMID to take action across Darfur by implementing patrols to watch over the women as they work.**

correctly and consistently. Introduction of these stoves to camps or urban settlements can therefore be expected to reduce the number of times a person needs to collect wood for household cooking – which, in turn, should directly reduce the probability of exposure to CRSV and SGBV attacks. Therefore, a fuel-efficient stove programme with a stated objective of “protection of women from CRSV/SGBV” will not seek to measure the occurrences of CRSV/SGBV incidences, but will focus on reducing the frequency of collection trips outside of a camp and thus the probability of exposure to attacks and violence.

“I used to go out at least four times a month to forage for firewood,” explains Fatima Ibrahim, a 37-year-old West Darfur woman.<sup>13</sup> Fatima describes that she was accustomed to walking long hours across the semi-arid land to get a bundle of firewood sufficient to cook for seven days. During

**FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES REDUCE FUEL CONSUMPTION PER MEAL AND CUT SMOKE EMISSIONS FROM THE TRADITIONAL FIRES USED INSIDE POORLY VENTILATED DWELLINGS**

these walks, she says, she had to come to terms with the potential security risks that she and other women faced while away from the village. Reports of violent assaults against women collecting firewood have prompted UNAMID to take action across Darfur by implementing patrols to watch over the women as they work. In addition to implementing these patrols, UNAMID has been promoting the fuel-efficient stoves to help reduce the need for women to travel outside their villages so frequently.

#### **Impact**

While the new stoves might be simple to construct, the potential impact of their design is far from trivial. Cooking fires emit greenhouse gases laced with sunlight-absorbing black carbon, which scientists say is the second-greatest contributor to climate change. In addition, exposure to cooking smoke leads to lower birth weights, childhood pneumonia and several other chronic illnesses.<sup>14</sup>

Fuel-efficient stoves reduce fuel consumption per meal and cut smoke emissions from the traditional fires used inside poorly ventilated dwellings. In addition, the materials used to make the mud stoves are available locally, helping to improve levels of replicability and cost-efficiency of the practice. Local production and sales of fuel-efficient stoves

also become an income-generating activity for women, while decreasing the risks of gender-based violence they face when collecting fuelwood.

An evaluation of fuel-efficient stoves in Darfur confirmed that improved mud stoves have a beneficial impact in terms of enhancing livelihoods, nutrition and health, forest conservation and environmental protection, fighting climate change by reducing carbon emission, and reducing SGBV. Using fuel-efficient stoves increases the resilience of the livelihoods of groups at risk, especially for most vulnerable women and IDPs living in camps. Improved mud stoves are now widely used and training continues to be delivered by partners and local trainers, providing a durable solution in a protracted crisis situation.<sup>15</sup>

Another aspect of the fuel-efficient stoves is designed to increase the income of Darfuri households and reduce people's dependence on humanitarian assistance. The projects implemented by UNAMID have allowed the beneficiaries – women, men and youth – to learn techniques to make fuel-efficient stoves. While a single household can save an average of 3.99 Sudanese pounds per day on firewood by using the new stoves, the project beneficiaries can also earn an income of 130 Sudanese pounds each month by making and selling the stoves.

The impact of the fuel-efficient stove project cannot be underestimated. To summarise:

1. Up to 60% of fuelwood traditionally consumed by the commonly used three-stone fire is saved due to use of fuel-efficient stoves.<sup>16</sup>
2. Project beneficiaries are trained to produce fuel-efficient stoves using easily accessible, low-cost local materials, and they generate additional income by making and selling the stoves.
3. A single household saves an average of 3.99 Sudanese pounds per day on firewood by using the new stoves.
4. Exposure to SGBV faced by women and girls is reduced, since they collect fuelwood less often.
5. Women and children's health is better protected from the smoke emissions of traditional stoves.
6. Containment of cooking fires, as a result of using fuel-efficient stoves, reduces safety risks.
7. Vegetation cover is improved, due to tree planting and reduced fuelwood extraction.

### Way Forward

Deforestation poses an enormous threat to Darfur, and maladaptive livelihood strategies and ongoing conflict displacements have dramatically accelerated the toll on



PHOTO CREDIT: MAHA SHERIFF, UNAMID

**Internally displaced women are trained to make fuel-efficient stoves as part of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) - sponsored quick impact project in Sortony, North Darfur State.**

## FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES HAVE PROVED TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SAVING FORESTS AND IMPROVING WOMEN'S SAFETY AND SECURITY IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES AND POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Darfur's trees. Most Darfuris rely on firewood or charcoal to meet their energy needs, leading to untenable rates of deforestation. To counteract this effect, UNAMID continues to promote alternative technologies that can attenuate the impact of these needs on natural resources through promoting the use of fuel-efficient stoves in Darfur.

Fuel-efficient stoves have been successfully adopted by the project beneficiaries. The life span of the improved mud stove is between six and 36 months. Fuel-efficient stoves clearly have a major role to play in protecting the environment and its deforestation. To this end, UNAMID and its partners should continue to promote the use of fuel-efficient stoves in the region.

In addition, the successful experience of UNAMID could be easily replicated by other peacekeeping missions facing environmental and other challenges in their areas of operation.<sup>17</sup> Replicability and upscaling can be further ensured through lessons learnt:

1. Pursue awareness-raising among decision-makers and communities on the benefits of fuel-efficient stoves.
2. Clarify the link between household energy consumption, impacts on surrounding forests and environment and the need for rational use of available resources to meet the demand of both the current population and future generations.
3. Provide flexible stove designs that can be adjusted to local conditions, based on consultations with community stakeholders – especially women, who are the main users.
4. Create a core training team (if possible, within the community) to monitor, report and share the results with stakeholders and researchers.
5. Identify focal points that communities can consult on the fabrication and use of fuel-efficient stoves in each location.

Fuel-efficient stoves have proved to play an important role in saving forests and improving women's safety and security in humanitarian crises and post-conflict situations. However, such initiatives cannot be sustainable in the long term if they are not coupled with nationally owned environmental protection strategies and effective rule of law. **A**

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# TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE KOM EXPERIENCE

BY JUDE NSOM WAINDIM



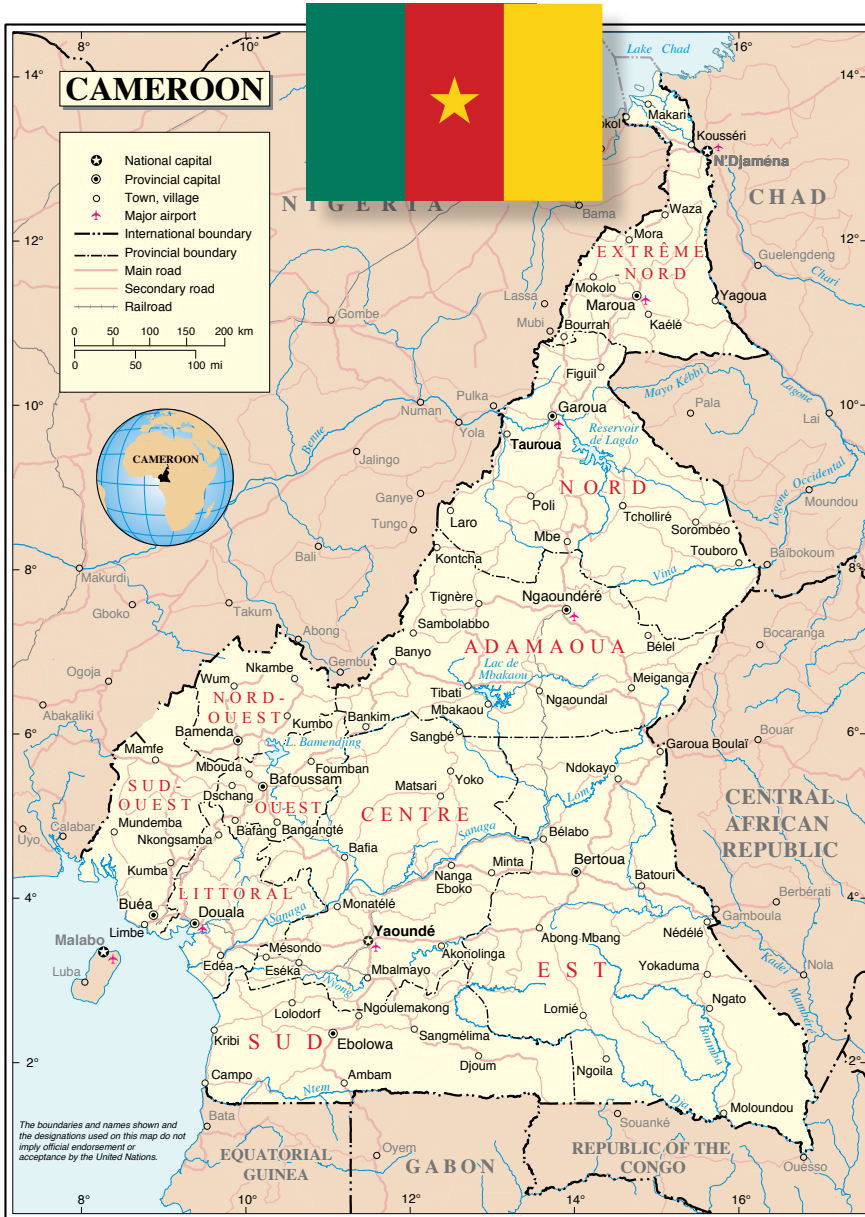
## Introduction

Long before Africa was colonised, and way beyond the advent of slave trade, African societies had institutional mechanisms as well as cultural sources to uphold the values of peace, tolerance, solidarity and respect for, and of, one another. These structures were responsible for “peace education, confidence-building, peacemaking, peacebuilding, conflict monitoring, conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution”.<sup>1</sup> If these mechanisms were effective in handling and managing conflicts among the people, it was largely because they reflected the sociopolitical orientation of the African people, addressing all the social, political and economic conflicts among a people who lived a communal way of life. Thus, it was customary as well as common currency to happen upon people sitting down informally to discuss and agree on important issues.

The traditional African system of government was open and inclusive, where all people could participate in the decision-making process. While the West practised majoritarian, or representative democracy Africans practised participatory democracy, where decisions were taken by consensus at village meetings, “variously called *asetena kese* by the Ashanti, *ama-ala* by the Igbo, *guurti* by the Somali, *dare* by the Shona, *ndaba* by the Zulu or *kgotla* by the Tswana.”<sup>2</sup>

However, with slave trade and colonisation, these indigenous institutions were largely weakened and even destroyed in many societies, especially as the colonial

**Above: In traditional African societies people lived a communal way of life and would sit down informally to discuss and agree on important issues.**



Map No. 4227.1 Rev.2 UNITED NATIONS Department of Field Support  
 November 2017 Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

masters introduced law courts, which came to pronounce judgments rather than resolve conflicts according to the African administration of justice. Of course, in this new legal system, the police took up cases that, hitherto, were handled through traditional amicable settlements, with emphasis on reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony, rather than on punishment of the conflicting parties.

African traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention, management and resolution were largely effective and respected, and their decisions were binding on all parties, mainly because “the identity of an individual is linked to that of his or her family and these families are formed by the acceptance of marriage alliances”<sup>3</sup>. Here, the importance of the family in the conflict management process was highlighted, as well as the role of the chiefs, elders, family

heads and others, to anticipate and resolve conflicts.

The major sources of conflict in Africa were land, chieftaincy, personal relationship issues, family property, honour, murder or poisoning, and matrimonial fall-outs. In resolving these kinds of conflicts, the principles of equity and justice, which is entrenched in African customs and traditions, were upheld.

This article highlights the traditional institutions and methods of conflict resolution in the Kom community of Cameroon.

**The Kom Experience: Traditional Institutions**

The Kom people are one of the principal ethnic groups of the North-West Region of Cameroon – also known as the Bamenda Grassfields<sup>4</sup> – where traditional government institutions are very important. The Kom kingdom, the second largest after Nso, is situated in the western central highlands of the Bamenda Grassfields, and occupies an area of about 280 square miles at an average altitude of about 5000 feet above sea level. The capital of the Kom people is Laikom,<sup>5</sup> which perches on a spur higher than 6000 feet above sea level and is the seat of the ruler, the Paramount Fon, and his advisors, the *kwifoyn*, who continue to be the most respected leaders of the land.

Traditional institutions, sites and objects play “a quasi-religious role” in the arbitration, mediation, conciliation and reconciliation of conflicts at a micro and macro level in Kom society. The Kom geographical location, as well as its social and political history, also play a great role in conflict resolution.

**THE KOM PEOPLE ARE ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL ETHNIC GROUPS OF THE NORTH-WEST REGION OF CAMEROON – ALSO KNOWN AS THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS – WHERE TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT**





**The Fon is the ruler and respected leader of the Kom people.**

### ***The Kwifoyn***

This is a highly secretive and hierarchical society, and membership of its inner circles is sharply restricted. The authority of this society is of an impersonal kind, and its agents are not held to account by the populace. As the executive body of the Kom traditional government, it is an instrument of the Fon's secular authority and, short of the personal intervention of the Fon, its decisions are not liable to appeal. Messages from the Fon are communicated to the Kom people through this institution, which is endowed with advisory, judicial and ritual functions. Its role in the Kom judicial system is that of arbitration, but not without the guidance of the Fon.

### ***The Fon***

As an institution, the Fon is regarded with infinite respect and surrounded with carefully guarded secrecy. From his religious position, sitting on the Kom ancestral chair and maintaining a nexus between his people and the ancestral spirits, he plays an instrumental role in the

resolution of conflicts: that of chief priest and custodian of all land. This is particularly so because he is considered to be an embodiment of the beliefs, hopes, fears and aspirations of his people. Thus, his judicial functions include reconciling human and spiritual forces.

### ***Itwi: The Fon's Traditional Court of Law***

In pre-colonial African societies, crime was an act that offended the strong and definite dispositions of the collective consciousness, and so was considered harmful to the gods. This collective consciousness was enshrined in the laws of public and private crimes. Such transgressions, which were tried by the Fon's court of law, *itwi*, included

**AS AN INSTITUTION, THE FON IS  
REGARDED WITH INFINITE RESPECT  
AND SURROUNDED WITH CAREFULLY  
GUARDED SECRECY**

certain forms of abuse, incest, witchcraft and treason. It must be emphasised here that in the *itwi*, the Fon is part of the council, and not the council itself; thus, he sits with his council of elders and notables to judge the category of cases that are referred therein.

### **The Ntul Shrine**

With an all-male membership open to the whole clan, this shrine is the centre of reconciliation, mediation and appeasement, which offers a forum for arbitration. If a person threatens the life of his neighbour or wounded him with a spear or cutlass, the two will be brought to the *ntul* shrine, where the first attempt will be reconciliation, while moral and legal sanctions will be meted out as well, and the wounded party will be treated with medicines from the *ntul* shrine.

### **Village Councils and Social Institutions**

Kom social institutions can be aptly classified as those where membership is either exclusively for men, women or mixed. Although the functions of these social institutions

may vary, the underlying purpose is to maintain peace, alliances, justice, bestow honour and sanction people for deviant behaviour.

The village council plays the role of the village court wherein minor civil and criminal cases are judged, while major contraventions are referred to the Fon. The masquerade society (*jujus*), or *ndo mikum*, is a regulatory society considered as the village parallel of *kwifoyn*, assisting the village head in the management of the affairs of the village. As such, these *juju* houses are considered as the eyes of the *kwifoyn* and examine cases relating to spiritual matters, especially witchcraft and poisoning.

### **The Chong Society**

This is a men's secret society and the most powerful traditional organisation at the village level. It is the property of the Fon. To acquire or create *chong*, an individual may be authorised by the Fon or simply given the rights by the Fon as a favour. This society is empowered by *kwifoyn* to settle disputes and assist in the promotion of peace and harmony



REAIRPCAM

**The fundamental role of *chong* is the maintenance of peace in the community.**



**The *Anlu* women's movement started in the early history of Kom to champion the rights of women and to make their voices heard.**

in the villages. It is thus tasked with tracking down and denouncing wrongdoers, whom it can reprimand and bring to justice, should they persist in wrong-doing. Commonly described by the Kom people as “power” or “authority”, it is a society of prestigious wealthier men, whose task it is to maintain peace or disassociate themselves from all violence. The fundamental role of *chong*, therefore, is the maintenance of peace in the community. It also plays a ceremonial role and, in this light, it has been described in the social sphere as a “high-life” or noble dance of the elders.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Fimbuen and Afaf Societies***

Kom traditional society is typically patriarchal. The man is the leader of the traditional society, the one who conceives and executes, while the woman is virtually absent from this aspect. Yet, lineage in Kom is matrilineal – that is, it is continued on the side of the mother and not the father, through the principle of consanguinity. There exist women's traditional societies, with *fimbuen* and *afaf* standing out as the parallel of the men's secret societies at the village level, performing similar roles in conflict

resolution, and so constituting a women's council, as it were. Although these women's social institutions function mainly as bereavement assemblies, performing most of the funeral rituals of their members as well as those of some notables of the Kom Fandom, they equally act as the voice of women, speaking on their behalf against injustices done to them. A major criterion to belong is age, in addition to proof of having given birth, and a fee. Membership seats are distributed in the house according to established protocol, similar to a typical *chong* house.

### ***Anlu*<sup>7</sup>**

Oral literature has it that the origin of the *Anlu* movement dates back to the Kom creation myth, to the settlement period when women checked territorial encroachment in the absence of their menfolk, who were out in the fields. *Anlu* thus gradually developed into an instrument of redress – a kind of female police force – with the women protecting womenfolk and equally punishing female crime, especially crime that bordered on the immoral.

This women's movement was started in the early history of Kom to champion the rights of women and to make their

voices heard – and, most especially, to punish domestic violence committed by men. Its first actions became evident during the Kom expansionist era, particularly when neighbouring Mujang warriors, realising that Kom warriors had left Laikom for a war expedition, moved in to capture the women and children and make them prisoners. It is recounted that upon arrival, the Mujang warriors met with strong resistance and so fled, thinking that they were chased away by men, for the women had disguised themselves as men. One Mujang warrior was caught and brought to the palace, where the women proved their identity and released the warrior with strict instructions: “Go and tell the rest, the warriors were Kom women.”<sup>8</sup>

ONE MUJANG WARRIOR WAS CAUGHT AND BROUGHT TO THE PALACE, WHERE THE WOMEN PROVED THEIR IDENTITY AND RELEASED THE WARRIOR WITH STRICT INSTRUCTIONS: “GO AND TELL THE REST, THE WARRIORS WERE KOM WOMEN”

It is worth mentioning that the *Anlu* movement brought to the fore a number of social and political tensions that, hitherto, had been simmering for many years: the erosion of both traditional and colonial authority, power struggles between “modern” youths and conservative elders, shifting gender relations, and cultural conflicts accelerated or perhaps instigated by the missionary presence.

#### **Kom Traditional Conflict Resolution**

Paul Nkwi asserts that whoever puts into jeopardy the concrete realisation of the common objectives or the achievement of the *bonum commune* creates a situation of conflict and becomes the enemy or the less friendly partner.<sup>9</sup> This lends credence to the idea that in conflict resolution, the principles of equity and justice, which are entrenched in African customs and traditions, are upheld. In fact, in Kom traditional society, there is no award for winning an argument. As such, the end result of conflict resolution is to accommodate all parties involved in the conflict, through genuine collaboration by all, in the search for effective compromise. In doing so, unnecessary competition is avoided, because the ultimate aim of conflict resolution is amicable settlement by persuasion, mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and negotiation, not



**The Royal Court of the Fon.**

necessarily reverting to the use of force or coercion at all cost, or at any cost.

In typical Kom traditional society, therefore, socialisation is an important factor in conflict resolution. Kom children are raised to consider that a quarrel or a fight with others is a quarrel or a fight between blood relations, and so it becomes imperative to avoid injury and harm, as well as avoiding situations of always trying to win at all cost. In Kom, this is a way of life, which is transmitted through myths, the use of proverbs, folktales, songs and idioms to children at a tender age, so that they may grow seeing human existence as unified and integrated.

To further inculcate this way of life, especially in a bid to establish truth, guilt and to discourage dishonest attitudes and evil actions, it was common practice in Kom traditional society to prevent, manage and resolve conflict through oath-taking, mostly at the shrine of a powerful deity, over an instrument that acted as a medium for contacting the deity. To avoid shame or even death, the consequences of oath-taking on falsehoods were made widely known.

To promote the virtues of peace, solidarity, harmonious living, respect for others and honesty, Kom traditional society instituted the celebration of festivals, during which these values were extolled in song. Rituals and sacrifices were performed to the village deities and ancestors for peace, protection, good work, fertility, and so on. This culture of communal life created an ideal environment for conflict resolution, because it was also an opportunity for a mutual exchange of privileges, goods, favours and obligations, among others. Reciprocity equally fostered peaceful coexistence and, consequently, eliminated the likelihood of conflict and wars.

Sanctions were imposed on families and individuals who contravened Kom customs and traditions. This was mainly to prevent stealing, wilful murder, incest, abuse of elders, wilful damage to property, lying, bearing false witness, poisoning and rape. It was also largely believed that deities could inflict sanctions through accidents, sickness, death, famine, poverty, misery, barrenness and loss of children, in addition to societal exile, ostracism, fines, compensation, restitution and the rendering of apology.

## Conclusion

Long before the slave trade and colonisation, indigenous African society had its own traditional methods and mechanisms of preventing, managing and resolving conflict. From the Kom experience, these ideas were well-entrenched in the traditions, customs, norms and taboos of the people; a way of life, as it were. As a people the Kom have not lost the capacity to co-exist peacefully, to commune together, to respect one another, to negotiate, to forgive and to reconcile in resolving their conflicts. In juxtaposition to what occurs in today's modern, formal judiciary system, with the introduction of law courts, paralegals, the police and other forces of law and order, justice does not always bring about peace and co-existence to a people. As has been made evident in this article, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms may achieve both, considering that negotiation, mediation and reconciliation have deep roots in indigenous

communities, which still have a strong belief in the principles of common humanity, reciprocity and respect for one another and for the environment. In Kom traditional society especially, conflict resolution mechanisms have been binding on the indigenous people for the simple reason that informal mediation renders conflict resolution flexible, expeditious and fast; it fosters relationships and it is cost-effective. ▲

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## Endnotes

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- 2 Ayttey, George (2014) 'African Solutions, African Problems, Real Meaning', Available at: <<https://www.panafricanvisions.com>> [Accessed 21 September 2018].
- 3 Ademowo, Johnson (2015) op. cit.
- 4 The Bamenda Grassfields is also known as the Bamenda Highlands, the Western High Plateau or the Western Highlands. This plateau was once heavily forested, but repeated cutting and burning by people forced the forest back to areas along the waterways and allowed grasslands to expand into the area, leading to its name.
- 5 In the Kom language (*itanghi-i-Kom*), this literally means the "country of Kom" or "Kom country". According to Kom history, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century migration in Cameroon, most tribes moved south in search of better economic opportunities. The Kom people, who originated from upper Mbam in Tikari, moved in search of fertile soils and in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier, finally settled in Laikom.
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- 7 David Chiatoh, on the Afo-a-Kom Yahoo Chat Group in 2003, situates the origin and explains the meaning of *Anlu*: "*Anlu* could be translated as an exodus or mass movement for some purpose at some destination. The Kom people, after their settlement, and until recently, had hunting reserves out of Kom, and whenever the men left for such expeditions, it was said that Laikom was out – 'lu' – which meant that the men had 'lu' for hunting. It was on one of such outings that a neighbouring kingdom, Mejang, attacked Laikom, with only women present, and what ensued saw the birth of the 'Anlu Movement' as well as the capture of the Mejang kingdom by the Kom fondom. As the paramount women's correctional society in Kom, Anlu had jurisdictional powers over both men and women and so could sanction a couple about their child-rearing, for example."
- 8 The Kom Heritage Foundation (2014) op. cit., p. 38.
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# CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN THE BIDIBIDI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN UGANDA

BY IRENE DAWA



GETTY/ISAAC KASAMANI

## Introduction

This article presents the results of a study conducted in the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in the Yumbe District of Uganda between June and August 2018. It examines the conflict trends between refugees and host communities. The aim was to understand the drivers and dynamics of conflicts in the settlement.

This article highlights the key findings of the study and some suggestions for conflict transformation for better relationships. The data collection process took 20 days. The methodology used for this research was based on qualitative study design. Qualitative data collection was done through focus group discussions using interview guides, direct observation, and structured and semi-structured interviews with different community-level committees, such as refugee welfare committees (RWCs) and the host population.

Non-structured interviews and informal meetings were also held to collect complementary information, especially with the various stakeholders, such as local government officials, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other implementing partners. Direct observation was used to confirm conflict dynamics reported during interviews, for validity and reliability. This study was inspired by the conflict transformation theory of Lederach. According to Lederach,<sup>1</sup>

**Above: The Bidibidi's Got Talent project has been holding auditions across the five zones of the refugee settlement for both refugees and members of the local community to empower youth and enhance social cohesion between different ethnic groups and with the Ugandan host community (November 2017).**

conflict is normal and dynamic within human relationships and can be seen as a catalyst for growth.

**Context**

Violent conflict in South Sudan from 2013 to 2016 forced over 977746 refugees to flee to Uganda, according to statistics from the UNHCR.<sup>2</sup> Some 86% of those who fled were women and children, with children making up more than 60% of all refugees. The majority of these refugees were settled in the West Nile region of Northern Uganda.

Uganda is a landlocked country located in East Africa and the Great Lakes Region. It is bordered to the east by Kenya, to the north by South Sudan, to the west by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to the south-west by Rwanda, and to the south by Tanzania. It covers an area of 241038 square kilometres. The population is estimated to be 34.6 million inhabitants,<sup>3</sup> with farming as the main economic activity. The country is also home to 56 tribes, all speaking different languages and with different cultural practices. Uganda’s refugee policy is one of the world’s

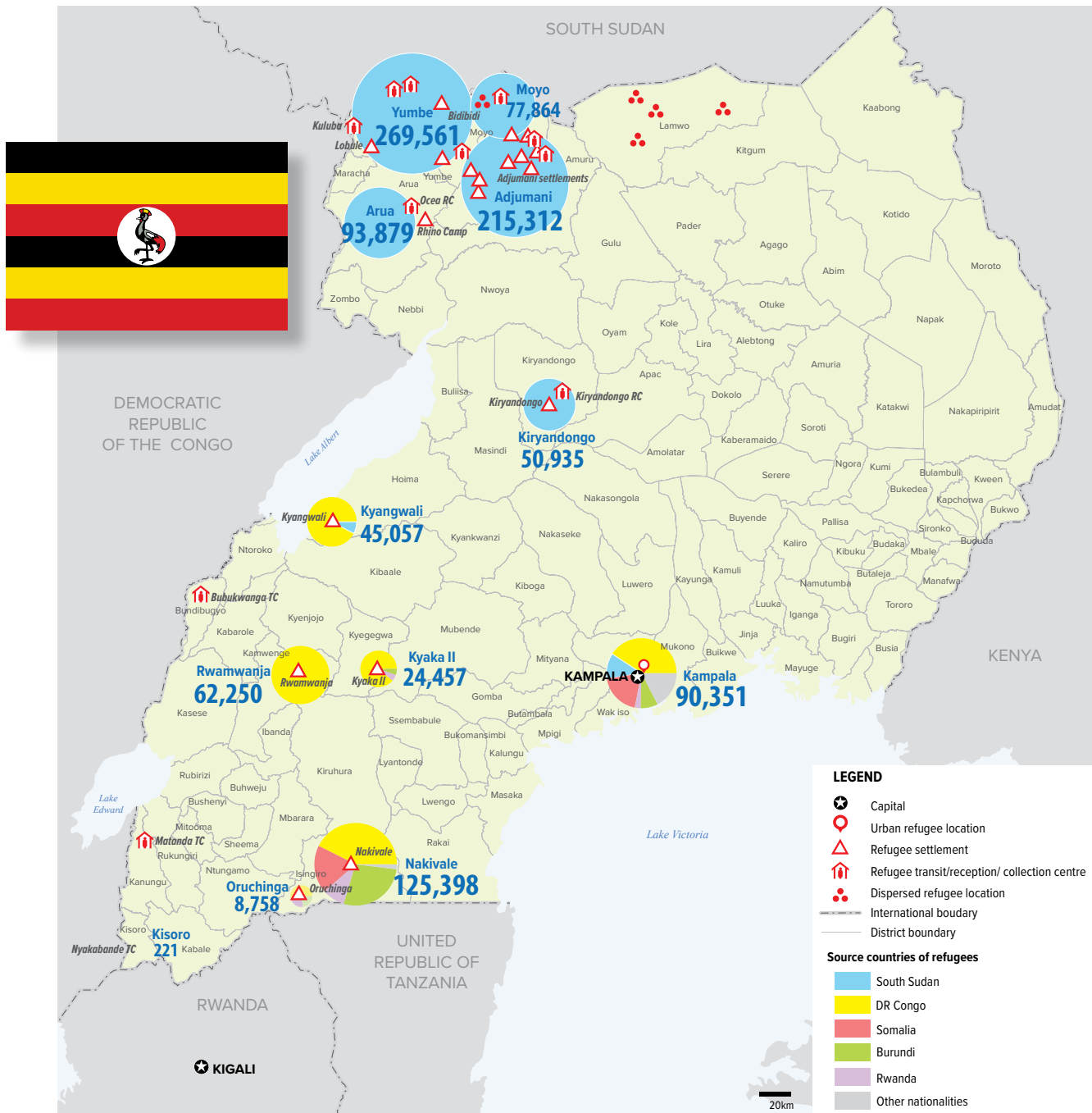


Figure 1: Map of Uganda showing refugee hosting districts<sup>4</sup>



**Uganda has one of the highest refugee and asylum-seeker populations in Africa.**

most progressive, promoting refugee integration rather than confinement, and directing aid resources to the host as well as the refugee population.

## THE MULTI-ETHNIC PROFILE OF THE AREA CREATES CONFLICT IN TERMS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE, INTERMARRIAGES AND MIGRATION TO URBAN SATELLITE TOWNS

### **Refugees and Uganda**

Uganda ratified the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1987.<sup>5</sup> According to Muluba,<sup>6</sup> the presence of refugees in Uganda dates back to the 1940s with the hosting of Polish refugees at Nyabyeya and Koja in Masindi Mukono. However, in 1955, Uganda became involved in a serious situation when some 78 000 refugees from southern DRC, Sudan and Kenya entered its borders. In 2017, World Vision Uganda estimated that 1 064 043 refugees and asylum-seekers

lived in Uganda.<sup>7</sup> World Vision Uganda also estimated that 68% of this number – equivalent to 723 550 refugees – were from South Sudan alone. Refugees from Rwanda and Burundi have also fled to Uganda. By late 2017, Uganda had the highest refugee/asylum-seeker population in Africa.

The West Nile region is located in the north-west corner of Uganda. It borders South Sudan to the north and the DRC to the east. The region's ethnic groups include the Lugbara, Alur, Kakwa and Madi. Political instability in the DRC and South Sudan has a direct impact on the region. The multi-ethnic profile of the area creates conflict in terms of cultural difference, intermarriages and migration to urban satellite towns. For over 20 years, West Nile was cut off from the rest of Uganda, due to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in Northern Uganda and the Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II), which ended with the signing of a peace treaty between UNRF II and the Government of Uganda in 2002. The conflict mainly affected the districts of Yumbe, Koboko Arua and Moyo.<sup>8</sup> Until late 2000, West Nile was home to thousands of South Sudanese refugees, who returned after the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan in 2005.





DENIS ONYODI/UGANDA RED CROSS CLIMATE CENTRE

**Refugees arrive at the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement reception centre, in Uganda’s Yumbe district, for registration. In 2017 Bidibidi was described as the largest refugee settlement in the world.**

South Sudan became independent in 2011. In 2013, the internal power struggle within the ruling party, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), resulted in clashes in the capital city, Juba. These clashes quickly turned into targeted killings against Nuer, the ethnic group of South Sudan’s vice president, Riek Machar, who fled into hiding and later became the leader of a rebellion against President Salva Kiir, an ethnic Dinka. Civilians were regularly and deliberately targeted in the conflict, leading to large-scale displacements.

Unfortunately, violence continued in South Sudan. According to the Inter-Agency Regional Analysts Network,<sup>9</sup> 350 000 refugees from South Sudan crossed to the West Nile region between January and October 2017. Because of the

high influx, nine new settlements were opened, with Bidibidi as the largest,<sup>10</sup> sheltering over 285 000 South Sudanese refugees, predominantly from the Equatoria region. Most of the refugees were women. In 2017, Bidibidi was described as the largest refugee settlement in the world.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Conflict Dynamics in the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement**

The Bidibidi settlement covers an area of 250 square kilometres. It is composed primarily of underutilised “hunting grounds”, considered by the host communities as unsuitable for agriculture. The area consists of low, rolling hills and mostly rocky soil. Bidibidi is divided into five zones, and each of these zones is divided into clusters, which are further divided into individual villages surrounded by host community settlements. Refugee leadership structures parallel Uganda’s own local governance model, which is composed of ascending levels of local councils. At the village level, there is an RWC1; at the cluster level, RWC2; and for each zone, RWC3. These are decided by elections overseen by the OPM. The RWC at each level is headed by a chairperson.

#### **Firewood and Environmental Challenges**

The conflict issue that is most significant between the host communities and the refugee population is the issue of

**BECAUSE OF THE HIGH INFLUX, NINE NEW SETTLEMENTS WERE OPENED, WITH BIDIBIDI AS THE LARGEST, SHELTERING OVER 285 000 SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES, PREDOMINANTLY FROM THE EQUATORIA REGION**



**The most significant conflict issue between the host communities and the refugee population is firewood collection.**

firewood. Collection of firewood around Bidibidi is ad hoc, with undefined access rights to both communities. The daily negotiation triggers hostilities, tensions and perceptions of insecurity. Refugees must negotiate daily for access to gather firewood and biomass in the surrounding land. There are no formal land rights granted to the refugees, so there is a constant risk of violence, assault and extortion on an already traumatised population.

This firewood problem is multilayered. First, there is no designated area for the refugee community to access firewood. According to interviews, the problem is complicated by refugee women's fear of the Aringa men from the host communities, accusing them of gender-based violence. During interviews, Aringa representatives claim their intentions are often misjudged, due to language barriers – for example, men often need the gathering area for charcoal production. While there have been consistent efforts to mitigate this problem, the issue appears unsolvable until land is clearly designated for firewood collection and/or cooking fuel is provided to the refugees.

Second, environmental degradation continues as biomass is cleared in the vicinities of the refugee settlements. Refugees are considered by the host communities to be

**WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT EFFORTS TO MITIGATE THIS PROBLEM, THE ISSUE APPEARS UNSOLVABLE UNTIL LAND IS CLEARLY DESIGNATED FOR FIREWOOD COLLECTION AND/OR COOKING FUEL IS PROVIDED TO THE REFUGEES**

temporary visitors, who do not respect the land or care about sustainability. Some host community members call the refugees "insensitive". A non-governmental organisation (NGO) official explained during interviews that environmental degradation is a very big problem and a key way to solve it is to plant more trees. They have been trying to work on the problem, but need much intervention in terms of planting more trees. While members of the host communities do not relay belligerent complaints with regard to land-sharing, questions about environmental degradation prompt angry replies. Officials in the district confirmed during interviews that the refugee presence has increased Yumbe's population



**The host community believe the refugees to be temporary visitors, who do not respect the land or care about sustainability.**

by 50%. This is a sudden and monumental strain on resources. The host communities are also concerned about the grass, which is needed to feed livestock. Refugees, however, cut grass for their own use to thatch houses – or, sometimes, they burn grass in accordance with traditional customs. A senior Ugandan official remarked during an interview<sup>12</sup>:

The environment has been degraded. It's been massive. The community needs mitigation measures to rehabilitate the environment, which is now out of control. It will cause a lot of problems. Environment has many components. There were issues of bush burning. It can destroy grass, and destroy trees. It can also cause pollution in the atmosphere. We want a comprehensive approach to be taken to mitigate issues related to the environment.

During interviews, an OPM official confirmed these challenges, suggesting that agencies should consider providing efficient cooking stoves to refugees and step up efforts to plant trees. He indicated that intervention was minimal and that the conflict between the refugees and the hosts over firewood will not stop unless an alternative is found.

Grievances over promises made by the OPM are imperative as to whether the host communities choose to

be cooperative. Host representatives stress that unresolved issues between the host communities and the OPM over land use have produced a backlash against the refugee presence within the host communities. Host communities were promised livelihood programmes that are yet to arrive. This adds to the resentment towards Ugandan administrators, which negatively influences host–refugee relations. Local officials, in particular, note that the infrastructure of the area was already severely underdeveloped before the settlements were established.

### ***Internal Politics and Dynamics***

The population of Bidibidi is relatively peaceful, despite the diversity of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, there have been isolated cases of ethnic conflict in the settlement, related to the war in South Sudan. Low-level interpersonal conflict

**LOCAL OFFICIALS, IN PARTICULAR, NOTE THAT THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE AREA WAS ALREADY SEVERELY UNDERDEVELOPED BEFORE THE SETTLEMENTS WERE ESTABLISHED**

is also widely reported, due to the trauma and hardship of resettlement.

The politicisation of ethnicity has been a defining characteristic of the war in South Sudan, and this ethnic conflict has been mirrored in the settlement. Most of the settlement residents perceive their communities to be on the same “side” of the war, against the South Sudanese government. However, this is not necessarily always the case.

One major flashpoint in the refugee settlement is centred on a small population of Dinkas. Most refugees associate ethnic Dinka groups with the government of President Kiir, the leadership of the SPLA, and the ethnic Dinka Mathiang Anyoor military force deployed in parts of Equatoria in 2016. Many refugees blame these groups for numerous atrocities. As a result, Dinkas have been singled out and isolated from the rest of the South Sudanese refugee community. During interviews, it was clear that tensions over the Dinka presence have occasionally resulted in direct violence – not only in Bidibidi, but also in the Rhino camp settlement, as was the case in June 2018.

The gender disparity in Bidibidi influences both refugee interactions and domestic conflict. There are many women living in the settlement without their husbands, which often leads to personal challenges. Men come to Bidibidi to find their wives, and instead discover infidelity. War brings

poverty, which often forces women into sexual exploitation to survive and support their families.<sup>13</sup> Adultery also leads to conflicts among women and affects family dynamics. According to interviews with women and refugee leaders, significant interpersonal conflicts and domestic abuse ensue. Depression and anxiety caused by earlier traumatic events in South Sudan, as well as alcoholism and financial stress, are serious problems in the refugee settlement.<sup>14</sup>

## THE POLITICISATION OF ETHNICITY HAS BEEN A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN, AND THIS ETHNIC CONFLICT HAS BEEN MIRRORED IN THE SETTLEMENT

### *Land Disputes*

Land is an emotional and contentious topic, and issues relating to resource-sharing causes feelings of bitterness and insecurity.<sup>15</sup> The host communities have deep cultural and emotional ties to their land, which extends beyond the issue of resources. They focus their conversations on Ugandan actors.



THOMAS KOEHLERPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

**The gender disparity in the Bidibidi settlement influences both refugee interactions and domestic conflict.**



**Land is an emotional and contentious topic, and issues related to resource-sharing causes feelings of bitterness and insecurity.**

The government and interlocutors do not seem directly concerned about the refugees and the land given to them. In contrast, the refugees interviewed are more concerned about sharing the land with the host communities. Refugees argue that the land is impossible to cultivate, either because it is too rocky or too close to livestock or too far from their home. This is not an issue between the refugees and host communities, but rather one between the host communities and Ugandan authorities,<sup>16</sup> because the Ugandan authorities have not kept their promise of compensating the host communities for the land that was given to the refugees. As indicated previously, host communities were promised livelihood programmes that are yet to arrive. This creates further resentment and negatively affects host–refugee relations. The presence of the refugees and the issue of land is the catalyst for tensions between the Ugandan state and its citizens.

The Bidibidi settlement is located on the communal land of the Aringa people, who are governed by customary laws. In general, communal land falls under the control of the specific clan with historical claim to the area. Under this system, each clan has a designated “land chief” responsible for speaking on behalf of the community. Most of Bidibidi is on land that was not used prior to the refugees’ arrival, as it was considered unsuitable for agriculture. But this land supported hunting, livestock grazing and charcoal production critical to the livelihood of the host population.

The customary nature of land rights resulted in adjudication on an “as needed” basis, since land rights have not officially been designated. The land that forms the Bidibidi settlement was unsettled on by the host population; consequently, the refugee situation stirred underlying disputes between individuals and sub-clans over the use and boundaries of the area. These manifested in two forms of conflict: (1) the perceived monetary benefit of land claims near the refugee sites; and (2) the negative effects on those previously using the land for livelihood purposes, primarily charcoal production, grazing and hunting. Several interviewees brought up boundary disputes between the sub-clans of Odravu and Kululu, specifically who has the authority to make decisions. These disputes have compromised relief programmes, including the building of a health facility. Claims to land rights are being waged not only by land chiefs, but also by citizens and agencies who falsely assert ownership.

Host representatives gave different responses about whether or not they were promised anything in exchange for their land. Many were frustrated, because they were not provided with “appreciation” for their generosity. The repeated use of the word “appreciation”, rather than compensation, indicated that an in-kind payment for the land was not expected. One OPM official explained that his office was constrained in its ability to fulfil all of its commitments,



**The United Nations and Office of the Prime Minister set a condition that all implementing partners had to allocate 30% of all aid resources to benefit the host communities.**

due to resource deficits and ambiguity over land rights. Some respondents believed that local politicians and elites were agitating the Aringa elders and land chiefs against the OPM, for their own benefit.

### ***Competition for Resources***

There is a low-intensity disagreement among the levels of local government over control of anticipated and actual aid resources that the host communities are to get 30%. The UN and OPM had set a condition that all implementing partners had to allocate 30% of all aid resources (training opportunities, livelihoods, and so on) to benefit the host communities. Representatives of all levels of local councils interviewed in Yumbe district all argued that the “30%” of aid projects destined for the host communities should be targeted to, and controlled by, the hosting village, sub-county and district respectively. The ambiguity of, and lack of transparency in, the “30% rule” has created more overt conflict over these resources. There needs to be clarification on who is entitled to what at all levels of implementation, to avoid the escalation of conflicts.

### **Conclusion**

In general, conflict transformation focuses on relationships between parties. To achieve this, there is a need for a clear mechanism for conflict transformation – such

as dialogue focusing on shared interests and resources, since the conflict seems to be focused mostly on resources such as land use and access to firewood collection. The aid resources serve to bridge, but also divide, the host and refugee populations. There are also widening gaps around the politics and grievances of hosting refugees, which could widen if left unaddressed. However, these challenges could also be an opportunity to lay the groundwork for longer-term stability and peaceful relations, with a view towards a likely long-term refugee presence in Yumbe district. The government and implementing partners should focus on clarifying their position with the host communities on land use, to avoid the host communities blaming the refugees. There is also a need to train refugees on Ugandan laws governing land and conflict management. Special attention must be paid to women – most of the refugees are women, and issues that affect their daily lives must be prioritised.

There are some significant positive findings from the Bidibidi settlement. The Ugandan government and aid agencies responded to an emergency crisis of unprecedented scale, all the while negotiating local politics and mobilising emergency relief. The South Sudan refugees, with some notable exceptions, have integrated relatively peaceably. There are a number of local and international NGOs working side by side to support both the refugees and host communities to cope with daily challenges. This is a

window of opportunity for collaboration between relevant stakeholders involved in education, livelihoods and conflict management. There is a small-scale but trade going on between the refugees and host communities, especially between the women. Refugee women exchange food for charcoal or firewood from the host community women. This creates a sense of common need for women, which can further improve relationships.

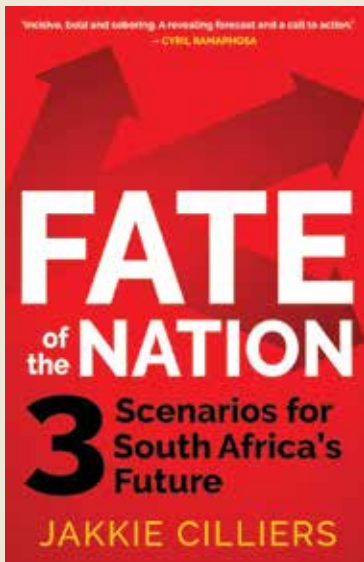
Some recommendations to improve stability and relations between all communities, and to prevent further conflict in Bidibidi and its surrounds, are:

1. OPM should engage in talks with landowners and clan chiefs over land rights and usage. The chiefs and landowners are so powerful that they can be spoilers of peace. The community listens to them and trusts them. Government officials and partners should use these local leaders as connectors of peace to build relationships between the host communities and refugees.
2. Due to the scarcity of natural resources and its impact on the environment, the Ugandan government and partners should advocate to donors to scale up existing projects for alternative energy. The firewood issue needs to be resolved to avoid ongoing conflict and intimidation, by providing alternative cooking fuels that can replace wood fuel and charcoal, as well as developing skills for the construction of stoves. Three types of cooking fuel that can be explored are briquettes, pellets and ethanol.
3. There should be more capacity building for RWCs and local committees to hold local courts for matters between hosts and refugees in terms of alternative dispute mechanisms and legal processes. However, there is also a need for awareness campaigns to ensure that the local courts avoid adjudicating beyond their jurisdiction.
4. Implementing partners should use the “Do No Harm” conflict-sensitive approach, which focuses on reducing the negative effects of aid on war and conflict<sup>17</sup> so as to minimise the drivers of conflict and focus on connectors of peace.
5. Communal land ownership between chiefs and sub-clan members should not be undermined. These are elders elected by the community to be the custodians of community properties, and the government needs to work with them for access to any community resources. Importantly, refugees need to be provided with land for cultivation and resources for education on land use.
6. Many refugees are still living with the effects of the traumatic experience of war, which can be triggered at any time. It is important to allocate resources such as counselling services to respond to the trauma of the refugee population. Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders has already phased out its emergency response in Yumbe, but there is still the need for such services. 🐘

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## FATE OF THE NATION: THREE SCENARIOS FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S FUTURE

Author **Jakkie Cilliers**  
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*Fate of the Nation: Three Scenarios for South Africa's Future* presents what author Jakkie Cilliers considers to be the three main future scenarios for South Africa. Cilliers ventures into the future by analysing the present and the past. He challenges previous authors who theorised the potential collapse of South Africa by providing a more evidence-based argument to support his vision.

However, Cilliers cautiously takes a middle path, stating that the country is indeed in limbo. Whereas he contends that the status quo in the country will change in one way or the other, he is quick to pose the questions of "What will the change look like? Will the country be more prosperous and less divided? Or will the status quo of inequality and poverty dominate?" The author goes on to raise other issues, such as the challenge posed by the "brain drain" to Western countries. The style in which he presents the South African situation and context presents the reader with a vivid snapshot of the history and present state of political and economic affairs in the country, while at the same time painting scenarios for the future.

The 10 chapters in the book are linked thematically. The first three chapters present an analysis of ex-president Jacob Zuma's last years of presidency. The introductory chapter encapsulates the author's main thoughts, which he later develops in the rest of the book. Cilliers provides a political history of how the country has evolved from the post-apartheid period to the present. He does this with the vividness of a direct participant in the events and across the period that the book covers.

Cilliers uses the examples of past trends to create future scenarios. For example, he discusses in reasonable detail the 1991/92 Mount Fleur Scenarios, also known as the Ostrich Lane Duck scenarios. This historical setting is significant in that it prepares the reader for the three scenarios that

Cilliers discusses later in the book: Bafana Bafana, Mandela Magic and Nation Divided. Each scenario's characteristics are derived from the context of its name, embodied in the image each symbolises in the daily lives of South Africans.

These three scenarios underpin the core of the book. The Bafana Bafana soccer team scenario signifies the perennial losers. It represents a situation in which South Africa may continue losing its glitter, just as Bafana Bafana has been recording losses in its football escapades. Mandela Magic is the desired scenario. It symbolises the evolution of the country from the yoke of apartheid to freedom, for all South Africans.

On the other hand, the Nation Divided scenario speaks of the inequality and security challenges that affect the country's present generation – and which, according to Cilliers, is one of the main things that political elites should be worried about, if the future of the country is to be safeguarded. He argues that this third scenario has the potential to adversely affect the economic growth of South Africa. This scenario depicts the current South Africa, in which the independence party – the African National Congress (ANC) – is faced with internal strife. He describes how these challenges are increasingly becoming insurmountable and warns that if not contained, may break up the ANC. He cites inflation, the instability of the national currency (rand), mega corruption cases, capital flight and stunted or negative economic growth as some of the challenges.

The author, eager to emphasise the era of the Nation Divided scenario, notes that this trend was evolving even as he wrote this book. In other words, the author was living through the scenario and therefore was documenting first-hand the evolution of the situations, such as the dynamics within the ANC, including the emergence of new political parties such as the Economic Freedom Front (EFF), led by



former ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema. Cilliers describes how such splintering of the ANC's internal strength is a contributor to the weakening of the party, noting how the EFF has gained popularity.

The author takes a futuristic approach by forecasting the likely gradual weakening of the ANC, even as this book went into print. This, in a way, points to the prophetic nature of Cilliers' work in this book. However, the author seems to get it wrong in his prediction that populism would lead to a political coalition between the ANC and EFF. Instead, what we have witnessed since the 2017 elections is coalition building between very unexpected foes-turned-friends, the EFF and the Democratic Alliance (DA), in some municipalities such as Tshwane and Ekurhuleni. The author is keen to leave room for surprises, as he does not expressly rule out the possibility of a merger between the ANC, EFF and other African-led political parties in the future South Africa.

The author's futuristic scenarios are spot on as far as the country's politics shaped out after the book was published. As predicted, the ANC's popularity dwindled, as it lost its majority vote in parliament, thereby fulfilling the Nation Divided scenario.

Of the 10 chapters, chapter six is perhaps the one that draws out clearly the uphill task that the ANC faces in trying to fight poverty. Cilliers states that social policies (such as the provision of social grants) under presidents Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma focused on pulling the former disenfranchised African population out of abject poverty. This, the author faults, was at the expense of enhancing the country's employment opportunities and pursuing economic growth – aspects that would have led to more sustainable options for the poor. Equally important in this chapter is the caution that African countries should watch out about not becoming obsessed with achieving “economic growth” as a measure of national development. He clarifies that whereas economic growth is a prerequisite for South Africa's progress, the ability to benefit from economic growth is significantly complicated by the fact that economic growth does not automatically translate into reductions in poverty in countries with high inequality, if its distribution is not equitable to the entire populace. Similarly, adds Cilliers, “If the economy is unable to grow, it will increase competition for a slice of the South African cake, which has to be shared by many competing priorities, as well as the inevitable urge to opt for redistributive policies – taking from those who have, and redistributing wealth to the poor and needy” (p. 119). This is because as the income curve grows (with economic growth), inequality increases. In the same vein, he argues further that in such economies where the distribution of wealth is skewed, the more a country espouses free-market policies, the more rapidly inequality increases.

Cilliers' argument in the book resonates with those of Lorenzo Fioramonti, who in his book, titled *Wellbeing Economy: Success in a World Without Growth*, argues that the pursuit of economic growth worldwide often leads to more losses than gains. It also widens the inequality gap in societies. Fioramonti contends that South Africa and many developing countries could get by without economic growth if they were to use their resources more effectively.

In conclusion, *Fate of the Nation: Three Scenarios for South Africa's Future* is a commendable contribution to the understanding of contemporary South Africa – until now, the continent's economic powerhouse. Whereas the book focuses on South Africa, there are many lessons that are applicable to other African countries, not least because of the interlinkages in the political and economic networks that tie African countries together. It could be recommended that the author continues with another similar publication that includes a broader African or subregional focus, to widen the scope of coverage. For students and academics of contemporary African political economy, this is a current and relevant recommended work. **A**

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