



# LOCAL PEACE PROCESSES IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

The recent re-eruption of political violence in South Sudan in late 2013 has not only inflamed long-standing and unresolved local grievances but also highlights the critical need to improve the impact and sustainability of local peace processes in any region. This report is informed by analysis from conflict resolution training workshops sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) as well as consultations, dialogues, meetings, and interviews conducted across Sudan and South Sudan from 2005 through 2010.

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Photos by Nelson Guda, [nelsonguda.com](http://nelsonguda.com). Cover photo: Traders from diverse backgrounds in Warawar markets. TOC photo: Peace Committee members who worked together to resolve cattle raids.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace.

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[Building an architecture for peace clarifies roles and responsibilities of peace actors and helps get a variety of actors working collaboratively rather than competitively, working with government and not around it.]



## Summary

- Sudan and South Sudan have theoretically been at peace since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, yet local and intercommunal violence continues seemingly unabated. Local conflicts related to cattle raids and grazing rights and persistent national conflicts are inextricably linked in Sudan and South Sudan, complicating efforts to reduce violence and build sustainable peace.
- Local peace actors undertake peace initiatives, turning to international organizations for funding and logistical support for peace conferences. Many of these peace conferences fail to produce lasting resolution to local conflicts.
- Future conferences, consultations, dialogues, and mediation should be embedded in larger peacebuilding processes that would begin with conflict analysis and outline a vision, goals, and objectives.
- Participants should include those with authority, knowledge of the problems requiring resolution, and interest in finding sustainable solutions that represent the full spectrum of stakeholder interests.
- Smaller, more regular meetings focused on a limited number of agenda items are likely to have greater effect than large conferences addressing many topics.
- A successful peace process in Sudan and South Sudan would be designed to build trust and accountability for taking recommended actions, including mechanisms for communicating outcomes to affected communities and seeking input from them.



## Introduction

In 2005, after years of civil war, Sudan and South Sudan signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). In 2011, South Sudan became an independent country. Despite these efforts and achievements, violent conflict persists, though mostly between groups within the two countries. The fighting that broke out in South Sudan in late 2013 in many ways confirms the fears many have had about the fragility of the peace forged as the new state was born.

It is unclear whether the root causes and presenting triggers of these conflicts are local, national, political, economic, social, or a combination. What is clear is that the violence remains a volatile mix of local, interethnic, and intra-ethnic conflict infused with political maneuverings on a national level. Cattle raids, attacks on traders, attacks on returnees and other violence may be indirectly related to Sudan–South Sudan dynamics, but the violence plays out on a local stage. Within each country, intrastate conflicts tend to be ones in which “the fighters are usually drawn from numerous political factions with divergent agendas, lines of command are blurred or nonexistent, and the battlefields are the very towns and villages where the combatants live.”<sup>1</sup> In the absence of stronger state control, responsibility for resolving these conflicts and protecting communities falls largely on the shoulders of local actors, with or without an international peace structure. Building local peace has proved exceedingly difficult.

Yet despite the difficulties, successes occur, and the western corridor—which runs through the Sudanese state of South Kordofan into the South Sudanese state of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal—provides an intriguing case in point, demonstrating how local actors use a variety of tools to resolve cattle raids or disputes over grazing or farming land as they have done for generations.<sup>2</sup>

Peace conferences are one of these tools. These events were historically convened for any number of reasons, including coordinating grazing and access to water and pasture. Peace conferences have historically been simple affairs involving only a few leaders from neighboring tribes meeting at the river to coordinate grazing passage. At other times, these conferences were intended to solve a particular problem that required a third party to help with resolution efforts. Such crisis-related conferences usually required the participation (and guarantees) of the government and other influential actors.

Among pastoralist—livestock-raising—communities, a tradition evolved of holding two preventive meetings a year, one before the cattle approach the southern grazing lands and the second afterward before the cattle go north again (the “returning season”). The civil war, however, largely ended the practice of holding meetings to prevent conflict. The agenda for a contemporary peace conference might contain many topics, some preventive, but most aimed at resolving already-violent conflict or addressing unresolved issues from previous conferences. Conferences tend not to be scheduled predictably. This, though, is changing in areas with robust international support. In the western corridor, no one can tell you how many peace conferences have been held.<sup>3</sup> The conferences might convene several hundred stakeholders from across the country or both countries, including government officials, members of the diaspora, and representatives of international organizations and government representatives, or only a few key clan representatives from communities in conflict.

Clearly, peace conferences and the conflicts that necessitated them have long been common occurrences, yet the context in which they are held has changed. Decades of civil war, changing structures of government, increasing demands on natural resources, and a proliferation of actors, for example, all have an impact on local peace processes. The proliferation of small arms means that conflicts increasingly spill over into neighboring areas. Escalation draws on historical narratives, rumors and fears, and ethnic and political allegiances, as well as

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**Conflict resolution processes have not kept pace with the onslaught of modern conflict dynamics.**

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unresolved issues from previous peace processes, unimplemented or dishonored agreements, or unpaid blood money (compensation to the next of kin of a slain person). Underemployed youth are easily mobilized, and the authority of elders, who traditionally intervened to stop the escalation of violence, is constricted by war, by changes in government structure, and by the changing roles of civil society and international actors. Conflict resolution processes have not kept pace with the onslaught of modern conflict dynamics.

Nor is there enough time between violent incidents for old societal wounds to heal. The failure to honor or implement agreements further deepens mistrust, thus true reconciliation never happens, and real trust between leaders is increasingly rare. Under pressure to provide peace, government entities manipulate outcomes, sometimes circumventing traditional mechanisms or undermining local efforts in the process. International actors intervene, desiring to support traditional mechanisms yet not fully understanding the nuances of those processes, and then they are at a loss when those mechanisms fail. They also support more peace conferences, hoping that giving local leaders the space to discuss their issues will be sufficient.<sup>4</sup> Yet the omnipresent violence tells us these processes are falling short.

Analysts are right to be cautious about drawing general conclusions about the conduct and effectiveness of local peace processes in Sudan and South Sudan based on observation of only a few of them. This said, certain issues have been consistent over the years:

- Peace conferences have become events unto themselves and are often not embedded within an intentional, step-by-step peacebuilding process. Some large peace conferences have thereby wasted money, time, and effort.
- Weak local government empowers elites and internationals, leads to a proliferation of actors with unclear roles and responsibilities, and fails to engage citizen stakeholders in peace efforts.
- Outcome documents generally do not include plans for action nor provisions for monitoring and evaluation. The documents are constructed without regard for relationship-building or trust-building, further perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Attempts to understand why local peace efforts are successful in some cases but not in others led USIP in April 2009 to convene South Kordofan peace practitioners, elders, and other opinion leaders from ten communities that had experienced violent conflict and participated in a variety of local peace processes, from conferences to mediations.<sup>5</sup> Participants were trained in conflict analysis and then asked to reflect on their perceptions of the difference between successful processes with which they had been involved and those that failed to break the cycle of violence.<sup>6</sup> Participants identified many reasons local peace agreements were not sustained. Because of their depth of experience, these local actors knew most intimately why peace agreements had failed. The reasons can be grouped into ten categories:

- *Lack of resources.* Participants cited a lack of funding to properly convene a peace conference, the lack of vehicles to travel to the scene of a disturbance or cattle raid, and the lack of cell phones (or cell phone networks) to facilitate communication.
- *Structural inadequacies.* Local actors observed that no ministry was specifically dedicated to pastoralist issues and that state officials were not assigned to work on peace and security in more remote areas.
- *Capacity weaknesses.* Participants remarked on a weak capacity to mediate disputes, to negotiate, to advocate, and to deal with entities like spoilers. Part of this set of challenges included capacity weaknesses in rule of law and problems with traditional processes like the compensation mechanism of *diya*.<sup>7</sup>



- *Lack of trained facilitators or trusted third parties.* Local participants did not know how to deal with situations of perceived mediator bias or of facilitators or mediators not having suitable skills.
- *Unsuitable participants.* Observers cited poor selection processes or selection of the “wrong” people (including elites), as well as problems they identified as “tribalism.”
- *Wrong topics on agenda.* Participants complained that sometimes important topics were deemed off limits and that at other times irrelevant topics were included. In some cases, the people in the room had no knowledge or expertise related to the items on the agenda. In others, problems required authority or resources.
- *Conferences too large.* Participants cited instances when conferences had too many participants—sometimes in the hundreds—to be productive. Similarly, working groups were sometimes considered too large to allow effective dialogue.
- *Peace actors’ roles unclear or unhelpful.* Observers pinpointed situations in which government actors’ actions were not transparent, were manipulative, were biased, or either failed to support or actively undermined local peace efforts.
- *Agreements not implemented.* Sometimes local actors identified a “failure to honor” an agreement, which undermined trust and negatively affected relationships. In some cases, the recommendations required resources that participants did not have access to.
- *Challenges of implementation.* Participants cited lack of follow-up and unclear responsibilities for doing so.

Despite the extensive nature of these challenges, the general view of participants can be summed up in the following observations: Local peace processes have embedded within them the elements needed to create sustainable peace. Local processes can be adapted in ways that respect core traditions and customs, yet can better use conflicts as opportunities to transform relationships.

The 2013 outbreak of violence in South Sudan underscores the importance of a number of factors as critical to stable peace, including conducting a thorough conflict analysis, consulting with key stakeholders, empowering local actors, creating an architecture for peace, and providing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The terrible reality of the dynamics of the recent violence confirms that all national peace must have its foundations in local peace.

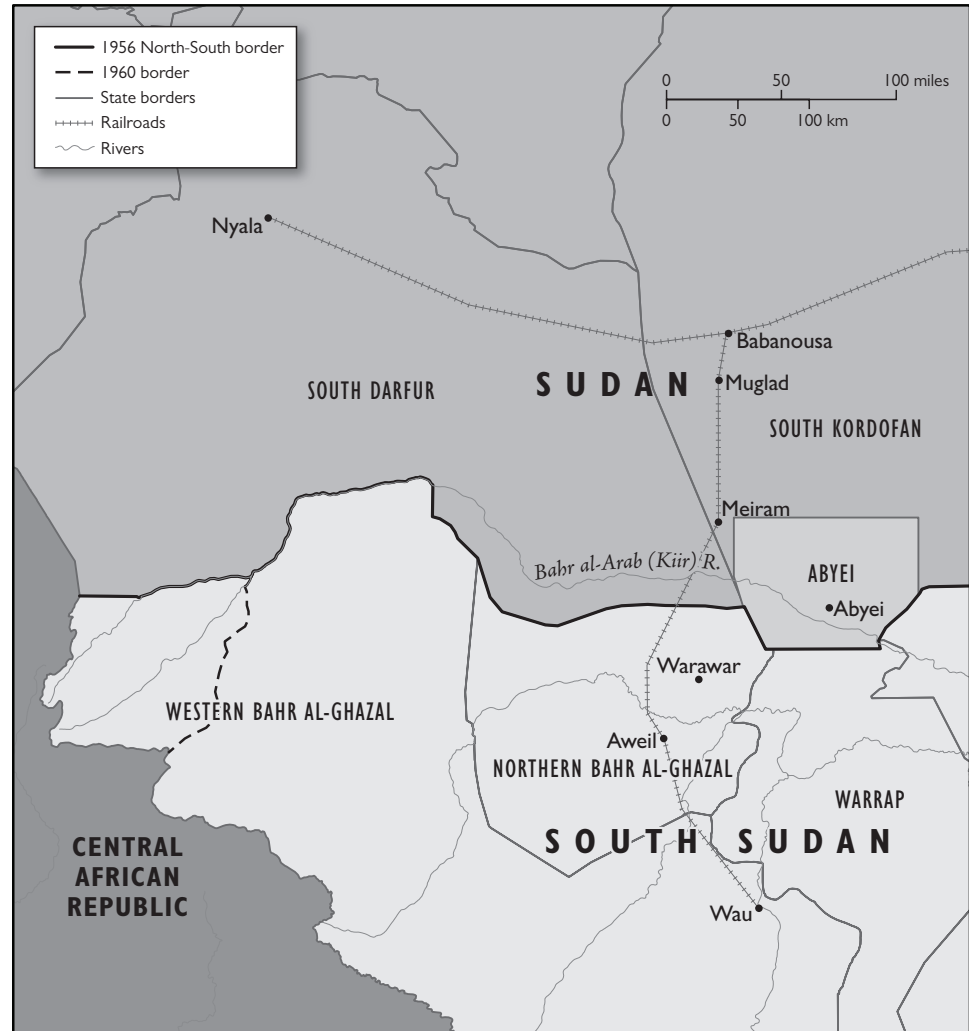
### Case Study: The Western Corridor

The potential for local peace processes to reduce violence in the western grazing corridor and beyond is best understood in the context of the forces that connect and divide communities like the Missiriya and Dinka, as well as the context in which local peace efforts occur. The western corridor is the westernmost of the three main grazing corridors used by the Fiyareen clan of Arabic-speaking, cattle-herding Missiriya pastoralists of the state of South Kordofan in Sudan.<sup>8</sup> Called *baggara*, Arabic for cattlemen, the Missiriya use different grazing corridors as seasonal rains demand. The Fiyareen graze southward into the territory of the Dinka Malual of the state of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal in South Sudan; the Dinka Malual are the largest subclan of the larger Nilotic Dinka community that spans much of the northern part of South Sudan (see map 1).<sup>9</sup> The Dinka are frequently portrayed as farmers in the conflict paradigm of farmers versus herders, but they actually practice semipastoralism and are very much a cattle-loving people, as are the Missiriya.

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***The terrible reality of the dynamics of the recent violence confirms that all national peace must have its foundations in local peace.***

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**Map 1. The western corridor area before West Kordofan was reestablished in 2013**

Note: Missiriya lost what was, in essence, a Missiriya state when West Kordofan state was dissolved and merged with southern Kordofan and the Nuba Mountains to form South Kordofan. This was likely done so the Missiriya vote could carry the South Kordofan referendum called for in a special protocol of the CPA.

Conflict resolution practices among and between the Dinka and the Missiriya have many similarities. Dinka chiefs use persuasion to resolve disputes. Disputants are allowed a public hearing in which all parties are allowed to speak. “Litigation among the Dinka is designed more to reconcile the adversaries than it is to find a right and wrong side. Unless people succeed in this, the conflict is not adequately resolved....In many cases, when a final settlement is reached, a ceremony of reconciliation follows.”<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Missiriya third parties keep community interests at the fore as they seek to return harmony and balance to the society. The practice of using third-party *ajarwid* (mediators) who use the *judiya* (a third-party process with characteristics of mediation and arbitration) followed by *sulha* reconciliation conferences are important baggara traditions used in local peace efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Dinka and Missiriya practices are affected by a variety of factors, including their respective cultures and religions. The Dinka are mainly Christians but have accommodated different religious movements into their cultural milieu. The Missiriya are primarily Muslims, but their conflict resolution practices reflect a combination of cultural and religious influences. Yet religious differences between Missiriya and Dinka do not override their cultural similarities. Underlying both their belief systems is a shared culture that largely revolves around the cow. For both groups, cattle are more important than any other possession and are thought of almost as members of the family.<sup>12</sup> For both communities, family herds are an indicator of status and wealth and an important form of social capital. Cattle are used to pay the bride price and to compensate homicide victims' relatives for their losses. Understanding how cattle act as currency, convey status, are used for compensation, and are raided or traded is a critical component of building sustainable peace.

In addition, each community is familiar with the values and customs of the other. Young Dinka men transition through age-sets in which demonstrations of physical prowess and valor are key; physical prowess and valor are likewise important in Missiriya culture. Both communities largely respect the wisdom and guidance of elders and chiefs, though both are struggling with youth who increasingly challenge authority figures. Missiriya hold dear the traditional Arab values of honor, generosity, and hospitality and live by a code of honor and courage that drives retaliation. According to one Missiriya, "Fear is the biggest disgrace."<sup>13</sup> The Dinka value harmony and good relations, traditionally reserving violence as a defensive weapon, a view consistent with the normative Dinka concept of *cieng*, which "puts 'human' values like dignity and integrity, honor and respect, loyalty and piety, and the power of persuasiveness at its core."<sup>14</sup>

The Fiyareen clan of Missiriya pastoralists follow their cattle, responding to the movement of seasonal rains from north to south. They traditionally spend the rainy season near Babanousa, then move slowly south in January and February to the river the Dinka call Kiir and Arabs call the Bahr al-Arab. They only need to move farther south (into Northern Bahr al-Ghazal) in drier years.

The Dinka Malual live a semipastoral, mixed-husbandry lifestyle that responds to the climate cycle. During the drier months between January and April, as the home grazing areas become exhausted and the land dries up, the Dinka move north toward more distant winter grazing land near the river until the rains come in spring. The rains begin and cultivating starts around May to June. Flooding can appear from June to September, meaning the area for Dinka Malual cattle to graze is relatively constrained. Historically, security concerns and the presence of pests such as the tsetse fly to the south and west also restrict grazing access and put further pressure on relationships with neighbors.

The relatively short growing season in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, constrained by a dry season of about six months, means that Dinka cultivation is limited to such crops as sorghum, millet, sesame, and groundnuts. This limited supply of crops means the Dinka depend on other sources of food when drought comes, crops fail, or diseases run rampant. This reliance on trade from other areas, including northern Sudan, from which key staples such as sugar come, is an important factor in the relationships across the Sudan–South Sudan border.<sup>15</sup> The western corridor is far from the key Sudanese port of Port Sudan and days by road from Khartoum. The existence of two critical north-south trade routes in the western corridor—the road that crosses the border and the rail line—makes these assets critical to both Missiriya and Dinka. Blocking the road can have dire consequences for communities on both sides (see map 1).

The Kiir/Bahr al-Arab River has been an important gathering point for people and cattle for generations, sometimes in peace, sometimes in conflict. Dinka value fishing in the river, and fish are an important part of the Dinka diet, particularly for poorer Dinka. Historically, the river was also an important wildlife hunting ground for baggara Arabs and Dinka alike. During the dry season, Missiriya cattle move toward the river, making it both a key location for interaction—given that in some years both Missiriya and Dinka cattle are in the same vicinity—and a critical shared resource.

### *Community Connections, Coordination, and Conflict*

Coordination of grazing and other conflict resolution tasks have happened in different ways over the years. Traditionally, tribal chiefs on both sides of the border would send representatives to meet and discuss the availability of grass, movement of rains, and the harvest, and in some cases, annual or biannual conferences were held. During the colonial period in the early twentieth century, chiefs and the chiefs' courts helped regulate seasonal grazing. When disputes arose, traditional mechanisms involved a third-party elder, religious leader, renowned mediator, or group of wise men. These *ajawid* acted as either mediators or arbitrators, consulting with stakeholders to understand their grievances, negotiating potential outcomes, and recommending a solution or verdict (which the parties were bound by custom to accept). The colonial administration modified and adapted this mechanism, creating tribal conferences by adding a neutral third party from a neighboring tribe and colonial officials and by focusing more on conflict prevention.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most important connectors between these communities practiced over generations is intermarriage. The two communities, Dinka Malual and Missiriya Fiyareen, are linked through corresponding family circles called *hashim bayt*, which help determine marriage connections. Yet the practice of intermarriage is generally only one way: Muslim men are permitted to take a non-Muslim wife, but Muslim women are generally not permitted to marry a non-Muslim man.<sup>17</sup> People have also been displaced by war or have moved voluntarily either north or south. Dinka women abducted during the war often married into or lived with Missiriya families, and many remain. The markets of Warawar and Aweil in South Sudan are flush with Arabs of various backgrounds, including Missiriya traders from just north of the border and others who have moved from Khartoum or Darfur for a number of reasons. Aweil, the capital of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal and a garrison town for the northern army during much of the civil war, is a key station on the north-south rail line. Those troops left behind a legacy of Arab influences and haunting memories that continue to flavor the town today. This diversity and rich tableau of historical and cultural connections affect conflict resolution practices and traditions.

The root causes of insecurity and violence on both sides of the border run deep. Before independence in 1956, the region was buffeted by national-level decisions made without input from local actors. Sudan's official independence was preceded by unrest related to the future form of governance, the ability of southerners to participate in government, and the relationship between North and South in general. Early Sudanese governments proved ineffective at governing and intolerant of diverse religious views. Unrest was met with repression that generated violent responses and increased militarization among southerners as they organized to fight for representation and freedom of religion. Attempts to acknowledge southern discontent and bring them into the fold through rudimentary peace processes and elections failed. Core grievances were not addressed and discontent grew.

Political changes in Khartoum toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s saw the democratically-elected prime minister replaced by a military revolutionary council and eventually the leadership of Jaafer Nimeiry, who brought new focus to ending the southern rebellion. The 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, negotiated between southern rebels and the new Khartoum regime and mediated with the support of international religious bodies, brought only temporary relief to the growing North–South divide and caused increased intertribal unrest in the south. In 1983, the Khartoum regime promulgated what were called the September Laws, which introduced sharia, including such punishments as stoning and amputation. The Christian southerners throughout Sudan were caught up in these laws, leaving scars that have never healed.

In the South, mistrust in the national government grew in part over designs for a Jonglei canal would drain the swampy sudd—which obstructs the river—damage the environment, and facilitate increased oil exploration. The South feared the northern government would capture this valuable southern resource and further exploit the South. These concerns, among others, led to a rebellion of southern army officers at Bor, led by John Garang, and resulted in the establishment in 1983 of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and a second full-scale civil war, after which Missiriya cattle rarely grazed south of the river.

Trade of commodities between neighboring tribes nonetheless continued when possible, although the very transportation links that were lifelines for trade near the border facilitated raids by the North against targets in the South.

In 1991, in the midst of intense violence and as community resilience wore thin after almost ten years of the second civil war, the Missiriya Fiyareen and their southern neighbors concluded a groundbreaking agreement to reopen trade routes in return for the ability to graze their cattle on Dinka land.<sup>18</sup> In defiance of their government in Khartoum, a Fiyareen member of the peace committee secretly passed a message to the senior SPLA commander nearest the border which noted that they would cease the deadly raids if allowed to trade and graze their cows. The parties agreed that the raids would cease and the critical north–south trade route would reopen. Goods would be sold in a peace market south of the border in the town of Warawar,<sup>19</sup> to be protected by a joint Dinka–Missiriya peace committee funded by fees from market traders. In the midst of a raging civil war, the Meiram–Warawar Joint Peace Committee and the Warawar Peace Market were born. The peace committee and the peace market still exist, and Missiriya cows graze on Dinka land.

The creation of a peace market and establishment of the Meiram–Warawar Joint Peace Committee was not the end of the story, however. When the government of Khartoum discovered its existence, the peace market was burned and looted. Members of the peace committee were arrested. The market resumed operating until it was burned and looted again. In more recent times, similar pressures have affected its work. However, the committee continues to play an important role in maintaining peaceful relationships for the people of the western corridor.

### *Violence After the CPA*

As noted, the second Sudanese civil war ended in early 2005 with the signing of the CPA, but that accord was put to the test within only a few years. In October 2007, serious fighting broke out in the western corridor, continuing on and off until spring 2008. The violence put great pressure on the Missiriya because the clashes between the pastoralists and the SPLA occurred within the grazing corridor, putting the Fiyareen at risk of being restricted from grazing their cattle south of the border. In addition, if the SPLA blocked the road, Missiriya traders would

be unable to access critical markets. Yet the underlying dynamic of the conflict was more complicated than access to grazing resources.

A complex set of national issues related to the CPA were converging on the western corridor. Seemingly straightforward topics, such as a national census and demarcation of the border between North and South, were further complicated by the disputed border area of Abyei.<sup>20</sup> All these were infused with vitriolic hyperbole and name-calling; fear of lost power, land, or resources, such as oil; and anxiety over the potential withdrawal of permission to graze Missiriya cattle on Dinka land—despite repeated statements to the contrary.

The challenges of implementing the CPA, particularly issues such as border demarcation, contributed to Missiriya fears that they were losing land near the river they had used for generations. Their grazing land had been compressed by factors such as oil exploration and resulting environmental degradation of critical grassland, as well as development arising within their traditional grazing corridor, pushing their grazing farther and farther west and putting pressure on their ability to graze in the south.<sup>21</sup> The Missiriya had contributed youth to fight the civil war on the side of the North and felt they had sacrificed tremendously for their government but had gotten nothing in return.<sup>22</sup>

The escalating events of late 2007 and early 2008 demonstrate clearly how local communities are buffeted by a complex web of national and local demands and underscore the need for some form of intervention. In response, a small group of Missiriya from Khartoum gathered in a park for ten days until well past midnight each night discussing ideas for a peace conference and took these ideas to an important Missiriya leader, Khair el Fahim. They also contacted locals in the Meiram area to generate support, and organizers reached out to each of the hashim bayts, despite sometimes violent opposition, to gain support for a peace conference. South of the border in Aweil, local actors were also building support for a conference, hoping to convene one quickly before spoilers could generate momentum against the idea. Their efforts were buttressed by a welcome announcement. In March 2008, General Paul Melong was appointed governor of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal. His extensive experience with the Missiriya along the border as the senior SPLA division commander and his role as recipient of their overtures to establish the peace markets made him a trusted figure on both sides. This event convinced Missiriya supporters of the conference that they had a willing partner south of the border.

About this time, the Government of National Unity (GNU) convened a high-level meeting of chiefs, border governors, and community leaders in Heglig, an important oil-producing area near Abyei, to focus on the issues at hand in the western corridor, to launch a dialogue between the two ethnic groups, and to bring healing and reconciliation. The appointment of Pagan Amun, then minister of cabinet affairs in the GNU and secretary general of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM, the political wing of the SPLA, or SPLM/A), and Mohamed Haroun, state minister of humanitarian affairs and the National Congress Party's deputy secretary of political affairs, to lead the joint ministerial committee was described by observers as instrumental in paving the way for the western corridor peace conference.

The Joint Ministerial Committee leaders in turn established joint technical and steering committees to lead thematic work and direct conference preparations. These committees were directed to steer clear of discussing border demarcation, deployment and redeployment of forces, and the disputed area of Abyei. Otherwise, they were free to set the agenda for the conference, projected to be held in Khartoum on March 31, 2008. An early position paper included several agenda items: the return of abducted children and women, compensation for past deaths and destruction, strategies for access to grazing land and water, disarmament

in accordance with the CPA, and opening the Meiram-Aweil road. Participants in steering committee meetings described tense and argumentative exchanges in which key participants either would fail to show up or would argue at great length before reaching agreement. Finally, one evening at a restaurant in Khartoum, the ice started to break and the parties to the process reiterated their need to work together.

The pressure near the border continued until early April 2008. On April 18, members of a high-level Missiriya delegation—led by South Kordofan governor Omar Suleiman Adam, Joint Steering Committee deputy chairman Khair el Fahim, plus heads of the Joint Integrated Unit and Police in South Kordofan—were greeted as dignitaries at the Aweil airstrip. The welcoming celebration was followed by a public rally at which Northern Bahr al-Ghazal residents sang songs of peace and women ululated, all to the sounds of the Aweil and Abyei jazz bands. The event proved important in building trust and confidence. Keeping a promise made at the ceremony the night before, a convoy estimated to include several hundred Missiriya crossed the border, opening the Meiram-Aweil road. They took this action in the face of opposition from the government of Sudan, which directed them not to go to Aweil. Missiriya supporters had met in Meiram and decided to defy this order.

This symbolic act addressed many important issues. Opening the road was expected to increase trade as well as almost immediately reduce prices of basic commodities, which had risen sharply during the war and again during the recent fighting. It would also help facilitate the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Khartoum to Northern Bahr al-Ghazal.

Despite a robust planning effort that included draft papers, workshops, and other conference preparation, the peace conference was delayed by events beyond the organizers' control. Efforts to conduct the national census for upcoming elections (and the Abyei referendum) created additional tensions and distracted key political actors, as did the SPLM political convention. The conference was further delayed by the invasion of Abyei by Sudan government forces in May, an event that occupied the attention of both governments and many western corridor actors. The committee tried to resume momentum and rescheduled for August. Yet as August loomed, severe flooding swept Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, and the conference was postponed again.

After a long debate about who should participate, the Dinka-Missiriya peace conference, scheduled to last for three days, was finally convened in Aweil on November 11, 2008. The agenda was extensive, modeled largely on a draft prepared by the steering committee, though some participants came with their own agenda from Khartoum, bringing with them a letter from the presidency. The conference was facilitated by an independent expert knowledgeable about the area. Discussion began in thematic working groups. Outcomes were compiled in two primary documents, the joint communiqué, and resolutions. The conference ended with food, dancing, and joyous celebrations.

At the end of the conference, however, no follow-up committee was established. When USIP reconvened representatives of the Dinka and Missiriya of the western corridor in June 2010, none of the recommendations had been implemented and several breaches of the agreement had already been reported. On April 28, 2011, some eight hundred Missiriya cows were stolen and four people killed. On May 2, the Meiram-Warawar road was closed again.

Within a few weeks of the April 2011 raid, 150 of the cattle had been returned. Intervention on the part of Governor Melong resulted in an additional ninety cattle being returned, but several hundred remained missing. Although both sides had made commitments to pay compensation for the two Missiriya and one SPLA soldier who had been killed, the blood money remained unpaid. Despite the initial excitement at having completed a landmark peace

conference only a few years earlier, the people of the western corridor once again faced the seemingly endless cycle of cattle raids, killing, unpaid blood money, blocked roads, and the need for another peace process.

## Improving the Impact of Local Peace Processes

The results of the June 2010 meeting that USIP convened in Aweil in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal shed important light on how international actors can more effectively contribute to achieving sustainable local peace.

Among the forty-odd male participants were members of the Missiriya and Dinka communities of the western grazing corridor who had contributed to the 2008 peace conference.<sup>23</sup> The 2010 gathering, called a Dialogue for Peaceful Coexistence, began with angry young men wagging their fingers at their tablemates, decrying the high bride prices that were putting pressure on marriageable men to gather more cows and therefore delay marriages.<sup>24</sup> Other participants described with great emotion how the joy of the 2008 agreement was overtaken by the pain of the failure to implement its conclusions. Despite recommending that *hafeers* (watering holes) be dredged to allow cows to graze further north, not one *hafeer* had been dug. Despite calls for the establishment of a joint court to help resolve cases of shared concern, such as cattle raids, no shared judicial mechanism had been discussed or implemented. Youth had not been held accountable for cattle raids. Blood money had not been paid.

How was it possible that months of work by numerous local actors (and much expense), the convening of almost three hundred people, the warm salutations, and a consensus document came to naught? More important, what can international and local actors do to create more successful, sustainable peace processes in the future? USIP's analysis of the ten conflict-affected communities in South Kordofan and its work in the western corridor have enabled the USIP team to make the following recommendations.

### *Before a Peace Process*

Although calls for a peace conference often initiate a peace process, much should be done in preparation to increase the odds of success. Important steps include

- conducting a robust conflict analysis;
- getting the right people in the room;
- building skills and trust;
- identifying a vision, goals, and objectives; and
- mapping the peace process.

Further examination will show how each can contribute to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of local peace processes.

### Conduct a robust conflict analysis

Analytical tools are critical to a successful local peace process. Determining a vision, goals, and objectives; selecting a theory of change; or calling for a peace conference before conducting a robust analysis is putting the cart before the horse. Yet it happens all the time. More commonly, participants leap from a superficial analysis of the situation—believing they know all they need to know—to a rather predictable solution. Although peace actors may be unfamiliar with conflict analysis and other analytical tools, most successful peace processes include a process of analysis and understanding before engaging in solutions.<sup>25</sup>



A conflict analysis framework helps a peace process in many ways. It can help determine which issues require immediate attention. It can help identify critical actors to include and to avoid. It can help clarify the strengths and weaknesses of stakeholder communities and interest groups and highlight the potential need for community outreach. It can help guide consultations with critical political leaders or government officials. It can identify key linkages or connectors that bind the warring parties together, as well as narratives or dividers used to mobilize actors to violence. A conflict analysis helps identify root causes of the violence, which must be addressed to build sustainable peace. It provides insight into issues that may remain unresolved from past peace processes. A conflict analysis also helps determine objectives, agenda items, and the participants.

Other analytical tools can also lend valuable insight. The USIP team used a variety of stakeholder mapping activities, modified to particular needs or settings. In one example, we sought to understand the role played by peace committee members in response to cattle raids or other potentially violent situations. We asked local actors to envision a scenario in which they were informed of the potential for violence and to map out their responses. Their responses differed depending on the level of violence or the number of stolen cattle—for example, providing important information about the respective roles and perceived responsibilities of various actors. Other useful analytical tools might include stakeholder interviews, focus group research, relationship mapping, and SWOT analyses.

A key goal of any conflict analysis is to understand the roles of the various actors. On both sides of the Sudan–South Sudan border, numerous international, national, state, and local actors are contributing to local peace processes and may have unclear or overlapping roles and responsibilities. Within civil society, those who claim to represent particular perspectives may not actually have the legitimacy or credibility to do so. Although government entities may be trying to clarify the roles of various actors, they too face challenges. In recent years, the trend has been for local actors to request peace conferences and for international organizations to fund them, in large part because it is unclear who in the national or state governments has the capacity, resources, or responsibility to address local conflicts. As indicated in the London School of Economics report,

While consideration of local indigenous structures is important and necessary in establishing a forum for political conflict, it is problematic if local indigenous structures are strengthened without questioning their political accountability in connection with violent conflict. In addition, linkages between formal government and putative traditional authorities have not been clarified and strengthened where appropriate. Currently, the proliferation of new government structures in addition to an emphasis on old governance systems has created a situation in which it is not clear where authority lies and ultimately who can take charge of dealing with violent conflict.<sup>26</sup>

The developing nature of the government of South Sudan and its respective states means that numerous committees, commissions, and ministries have, at times, been tasked with peace. In Sudan, peace similarly seems to fit within the roles of a number of official and unofficial bodies. Leaders in South Kordofan state, for example, created the Reconciliation and Peaceful Coexistence Mechanism to engage in conflict resolution efforts across the state. The mechanism reported directly to the governor and was staffed by former high ranking military members (which sent unclear messages about their approach to peace).

In addition to government-established entities, each community has its own set of traditional leaders interacting with local government officials. Below state-level actors sit the remnants of the Native Administration in the north, with an ever-growing hierarchy of chiefs, elders, and traditional leaders at various levels of society (subclan, clan, tribe). These elders interact with government officials at the village, town, and county levels. All these actors may have murky responsibilities and authorities with respect to peace.

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***A conflict analysis helps identify root causes of the violence, which must be addressed to build sustainable peace.***

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The proliferation of tribal chief positions within the formal or informal native administration in both Sudan and South Sudan has caused the number of participants in peace conferences to balloon to three hundred or more. It means that more actors are expecting a seat at the table, but many of them may not have real influence in terms of implementing a successful outcome. In addition, governments have manipulated the role of traditional leaders, historically respected as representatives of local communities. Globalized and educated youth also challenge the legitimacy of their leaders and boldly defy their edicts. Youth in the cattle camps may be manipulated to conduct raids or take it upon themselves to steal their way to a marriage dowry, in defiance of or with the blessing of elders.<sup>27</sup>

According to one participant in a USIP meeting, three actors are critical to peace in the western corridor: the governor of South Kordofan state, the governor of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal state, and the Meiram-Warawar peace committee.<sup>28</sup> Some have praised the work of the peace committee, and others have felt the need for a group of people professionally trained to manage peace.

The relatively recent addition of peace committees to the menu of local actors presents both new opportunities and new challenges. Before engaging with peace committees or assuming they are a suitable interlocutor for a particular engagement, one needs to understand their reputation and level of legitimacy, who they represent, what kind of access they have to various actors, what successes or failures they have had, their capacities and resources, whether they duplicate roles played by other actors, and what relationships they have with political, military, and other actors.<sup>29</sup> In the civil society realm, international NGOs are creating and supporting peace committees in Sudan and South Sudan in a variety of contexts. Some of these efforts may be creating essential entities able to reach across ethnic boundaries and provide sustainable solutions. Unfortunately, others may be creating committees that are unsustainable, ad hoc, moneymaking bodies that empower alternate power structures, undermine state authorities, or create forum-shopping opportunities for conflict entrepreneurs. Other committees may be formed specifically to implement conference recommendations and to be successful may require logistical, financial, and other support. A more productive alternative may be to engage existing entities with recognized responsibilities and authority for aspects of peace.

Other civil society actors can also play a constructive role. Each one has a specific mission and purpose, yet may adapt to the needs of international donors to receive funding, a dynamic that can be problematic in several ways.<sup>30</sup> This does not prevent them from playing a constructive role, and in Sudan and South Sudan, they are becoming some of the most important actors.

Respected religious leaders may play key third-party roles, such as convening or mediating, and many willingly embrace exceedingly challenging peace efforts. The Sudan Inter-Religious Council, for example, has sought to convene actors in conflicts and to encourage peaceful solutions. In South Sudan, church representatives are striving to make critical inroads for peace in Jonglei state, where a deadly conflict has raged for years. The best example is perhaps the 1999 Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace and Reconciliation Conference, known as the Wunlit conference because it was held in the small southern village of Wunlit. At this conference, the New Sudan Council of Churches worked with other partners to help key Dinka and Nuer leaders put aside their intertribal feud and focus on reconciling the communities of the West Bank after years of civil war.

### Get the right people in the room

Consultations in South Kordofan made it clear that one of the many reasons local peace agreements are often not sustainable is that the “wrong” people are in the room for peace activities,

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***According to one participant, three actors are critical to peace in the western corridor: the governor of South Kordofan state, the governor of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal state, and the Meiram-Warawar peace committee.***

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and thus important perspectives are missing. For example, nomads who actually move with the cattle are rarely in discussions of grazing corridors, and IDPs are seldom included in local peace efforts, but their interests and needs cannot be ignored.

A useful way to help get the right people in the room is to refer to the objectives for any peace activity and then to ask the question of whose perspective, contribution, or commitment is needed to achieve those objectives. For example, using participant selection criteria, such as “people who understand this particular cattle raid,” expands the universe of potential participants from youth union representatives to include youth from the cattle camps and perhaps owners of the cattle that were raided.

Conflict analysis of the western corridor indicated that trade relationships were key but that traders were not represented in the peace conference. A committee was therefore created to establish participant selection criteria to broaden participation and include members of this key sector. The incorporation of marketplace traders in a future session contributed greatly to the perspectives shared in the meeting and demonstrated the value of broader inclusion.

Additionally, the views, interests, and needs of spoilers need to be anticipated and dealt with. Women and youth should be included, but labeling them by their gender and age alone dilutes the importance of their individual perspectives. Youth from cattle camps and women singers, to give two examples, are groups whose interests may not coincide with peace efforts and whose views would almost certainly conflict with more mainstream civil society women and youth representatives. All parties should be represented, however, because they can advocate for retaliation and more violence.

Another factor frequently cited for the failure of local peace efforts is tribalism. Yet participant selection criteria often identify people by tribe. The 2008 conference in the western corridor was called the Dinka-Missiriya peace conference. This title can have numerous meanings and interpretations, but one is that those from other groups are unwelcome. If one were to include only Dinka and Missiriya in a western corridor conference, Missiriya would likely be drawn from the North (Sudan) and Dinka from the South, which misses many Dinka in the North and Missiriya in the South. It may also exclude other minorities or ethnic groups involved in or affected by the conflict.<sup>31</sup> In Aweil, Warawar, Meiram, and other western corridor towns, several minority groups—Darfuri traders in the marketplace and restaurant owners from outside the area, for example—were frequently excluded from local peace efforts despite their interest in peace.

Dissemination of outcomes can also help involve important actors in a peace process. For example, if the results of a particular process or agreement need to be disseminated to widespread rural communities, representatives of low-tech media outlets might be important to engage early. If the implementation will require resources such as digging a hafeer, it might be wise to invite representatives from the ministries (both North and South) in charge of water resources and perhaps an international nongovernmental organization (NGO) that supports such development initiatives. If a decision is made to task subcommittees with implementation duties for which they have no resources, thought needs to be given to who might provide those resources.

### Build skills and trust

Training in active listening skills is a good way to enhance the level of discussion in a group and enable improved communications. Listening and storytelling exercises in a workshop setting can facilitate the sharing of personal stories that might not otherwise be revealed. Training in negotiation skills and the roles that interests, needs, and values play in conflict resolution

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***Knowledge of techniques such as using leverage, building coalitions, and undertaking advocacy can improve negotiation outcomes and options for bargaining.***

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can broaden the scope of solutions and can also increase bargaining power. Knowledge of techniques such as using leverage, building coalitions, and undertaking advocacy can improve negotiation outcomes and options for bargaining. Information about conflict or negotiation styles can help groups recognize when a particular approach is not likely to be productive. Improved understanding of third-party roles can help local actors interact more effectively with the multiple third parties that are often involved.

Bringing together people from varied backgrounds and having them share perspectives on the conflict dynamics as well as their experiences can become a process for humanizing the other and learning about suffering or trauma previously unknown or unacknowledged. Storytelling was an important element of the Wunlit conference.

A little more than a full day was given to Dinka to tell their stories to the Nuer and to surface the issues that were outstanding between Dinka and Nuer. This was followed by a similar amount of time for story telling by the Nuer, including their responses to what had been said by the Dinka. Finally a day was given for dialogue and rebuttal, comments from key border chiefs, and observations from chiefs who had come as observers from the east bank of the Nile River. The three and a half days of speaking generated a list of issues and a number of proposals for solutions.<sup>32</sup>

These skills and activities can improve the substance of local peacebuilding activities, but it is equally important to take every opportunity to build trust. Numerous activities can simultaneously build conflict management and negotiating skills, broaden perspectives about a conflict situation, and increase trust. Asking participants to share a time they felt proud of their peacebuilding abilities is a good way to generate positive feelings and to perhaps open the door to more personal reflections and understanding, which in turn helps others see the individual as worthy of trust. A simple listening activity in which one person tells a story and another listens, conducted after training in active listening skills, can be powerful and moving. Exercises that highlight personal characteristics or animosities, exercises that explore identity and perception, and activities that allow one to move to deeper levels of understanding all bring peace participants to begin to see the world through the eyes of someone they might consider an adversary or even an enemy.

### **Identify vision, goals, and objectives**

Peace processes lacking a vision, goals, and objectives are unlikely to be successful. Without a common vision, local actors may not be able to generate the energy or commitment needed to make the sacrifices, to step outside the immediate demands for violence, or to overcome the anger, animosity, or other factors supporting violence.

The Wunlit conference, widely regarded as one of the most important and effective processes ever held in contemporary southern Sudan, provides an excellent example of the power of a common vision. The participants shared a goal—for Dinka and Nuer to stop fighting each other and to focus on reconciling their communities. Embedded within that vision was the recognition that without local peace between Dinka and Nuer, all southern Sudanese were being kept from a larger vision of sovereignty and an end to the devastating civil war with the North.

Yet at times there is no common vision. In fact, some would say the separation of South Sudan from Sudan demonstrates the lack of a vision for a shared future. In these cases, it may still be possible to launch a process of trying to determine what elements of a shared vision (and interdependence) do exist—shared grazing resources, intermarriage, trade relationships, shared heritage, common culture—with an eye toward developing bridging elements that can

help bring communities together. Creating a common vision can be as simple as helping communities come to a mutual realization that the particular conflict cannot be resolved through violence and that a nonviolent peace process holds the best potential for all sides.

After developing a vision, local actors can address goals and objectives. I see goals as being component parts of a vision. Here is an example: If two communities have previously been in conflict, their common vision may be to transform into a set of neighboring communities living in peace and harmony. They might determine that there are three things that need to occur in order to achieve that vision: building trust between the two communities, improving livelihoods and economic opportunities for both communities, and improving conflict resolution processes to prevent conflicts from escalating to violence. Each of these three elements becomes a goal. For each goal, they would ask themselves what would be required to achieve that goal. These become their objectives. When they ask the question of how they would achieve those objectives, those become their activities. Although oversimplified, this example demonstrates how vision, goals, and objectives are directly linked to concrete activities.

More specific than goals, objectives also help move the process forward. Establishing objectives is the process of outlining the component steps needed to reach each goal. Outlining them can overcome the logjam of not knowing how to tackle complex problems, and helps address challenges of who is responsible for which actions, or of not knowing what step comes first. By brainstorming a list of activities, it generally becomes clear which activity or action needs to happen first. One can apply the tried and true method of selecting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) objectives for each step along the way, but in my experience, participants are more likely to be able to recite the elements of SMART than to be able to apply them. For this reason, a simplified problem-solving framework can be helpful.<sup>33</sup>

1. Determine what one hopes to achieve.
2. Analyze the conflict or problem.
3. Brainstorm options.
4. Decide on a course of action.
5. Develop an action plan.
6. Begin implementation of the plan.
7. Monitor, evaluate, and revise.

For example, if a village market recently burned down during a series of clashes between neighboring tribes, a problem-solving approach might focus on rebuilding the market. But if the vision is of two communities living peacefully side by side, and the immediate goal is to bring stability and peace to shared market operations, just rebuilding the buildings will not be enough: Relationships must also be rebuilt. Objectives such as restoring a place for commerce, calming community relations, and restoring the financial viability of the community could generate ideas for activities that collectively will add up to more than the sum of their parts, if conducted under the umbrella of transforming relationships and building trust. Prioritized objectives, in this case, might lead toward activities to resolve the immediate violence and put security measures in place.

Once the area is secure, community leaders could convene in the center of the marketplace or other town gathering spot (such as under a mango tree), to commit publicly to holding the perpetrators accountable. Getting youth from both sides to participate in a training program on construction techniques, after which they would rebuild the marketplace together, could come next, and might be accompanied by activities on addressing stereotypes and a problem-

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***Creating a common vision can be as simple as helping communities come to a mutual realization that the particular conflict cannot be resolved through violence and that a nonviolent peace process holds the best potential for all sides.***

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solving working group on cattle raids. The women from the two villages could be invited to write and sing a song of peace about the new market that also indicates a transformed relationship. All these activities would be consistent with achieving the overall goal of reconstructing a peaceful, shared marketplace and building the relationships to sustain it. In this case or any other, it would be important to reflect on what the original objectives were, assess whether they have been achieved, and be willing to modify the project as needed.

### Map the process

Before a peace process begins, it is helpful to have a mental (or actual) map or outline of where the process is going and how it is going to get there, acknowledging of course the need to remain flexible. This map can also be called an action plan.

The plan should incorporate the learning from the previous steps in the process. It should reflect the conflict analysis in terms of steps to engage communities and other stakeholders affected by violence, strategies to address spoilers, and activities to deal with unresolved causes. It should reflect the achievement of particular goals in support of a vision, and the objectives should be reflected in the activities along the way. It should outline activities to address skill and trust gaps. It should also show how various stakeholders and actors will be engaged in the process. In addition, it should include mechanisms for dissemination and feedback, reflection and reassessment, and monitoring and evaluation.

Whether one is using a visual depiction or a textual outline, the map should make clear to anyone participating in the process that it is specifically designed to walk stakeholders step by step to the agreed goal. Finally, the process map should point toward an end goal, which will help the organizers to know whether they have succeeded in their efforts.

Some of the best process maps are the work of Susan Podziba for her community-level consensus-building process to create a new city charter in a dysfunctional U.S. city wracked by corruption and ethnic cleavages. Some elite stakeholders had no interest in changing the status quo because they benefited from it, so she needed to incorporate elements, including community consultations and transparency and accountability mechanisms, to address those dynamics.<sup>34</sup>

### During Peace Events

Whatever the goals or objectives, at some point convening a variety of actors for some form of meeting or conference will be necessary. Such events might range from a small group of four or five senior decision makers to a large gathering with scores or hundreds of participants; whatever the size, the choices and decisions one makes as an organizer can determine the success of the entire process. The key elements to keep in mind for conducting a successful event include

- conducting consultations and gaining the support of key stakeholders;
- designing an event to achieve the stated goals;
- using a consensus decision-making model;
- integrating activities to build empowerment, recognition, and trust; and
- ensuring transparency and accountability.

### Conduct consultations and gain buy-in

In some cases, the key objective for consultations might be to inform stakeholder groups about a process or to introduce to them third-party actors, such as facilitators or mediators. In other

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***An action plan should include mechanisms for dissemination and feedback, reflection and reassessment, and monitoring and evaluation***

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cases, the goal is to gain the buy-in of key political actors without whose approval a peace process cannot go forward.

Sometimes consultations can help fill in gaps in a conflict analysis—for example, if one is unable to gain the support of key political actors, consultations with community members can help third-party facilitators understand the reasons for the lack of support and address those gaps. At other times, consultations can help broaden the participant selection process and ensure that essential perspectives are included.

At the 2008 Dinka-Missiriya conference, the organizers gave local community members specific criteria to use when selecting their participants. Certainly, outsiders did not know who the “right” people to be in the room to address specific issues were. However, it became clear that youth union and women’s union participants were favored in the selection process and that many key actors were missed despite the high number of participants. In the western corridor, representatives of the SPLA were rarely invited to the conferences or called on to provide input, even though they were involved in violent conflicts and cattle raids.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to helping identify appropriate participants, consultations can help identify credible spokespersons for various stakeholder perspectives. In the city charter development process referred to earlier, Susan Podziba confronted a community controlled by political power brokers, beset with quasi-democratic processes, ethnic polarization, widespread corruption, and a disengaged citizenry. She could not produce a usable city charter without community engagement, yet it was impossible to engage every citizen. She therefore consulted constituency groups, asking each of them to provide names of individuals they trusted. When three names were mentioned repeatedly by a wide variety of groups, she engaged those individuals to create a committee to identify spokespersons who were trusted to speak on behalf of the full spectrum of stakeholder interests. This process produced a set of trusted actors who were then trained to conduct community consultations, disseminate tentative decisions, and generate feedback and comments that could then be fed back into the draft agreement.<sup>36</sup> Although a process such as this would require delicacy and persistence in remote areas of Sudan and South Sudan, the principle of finding trusted spokespersons trained in community engagement in order to gain buy-in and accountability should be kept in mind for any peace process.

A key factor in the success of the Wunlit conference was that the broader community was fully engaged in the process.

With the organising skills of a local chief, nearly three hundred citizens laboured for three months to build an entire village for the peace conference. One hundred fifty tukuls [houses], a large meeting hall was built, cattle, goats and chickens were pledged and provided for meat. A well was drilled, additional food was imported, extensive transportation was planned, and relationships were maintained with all levels of society from local chiefs to the highest levels of the political movements.<sup>37</sup>

### Design an event to achieve stated goals

Although a successful peacebuilding strategy involves a variety of approaches, a conflict situation is likely, at some point, to require convening peace actors in one location to discuss issues and create solutions. These discussions range from dialogues to problem-solving working groups to peace conferences, each of which has its value.

In an increasing number of situations, organizers are convening smaller, preventive events, such as pre-grazing meetings. Many conflict situations are better suited to these smaller meetings—cattle raids, for example.<sup>38</sup> An organizer should ask whether all the interested parties need to play a role in reaching a solution or whether their interests can be met through consultations before or

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***In the western corridor, representatives of the SPLA were rarely invited to the conferences or called on to provide input, even though they were involved in violent conflicts and cattle raids.***

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follow-up meetings after a smaller group meets to resolve the problem. One approach might be to conduct regular, smaller meetings of working groups composed of no more than twelve carefully selected individuals and tasked with limited objectives. Weekly meetings at a local peace center or designated community-gathering spot to address local grievances already occur with elders and traditional or governmental community leaders. Such gatherings might serve as a model.

Even with more smaller, specific-purpose meetings, times will still arise when a large number of actors need to come together—in essence, a peace conference. The peace conference has become a cultural stalwart in Sudan and South Sudan, part of the historical narrative of community relationships north and south of the border. As noted earlier, they typically involve large numbers of political actors and traditional leaders but few grassroots representatives. They are expensive and frequently initiated by local actors seeking international funding. For all these reasons, and without denigrating their good work, it is important to analyze these events and modify current practices to make them more effective.

One shortcoming is that peace conferences often have no specific objectives other than peace and often specify no intended outcomes, a situation that can be addressed by delineating goals and objectives, as noted. They are frequently convened after a particularly costly cycle of violence, which suggests increasing the focus on prevention. Large peace conferences are usually held infrequently, in part because of the costs and other demands, resulting in agendas overloaded with complex and challenging situations. Holding fewer, smaller meetings focusing on specific topics can thus pare the agendas to more manageable levels.

For example, if abductions are of concern in a particular community, a sidebar effort to bring a representative from the national-level Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC) to present the latest status on the topic to the community could keep the topic off an agenda at a conference.<sup>39</sup> The topic of abductions does not in fact belong on the agenda of any local peace conference, though it is obviously a grave concern to many local actors. The subject is too sensitive and too complicated to warrant local actors struggling over possible solutions that are beyond their ability to implement. On the other hand, the national-level entity tasked with addressing abductions can and should present findings to local communities and explain their inability to tackle unresolved cases.

Agenda topics must be relevant to the parties at the conference, who must have the authority either to solve problems that are presented or the ability to initiate a credible process to generate discussions and actions.

The structure of the conference can also have an impact on its success. In contemporary peace conferences, several hundred participants are typically divided into working groups of twenty to fifty, far more than invite productive consultations. In general, twelve participants is probably the largest size for a productive conversation. However, groups as small as five or six can be quite productive when well facilitated and when the appropriate people participate.

Facilitation is an area of professional practice, and an organizer cannot assume expertise just because someone holds a particular position or role, or because they have undertaken the task previously. It may be best to train a cadre of local actors as facilitators. Good facilitation ensures productive discussions by keeping participants on topic, keeping discussions to a particular time schedule, summarizing decisions and highlighting areas of disagreement, and following other facilitation strategies. Professional quality facilitation requires an understanding of perspectives, such as local ownership of the process, guidelines for effective communication, reaching consensus on easy topics as well as building consensus on the difficult issues, and summarizing agreements. It is a skill that requires expertise and practice.

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Many contemporary peace conferences dedicate time for politicians to have the microphone and speak for as long as they desire. Organizers might consider ways to allow politicians adequate face time without disrupting or capturing the proceedings. Participants could arrive just in time for a welcome dinner the evening before the conference begins at which politicians formally kick off the event and get a chance to speak. Other strategies might be to dedicate a mechanism for political leaders to indicate their support for the process through a proclamation or news bulletin. In some cases, tradition dictates that key actors be present, or that a representative open the conference. Organizers should put strategies in place so that late arrivals of key leaders do not delay the substance of the event. One approach is to plan trust-building activities, such as interpersonal introductions, to occur before the official opening.

Other shortcomings in structure and process can be addressed through good facilitation. It is common for facilitators to invite participants to create guidelines for discussion. These fairly predictable rules (turn off cell phones, encourage everyone to contribute, treat others with respect) are often regularly violated. A facilitator can invite the participants to create their own rules as well as determine penalties for violating them.<sup>40</sup>

Facilitators should take advantage of any opportunities for collaborative decision making and practicing the skills that will be used in peace conferences—developing an agenda, gaining consensus on the venue, setting dates and coordinating travel, and agreeing on times for breaks or whether a meal will be served are all opportunities to build trust and confidence through consensus and successful implementation of decisions.

### Use a consensus decision-making model

A number of models of discussion are used at peace conferences. A common structure allows key individuals to stand, microphone in hand, and have their say about events or the topics at hand. This model of power-broker speaker and passive listener is useful for certain activities, such as conveying buy-in or support for the process or disseminating key information. But sustainable peacebuilding requires the engagement of key stakeholder groups—either in person or through credible representatives—in which participants become key contributors rather than passive bystanders. Practices such as debate, discussion, dialogue, and deliberation all have their place. Likewise, a variety of decision-making practices, from majority vote to secret ballot, have their place as well. Consensus-building, though, is likely the most suitable, most effective communication and decision-making practice for peace processes.

Consensus-building is defined as “a process of seeking unanimous agreement. . . . Consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can live with whatever is proposed after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all stakeholding parties.”<sup>41</sup> Sometimes complete consensus is not possible, but even partial consensus can contribute to improved outcomes in the recognition that views were heard and considered and that, to the greatest extent possible, solutions reflect the best options to accommodate the various interests and needs.

### Build local empowerment

Almost every stage of a peace process presents an opportunity to build capacity in some way, but the early stages are especially important to set the stage for success. Empowerment means that local actors should be in the lead. (The idea of training a cadre of local peace actors as facilitators is consistent with this approach.) Opportunities to empower include involving locals in conducting consultations, setting the agenda, determining the venue, identifying par-

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***Sustainable peacebuilding requires the engagement of key stakeholder groups—either in person or through credible representatives—in which participants become key contributors rather than passive bystanders.***

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ticipants, facilitating events, and implementing the outcome while identifying and addressing gaps or challenges through training, mentoring, and other resources. If a negotiated settlement is required, negotiation skills training might be in order. In the western corridor, training in conflict analysis was welcomed and gave local peacebuilders a new tool to work with. Empowering community leaders to conduct their own analysis and find their own solutions will leave behind an approach that could pay dividends for future conflict resolution efforts.

Local actors in communities in South Kordofan indicated weaknesses or gaps in their understanding of concepts such as negotiation, conflict mapping, mediation and other third-party processes, and reconciliation. Although they had had previous conflict resolution training, they still felt inadequately prepared to deal with the complex nature of the conflict dynamics in their communities. In other words, empowerment requires not just transferring skills but also the commitment to support the application of those skills.

Sudanese and South Sudanese have a long history of mediating disputes and calling on third parties who can be helpful if well informed about local needs. The training of Sudanese and South Sudanese must be done in ways that connect new skills with their existing conflict resolution or conflict transformation capacities as well as the situations to which the skills will be applied. Thus, a training environment in which local actors feel comfortable questioning assumptions, building the agenda, and steering workshop content to local needs is the most empowering.

### Ensure transparency and accountability

Grassroots actors are often not invited to participate directly in peace processes. The lack of consultation with key constituencies may mean that solutions cannot be implemented because the communities reject the agreements. Citizen observers who are negatively affected by violence can be prime candidates to help prevent conflicts from escalating precisely because they understand so well what is at risk if the situation turns violent. Grassroots processes could be organized before a peace conference to feed issues and concerns to the conference working groups. These working groups can summarize past actions, reflect on what aspects were effective, and initiate a process to gather information. “Nothing about them without them” is a wise peacebuilding principle.

Two key guiding principles to achieve sustainable outcomes are transparency and accountability. Transparent processes can affect success in many ways. Transparency allows citizens to see their government officials and other actors in action, making decisions, debating important issues, and discussing situations with those who might otherwise be enemies. It can transform people from observers to collaborators. Transparency also allows for accountability. Only through accountability can citizens, observers, and participants know whether a peace process is serving the interests it is intended to serve.

Mechanisms for transparency and accountability should be built into a peace process from the beginning. These could include a plan to return to stakeholder communities consulted before a process or event; to describe the discussions, points of consensus, and areas of disagreement; and to ask for their feedback or suggestions. Town hall presentations—or the equivalent in Sudan or South Sudan, such as discussions between elders, peace committee members, political leaders, and community members held under a mango tree or in the town center—are excellent venues to build transparency and accountability before, during, and after a process. Media programs can gain the support of and inform key constituencies. Initiatives such as advocacy campaigns, follow-on meetings, or formal requests can link grassroots or local processes to state, national, or international actors with important resources or perspectives.

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***Transparency allows for accountability. Only through accountability can citizens, observers, and participants know whether a peace process is serving the interests it is intended to serve.***

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Because local peace processes are inextricably linked with regional and national political and social dynamics, it is important to create linkages between various levels of society, such as members of a peace committee and important constituency villages or state-level actors and national ministries. These are critical to closing the loop in terms of accountability.

For example, organizers of the Wunlit conference recognized that entire communities needed to be engaged. Beyond the process of building the peace village itself, the New Sudan Council of Churches used the people-to-people model to integrate communities, dialogue and working groups, and political and religious actors under a common vision.<sup>42</sup>

Planning for transparency and accountability mechanisms is critical to their success. Another important aspect is addressing logistical challenges, which can in and of themselves undermine a peace process. In Sudan and South Sudan, cell phone coverage is not universal, so communicating outcomes or consulting leaders at another level can require transportation and other logistics support, which may in turn require car rental, fuel, satellite phones, or phone cards. If a peace committee is to meet somewhere other than under their mango tree, funding for renting a venue and lodging and feeding participants may also be required.

### *After a Conference*

A peace conference typically ends with great pomp and flourish. Music and dancing is typical, and a hearty meal is shared. Warm feelings of renewal are palpable. Traditional reconciliation rituals, like slaughtering a bull, have largely been subsumed by more expeditious processes, such as a media interview by the presiding politicians or politicians showering paper money over the heads of fellow dancers. Participants are transported back to their villages and promise to share the conference proceedings and agreements with their people. Yet follow-up is rare. Implementation of the recommendations is even more so. Of the 2008 western corridor conference, one organizer said, “Nobody really took care of the recommendations.” The June 2012 conference in Jonglei state was praised for getting the right actors in the room; for being facilitated and convened by third-party actors with standing, access, and credibility (religious leaders); and for producing not only a set of agreements but also a fairly robust action plan. Even in this case, however, follow-up and implementation failed to deliver on promises, and the initiative faltered.

According to Chester Crocker, longtime U.S. diplomat and scholar of peace processes, “Those [agreements] that ‘work’ are nurtured by a continuous element of sustained, third-party leadership, mediation, problem-solving and peace building.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, peace conferences and peace agreements may be the easy part. As one western corridor observer noted, implementation is “costly because it forces someone to implement compromises made at the table. ... Signing on paper doesn’t cost anything.”<sup>44</sup>

Successful peace agreements face many obstacles, political will being only one of many. Peacebuilding requires overcoming weak government structures, unclear roles and responsibilities among multiple actors, trauma and pain, mistrust between communities and leaders, lack of resources, interventions by myriad international actors who may come and go, and the inertia of everyday life in a harsh environment in which mere survival can be a daily struggle. Local actors recognize the shortcomings but often do not know how, or do not have the ability, to address them. Peace practitioners can—and should—anticipate these challenges and design creative mechanisms to address them. Some of the most important to keep in mind include

- creating an architecture for peace,
- moving beyond recommendations to agreements,

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- mapping implementation mechanisms into the process,
- monitoring and evaluating,
- building a communication and outreach strategy, and
- deepening reconciliation and commitment.

### Create an architecture for peace

One feature of sustainable peace agreements, whether national or local, is institutionalization. In other words, the responsibility for the outcome is embedded within a structure. Different elements of civil society and government take ownership of aspects of a peace process. A state-level entity could be given responsibility by the local actors for overseeing implementation of an agreement. A peace committee might be tasked with conducting a problem-solving working group to coordinate grazing. A senior local chief could be designated to lead a committee tasked with exploring the root causes of cattle raids in the county and reporting to a working group tasked with following up on a recent cattle raid.

These individual activities need to be part of an overall plan, however. What is required is a thoughtful, well-planned process that outlines roles and responsibilities, clarifies areas of overlap, and creates processes of action and commitment tied to budgets and authority. Many aspects of this infrastructure already exist. Many actors are working hard to bring peace to Sudan and South Sudan, but their efforts may be redundant, overlapping, competitive, or piecemeal or present other challenges to success. Stakeholder mapping, like that conducted with the Meiram-Warawar Joint Peace Committee, can help determine which actors can be usefully engaged in particular parts of the peacebuilding process and which entities have legitimacy, access, and standing.

The process of clarifying roles and responsibilities for various actors is an important contribution. Activities conducted with the Meiram-Warawar committee helped them create a mission statement as well as craft a vision for the future of the western corridor. A more robust effort might involve taking that mission statement to other peace actors and discussing overlaps, identifying gaps, and creating structures and processes for coordination, all related to various conflict scenarios that could be anticipated in the future.

Part of creating an architecture for peace is envisioning scenarios for conflict prevention, resolution, and transformation. Another part is anticipating crisis situations in which violence might escalate quickly. Crisis response situations are not likely to be resolved in large peace conferences, and peace conference agreements are not likely to be sufficiently timely to address the problems. Rapid response mechanisms would likely involve the peace committees, traditional leaders, and police or other security officials who are first informed of the situation and who have the communication and transportation resources to respond effectively and quickly. These mechanisms, though, should also include specific actions and commitments to undermine opportunities for escalation.

The process of outlining roles and responsibilities helps address problems with the recommendations section of peace agreements. A conference that has sixty participants in a working group about grazing may include only half a dozen with substantial knowledge and interest in the topic. A more productive approach might be for the peace conference to select, for example, a smaller group—such as a grazing committee—that includes only knowledgeable participants, such as clan leaders, nomads, and local security officials. The process of selecting this committee should be transparent and inclusive to ensure its legitimacy and credibility

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***Stakeholder mapping can help determine which actors can be usefully engaged in particular parts of the peacebuilding process and which entities have legitimacy, access, and standing.***

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to address these issues. Political or traditional leaders could contribute recommendations for consideration by members of the grazing committee. This committee could be convened at a location near the border, along rivers, or near other sources of water. Their agreements on dates and processes could then be presented to county, state, and national leaders; military and police officials; and local communities for comment and feedback.

### **Move beyond recommendations to agreements**

The peace agreement documents that emerge from local peace conferences tend to follow a standard template. One of the main components is a set of resolutions or a communiqué that highlights relationships, situations of interdependence, and perspectives that encourage a mindset of peace. It may also outline guiding principles or assumptions. The second component is usually a set of recommendations, which normally outline actions that participants in the thematic working groups believe would help resolve the problem. These recommendations may be followed by a signature page in which influential actors indicate their approval. In some cases, the agreement outlines an implementation process, goals for dates and timelines, and actors responsible for certain actions or areas of interest.<sup>45</sup>

Mostly, such agreements commit no one to take any action and largely fail to create a process for peacebuilding. They may neglect to differentiate between high priority actions related to crisis response, long-term activities to address root causes, and procedures for conflict prevention, in addition to ignoring issues of trust. A combination of factors already discussed—not having the right participants in the room, the mismatch between agenda topics and participants' expertise or area of responsibility, and a history of peace practice in which grassroots stakeholders put their trust in chiefs and government to take care of peace—undermines the ability of these agreements to have any sustainable impact.

One approach to these challenges is to initiate a process (distinct from an event) in which citizen stakeholders can engage in efforts to build foundational agreements, such as community principles to take the place of conference resolutions that relate to processes and principles. These principles could be generated through consultations with all community members, put in draft form, returned to the community for comment and feedback, and then finalized and posted in the central market.<sup>46</sup>

Such an approach could encourage the community members to discuss values and guiding principles and thus becomes a constructive exercise in civic education and empowerment. This approach removes the need for a process of identifying community values from the peace conference agenda, in which the values reflect only the perspectives of those in the room and are likely to be determined by a group only barely representative of diverse views within a community.

### **Map implementation mechanisms into the process**

Organizers should determine what the objectives are for any peace intervention and design a process to achieve them. They should consult with the people affected by the conflict and ask them what they would hope to see out of a peace process. Organizers might invite some community members to participate, observe, or contribute to the process. These steps increase transparency, accountability, and the likelihood of follow-up.

The goals and objectives for implementation should clearly outline tasks, responsibilities, and commitments for follow-up meetings; advocacy to generate resources or other items needed for implementation; creating or joining coalitions; and linking grassroots processes to local, state, and

national government entities. International and government entities should ensure that lessons are shared across thematic groups, across levels of government, and across geographical areas.

When efforts are divided into smaller pieces and mapped into the plan, follow-up becomes a more natural part of the process. As an infrastructure for peace is created, the implementation plan engages actors in their part of the plan and invites oversight, collaboration, and continual monitoring and evaluation. A local problem-solving working group, for example, can schedule monthly meetings at which members are called on to describe activities since the previous meeting. At the end of each meeting, members are assigned tasks or volunteer for them, with specific timelines. Action plans should include next steps and check-in points. These tasks can be small—for example, make one telephone call and report to the group at the next meeting. Actions should be analyzed in terms of feasibility, resources needed, and potential logjams. If the right people, those with resources to dig a hafeer, for example, are not in the room or have not committed to doing so, a plan can still be put in place to contact those people, to submit a formal request for services, or to appeal to higher levels of government or other actors with the potential ability to implement.

The more this process of task and responsibility, reporting, and monitoring becomes standard procedure, the more reinforcing the results. As one member of the western corridor peace committee said in an interview, “A peace process is an everyday job.” Shifting conference products from signatures and recommendations to commitments to specific actions can change expectations to one in which agreements are not the end but instead initiate or invigorate a peace process.

Probably the most important aspect of implementation relates to building trust. According to conflict resolution scholar and practitioner Herbert Kelman, what is needed to implement local peace agreements is “working trust,” which “increases to the extent each side is convinced that the other is moving in a conciliatory direction out of its own interests.” Kelman calls for “steps of mutual reassurance” and “evidence of the others’ trustworthiness” such as “acknowledgements, symbolic gestures, or confidence-building measures” that should meet two criteria: “to be meaningful to the receiver yet affordable to the giver.”<sup>47</sup>

Rebecca Garang, wife of SPLM/A founder John Garang, once said that South Sudan was so rural and peoples were so remote from one another, with few roads and few connections between neighboring tribes except when there were clashes, that the “tribe over the next hill was considered the enemy.” Peacebuilders may underestimate the extent to which the vast majority of Sudanese and South Sudanese do not know each other and have not experienced opportunities for cooperative learning or constructive interaction between groups. Tools such as dialogue can help humanize groups and change previously held stereotypes.

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#### **Include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**

Throughout the peacebuilding sector—incorporating peace conferences, development assistance, diplomacy, security sector, rule of law, and other activities—monitoring and evaluation presents a special challenge. It is virtually impossible to demonstrate cause and effect between actions that may prevent conflicts or violence and the violence that never occurs. Even with these challenges, it is increasingly important that peace actors be able to document what they seek to achieve, how they go about it, their successes and failures, and how they implement processes for reflection and learning lessons. Having goals and objectives for each activity will help support better understanding of what works and what does not. Being willing to share successes and failures within organizations and beyond helps encourage the peacebuilding community to follow its own guidelines for transparency and accountability.

Global security specialist Fen Osler Hampson, whose expertise includes work with peace actors across international borders, recommends creating different measures of success for the different phases of the process. A definition of success for the initial stage might be that warring parties agree to come together for dialogue, that they agree to stop the violence and actually do so, that they reach an agreement on how to mend relationships and move forward, and that they actually implement what they say they will do.<sup>48</sup>

Effective monitoring and evaluation requires documentation, however. This situation could be addressed constructively in several ways. International and government entities should ensure lessons are shared across thematic groups, across levels of government, and across geographical areas. International actors working both at the national level and across several states have the resources and ability to document processes more broadly, which allows for more broadly applicable lessons learned. A central depository for this documentation would be useful.<sup>49</sup>

At the national level, both the Sudan and South Sudanese governments have the opportunity to identify a government-sponsored repository for this type of documentation. Another option is for each state to designate a specific peace actor who will compile and maintain it. States in South Sudan have been working to organize early warning and early response activities, and peace efforts could learn from these structures and processes.<sup>50</sup> This task of documentation could be assigned to a ministry of peace (if one exists), to a national flagship university, or to a specifically created commission (if adequate funding is available).

### Build a communication strategy for success

Conference participants frequently expressed an expectation that someone would communicate results to their communities. Yet if participants are largely elites from urban centers, only a few may be able to take the message to faraway villages. Having village witnesses or participants can address such shortcomings. Organizations have in some cases used local radio in local languages to disseminate critical information to rural communities. One NGO created posters with copies of a signed agreement and posted them around the local marketplace. Any number of these activities can help make these agreements more sustainable by indicating to rural residents that their trusted leaders have committed to peaceful means for resolving conflict.

More than just disseminating outcomes, a process that shares results with affected communities is the first step toward accountability because it reinforces the two-way relationship between government and citizens, grassroots community members and traditional leaders or elders, and civil society organizations and the constituencies they represent.

Peace committees create a challenge to this paradigm, because from one perspective they are accountable to all stakeholders, yet from another they are accountable to none. In the case of the western corridor, one could say the peace committee is accountable to the traders who use the peace markets, the pastoralists who graze across the border (and the communities who accept them), and the security entities that work collaboratively with the peace committees to help prevent and resolve crisis situations, such as violent cattle raids. Yet robust communication presents challenges in situations with poor infrastructure. Local actors often ask for cell phones, satellite phones, money for transportation, and so forth. These may not be available, however. Instead, one must work with elders, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, and security officials to get the word out through more traditional methods and to reach out to women and youth networks and people at social gathering areas, such as markets and town centers.

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### Deepen reconciliation and commitment

Commitment is marked in ways that go beyond signing an agreement. Traditions of opening and closing conferences also have meaning. However, a Rift Valley Institute report cautions that “in local level peace meetings emphasis is placed on indigenous traditions of arbitration, reconciliation, forgiveness and resolution, but these traditions are not well understood by outsiders.” and it would be “neither possible nor productive to revive all peace traditions.”<sup>51</sup> Even some participants have their doubts: “I have always been called to attend these meetings, but I do not honestly understand the genesis of these problems. We have been called to reconciliation. Even if we sacrifice a hundred head of cattle to confirm our agreements, in the end will we be able to restrain the actions of the soldiers when they determine to raid?”<sup>52</sup>

At the end of a peace conference, signing an agreement is a key activity. Manal Taha, a Sudanese American anthropologist who has studied conflict transformation, asked a variety of local actors about the significance of signatures on a page and received a variety of responses. Some said that signing the paper was something that came from the British and was not part of their own tradition. When asked how they would indicate a commitment to implement a peace agreement in historical times, a Missiriya pastoralist demonstrated a ritual from his culture. He pulled a knife from a scabbard strapped to his upper arm. From the hilt of the knife, he pulled a large (six inch) pair of tweezers. The tweezers, he explained, symbolized removing the thorn, or the issue underlying or driving a particular conflict. The tweezers would be placed over some dying embers. He then removed a large needle from the hilt. The needle, also placed on the coals, symbolized restitching the “wound” so that it might heal. His final sign of commitment was for the participants in the ceremony to place their hands over the cooled embers to indicate that the flames of hatred and violence had died out and that peace could come again.<sup>53</sup> In terms of Dinka traditions, the commonly recited ritual is the slaughter of a white bull, but it is rare to hear of this ritual being used for peace conferences today.<sup>54</sup>

At many types of peace meetings or workshops, organizers bring in local dancers. Another common practice is sharing a meal, an age-old way to break down barriers. In any peace gathering, food is shared. The choice of what kind of food is shared and when it is served can provide an opportunity to build consensus and understanding between groups. Former USIP member Mary Hope Schwoebel created a dialogue process among Pashtun communities spanning the Afghanistan–Pakistan border in which the participants stayed in the home of a member of the opposite group, sharing meals and interacting with their families. Likewise, Missiriya traders said they frequently spent time with their hashim bayt families during the grazing season. When attempts were made to put workshop participants into local homes, however, it was clear that the expectation was for better, more private accommodations.<sup>55</sup>

A deeper level of healing related to trauma is also not addressed in peace conferences. Some practitioners would say that the inability to deal with healing at a community and an individual level is sowing the seeds of future violence and instability. Although some trauma work has been done in South Sudan, little if any has been done in conjunction with a peace conference. Wounds of past violence do not heal without some type of culturally acceptable process, done with care, sensitivity, and local ownership.

### Policy Recommendations

Observation of local peace processes in Sudan and South Sudan has made it clear not only why local peace conferences have been a popular approach to conflict resolution but also why they have often failed to produce any sustainable outcomes. Given international funding

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and a focus on convening large numbers of participants to address lengthy agendas, peace conferences attract the enthusiasm and participation of many peace actors, yet conference recommendations are frequently divorced from the realities of affected communities and implementation is rare. It is time to reexamine these peace interventions to deal with the many issues that confront communities experiencing cycles of violence and to build a robust peacebuilding process in which those interventions are embedded.

### **Before a Peace Process**

*Conduct a robust analysis of the conflict.* Analysis informs a peace process about critical stakeholders and spoilers, root causes, and past efforts at resolving conflicts large and small, and it highlights elements of both successes and failures. These tools include conflict analysis frameworks, stakeholder mapping, and focus groups.

*Get the right people in the room.* Clarity about the contributions of various peace actors provides a 360-degree picture of who is needed in the room to create effective and sustainable agreements, who has the ability to undermine or derail a peace process, and whose consent is necessary for peace agreements to be implemented.

*Build skills and trust.* Concepts such as ripeness describe the extent to which a community is ready for peace. Understanding ripeness as well as capacities and resources helps determine the extent of the capacity-building needed. In addition, assessing levels of trust helps inform the need for work on trauma, justice, reconciliation, confidence-building measures, accountability, and transparency.

*Identify a vision, goals, and objectives.* If a vision for peace is lacking, it may be challenging to gain commitment and generate the hard work needed to build peace. Likewise, goals and objectives help outline specific sets of activities necessary to achieving a vision of sustainable peace.

*Map out the peace process.* Mapping a process creates a visual reminder to all participants of why even the smallest pieces of a process are needed to achieve a larger outcome. It also allows a community and peace actors to visualize where they are in their journey toward peace.

### **During a Peace Process**

*Gain the support of key stakeholders.* Without face-to-face consultations, it may be challenging, if not impossible, to generate the engagement and commitment to peace that is needed for successful processes. Without the information gained through consultations, one would be implementing a process based on assumptions about stakeholder goals, interests, values, and perspectives rather than direct knowledge. In addition, consultations can build trust and relationships that contribute substantially to the process.

*Design an event to achieve goals.* Once an organizer or initiator of a process has determined what they hope to achieve, a brainstorming or collaborative process can help answer the question of how best to go about achieving it. Any event, from a small meeting to a large conference, can have value, but specific events with specific actors might be needed to achieve specific goals.

*Select a decision-making model, preferably one that builds consensus.* In conflict-affected areas, victims of violence may see no options except to retaliate or wait for the next attack. Engaging representatives of key stakeholder communities in decision-making processes that reflect broad consensus gives peace a foothold in that community.

*Build local empowerment.* Throughout a peace process, training local actors and involving them in leadership roles can contribute to a sense of ownership of the process, to developing an

increasing recognition of the needs and feelings of others, and to a sense of trust that all effort will be made to honor and implement commitments.

*Ensure transparency and accountability.* Activities such as “town hall” meetings and other community-level presentations, as well as media programs, help inform and engage stakeholder groups in the process. These meetings can also serve as mechanisms to keep decision makers and implementers accountable, further building trust in each other and confidence in the process.

### **After a Peace Process**

*Create an architecture for peace.* It is difficult, if not impossible, to create sustainable peace when ad hoc or informal actors bear the brunt of responsibility for implementation of an agreement but lack the capacity and resources to do so. The various elements of security, development, and peacemaking should be part of a structure that clarifies roles and responsibilities and that applies appropriate resources toward peace.

*Move beyond recommendations to agreements.* Passive, undirected recommendations are not likely to have a positive impact. Even assigning responsibility for a recommendation does not commit anyone to action. Agreements that address structural, procedural, and enforcement components of peace and that indicate commitment to specific actions by specific actors are most likely to move a peace process forward in a sustainable way.

*Map implementation mechanisms into the process.* It is critical to hold the players in a peace process accountable for their commitments as well as to keep the process moving forward despite inevitable setbacks and challenges. Mapping implementation mechanisms into the process highlights the key idea that a peace conference is truly only the beginning of a peace-building process.

*Include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.* It has become increasingly clear that international and local actors need to document what they seek to achieve, how they go about it, their successes and failures, and how they implement processes for reflection and learning lessons. A central repository for this documentation would be helpful.

*Build a communication and outreach strategy.* Commitments to transparency and accountability must include disseminating the outcome of peace conferences and peace agreements widely. One way to do this is to have witnesses or participants at the conference from all regions, including rural areas. Other strategies include using local radio and displaying posters at local marketplaces.

*Deepen reconciliation and commitment.* The process of reconciling peoples who have perpetrated or been victimized by violence requires considerable time, energy, and commitment. Wounds of past violence do not usually heal without some type of culturally acceptable process. Examples of such activities have included traditional ceremonies or rituals, presentations by local dancers, and sharing meals, but these should be examined for appropriateness and then supplemented.

These recommendations will not build lasting peace in Sudan and South Sudan overnight. Almost certainly, without some mutually agreed-upon vision and framework of peace between the two, local peace in either of these countries will prove unattainable. Yet certain actions and perspectives, if applied consistently, can improve engagement of communities in finding solutions to their problems, which will contribute to better outcomes and more sustainable impact. Several guiding principles that should apply to all phases of peace processes bear repeating: empowerment, transparency, and accountability. These principles and a common vision should

drive the creation of plans for all actions, including consultations and consensus processes around specific problems. In addition, building an architecture for peace clarifies roles and responsibilities of peace actors and helps get a variety of actors working collaboratively rather than competitively, working with government and not around it.

Building peace in war-torn societies riddled with ethnic and political mistrust, weak governments, and poor infrastructure and without engaged, educated citizens is problematic. Yet the only way to build sustainable peace is to build it from the ground up. Peace will happen step by step, meeting by meeting, conversation by conversation, decision by decision, action by action. It is a journey well worth the trouble.

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This report would not exist without the support, encouragement, and contributions of many people along the way, including a number whose participation came at great hardship. The western corridor, as with many areas of Sudan (and now South Sudan), can be a dangerous place. Despite these risks, many individuals have gone, and continue to go, to great efforts to bring peace to this area. Sincere gratitude goes to all these people, foremost the members of the Meiram-Warawar Joint Peace Committee and the citizens of the western corridor and Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, for whom livelihoods and lives are at stake on a daily basis and for whom peace efforts are a constant but necessary struggle.

At a critical time in the implementation of this project, an inspirational and courageous Sudanese woman, Manal Taha, joined the project as a consultant and infused it with a new focus and energy. Her commitment to the project, and more importantly to bringing peace to the western corridor and beyond, was instrumental in any successes. Many thanks also go to the staff at the University of Durham's Sudan Archives, Ahmad Hassan for his research at the Sudan National Records Office in Khartoum, and Martina Santschi for her insights into the culture of communities of Aweil East. Individuals in national, state, and local government in Sudan and South Sudan gave their consent and support to this effort. In particular, Lino Adub, well known for his peacebuilding efforts in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal over the years, was an important supporter, as was Governor Paul Melong.

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## Notes

- 1 Richard Solomon, "Forward," in *The Effects of Violence on Peace Processes*, by John Darby (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2001), vii.
2. During the time of this project, the area of the western corridor was part of South Kordofan state. Since that time, the government of Sudan has reinstated West Kordofan as a state. It now incorporates the western corridor.
3. A member of the Meiram-Warawar peace committee mentioned that he had participated in seventeen peace conferences.
4. We have seen that this is the case in the western corridor, but another example is the area of Jonglei state in South Sudan, where there have been at least six peace conferences in ten years, yet a disturbingly destructive cycle of raids, abductions, and revenge killings continues.
5. Only some of these communities are linked with the western corridor. The remainder, if pastoralist, use other grazing corridors further east, though the consultation included sedentary farming communities as well. Communities included Fula, Babanousa, Muglad, Lagawa, Farshaya, ad-Dibeibat, Kurgul, at-Tukuma, and villages near Dilling.
6. Success was defined as maintaining the peace for at least one year after the process concluded.
7. Diya is the traditional form of compensation passed from the extended family of a killer to the victim's extended family.
8. The Missiriya are a large tribe that lives from Darfur in the west to the Nuba Mountains in the east. The Missiriya are divided into two main clans, the Zuruq to the east and the Humr in the west. The Humr are further subdivided into two main subclans, the Ajaira and the Felaita. The Fiyareen, a subclan of the Ajaira, primarily use the western grazing corridor. The remaining Ajaira use the central grazing corridor that runs through Abyei, just east of the western corridor.
9. The use of terms such as tribe and clan in this report are purely functional. See Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), xiv–xv, for a helpful clarification of these terms: "Popular descriptions of the war in the South frequently make use of the words 'tribe' and 'clan' interchangeably, usually as units of kinship and descent. Political affiliation is thus represented as being based on, or organized along lines of primal blood relationships. Yet, 'tribe,' in both the administrative and anthropological usage in the Sudan, is a political term. 'Clan,' when used at all, represents membership of a birth or descent group, relevant mainly in determining degrees of relationship in matters of marriage. A tribe is the largest unit of political combination of smaller, affiliated sections. The organizing principles of a tribe vary from people to people, and even within peoples."
10. Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of the Sudan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 113.
11. See Mark Bradbury, John Ryle, Michael Medley, and Kwesi Sansculotte-Greenidge, *Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study* (London: Rift Valley Institute, April 2006), 84, [http://southsudanngoforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Rift-Valley-Institute\\_2006\\_Sudan-Local-Peace-Report.pdf](http://southsudanngoforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Rift-Valley-Institute_2006_Sudan-Local-Peace-Report.pdf).
12. Although Dinka eat beef, they do not raise their cattle primarily for meat. According to Deng, "So important for the welfare of the Dinka and so honored by them are their cattle that the Dinka speak of the cow or the bull as the 'creator'" (*Dinka of the Sudan*, 3). Dinka boys are named after colors of cows.
13. Interviews by Jacqueline Wilson and Manal Taha.
14. Deng, *Dinka of the Sudan*, 13.
15. For more details on trade relationships, see SUPRAID, BYDA, and Concern Worldwide, "Trading for Peace" (Washington, DC: USAID, September 2004), [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADA531.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADA531.pdf). Although more than ten years old, the report remains an important reference for understanding the impact trade relationships, as well as participation of key stakeholders in decision-making processes, have on peace.
16. For more information on tribal conferences, see Khalid Ali El Amin, "Lessons in Governance and Peace Building: Tribal Conferences for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Under British and Sudanese Rule," University of Khartoum, Development Studies and Research Institute Monograph Series, forthcoming.
17. In my observations and through interviews, it seems that although Dinka generally understand that these so-called rules are dictated by Islam, they still resent and perceive the one-way nature of intermarriage as unfair and essentially a slight—or worse, an indication of mistrust or even disrespect of Dinka by Missiriya.
18. Similar agreements may have been reached between Rezeigat and Dinka. One interviewee indicated that Rezeigat in some cases agreed to tip off the SPLA when government supply trains were en route to the south, essentially facilitating SPLA ambushes in return for being able to access grazing south of the river.
19. The peace market was actually first located in another village nearby but quickly moved to Warawar. It has long been referred to as the Warawar peace market.
20. All these issues, Abyei included, are exceedingly complex and remain largely unresolved as of this writing. For further insight on these and related topics, see Douglas Johnson, "Why Abyei Matters: The Breaking Point of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement?" *African Affairs* 107, no. 426 (2008): 1–19.

21. In September 2011, Manal Taha and Jacqueline Wilson convened a group of Missiriya nomads in Khartoum to physically mark their grazing route on maps. Even they were surprised at the extent to which the corridor had shifted westward into South Darfur.
22. In fact, not only had Missiriya gotten nothing in return but it also lost what was, in essence, a Missiriya state when West Kordofan state was dissolved and merged with southern Kordofan and the Nuba Mountains to form South Kordofan state. This was likely done so the Missiriya vote could carry a South Kordofan referendum called for in a special protocol of the CPA. West Kordofan state has since been restored.
23. Although I requested women be present, one organizer responded, "We all know that women are important, but that doesn't mean we need to see them."
24. After consulting with local partners, I designated the session a "dialogue for peaceful coexistence" to distinguish the gathering from a "peace conference," even though the three-day event did not have the characteristics of a traditional dialogue. It included instead some skills training and a few small-group discussions.
25. During a conflict analysis training session in the 2010 USIP Dialogue for Peaceful Coexistence, one local leader remarked, "I have been involved in seventeen peace conferences, but this is the first time I have been given training in a scientific way of looking at our problems."
26. Mareike Schomerus and Tim Allen, *Southern Sudan at Odds with Itself: Dynamics of Conflict and Predicaments of Peace* (London: Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010), 8.
27. On the link between dowries and cattle raids, see Marc Sommers and Stephanie Schwartz, "Dowry and Division: Youth and State Building in South Sudan," USIP Special Report no. 295 (Washington, DC: USIP Press, November 2011); for a rejection of this assertion, see Jok Madut Jok, "Insecurity and Ethnic Violence in South Sudan: Existential Threats to State?" (Juba, South Sudan: Sudd Institute, August 20, 2012).
28. He gave as an example a time when Governor Ahmed Haroun of South Kordofan state was distracted with campaigning for office and not able to focus on peacebuilding at a fragile and dangerous time.
29. The USIP team conducted several activities with the Meiram-Warawar peace committee, including asking them to map their responses to various scenarios to help determine their role in response to situations of violence such as cattle raids. It was evident that this particular peace committee (as well as its subcommittees along the border) was filling critical gaps related to peace. A situational mapping activity affirmed the peace committee's in-depth understanding of dynamics and actors related to local conflicts.
30. Schomerus and Allen provide one example: "Usually facilitated by outside help, the proliferation of peace conferences has created a paradoxical situation for many local leaders in which their power is expressed by the ability to fundraise for a local conference and gather support of an aid agency, yet simultaneously undermining their own authority to solve local problems without outside help" (*Southern Sudan at Odds*, 10).
31. In an effort to reduce the impact of so-called tribalism, I chose to refer to our work not as Dinka-Missiriya or Dinka-Rezeigat but as "working with people affected by the western grazing corridor."
32. "Resolutions," Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace and Reconciliation Conference, Wunlit, Bahr el Ghazal, Sudan, February 27–March 8, 1999, [http://sudaninfonet.tripod.com/Pure\\_Resolutions.html](http://sudaninfonet.tripod.com/Pure_Resolutions.html).
33. In some cases, problem-solving approaches will be sufficient, whereas others require confidence-building and trust, trauma approaches, reconciliation, truth-telling and accountability, or other peacebuilding tools and techniques. Yet all of these begin with understanding the conflict situation and knowing what any intervention hopes to achieve.
34. See <http://podziba.com/sites/all/themes/ppm/pdf/projects/chelsea/4.2ChelseaCharterProcessMap.pdf>. For more information about process maps, see Lawrence E. Susskind, Sarah McKearnen, and Jennifer Thomas-Lamar, *The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999).
35. In a September 2011 interview with Major General Santino Deng Wol, SPLA 3rd Division commander in Aweil East county, facing the western corridor, General Wol told the USIP team that he does not attend peace conferences. His role, he said, is to maintain order. He leaves it to community leaders and the peace committee to play their roles while he and the SPLA play theirs.
36. See "Chelsea Charter Consensus Process," Podziba Policy Mediation, <http://podziba.com/projects/chelsea-charter-consensus-process>.
37. See "The 1000 Wunlit Dinka-Nuer Peace & Reconciliation Conference," Paanluel Wël: South Sudanese Bloggers, December 19, 2011, <http://southsudanfriends.org/wunlit/>.
38. Cattle raids are frequent occurrences and require new strategies to improve responses to them, including additional analysis to fully understand what drives raids, efforts to engage cattle-camp youth in generating sustainable solutions, identifying the right actors to influence prevention and mitigation, engaging chiefs and the legal sector in improving accountability measures, coordinating responses of security actors, resolving issues of compensation, and clarifying the role of peace committees or other actors in constructive responses.
39. CEAWC was established in 1999 by the government of Sudan with a mandate to ensure the safe return of abducted women and children, bring to trial suspected abductors, and recommend ways to eradicate the practice. Despite important progress, large numbers of abductions remain unresolved.

40. Humor is an effective way to address these issues. The first time someone's cell phone rings during a workshop or event, for example, I almost always walk over with a trash can and invite the guilty owner to place their phone in the bin. They don't, but when I follow this by turning my own phone off, it helps encourage them to do so.
41. Susskind, McKearnen, and Thomas-Lamar, *Consensus Building Handbook*, 6.
42. For more on people-to-people processes, see Titus Agwanda and Geoff Harris, "People-to-People Peacemaking and Peacebuilding," *African Security Review* 18, no. 2: 42–52; Bradbury et al., *Local Peace Processes*.
43. Fen Osler Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1999), viii.
44. Western corridor interviews, September 2011.
45. See "Jonglei State Council of Ministers Endorse Agreement," *Sudan Tribune*, October 17, 2012, [www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44250](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44250).
46. My own views on these community principles differ somewhat from those outlined in the seminal book by Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, *Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2004, 162–63), which sees these declaration of principles as foundational. Undue attention to these principles, however, can allow parties to mask their inability to reach consensus, their unwillingness to compromise, and the lack of political will to truly reach a negotiated agreement.
47. Herbert C. Kelman, "Building Trust Among Enemies: The Central Challenge for International Conflict Resolution," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 6 (2005): 639–50.
48. Hampson, *Nurturing Peace*, 9.
49. The United States Institute of Peace, the Rift Valley Institute, international NGOs, the UN missions, and other entities have struggled to gather peace reports at various times, but no comprehensive database seems to exist.
50. Catholic Relief Services and Danish Demining Group were both active in early warning/early response processes in several states of South Sudan. However, these processes fell heavily into the realm of security and security services. I would caution that peacebuilding processes should be complementary to EW/ER activities but not subsumed within them.
51. Bradbury et al., *Local Peace Processes*, 9–15.
52. *Ibid.*, 2.
53. Interviews conducted in Khartoum by Manal Taha and Jacqueline Wilson.
54. Ceremonial slaughter has been reportedly used at larger peace conferences, but many peace events do not seem to warrant such a ritual.
55. This issue of high expectations regarding conference accommodations is one not likely to be resolved without considerable effort. My goal of bringing Dinka and Missiriya youth, elders, and women from the western corridor together to build a simple peace village near the border remains unfulfilled.



## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote postconflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict-management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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Sudan and South Sudan have seen numerous local peace-building efforts in recent years, yet violence continues largely unabated. Local peace actors are buffeted by national level political, economic, and security challenges that can destabilize local efforts. This situation underscores the critical need to better understand local peace processes more generally and to improve them. Strengthening the process, as this report outlines, requires an architecture that begins with conflict analysis, entails a common vision, and focuses on achieving specific objectives. Participants must include those with authority, with knowledge of the problems requiring resolution, and with vested interest in sustainable solutions. A successful process will build two elements critical to any stable society—trust and accountability.

## Related Links

- *Pathway to National Dialogue in Sudan* by Jon Temin and Princeton Lyman (Peace Brief, August 2013)
- *Learning from Sudan's 2011 Referendum* by Jon Temin and Lawrence Woocher (Special Report, March 2012)
- *Gender and Statebuilding in South Sudan* by Nada Mustafa Ali (Special Report, December 2011)
- *Dowry and Division: Youth and State Building in South Sudan* by Marc Sommers and Stephanie Schwartz (Special Report, November 2011)
- *Diversity, Unity, and Nation Building in South Sudan* by Jok Madut Jok (Special Report, October 2011)
- *Toward a New Republic of Sudan* by Jon Temin and Theodore Murphy (Special Report, August 2011)
- *Local Justice in Southern Sudan* by Cherry Leonardi, Leben Nelson Moro, Martina Santschi, and Deborah Isser (Peaceworks, October 2010)

