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# ‘It May Approach as Quickly as a Bushfire’: Gendered Violence and Insecurity in South Sudan

Marjoke A. Oosterom

June 2014

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Cover: Research participant (man, 32 years) from Imurok Payam (Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State). The picture was taken in response to the question: 'What does the government do for your security?'. With the image of the torn flag of South Sudan the participant wanted to show that the government may be present, but is not fully reliable when it comes to the protection of citizens.

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# Summary

This research report presents the findings of case study research in Eastern Equatoria State in South Sudan, carried out within the Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme. The report describes forms of gendered violence at the local level in an insecure state. In post-civil war South Sudan, citizens experience a deep sense of insecurity due to actual incidents of violence in their home areas and to reports they hear about violent conflict elsewhere in the country. This sense of insecurity is exacerbated by the lack of protection from the state and the perceived injustice in the national political settlement. In response to this sense of insecurity, citizens develop protection strategies based on local institutions. These strategies are mainly developed by men. Though women are excluded from the institutions that govern security arrangements, they exercise subtle forms of agency to influence local institutions.

**Keywords:** violence; security; gender; masculinity; post-conflict governance; South Sudan.

**Marjoke Oosterom** (PhD) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Development Studies, in the United Kingdom. Her work focuses on forms of citizen participation, citizenship, gender, local governance and politics, and voice and accountability in contexts of violence and conflict, in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa.

## Acknowledgements

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## About the programme

The Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme is an action research project designed by researchers at the Institute of Development Studies and carried out with a number of institutional partners. This project addresses the need to shift from a state-focused to a more citizen-centred perspective in contexts of fragility and chronic violence. The project aims to understand how citizens deal with violence, in particular how they confer legitimacy to, or withhold it from, the various forms of leadership and authority in their environment. The project engages with debates on political settlement by showing how citizens view the political settlement in their context, and how it informs their agency in response to violence.

## Acronyms

CBO	Community-based organisation
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EDF	Equatoria Defence Force
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PVCA	Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Forces
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan

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# Introduction

A group of eight women sit quietly in a circle listening to one of the older women. 'Every day five women are beaten in this area,' the woman explains. 'Often because the man has drunk.' The younger women refer to the older woman as their senior and elder, someone a woman can run to in the middle of the night if her husband is angry. This is the sort of violence they witness in their community in everyday life. But the women are also afraid of other threats: 'There could be bad enemies in the bush. Maybe the Yau Yau militias from Jonglei, who might come here'. The men sit under a tree near the *payam* [district] administrator's office, partly constructed a few years ago, but then not finished. One of them explains: 'During the civil war, we the *Monyomiji* [young adults] could not get together in our meetings. We were all in the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army], and some of our brothers in the SAF [Sudan Armed Forces].' Another man adds: 'Now, we the *Monyomiji*, we are the ones protecting the community. In case of any threat, we need to take action, for instance if other people come to encroach on our land. If there is any suspicion, then women cannot move late at night.'<sup>1</sup>

When Sudan's civil war ended in 2005, this did not mean the end to violent conflict for its citizens. The fragile peace between the North and the South is undermined by conflict over the division of oil revenues, the demarcation of the international border, and the future of the contested border area of Abyei. In the South, various forms of conflict frequently result in violence with devastating consequences for local populations: the presence of militias contesting the state, political divisions, and (often politicised) inter-ethnic tensions fought out against a backdrop of competition over natural resources. These challenges remained when South Sudan became independent from the Republic of Sudan in 2011.

A number of studies have focused on the causes and drivers of internal violent conflict in post-war South Sudan (Arnold and Alden 2007; Pendle 2014; Schomerus and Allen 2010; Rolandsen and Breidlid 2012). Only a few studies have addressed the security of women (Bubenzer and Stern 2011; Lacey 2013). Not much is known about how men and women experience everyday insecurities outside outbursts of large-scale violence in inter-community conflicts. It is also not clear how women and men respond differently to everyday forms of insecurity based on their gender, and to what effect.

There is some knowledge about the local conditions in which forms of agency unfold. In South Sudan, citizen strategies in response to (the threat of) violence and insecurity develop in a context of multiple forms of authority, or 'negotiated statehood' (Hagmann and Péclard 2010). The state is often just remotely present in people's lives, whereas customary institutions constitute an important part of the local governance set-up in all regions of the country. Customary authority has traditionally been crucial for local security arrangements. But customary institutions have been affected by the civil war and their legitimacy is questioned in some areas (Schomerus and Allen 2010). Younger generations of men, whose

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1 Quotes from two different focus groups, Imurok *payam*, April 2013.

masculinity has been 'militarised' during the war (Hutchinson and Jok 2002), have in the meantime become more powerful. These conditions have implications for the security and agency of women. Customary institutions in South Sudan are associated with patriarchal norms that restrict women's agency in the public sphere (Arabi 2011; D'Awol 2011).

This research report presents the findings of case study research in Eastern Equatoria State in south-east South Sudan, carried out within the Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme. The central question this study seeks to answer is: which forms of agency and social leadership do men and women express in response to insecurity and violence in the context of post-civil war South Sudan? The study takes a 'seeing like a citizen' approach (Gaventa 2010) to analysing violence: a bottom-up view of violence and politics, how they are entangled, and how citizens exercise agency in response to violence in their everyday lives. This approach acknowledges that different social identities exist and matter – like gender, age and ethnicity – and that these shape citizens' perceptions of insecurity as well as their responses. Using this lens, the study explores forms of gendered violence and gendered responses. The study aims to inform the interventions of the government of South Sudan (GoSS) and civil society actors in South Sudan to address gender inequality in local security.

The report describes forms of gendered violence at the local level in an insecure state. In post-civil war South Sudan, citizens experience a deep sense of insecurity, due to actual incidents of violence in their home areas and because they hear about violent conflict elsewhere in the state and the country. This sense of insecurity is deepened by the lack of protection from the state and the perceived injustice in the national political settlement. In response to this sense of insecurity, citizens develop protection strategies based on local institutions. These strategies are mainly developed by men, informed by a version of masculinity that emphasises their role as protectors of their communities and their land. Some of these strategies restrict productive and reproductive activities (such as planting or collecting water). At the same time, men expect these activities to continue and when women fail to manage this, domestic violence may occur. The institutions and practices in which security is organised and masculinity confirmed have exacerbated a gender divide. While many interventions treat inter-community violence and domestic violence as distinct problems, this report calls for approaches that relate them.

The research team finished the last stage of fieldwork in the first week of December 2013. On 15 December violence broke out between army factions in the Presidential Guard in Juba. A faction comprising ethnic Dinka that supported President Salva Kiir Mayardit clashed with a faction of ethnic Nuer, who supported former Vice-President Riek Machar. Within ten days the violence spread to Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states, between Dinka and Nuer factions in the SPLA and their communities. At the time of writing, peace negotiations between the government of South Sudan and the SPLA-Opposition were ongoing. This study was carried out before the recent upheaval began. Nonetheless, the findings presented in this report should be read against the background of the highly unstable and often violent political context.

# Part 1

## 1 Post-conflict situations through a gender lens

This study adopted a gender and politics lens to enhance the understanding of what enables and inhibits women's agency in relation to violence and insecurity. Consequently, the theoretical framework of power, violence, citizenship and agency was opened up to include the question of gender and masculinities in contexts of national and local violent conflict. This section first outlines the conceptual framing of agency as it is used in this study. It then elaborates a notion of gender and masculinity in (post)conflict settings. The final section brings in the idea of 'negotiated statehood', including how security at the local level is negotiated by multiple forms of authority.

### 1.1 Violence and agency

The point of departure for this study is to understand how *citizens* have agency in contexts of violence. Citizen agency is a concept that is integral to a notion of active citizenship: the idea that a citizen is a person with rights, who should be able to participate actively and equally in public life, in the processes where rights are defined, and in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Individual agency can be distinguished from collective agency. However, it is important to recognise the value of social interactions in enabling the individual to become aware of his/her rights, learn about forms of citizen engagement, and gain a political consciousness (Kabeer 2005; Lister 2003). Feminist scholars have contributed to the citizenship debates by pointing out the mechanisms and institutions in society that limit the possibilities for women to participate in society and politics as equal citizens to men. There is a rich literature on citizen participation that uses a notion of active citizenship, although this has been studied mostly in relatively stable settings. It has been discussed less in relation to contexts of violence and protracted conflict and less in relation to gender (Castillejo 2011; Oosterom 2011). The question of how civilians live their lives in conflict areas is a major theme in conflict studies literature, which may offer important pointers for understanding how citizen agency is expressed.

People living in warzones were often previously described as victims. It is now widely recognised that citizens express agency in a variety of ways. Vigh (2006) introduces the term *social navigation* to describe how people try to shape their life trajectories in an environment that is constantly in flux (2006, 2010). Aware that their context is changing, people adjust themselves and their actions in response. The concept thus conveys that people are inventive, and relations and power continue to be configured in these settings. Hence, agency exists in dialectical relationship to the very dynamic setting of a conflict situation. Vigh (2006) contends that agents plan and act upon the real and imagined environment. This study will take this notion forward to explore the difference between *actual* violence/insecurity and the *sense* of insecurity.

Creative coping strategies, themselves expressions of agency, help people make sense of their worlds in the midst of chaos at the same time as it helps their survival (Nordstrom 1997; Lubkemann 2008). Recent scholarly work has started to distinguish different forms of agency in violent settings. Moser and Horn (2011) distinguish 'coping' from 'resolving' agency to highlight the difference between short-term acts for survival and agency aimed at addressing the causes of violence. Barter (2012) describes three strategies that civilians use, sometimes in combination, to deal with violence: flight, voice and support, on Hirschman's typology (1970) of exit, voice and loyalty. These strategies represent levels of agency, some of which can be considered 'more political' to the extent that citizens engage with or challenge the more powerful authorities in their environment. Barter's typology is useful for distinguishing 'survival' or 'coping agency' from agency that directly seeks to address actors or causes of violent conflict.

Flight refers to migration away from the (threat of) violence. Voice has three sub-categories: defiance, everyday resistance and engagement. Defiance is the most visible and confrontational form and is expressed through protests, reporting violations, liaising with international actors, but also in declaring peace zones that challenge the authority of armed actors. Informed by Scott's (1985) work, Barter holds that forms of everyday resistance are often symbolic, require less coordination than mobilised guerrilla activity, are less risky and may have the potential for social change. These acts undermine the legitimacy of armed groups. Engagement is about negotiation between civilians and armed actors, with the aim of enhancing security. Support entails a form of collaboration with violent actors, often for one's own protection. There is an increasing understanding of the different forms of support that populations give to armed actors, like food, information and services (Barter 2012) in exchange for minimum levels of security, protection (of homes, economic activities and trade networks) and even 'order'.

Thus, scholarly work has shown the multiple strategies that people develop in the midst of violent conflict. Much of this work, however, shows how people exercise agency to ensure safety and maintain livelihoods. For a better understanding of what people do in the midst of conflict it is helpful to distinguish forms of 'coping' or 'survival agency' from types of agency that are more political. It is this political notion of agency that is important for citizen agency. At the same time, the forms of political agency that Barter (2012) has discussed also challenges a normative understanding of citizen agency as only 'civic' and channelled through democratic institutions. In (post)conflict settings, where state institutions may be weak, engagement with non-state authorities may be political, but this may not be a form of engagement that is associated with democratic institutions.

## **1.2 Gender and masculinity in post-conflict situations**

The term 'post-conflict' generally refers to a period when predominantly male combatants have ceased to engage in 'official war'.

(Handrahan 2004: 429)

The term post-conflict does not at all mean that violence has ended. On the contrary, particularly for women there is often no personal security. Often, in post-war contexts the levels of sexual and domestic violence increase and women

continue to experience threats to their bodies (Handrahan 2004; Pankhurst 2003). The question 'Whose security' (Luckham and Kirk 2013) is particularly relevant to women in post-conflict settings to expose the particular threats they experience. Feminist literature on war recognises that armed conflicts affect men and women differently, and that post-conflict recovery processes also function differently for men and women (Sjoberg and Via 2010). The specific security needs of women are often not recognised or prioritised by national governments. The international community also overlooks their specific security needs – not in the least due to its inability to address its own patriarchy (Handrahan 2004).

For a long time war was seen as the doing of men, while women were the passive, innocent victims of it (Moser and Clark 2001). It is increasingly recognised that women in conflict situations exercise agency: they play a variety of roles as supporters to those in combat and as the organisers and protectors of families in their homesteads, often assuming leadership roles that are not recognised after the conflict (Pankhurst 2003). They can also participate in or encourage and instigate violence – as documented in the case of South Sudan (Hutchinson and Jok 2002). A popular thought is that women gain certain freedoms during the war, by engaging in economic activities and taking up social leadership roles, which they could maintain in the post-conflict situation. However, women often experience a backlash after a conflict. From various sides, there can be a push to return to 'normality' including pressure on women to resume domestic roles and leave the public sphere (Pankhurst 2003). Resettling into 'normal' domestic life can be challenging for both men and women. Male combatants, but also other men, can resist the forms of independence and political agency that women attain during conflict. Domestic violence tends to increase when ex-combatant men come home (Handrahan 2004). The experience of 'gender liberation' (Handrahan 2004: 436) is therefore often short-lived.

The position of women in (post)conflict societies has become increasingly recognised and addressed in international interventions. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) mandates that women participate in peace processes as well as in the institutions and activities that seek to maintain the peace. Several governments in post-conflict countries have implemented gender quotas, including South Sudan. Governments and aid agencies have in many cases committed to 'gender-sensitive' programming, which in practice often means increasing the representation of women in activities. Yet bringing women into state institutions and peace-building interventions does not automatically change the *gender basis* of such institutions. Masculine values predefined the behavioural norms and the terms and conditions of many of those institutions before women were included (Sjoberg and Via 2010). 'Spaces for participation' that are opened up to women can be dominated by men, which in the worst case only reinforce the prejudice against female participants. Or, interventions that were thought to be 'gender neutral' may fail to recognise the specific needs of women in a recovery process. Sjoberg and Via (2010) give the example of female ex-combatants in South Sudan. Shaped by their combat experience the behaviour of these women was considered 'unfeminine' in a context where women are expected to be docile. The social challenges they faced when they were meant to reintegrate have not been addressed in mainstream disarmament programmes. This underlines the importance of understanding what happens to gender roles

and norms during and after conflict, as well as the need to understand women's security needs (Denov 2007).

Exploring the concept of masculinities may help to unpack the challenges and understand what happens to gender relations in (post)conflict environments. It has its roots in social psychology in the 1960s and 1970s and has since been used and developed in a number of fields, including in international development (Edström 2014). Masculinities can be defined as the stereotypes, behavioural norms, expectations and rules assigned to men (Sjoberg and Via 2010: 4); the set of traits or patterns of behaviour that are considered 'typical' of men (Haque 2013). These norms thus tend to represent a presumed essence of manhood. Scholars emphasise that a variety of such behavioural norms and rules exist within every given context – hence the use of the plural 'masculinities'. Masculinities are not 'fixed', but change over time. The concept opens up a debate about deeper relationships between gender and power. The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been used, for example, to demonstrate that oppressive gender orders exist, including the oppression of subordinate men (Connell 2000). Similarly, subordinate, complicit and marginal masculinities exist. Morrell (2001) proposes that a masculinity is a particular gender identity that is particular to a male individual. Men choose and shape their masculine identity depending on their position in society, social relations and gender relations. Masculinities are thus socially constructed. They are constantly negotiated and reproduced in institutions and everyday social practice. Importantly, women also reproduce masculinities in their everyday behaviour.

In contexts of war and violent conflict, the often dominant masculine identity is that of the man as the 'the hero', the fighter and the protector of women and children. War and violent conflict are often associated with producing militarised masculinities (Haque 2013). In a post-conflict setting, former soldiers are often economically marginalised with few prospects. Unable to function in the new order, they resort to violence and aggression. This would partly explain the high levels of violence against women after war (Myrntinen 2005). Haque (2013) demonstrates that war does not necessarily produce aggressive, militarised masculinities. In his case study of Cambodia the dominant masculinity is that of men as 'model' fathers and husbands who are responsible for the education and prosperity of their families. A new gender order emerged in post-war Cambodia, in which prosperous, successful family men command respect, whereas the militant masculinity was devalued. Women played an important role in the discourse around 'good' men.

It is the relationship between masculinity and agency that is important in the context of this study. For if a notion of masculinity is an identity and functions as an ideal or role model, it will influence and shape the behaviours of men and women in gender relations and in relation to security and violence – insofar as existing masculinities prescribe roles in relation to the security context. The study will therefore explore existing notions of masculinities at the local level and examine in which institutions and relationships they are produced and reproduced.

### **1.3 Negotiating authorities in the local state**

It is widely accepted that the state is not the single authority that shapes the security of citizens, particularly in (post)conflict settings (Luckham and Kirk 2013).

A third body of literature that is therefore included in this study is that of negotiated statehood (Hagmann and Péclard 2010), which has developed within the larger debate on post-conflict state-building. It is beyond the scope of this report to present a complete review of the literature on state-building, therefore this section highlights three sub-themes that are important for the purpose of this research.

First of all, a notion of negotiated statehood acknowledges that the weak performance of states does not mean the absence of governance or social order. In (post)conflict settings like South Sudan there are often multiple forms of state and non-state authorities that together constitute a new social order and system of governance (Justino, Brück and Verwimp 2013; Kalyvas, Shapiro and Masoud 2008). Lund (2006) shows that public authority operates in the absence of the state, referring to this as ‘twilight institutions’ that operate *in between* the public and the private, and between state and society. Hagmann and Péclard (2010) emphasise the dynamic nature of public authority in the phrase ‘negotiated statehood’; the state is not necessarily absent, but is certainly not the single authority that has a monopoly on the use of violence. Leonard (2013) speaks of ‘networked governance’: governance is multilevel and networked, authority is a fluid and negotiated set of relationships, and formal state authority may only play a modest role. Thus, a multitude of social-political actors exists that compete over the institutionalisation of power relations, with implications for the legitimacy of the state.

Secondly, the system of governance is highly important for the security of citizens due to the new social order in which the state may not have the monopoly on violence; non-state actors may use violence to maintain order without being accountable to citizens (Pearce and McGee 2011). Citizens may choose to develop vigilante groups in response (Steenkamp 2013). Or, as explained in section 1.1, citizens coexist and develop relationships with state and non-state forms of authority to enhance their security (Barter 2012).

Thirdly, the existence of multiple forms of political authority has an important gender dimension, because the governance set-up shapes the space in which men and women exercise agency. State and non-state authorities can enforce governing principles that enable or constrain men and women to varying degrees in different spheres of life. State institutions may or may not formally recognise women’s rights and opportunities for their political engagement. Patriarchy, often associated with customary leadership and the restrictions it places on women’s participation in the public sphere, also operates within state institutions.

This research explores forms of agency in relation to insecurity at the very local level, in a context where multiple forms of political authority exist. As section 2.3 explains, in the context of South Sudan local state actors and customary authorities are the two major forms of authority in people’s lives. Living with a myriad of actors that claim and exercise authority, citizens navigate and negotiate these authorities in everyday encounters (Vaughan, Schomerus and De Vries 2013). If men and women define and experience their (in)security differently, it is important to see how they negotiate their security with the different forms of authority in their lives. Finally, looking at multiple forms of authority from a citizen perspective brings in the question of legitimacy. Although they are often in less powerful positions, citizens are still able to confer or withdraw legitimacy to these institutions, for instance by using and accessing some while avoiding others.

## 2 South Sudan: a brief political history

South Sudan's political settlement<sup>2</sup> first developed as part of the wider political settlement of the greater Sudan, before it gained independence in 2011. Important milestones in its political settlement are Sudan's independence from the British-Egyptian regime in 1956, the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord that ended the first civil war (1955–72), the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that marked the end of the second civil war (1972–2005), the Interim Constitution of 2005, and the independence of South Sudan from 2011 followed by a transitional constitution. Certain dynamics during the civil wars had important implications for the post-civil war political settlement. This section outlines some of the important episodes in the history of the civil war and its aftermath. It pays specific attention to events in Eastern Equatoria State, where this research was carried out.

### 2.1 History of the civil wars

The war between Sudan and the Southern regions, as it was referred to before independence, has often been portrayed in the media in religious-ethnic terms: the war between the Arab-Muslim North and the African-Christian South. However, a widely accepted explanation is that the historical marginalisation of the South and its structural exclusion from political power and economic resources were the important drivers of the civil war (Schomerus 2008; Branch and Mampilly 2005). Marginalisation of the Southern regions of then Sudan started during Anglo-Egyptian rule (1899–1956), a joint rule over the Sudan through what was known as the Condominium Agreement. The North developed economically and gained political power in the administration, increasing over the South, while the South became a marginalised region. After independence Southerners were largely excluded from decision-making over the future administration of Sudan and from senior positions in the government and the military.

In 1955 a revolt started among soldiers of the Equatoria Corps against the Khartoum government in Torit town, in Equatoria (Schomerus 2008). The revolt reflected the aspirations for self-rule among the Southerners. The insurgency spread across Equatoria and sparked the beginning of the first civil war (Anyanya I) between the north and the south. To Equatorians, their deep involvement in Anyanya I is highly symbolic in terms of their role in the liberation struggle. A peace agreement was signed in 1972 in Ethiopia, known as the Addis Ababa Accord. The South became a semi-autonomous region with its own regional assembly (the High Executive Council) and a significant degree of self-autonomy (Branch and Mampilly 2005).

During the inter-war period, political divisions became visible in the South. Southern politicians started to push for dividing the South into three distinct constituencies with more autonomy for each, encouraged by the government of

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2 Political settlements are understood as the informal agreements and negotiations over power that shape the formal political processes associated with the distribution of power, resources, rights and responsibilities within a state (Parks and Cole 2010).



Sudan that would only benefit from such fragmentations. The High Executive Council refused the fragmentation of the South. Then-President Numairi, of the Khartoum government, ordered the re-partition by decree in 1983, appointed three governors and their cabinets, and reversed much of the autonomy of the South. Soon after, a series of laws based on Sharia was adopted, excluding any Southern involvement (Johnson 2003). This sparked the Southern rebellion by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), led by Dr John Garang de Mabior, and its political wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). A new war began.

Divisions within the SPLA and between different groups in the South soon resurfaced. The SPLA was largely populated by ethnic Dinka and Nuer and their political leaders used this to further their personal political interests (Johnson 2003). Equatorians were far less represented in the SPLA. Ideologically, the SPLA leadership was divided over the ultimate aim of the insurgency. Garang, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, fought for a unified but federal Sudan with equal powers for Southern citizens. Other ethnic groups (including the Equatorians) feared that the SPLA struggle might lead to domination by the Dinka and pursued a separatist agenda. Moreover, other SPLA leaders resisted Garang's dictatorial leadership style and pushed for structural and institutional reforms within the movement (Johnson 2003: 94).

An important split in the SPLA occurred in 1991, after an unsuccessful coup attempt aimed at toppling Garang. Riek Machar, of the Nuer ethnic group, defected from the SPLA, regrouping the Nuer factions into the SPLA-Nasir. SPLA-Nasir operated mainly in the Upper Nile and Jonglei States, where Machar had his Nuer support base. Garang continued with his Dinka-dominated SPLA faction, now called SPLA-Torit, from its bases in Equatoria. The immediate consequence was the rapid polarisation and militarisation of Dinka and Nuer ethnicities (Hutchinson and Jok 2002). Violence escalated between the SPLA-Nasir and SPLA-Torit factions and was fought along ethnic lines, involving Nuer and Dinka communities. Large-scale violence erupted between the Nuer and Dinka in eastern Bahr al-Gazal and Jonglei State. The attacks in Kongor and Bor (Dinka districts in Jonglei) in 1991–92 sparked the displacement of thousands of predominantly Dinka into Eastern Equatoria State, who then settled among the Equatorians. This created great tensions between the Dinka and the ethnic groups of Eastern Equatoria, as the Equatorians were suspicious of their land being taken away from them. Afraid of the SPLA violence, large groups of Equatorians fled to neighbouring countries. This fuelled the idea among the Dinka SPLA factions that the Equatorians did not really support the struggle (Schomerus 2008). The SPLA-Nasir group grew weaker over time, until it signed an agreement with the government of Sudan in 1997 and was absorbed by the army of Sudan into becoming the Southern Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF). It split away again in 2000 after the government of Sudan increasingly violated the agreement, according to Machar. In 2002 Machar reunited with the SPLA and Garang.

Throughout the second civil war local militias emerged across South Sudan, or split off from the SPLA. Some aligned with the government of Sudan. It is believed these militias emerged in response to perceived Dinka domination in the SPLA and the fear that the SPLA was the vehicle for establishing Dinka rule. Militias also reacted to the often violent ways in which the SPLA sought to control and govern

The flag of South Sudan: a new but fragmented nation



the civilian population (Walraet 2008; Branch and Mampilly 2005). In Eastern Equatoria the most important of these militia groups was the Equatoria Defence Force (EDF). This formed in the early 1990s and was formally established in 1995 to protect the Eastern Equatorial population against abuse by the SPLA and members of the displaced Dinka communities. It was one of the stronger militia groups, with 12,000 fighters at its height, and with stronger ties to Khartoum than many other groups (Schomerus 2008). The EDF was incorporated into the SPLA in 2004, after Garang accepted a memorandum in which the mistreatment and under-representation of Equatorians was officially recognised and steps taken to address this.

In 2002, a ceasefire was agreed between the government of Sudan and Garang's SPLA/SPLM. This paved the way for negotiations over a series of protocols. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed in 2005 (Belloni 2011). The Interim Constitution was adopted in the same year. Garang became the vice-president of Sudan, but died in a helicopter crash in July 2005. Salva Kiir Mayardit, also a Dinka from within the SPLA ranks, succeeded Garang. Salva Kiir formed the first autonomous government for the South and simultaneously became vice-president in the government of Sudan.

## 2.2 The post-CPA political settlement

The CPA and the Interim Constitution created a new political dispensation (Zambakari 2012) and a new milestone in its political settlement. The CPA provided for a significant degree of autonomy for Southern Sudan. The first national elections were held in 2010, which were won by the SPLA. Salva Kiir was sworn in as president and Riek Machar became his vice-president, which many hoped would usher in inclusive democracy in South Sudan.

The CPA provided for a transitional period of six years, after which the population of South Sudan were to decide in a referendum whether the country should become

independent. In the referendum in January 2011, 98.3 per cent of the South Sudanese voted for secession from the North. South Sudan became an independent state on 9 July 2011. A Transitional Constitution was adopted, affirming South Sudan as a federal state and establishing formal devolution of powers.

These developments did not put an end to violent conflict in South Sudan, however. There are continual tensions between the North and the South over border areas, with wrangling over access to the resources from the oil fields in the South. The contested area of Abyei remains the site of heavily armed conflict in which the armies of both countries are involved. It seemed as if the challenges to North–South relations remained the focus of attention of politicians, at the expense of addressing divisions within the South (Schomerus and Allen 2010) and the lack of a unified, Southern Sudan identity (Branch and Mampilly 2005).

Political divisions fuel many of South Sudan's violent conflicts today. The government is blamed for its inability to deliver basic services and basic security (Jok 2011). Allegations of nepotism, corruption and exclusion, and concerns over the domination of certain ethnic groups in the government and in business are widespread (Jok 2011; Belloni 2011). The wartime perception of Dinka domination still exists across the country (Schomerus and Allen 2010). The lack of an inclusive political community and the inability to manage diversity are seen as major challenges to the viability of the state (Zambakari 2013). Political divisions tend to coincide with ethnic divisions. Inter-ethnic violence is manifested in cattle raids, border disputes and actions of youth militias. Ethnicity is not necessarily the cause of these conflicts, as many are rooted in the civil war, or result from the politicisation of ethnic identities. Armed militias exist in several states, such as the militia in Jonglei State led by David Yau Yau, who contested the outcomes of the 2010 general elections (Rolandsen and Breidlid 2012).

The newest episode in South Sudan's political settlement began on 15 December 2013. A fight between factions within the Presidential Guard, between Nuer soldiers supporting Machar, the former vice-president, and Dinka soldiers supporting President Salva Kiir, escalated into violence (Pendle 2014). The government spoke of an attempted coup. The clash had its roots in the decree issued by President Salva Kiir in July, when he dissolved his cabinet and 'sacked' Machar, his main political rival. In Juba, Dinka SPLA started to attack and kill members of the Nuer population. The violence spread rapidly to Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States, where Nuer factions defected from the SPLA in support of Machar. They started launching attacks on the SPLA and violence erupted between Nuer and Dinka communities. Since then, more than 1 million people are estimated to have been displaced and thousands killed.<sup>3</sup>

A ceasefire was agreed on 23 January 2014, in Addis Ababa, during peace negotiations led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) between the government of South Sudan and the SPLA-Opposition. Fighting continued, however, and the IGAD resumed the peace talks in March. At the time of writing of this report, the United Nations (UN) were deploying more

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3 *Sudan Tribune*, 7 April 14: The figures are based on estimations made by the UN agencies in South Sudan. Verifying the exact numbers was very difficult so these may not be accurate. [www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article50573](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article50573)

peacekeepers to support the existing United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). IGAD authorised the deployment of security forces from the region. Peace negotiations are proceeding in Addis Ababa.

### 2.3 Local governance dynamics

Decentralisation was not solely a characteristic of the post-CPA period. Already during the war, the SPLA was forced to create civil administration structures through which to relate to the civilian population and to nurture support for the insurgency, especially in non-Dinka areas (Johnson 2003; Walreat 2008; Podder 2014). Post-CPA and post-independence, the government of South Sudan has made decentralisation one of the mechanisms for peace and development, supported by international actors.

In many areas, including Eastern Equatoria State, the development of a structure for civil administration did not happen overnight. The transition to a demilitarised civil authority is a challenge (Branch and Mampilly 2005). Though the structures at county, *payam* (district) and *boma* (village) level have been created, a real devolution of power and resources has not taken place (Schomerus and Allen 2010). It is questionable whether decentralised governance and the devolution of powers can actually mitigate conflict, especially in such a politicised environment like South Sudan. There is a real risk that the system is used in local level power struggles and patronage networks and may generate conflict. In their study in three different states, including Eastern Equatoria, Schomerus and Allen (2010: 9) find that ‘decentralisation, while theoretically the best way to govern South Sudan, has in reality often become an instrument to entrench “tribal” lines over competition for resources, manifesting itself in the proliferation of new counties.’ Local political elites use the decentralised governance system to claim land ownership for their communities, furthering entrenched ethnic identities and social divisions. In each of the three states, ethnic communities demand that county boundaries are drawn along tribal lines, because a county is associated with better representation at state level and hence has better access to resources. In various areas this has led to great animosity and increased competition between groups. Add to this the government preference for appointing county commissioners from a military background or through military connections, and the outcome could be a military-controlled tribal local administration (Schomerus and Allen 2010: 41).

At local level, customary institutions are part of the local governance set-up. The Transitional Constitution and the 2009 Local Government Act recognise traditional authority and customary law, which need to function in accordance with the Transitional Constitution, State Constitutions and the law. Critical challenges exist, which affect democratic governance as a whole, local development and citizen security. Although customary authority is recognised by law, in reality there are many ambiguities as to which issues are governed by customary law, where customary law ends and state law begins. State law and customary law may be integrated, but in reality various versions of governance exist and often conflict with one another (Schomerus and Allen 2010). State and non-state authorities are both involved in conflict resolution, but these bodies may be at odds. Secondly, one of the consequences of the long civil war is the undermining of the authority of customary leaders. Furthermore, there is often competition between customary

chiefs and local political leaders, who all try to occupy the same political space, sometimes for their own and the community's interest.

On the security of women, customary authority probably plays a more important role in the rural areas of South Sudan than the police or any other government institution. Customary leaders are usually the first to deal with any dispute or fight in the community or between husbands and wives, and they also oversee and discipline youth. In cases of very serious injury or murder, the *payam* administrator is supposed to take over and refer the case to the police. Although rape and sexual abuse cases should be handled by civil law, they are often managed by customary institutions, which usually results in the perpetrators going unpunished (D'Awol 2011).

Officially, civil law stipulates that statutory law shall take precedence when customary law contradicts civil law, but in reality this is often not the case (Lacey 2013). Women's rights organisations from across South Sudan have pointed out that the ambiguities surrounding the authority of customary leaders allow many forms of gender-based violence to continue. Customary law is highly patriarchal and the chiefs and customary courts often exclude women from membership and voice. In the 2013 civil society constitutional review conference, representatives from women's organisations from all the states emphasised that customary law contains many values and 'good things', but there are many aspects they would like to see changed to protect women's rights.

## 3 Gender and masculinities in South Sudan

The literature on gender relations in the context of South Sudan and how these have been affected by the war is still very limited, particularly for the post-CPA period. The available literature on the civil war suggests that in this context norms about masculinity have changed. Studies carried out in the post-CPA period have associated these changes with increasing levels of domestic violence and the re-affirmation of social structures that maintain gender inequality.

### 3.1 Gender and the civil war

Particularly during the second civil war, women played an active role. They stepped in as employees and volunteers in, for instance, the health and education sector and assumed many of the responsibilities left by the men, thus becoming more involved in the public arena outside their homes (Arabi 2011). Many women played a vital role in organising the supplies for the SPLA.

Jok (1999) and Hutchinson and Jok (2002) have written important contributions about the position of women during the war, the stance of the SPLA in forging a role for women in the struggle, and changing norms about sexuality and female bodies among the Dinka and Nuer soldiers and civilians. From 1991 onwards, the SPLA's official policy became that women would be in support roles (cooking, nursing) away from military combat. The SPLA used propaganda that reinforced normative gender roles: the contribution of women to the struggle was through reproduction (Jok 1999).

Hutchinson and Jok describe how a ‘hypermasculinised and militarised world view’ (2002: 101) emerged that justified the use of female bodies as a reward for men’s hardships at the front. After the split of the SPLA, creating a division between the Dinka and Nuer leadership in the SPLA and their supporters, these masculinities resulted in large-scale violence against women, including sexual violence, which broke all previous existing codes about warfare between the Dinka and Nuer.

### 3.2 Gender equality in the post-CPA period

The changes in South Sudan’s formal political institutions that opened up spaces for women to participate as citizens and political leaders in political life are celebrated (Sherwood 2012). The 2005 Interim Constitution and the 2011 Transitional Constitution recognise the rights of women. Other observers have been more critical, stating that the CPA and the Interim Constitution were ‘gender blind’ and that gender inequality was never considered a factor in security (Bennett 2010, cited in O’Connell 2011). The Transitional Constitution stipulates that the government of South Sudan shall promote women’s participation in public life and enact laws that counter the customary institutions that undermine the position of women. Moreover, it provides for a 25 per cent quota of women in all legislative and implementing government institutions, from local to national level. The quota system was already introduced in 2008, but in reality, the quota is often not met, particularly at state level and below. Moreover women in leadership positions face numerous challenges to carrying out their responsibilities: few women have the confidence and the political experience to fulfil their roles and they meet resistance from other political actors and communities (Arabi 2011). Numerous flaws in formal legislation persist, which threaten formal gender equality. The family law, for instance, is based on customary law and stipulates that women cannot legally inherit or own land or property (Lacey 2013).

Women’s organisations in South Sudan concentrate a lot of their efforts on making sure these spaces are used or widened. Women’s organisations for instance pushed for more women to be included in the constitutional review committee. The National Action Plan for the implementation of UN1325 (in short NAP1325) kicked off a similar process that seeks to promote women’s participation in peace-building. Important as these initiatives are, there is a need to address the challenges for women to access these spaces and use them effectively. A popular idea among many women’s organisations is that women at local levels have gained skills and independence during the war – when they took over many responsibilities from men – which they will hold on to. For South Sudan, there is little evidence so far that this proposition holds. Already during the war, soldiers felt their manhood was being questioned when their wives assumed more control of the household budget, leading to domestic abuse. It may well be that discourse on women’s rights is limited to a handful of civil society organisations in the town, while men at home seek to reassert their authority. The findings in this report suggest that this is the case.

Finally, much of the literature underlines the pervasiveness of patriarchy and customary institutions in relation to women’s lives (Arabi 2011; D’Awol 2011). Traditional values and customary institutions relegate women to subservient positions in the home and in the community, subordinate to men in general and to their husbands in particular. The public domain of community decision-making and

politics is considered to be for men and where women do not have a political voice. However, there are women who have authority in the community, as some forms of customary leadership are inherited positions. One of the paramount chiefs in Eastern Equatoria State, for instance, is a woman and there have been female chiefs in the history of South Sudan.

Gender inequality thus remains a serious issue in today's South Sudan. Women face discriminatory practices in social, political and economic spheres that threaten their social and reproductive health rights, and their civil and political rights. This section finishes with a description of forms of violence against women, which is a serious problem country-wide.

### **3.3 Insecurities for women post-CPA**

In relation to inter-group violence, the situation of women in cattle raids has been highlighted (Lacey 2013). One of the reasons for cattle-raiding is that young men need to acquire cattle to pay a bride price (the dowry paid by a prospective husband to the family of the woman upon marriage). At the same time, in the process of cattle-raiding, women – and children – are often abducted. They are abducted for their reproductive and labour capacities, for which no bride price need be paid. In many cases, a cattle raid has grave consequences, with people killed during an attack and numbers of women abducted. Lacey (2013) however states that women are not only victims. Women in raider communities encourage men to raid and participate in the celebrations once the men return with other women.

The level of violence against women in South Sudan is thought to be very high (HSBA 2012). It is almost impossible to establish the exact figures, because of the lack of capacity to process statistics and because cases are under-reported. Several authors state that violence against women has increased since the CPA (D'Awol 2011; Sherwood 2012). Results of the small arms survey among women show that 59 per cent of women have experienced violence in the home and that domestic violence has increased since the CPA (HSBA 2012). Violence against women includes physical violence and sexual violence, in the community and within the home, thus including domestic violence. The prevalence of violent conflict in communities and the availability of arms is one of the risks to women's security. But several scholars have pointed out that the war produced highly militarised conceptions of masculinities among both soldiers and civilians (Jok and Hutchinson 2002). These militarised masculinities, together with the changes in sexual norms that occurred, persist in the post-conflict situation and form part of the explanation of the high levels of violence against women in contemporary South Sudan (Jok and Hutchinson 2002; D'Awol 2011).

D'Awol (2011) argues that the strongly patriarchal society of South Sudan, in which customary law entrenches gender inequalities, creates the conditions in which forms of sexual violence thrive. The militarised masculinities that developed during the war have deepened the notion of the man as the decision-maker in the household, including over when to have sex. When a woman refuses to have sex the use of violence has become acceptable. Social norms encourage silence among victims of sexual violence and cause severe stigmatisation of the victim when it is revealed in public (D'Awol 2011). Harmony within families and

communities is prioritised over the wellbeing of the victim, which contributes to a culture of impunity for the perpetrators of sexual violence. Local reconciliation mechanisms are preferred as civil procedures may lead to the removal of the perpetrator from a community, thus jeopardising community harmony. One of the common ‘solutions’ for unmarried girls is to marry the perpetrator (Lacey 2013).

Customary institutions are considered a major limitation to women’s participation in politics and in the public sphere more generally (Arabi 2011). Marriage is a crucial institution in the lives of South Sudanese women, largely controlled by customary law (Lacey 2013). In theory, the bride price is in recognition of the value and capacities of the woman who is brought into a family. In reality, however, women become the ‘property’ of a husband and his family over whom they have control (Lacey 2013). One implication of their exclusion is that they usually cannot take part in the deliberations where issues of peace and conflict are discussed. Often women are not given the opportunity to participate in peace conferences, one of the existing conflict resolution mechanisms common in South Sudan, and when they do, their voices are often marginal (Lacey 2013). However, little is known about the everyday forms of agency expressed by women in relation to violence or concerning local level decision-making. They may have their own ways of navigating the authorities and institutions in their lives, or negotiating with men. This report aims to contribute to wider knowledge on this.

## 4 Research site: Eastern Equatoria State

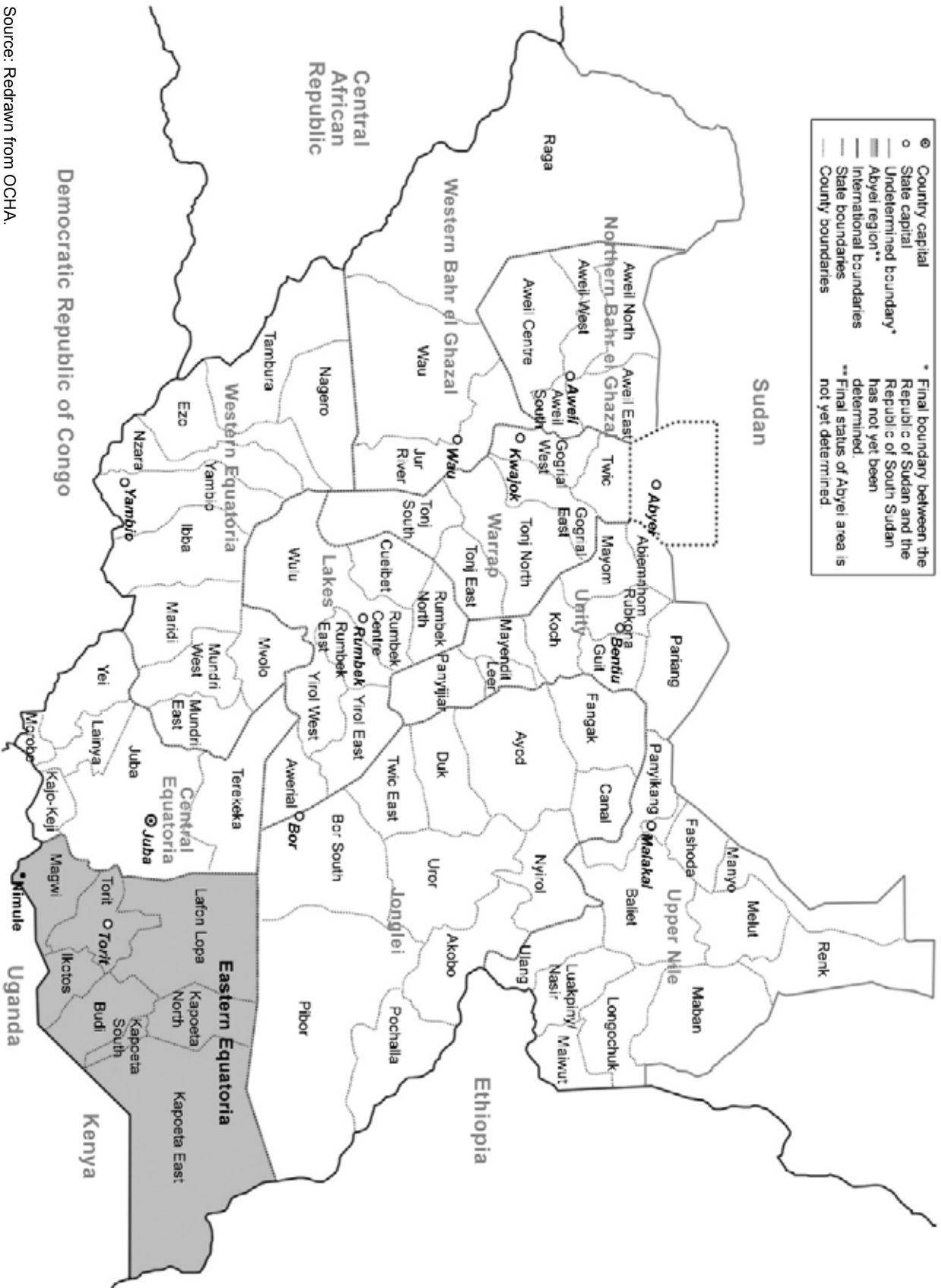
Eastern Equatoria State is a hill area in South Sudan’s borderlands, in the south-east of the country (see map). It has eight counties: Lafon-Lopa, Kapoeta North, Kapoeta West and Kapoeta East in the northern part of the state, bordering Jonglei State; and Magwi, Torit, Ikotos and Budi county forming South Sudan’s international border in the southern part. Torit town is the State capital. Counties are divided into administrative units called *payams* (districts), which are subdivided into *bomas* (clusters of villages). With three international borders – Uganda to the south, Kenya to the south-east, and Ethiopia to the east – Eastern Equatoria is important for international trade, especially since the CPA in 2005 and the end of the conflict between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda in 2008. The porous border also affects the security of Eastern Equatoria due to conflicts between pastoralist groups across the border and the illegal trade in arms (Walraet 2008).

Eastern Equatoria State is home to a number of ethnic groups: Toposa, Latuko, Lango, Imatong Didinga, Mundari, Bari and Acholi. Large groups of Dinka migrated into Eastern Equatoria State from Jonglei when Nuer militia engaged in attacks on the city of Bor. After this, Dinka from Jonglei settled in Eastern Equatoria where they gained political and military influence. Their presence has often led to tensions with the other ethnic groups (Schomerus 2008).

In a conflict assessment at state level, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2012) considered border conflicts, cattle-raiding and



Map of South Sudan showing the different states and counties



Source: Redrawn from OCHA.

disaffected youth to be major sources of conflict in present-day Eastern Equatoria State. Border issues over state, county and *payam* borders for which the demarcations remain unclear create tensions between groups that claim the ownership and use of the land (UNDP 2012). These conflicts are not limited to inter-ethnic tensions but happen within ethnic groups as well. Apart from Magwi county, all other counties are affected by cattle-raiding and access to water and grazing land for cattle. The lack of economic and educational opportunities, combined with the availability of arms, is associated with the emergence of criminal gangs. Furthermore, the absence of governance institutions that provide adequate security and the gaps in basic service delivery are considered major factors contributing to insecurity.

Displacement of various ethnic groups into Eastern Equatoria during the civil war has caused tensions over land ownership. This is fuelled by debates about who stayed (and suffered), fought, and fled during the war, who contributed more to the liberation struggle and who has therefore more entitlement to the land (Leonardi 2011). Although not all of forms of conflict are politically motivated, politics and the political economies of conflict play a strong role in many of them. Schomerus (2008) indicates that border conflicts may be fuelled by politicians who seek to secure access to resources from the land. Walraet (2008) describes the linkages between political actors involved in cross-border trade and commercial raiding.

## 5 Research process

### 5.1 Research team

The research formed part of a learning trajectory for three organisations: Voice for Change, the Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation and the South Sudan Law Society. The learning trajectory consisted of training on participatory research methods and power analysis, and of using these techniques to learn about different forms of violence and their gendered impact. The research team included one member of each organisation and the IDS researcher (two women, two men). They were joined in Eastern Equatoria by two interpreters (one man, one woman), who belonged to the Latuko ethnic group and worked for community-based organisations in Torit town.

### 5.2 Selection of the case study

At the time of research, a number of factors determined the selection of the *payam*, not all of which are theoretical. In line with the research objectives the study focuses on a rural area, which has experienced different kinds of community violence. However, the safety of the research team needed to be guaranteed. Violence erupted in Budi county a week before the research started and the situation was still unstable, which meant the team could not go there. In Torit itself, tensions between groups were on the increase in Buhr county and violence broke out on 27 and 28 April 2013. Nine people were killed in the violence and the county commissioner had to intervene. Many people left their homesteads to find refuge in

the bush. Although these dynamics affected the selection process they did not affect our activities in the *payam* where the research was carried out.

Besides having to select a more stable area, appropriate transport and communication were also important for the security arrangements of the work. The resources required for the logistics of field research in a context like South Sudan cannot be underestimated (see Roberts 2013). The funding available is therefore a strong factor in determining where and how remotely the team can work. At the time of research in 2013, UNMISS considered parts of the road to Kapoeta unsafe and advised international organisations to use two vehicles and to take radio equipment or satellite phones. As the team had only one vehicle and mobile phones, a safer area had to be selected, with access to mobile phone networks.

These factors played a role in the selection process and finally a relatively stable *payam* in Torit county was selected: Imurok *payam*, just south of Torit town (see map). In this *payam*, a number of border issues had created tensions and remained unresolved, but had not led to large-scale violence – only the threat of it. Although the selected *payam* suffered a cattle raid in the past, it is by no means a site where cattle-raiding and violence in retaliation is very common. Choosing a relatively safe area has implications for the study: the dynamics of violence and citizen responses may be different than in areas where violence occurs more frequently and is more intense. This study therefore by no means claims to be representative for other, more violence-prone areas in South Sudan. Rather, it is a rich case study that provides an in-depth analysis of local perceptions of political settlements and violence, and how this shapes responses to violence. This framework may be applied to other areas where dynamics of violence are different.

### 5.3 Research methodology

The study was carried out in one *payam* of Torit county in three phases, coming back to the same *payam* each time. The *payam* comprised four *bomas*, which were all included in the study. The *payam* centre was a one-hour drive from Torit town, while it took two hours to get to the two *bomas* that were furthest away from town. To have only one case study in this research enabled the research team to build relationships with the residents of the *bomas*. To come back and catch up with people raised our credibility as a research team and it enabled the team to follow any developments concerning particular border disputes that could potentially escalate into violence.

Taking a qualitative research approach, the study used a range of qualitative methods: focus group discussions, individual interviews, and participatory methodologies such as village maps, rankings, institutional mappings and flow diagrams. In each of the *bomas* focus groups with five to eight participants were organised, for men and women separately. It was ensured that different age groups were included. Participants were usually invited by one of the respected older men and women in the *boma*. At *payam* level the research team carried out 20 focus group discussions and 18 individual interviews in total.

The participatory research methods were adapted from Moser and Horn (2011), who used participatory methods to study 'violence chains' and to identify tipping points for when tensions escalate into violence. In this study these techniques were

used to identify the types of violence and to discuss their causes and consequences. After the range of types of violence and their linkages had been analysed in detail, the focus group discussion shifted to understanding how people have agency in relation to violence. Topic guides were used to facilitate discussions.

An exercise comprising of participatory photography with 12 participants, follow-up interviews and a focus group discussion constituted an important part of the data collection on agency (see Box 5.1). It also served as a tool to start a collective reflection on forms of violence in the community and possible ways forward.

In addition, six semi-structured interviews with key informants in the *payam* focused on their perspectives of the national political settlement, their sense of citizenship and the relationship between political settlements and violence. These key informants were identified during the research process. Finally, as a 'case within the case study' the research team pursued one concrete case of a border dispute and asked the focus groups from all four *bomas* to narrate what had happened. This case is presented as a vignette in Section 6.

In Torit town, the research team interviewed two county government officials, one representative of the Ministry of Gender, a group of six Members of Parliament of Eastern Equatoria State belonging to the women's caucus, and five community-based organisations working on women's rights and peace. It was not within the scope of this research to interview a wide cross-section of international NGOs and representatives of the UN agencies. The objective of the interviews in town was to obtain an impression of activities carried out in relation to women's security and to see how local institutions and forms of agency among women and men figured in these interventions.

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### Box 5.1 Participatory photography and violence

Participatory photography is a methodology in the family of participatory visual methods. Also known as Photo Voice (Wang 1999) it offers participants the possibility to communicate their stories through pictures. In certain contexts this may overcome existing barriers to use written and spoken words. It is not without risk, however (Prins 2010). This box presents the process of the participatory exercise in this study.

#### ***Negotiating access***

The protocol to gain access to the local level required a meeting with the County Commissioner. The team had met him on an earlier occasion to ask permission for doing the research. Given the sensitivities around photography in public spaces, especially in a conflict-prone and sometimes militarised environment, permission for this phase of the research was particularly important. As in our previous encounter, the meeting was filled with subtexts around power and authority that served to confirm the authority of the Commissioner. After the meeting, he readily agreed to the methodology that involved photography and confirmed this in a phone call to the *payam* administrator. Later that week, the team interviewed the Speaker of Eastern Equatoria State Parliament, who called in the member of parliament from the *payam* where the study was being carried out. He, too, used this interaction to confirm his authority by allowing the team to carry out their work in the *payam*. This emphasis on who has authority reappeared in the *payam*, where the team convened an introduction meeting about the methodology with the *payam* authorities. The men repeatedly said there was 'no problem' and that they would all cooperate because the 'authority was sent from the county'. They emphasised that if the 'authority' was given, then everything was fine, as that was how it worked there.

### ***Preparing the participants***

In the meeting at the *payam* level, the team explained the method to the authorities and emphasised confidentiality issues concerning the pictures and interviews, ethics concerning taking pictures of other people, and discussed whether there was anything or anyone that could not be photographed. The team asked for two groups of participants to be identified, one consisting of six women and one of six men. The groups were meant to represent different social identities: youth, middle-aged people and an elder, someone related to the local administration and a customary leader, and one participant could be identified by the community.

The process for participatory photography included an individual and a collective component. The research team worked with the female participants on one day and came back the next day to work with the men. The participants were shown how to handle a simple camera. The team discussed ethical issues and confidentiality. The participants were asked four questions, which they could answer in the form of one or several pictures:

1. Can you take pictures of some of the problems you face in daily life?
2. Can you take pictures of the threat to your security in daily life?
3. Can you take pictures of how you deal with this insecurity, and who else helps to address it?
4. Can you take a picture of how the government is involved in relation to your security?

### ***Capturing excitement***

To warm up, participants could try their cameras. This created a lot of excitement, which then fed into the exercise. All participants, men and women, were very excited and engaged with the questions very seriously. Where the women had been quite shy in previously held focus groups, they were now very enthusiastic about going around their area and taking pictures of their environment. In some cases they 'staged' pictures, asking others to pose to represent a situation. For example, one participant asked two men to pretend to hide in the bush, which represented her fear of militias from other tribes.

All pictures were printed and taken back to the individual participant. In one-to-one interviews the participants were asked to tell the story of the picture, with the facilitators as active listeners without prompting too much. This was followed by a semi-structured interview about the pictures that pursued the linkages between types of violence and people's agency.

### ***Discussing violence***

The next stage was a focus group discussion in which participants could present their pictures to others and open up the discussions. Before starting, participants had the opportunity to select or eliminate the pictures, which is particularly important when sensitive issues like violence are being discussed (Prins 2010). One of the women for instance decided to remove a picture that reflected domestic violence, in which she had posed. The focus groups opened up lively discussions about the community's collective responses to types of violence. However, as will be discussed in the findings sections, the men talked about landmines and community violence, but domestic violence did not come up. The women engaged in a serious discussion about how they can support one another to cope with domestic violence, although it was a greater challenge to imagine how it could be overcome. This methodology is thus useful to compare discourses around violence and it may prompt groups to speak about actions. Yet it does not mean that complex problems like domestic violence, marked by unequal power relations, can be overcome in one exercise. This would require a series of conversations over a longer time frame, with sometimes men and women together.

## Part 2

# 6 Local dynamics of insecurity and gender inequality

Part 2 of this report presents the findings of this research. It presents the gendered experience of violence and insecurity at the local level and the gendered responses. It will show that a sense of insecurity is informed by incidents of violence in everyday life, by people's perceptions of a political settlement that is unbalanced, and by the knowledge that they live in a deeply insecure state. In response, the people in the *payam* have developed protection mechanisms. Men have predominantly developed the security arrangements in customary institutions. The findings show that these customary institutions also constitute a site where masculinities are confirmed. In the post-conflict situation, the men seek to reassert the authority of these institutions, after being disrupted during the war, drawing on a form of masculinity that emphasises the men's role as protectors. However, it appears that these protection mechanisms are one of the reasons that domestic violence has increased. Although women are largely excluded from the governance of protection, they do exercise agency – albeit limited – in influencing the men, sometimes by appealing to their pride and masculinity.

Section 6.1 introduces the historical context of Imurok *payam*, based on focus group discussions and the narratives of participants. This reflects the particular history of Eastern Equatoria State, which shapes people's current understanding of the post-civil war political settlement. Section 6.2 outlines the important local political and social institutions and their functions, which constitute the governance mechanisms in Imurok. Section 7.1 presents the findings for the forms of violence experienced in the *payam*, which demonstrates that this experience is gendered. Section 7.2 details how men and women exercise agency in relation to domestic violence while section 7.3 in relation to intra/inter-community conflict shows the gender divide in local security arrangements. Section 7.4 shows that perceptions of the state and the political settlement and violent conflict elsewhere in the country affect a sense of security and people's responses, which calls upon the protection trait of masculinity. Finally, section 8 reflects on people's expectations from higher levels of government.

### 6.1 Imurok *payam* during the war

The war started in 1983, but the first small SPLA battalions arrived in Eastern Equatoria State in 1986 (Kurimoto 1994). The people of Imurok remembered the Tingli battalion passing through and the first SPLA attacks on garrisons in Torit in 1989. Garang had his SPLA-Torit headquarters in Torit town, but moved to Chuckudum, Budi county, in 1992 having been pushed back by the SAF. Imurok became a strategic location on the front line between the two forces. The northern part of the *payam* had been controlled by the SAF at times, which was aiming to capture Magwi town in the south. Imurok was located in between. The southern parts had been in the

hands of the SPLA, therefore respondents referred to the centre of the *payam* as a major 'battle ground'. Since the *payam* population 'belonged' to the forces that occupied the territory, interaction between inhabitants of the northern and southern parts of the *payam* had sometimes been impossible. If caught by the forces on 'the other side', a person could be accused of collaborating with the enemy, leading to captivity or death. Antonov aircraft belonging to the SAF and the government in Khartoum carried out aerial bombings. Both the SPLA and the SAF planted landmines across the entire *payam*: on and along the roads, in the fields and swampy areas by the hills. In the late 1990s, the Equatoria Defence Forces (EDF) factions were also stationed in the *payam*. It caused a confrontation with the SPLA, after which the EDF took control of the centre and started looting. They raped and violated some of the women. Finally, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>4</sup> carried out a number of attacks between 2002 and 2004, some of which were countered by the men from Imurok.

The inhabitants associate the start of the second civil war with the atrocities committed by the SPLA: forced conscription by kidnapping young boys, looting, and sexual violence against women. This prompted many citizens of Imurok, though impossible to say how many, to flee to Magwi and Nimule further south or across the border to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those who remained had to cope with the war and the armed struggles between the SPLA and the SAF. There were places to hide within the *payam*. On either side of the road, the Magwi hills stretch through the *payam* from north to south. These hills, especially Ikhwalla and Lellere mountains, have countless caves. The caves were an important part of local life, as some kept the shrines of cultural leaders and nobody else was allowed to enter. During the war, other caves became hiding places for women, children and older people, for years on end. Some of the women claimed they stayed there for 20 years without coming down to the central road. The men said that many families remained in the villages for a while, but that the majority was forced to flee to the caves after the EDF was established, due to the many violent confrontations between the SPLA and the EDF in the area. The caves were again used when the LRA launched attacks into the *payam*.

The women had cleared gardens for cultivation on the hill. Through the headmen, they received instructions about which crops to hand over to the SPLA, and how much food to cook and *warangi* (local alcohol) to brew for the men on the front line. They had to give most of their goats and poultry to the SPLA. This supply was forced through SPLA command, but both men and women stated that it was also a tactic to prevent SPLA violence against women and children. On the hills the elders organised a school for the children, a church and places to take care of the wounded. Some of the important cultural leaders, like the chief of the land and the rainmaker, stayed with the women and elders. Our respondents explained their belief in their spells and rituals, which had protected the people in the caves. The

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4 The LRA is a Ugandan rebel group. Between the early 1990s and mid-2007 the LRA was active on South Sudanese territory, particularly Magwi county, from where it launched its violent incursions into Uganda (see Schomerus 2007). The government of Sudan supported the LRA to fight against the SPLA. By 2005 most LRA factions had left Eastern Equatoria. Peace negotiations in the capital of Juba (2006–8) resulted in a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the government of Uganda and the LRA in 2007. The final peace agreement was not signed and the LRA is still based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where it occasionally enters Western Equatoria.

rainmaker would cast spells that made any enemy approaching the hills blind, unable to see those in hiding. Other spells were made to prevent bullets and arrows from hurting anyone. Cultural leaders were also able to summon bees and scorpions and had them attack the enemy. Life on the hills was difficult: it was a challenge to organise enough food. The spiders and other insects in the caves bit them at night and in the morning the children would be crying. Both men and women reiterated the lack of commodities like salt and soap, a common way to describe hardship and scarcity.

While on the hills, the women received very little information about what was going on in the centre or in other areas. Sometimes they received some news through the headmen, but mostly they were guessing that fighting was taking place when they heard gunshots or planes approaching. At times, small groups of women went up to Torit and Magwi towns and as far as Uganda to get salt and soap. This was a very risky journey and many risked their lives. These women brought back intelligence about what was going on in town and elsewhere, which several men recognised as a valuable contribution to the war.

Many of the men joined the SPLA and stayed in the centre of the *payam*, where the SPLA had created a basis in the school. Our female participants recalled the SPLA forcefully recruited boys in the 1980s and again in 1992, when every family had to send men. The men explained how their local leaders tried to negotiate with the SPLA about how many and who from every family was obliged to go. Village leaders negotiated for recruited men from Imurok to remain stationed in the area to protect their own people against the SAF, the EDF and the LRA. They discussed how much manpower and food the population had to supply. Village leaders could also report instances of SPLA abuse to the generals. In this *payam*, the EDF was not represented as an ally but as a new oppressor. According to the men, they caused social divisions in their area by referring to the population in the SPLA-liberated areas as 'Dinka'. During the time that both the SPLA and the EDF were active in the *payam*, young men were forcefully recruited into both groups. Male participants from across the *payam* told numerous stories about particular men from Imurok, who were in the SPLA but infiltrated the EDF and pretended to serve its cause. Thus they negotiated with both groups, found out their plans, and communicated with their 'sons' who served in these groups about how the people of Imurok could best be protected. The strategy that combined disguise and negotiation was mentioned time and again as one of the ways in which lives were saved.

Thus, the population of Imurok used a combination of strategies to live their lives in the war zone, with men having a more prominent role at the 'voice' end of the spectrum (Barter 2012). While many people chose the 'flight' option (Barter 2012) to leave the war zone, the flight option to the hills offered protection as well as a basis from where to contribute to the struggle. Furthermore, the 'voice' strategy of certain men, combining disguise and engagement, was a way to navigate the presence of multiple armed actors in the area. Some of the characteristics of life during war have continued into the present, although in new ways. The caves remain potential hiding places for when violence erupts again. They are also a symbol for the protection of women through isolating them. Some forms of authority that emerged during the war are still part of local life, as some of the men who had negotiated with the SPLA and the EDF on behalf of the Imurok population are now in leadership positions as local chiefs.



## 6.2 Local governance and security arrangements

At the *payam* headquarters, the research team frequently met with the *payam* administrator, his secretary and the local chiefs (one chief at *payam* level and 'boma chiefs' at village level). As the team learnt about the existing forms of customary authority, it turned out that several chiefs doubled as customary leaders, like the 'chiefs of the land' (explained below). The *payam* administrator was often accompanied by other men, whom he referred to as the '*Monyomiji*' – young adults in the customary age-set system. At the local level, the *payam* administrators and the local chiefs closely interact with the customary authority structures in the villages, signifying the hybrid nature of local governance in the *payam*. This section presents the nature of the customary institutions that are characteristic of the Latuko ethnic group and how they operate in this *payam*, as explained to us by our participants. It describes how customary institutions are responsible for local order and security arrangements. The findings show they are also important sites where young men are nurtured into adulthood and where masculinity is constructed.

### 6.2.1 Individual customary leaders

A number of customary authorities with specific functions exist, like the chiefs of the land, rainmakers and chiefs of the spear. Simonse (1993) refers to the position of the king, which did not come up during our fieldwork. These customary leaders are inherited positions and can be male and female. They are highly respected in the community and their authority increases with age and experience. All of them are community advisors, to whom people can turn in case of problems. Chiefs of the land have knowledge of boundaries and territorial borders and therefore play an important role in land disputes. For serious border disputes between communities, the chiefs of the land from both sides of the border need to discuss a resolution. When they cannot agree, a ritual is performed in which a goat is slaughtered, its blood tasted by the chiefs of the land, and then both chiefs need to 'swear' on the border. The chief of the land who had claimed the land under false pretences is expected to die or fall seriously ill over the next few days. This ritual is therefore considered to be very serious and used as a last resort. Chiefs of the land can furthermore bless the land for cultivation and perform rituals to ensure good harvests. As their title suggests, rainmakers perform rituals to attract the rains at the right time for cultivation. The chiefs of the spear bless the arms of the men who go out to fight and perform rituals for the protection of those who fight and those who stay behind. As indicated in the previous section, all these customary leaders took on protective roles during the war, using their spiritual powers to protect the community.

### 6.2.2 Amangat: collective customary authority

The most important customary authority of the Latuko is a collective, though male, form of authority, comprising the *Monyomiji* (young adult men, the 'warrior generation') and the institutions known as *Amangat* and *Adufa*. *Monyomiji* means 'owners' or 'fathers' of the land (Simonse 1993; Sureau 2013). The *Monyomiji* are the group of young adult men, who are the rulers and protectors of the community until they reach the age set of 'elders' and retire. It is as much a social identity as it

is an age group with certain responsibilities: they preside over the social order, moral integrity and security (both food security and physical security) of the community. The *Amangat* (village section) is the assembly of the *Monyomiji* and the decision-making institution at local level. Customary leaders and elders who are no longer part of the *Monyomiji* advise them.

According to Simonse (1993) young men belonging to the same age set group 'graduate' to become *Monyomiji* at the same time (approximately every five years), which is when the older age set of *Monyomiji* retires. The ruling group of *Monyomiji* usually comprises two age sets. Kurimoto (1994) describes the equivalent *Mojomiji* among the Pari ethnic group in Lafon (Eastern Equatoria). He describes the tensions between age sets that may occur when the older age set of the *Monyomiji* refuses to hand over power to the younger ones. This prompts them to demonstrate that they have the capacities and courage to take over. He argues that this caused mass-enrolment into the SPLA among the Pari youth from 1985–89, when small factions of the SPLA were starting to operate and recruit in Eastern Equatoria.

According to the men in Imurok, the *Amangat* barely functioned during the war as people dispersed and many men participated in the SPLA (see also Sureau 2013: 145). One of the local *boma* chiefs explains:

*The Monyomiji were powerless at that time. They could only send people to fight in the SPLA and follow the orders of those in command. Some stayed behind to protect the area, but they had no weapons. So they protected only with words. They would accompany the women and show them where to hide. Whenever the SPLA came into their area they would say: 'We are just here with the women to cultivate. We have already sent our children to fight. We have nothing, we are just farming'. All the Monyomiji did was to pick up and carry the small children that were left behind when the women had run [to hide].<sup>5</sup>*

In this interview with the *boma* chief and in the focus group discussions with the men, it appeared that the men's role as fighters/protectors in the SPLA had been in tension with losing the institutions of the *Amangat* and the codes among the *Monyomiji* that govern how fighting is done. They also stressed that as many young men were conscripted into either the SPLA or the SAF, they missed formal education and 'the education at home' – meaning participation in the customary institution of the *Amangat* where one learns to become a man. As this report shall argue, this disruption of the *Amangat* and the governing mechanisms of *Monyomiji* had implications for the post-conflict situation as the *Monyomiji* tried to reassert their authority through these institutions.

### 6.3 The functions of the *Amangat*

The *Amangat* stands as a symbol for unity and harmony in the community. It is also a place where visitors can be received and provided with food, and huts built around the *Adufa* can accommodate visitors with no relatives in the area. The *Amangat* meets at the *Adufa*, which is a fenced meeting place where the drums are kept.

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5 Interview, *payam* chief in Imurok, 27 April 2013.

The *Adufa* is the seat of customary government: the site where the ruling age groups of adults meet as an assembly (*Amangat*) to discuss community affairs.



Within the *Amangat* a social hierarchy exists, based on age and level of authority, with corresponding responsibilities. Here, youth become *Monyomiji* when they are 18 years old. The *Amangat* in Imurok included four age sets with the following names:<sup>6</sup>

- *Ahou* are the most senior *Monyomiji*. They play an advisory role and give orders to the lower-rank *Monyomiji*. They keep the fire in the *Amangat*.
- *Ohiji* are the senior *Monyomiji* who enforce the orders given by the *Ahou*.
- *Ofirat* are the middle-senior *Monyomiji* who oversee the implementation of orders by the *Asahat*. They are the first to be mobilised to defend the community.
- *Asahat* are the junior class of *Monyomiji*, the 'footmen' who implement any orders given to them.

Customary institutions are not intrinsically harmonious. Vaughan *et al.* (2013) indicate that frictions and competition among customary institutions are part of local reality across South Sudan. Decisions over how to respond to security threats and incidents can be a source of tension. In Imurok, there was some indication that competition existed between the elders and the younger generation of *Monyomiji*. Some elders expressed their concerns over the *Monyomiji* who nowadays choose to fight where other resolutions are possible. This was mentioned as one of the causes for conflict elsewhere in the state, whereas Imurok is relatively peaceful compared to other parts of the state. The study did not come across issues that had resulted in a serious conflict between elders and *Monyomiji*. In one particular land dispute between *bomas* (section 6.3) the Chief of the Land had maintained control over the youth, who were initially prepared to go to fight the rival community.

6 Our Latuko interpreters indicated that the titles of each age group can vary from place to place, but that the social hierarchy within the *Amangat* exists in all Latuka areas. For instance, in one of the other *payams* the ranks were named *Ahou/Mokoro*, *Humar*, *Eyolo* (after a yellow, noisy bird), and *Sulfhea*.

The *Monyomiji* are considered the authority of the village, discussing all sorts of issues and taking decisions about celebrations, cultivation, initiations and – importantly for this study – responses to insecurity and threat. Many *Monyomiji* gather every evening in the *Amangat* to discuss the day, and periodically all members of the *Amangat* come together to deliberate on community affairs. This for instance includes communal labour that is to be carried out (on roads or schools) and cultivation. Members can ask for help and the *Amangat* discusses rotas for planting and harvesting. The *Amangat* can decide to put requests to the *payam* authorities, for example, when the local health unit runs out of drugs. *Payam* authorities, in turn, consult the *Amangat* about community needs.

Traditionally, the security of the *payam* is the main concern of the *Amangat*. In the case of an acute emergency or security threat the drums in the *Adufa* will be beaten and the *Monyomiji* will gather in the *Amangat* to decide on their strategy. The decision on whether ‘to talk peace or to declare war’ is taken here. In *Amangat* meetings the day-to-day security of the *payam* is discussed, varying from any incident of ‘two brothers arguing among themselves’ to possible tensions with other communities. *Monyomiji* will report the news from other places and on anything unusual observed on their territory. The possible implications of national security issues can also be on the agenda. For instance, when news arrived that President Salva Kiir had dissolved the cabinet in July 2013 this was discussed in the *Amangat*. In the past, the *Amangat* had discussed the situation of the Yau Yau rebellion in Jonglei state. The resolution of the *Amangat* was that all *Monyomiji* should safeguard the harmony in their community, so that the community would ‘stand as one’ in case insecurity came their way.

### **6.3.1 The Amangat as the site for confirming authority and masculinity**

The *Amangat* is a site for preparing youth for adulthood and for becoming active members of their community. In order to become *Monyomiji* a young man needs apply to the *Amangat* and pay a contribution to its members. In the case of Imurok the contribution consisted of 18 sticks of bamboo and a goat. Failing to do so ‘a youth will not have voice in the community and will be regarded as a woman’.<sup>7</sup> This statement also reflects the norm that the public sphere for deliberation and decision-making is the domain of men, whereas women do not have a political voice (addressed below). Local social and political institutions like the *Amangat* are important spaces where ‘active citizenship’ is learnt, like norms and practices for deliberation, negotiation, interaction with authority and decision-making (Oosterom 2014). They also function as the places where customary authority is practised and confirmed. In all focus groups where the function of the *Amangat* was discussed, the men highlighted it as a place where the youth are ‘taught’ norms and values, and the culture and history of the Latuka. They are given advice on how to live in harmony with other community members and on how to protect the women in case of any external threat or attack. Even outside the *Amangat* the *Monyomiji* are respected and obeyed, but are obliged to serve the community. If a *Monyomiji* is not following the rules, then the senior *Monyomiji* will intervene. *Monyomiji* can be suspended from the *Amangat* and disciplined and advised by the elders.

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7 Focus group with men, Imurok, 25 April 2013.

The *Amangat* is sometimes referred to as the community parliament in English and the *Monyomiji* as the representatives of each village – despite the fact that women cannot be *Monyomiji* or participate in the *Amangat*. The *Amangat* is a space for men, governed by rules and norms that were created by men and that reflect a particular masculine identity. Women are not allowed to enter the *Adufa* at any time and if a woman trespasses her whole age group will be fined. Obviously, women cannot participate in the gatherings of the *Amangat*. Older women may sit at a small distance to listen to the discussions, but are not allowed to speak directly to the men when they meet. Occasionally meetings are organised for the whole community, typically when the state or county government needs to communicate information. In these community meetings both men and women participate and women are allowed to speak.

The *Amangat* previously had legislative, executive and judiciary powers (Simonse 1983), but it appears that nowadays the customary courts function separately from the *Amangat*. This may be the effect of the SPLA policy that introduced local courts (Johnson 2003), which some of the elders referred to. The courts consist only of elders, usually all male. Minor local disputes and violent incidents may be discussed and resolved in the *Amangat*, but when it comes to a court case the elders in the customary courts are the ones to hear the case and decide on a resolution, punishment and compensation. Section 8 will reflect on the legitimacy of customary institutions and local state actors.

## 7 Citizen security defined by men and women

To understand the gendered experience of security and insecurity first requires an understanding of the forms of violence that affect the lives of men and women, and how they respond to these. The findings show that not only the actual instances of violence matter. It is also the threat of violence that shapes people's notion of how safe and secure they feel in their environment. It may therefore be more relevant to speak of the *sense of security*. This section addresses the question 'whose security', by analysing the differences between men and women's senses of security.

### 7.1 Forms of violence and insecurity experienced

Table 7.1 below shows the aggregated outcomes of ranking exercises of the forms of violence experienced by men and women, collected in six focus groups in which each individual could prioritise three forms of violence. During the discussions, much of the debate concentrated on whether a form of violence should be ranked higher for its impact or for how frequently it is experienced; most forms of violence were prioritised for their frequency.

**Table 7.1 Ranking types of violence experienced in daily life**

Women	Score <sup>1</sup>	Men	Score <sup>2</sup>
Physical violence against women (in the community)	12	Landmines	15
Domestic violence (in the home)	11	Alcohol abuse	12
Fighting in the community	5	Fighting in the community	8
Alcohol abuse	5	Wife-battering	7
Girl-child compensation	4	Killing	4
Rape/sexual violence	4	Theft	2
Land disputes	3	Girl-child compensation	2
Landmines	2	Border disputes	
Forced early marriage		Cattle-raiding	
Cattle-raiding		Forced and early marriage	
No education for girls			
Widow inheritance			
Polygamy or men leaving a family for another woman			
Child abductions			
Children not respecting their parents (sons beat mothers)			
Security in the bush			

<sup>1</sup>Aggregated score from three focus groups with women, five participants per group. Each participant could prioritise three forms of violence.

<sup>2</sup>Aggregated score from three focus groups with men, five participants per group. Each participant could prioritise three forms of violence.

The immediate observation from Table 7.1 is that women distinguish many more types of violence than men and that most of the additional types of violence constitute forms of violence against women. Domestic violence, girl-child compensation,<sup>8</sup> early marriage, no education for girls, widow inheritance, and the effects of polygamy are all forms of violence against women. Even the lack of respect of children for parents, which mainly concerned boys not respecting their mothers, is a form of violence when it is seen in relation to boys being raised in families and communities where masculinity prevails, with certain ideas about authority.

8 Girl-child compensation refers to a form of compensation after someone is killed. The family of the perpetrator has to compensate the family of the victim by sending them one of their daughters, often a very young girl.

Table 7.2 shows the outcomes of the participatory photography exercise with the pictures representing security concerns. To a certain extent, the frequency with which each security concern appeared in the pictures corresponded with the outcomes of the ranking exercise. But this exercise brought out even more that security goes beyond the forms of violence. Men included droughts as a threat to their food security and women took pictures of the threat experienced from unknown 'enemies' associated with various conflicts elsewhere in the state and the country. The remaining part of this section summarises the findings for the types of violence and the findings for the 'sense of security' are elaborated in section 7.4.

**Table 7.2 Pictures representing security concerns experienced in daily life**

Pictures taken by women	Frequency <sup>1</sup>	Pictures taken by men	Frequency <sup>2</sup>
Domestic violence	4	Landmines	12
Fights in the community	4	Ammunition/arms left behind after war	5
Land disputes*	4	Land disputes*	4
Cattle raids	3	Alcohol	1
Enemies in the bush	3		
Landmines	3		
Alcohol	3		
Ammunition/arms left behind after war	3		
<i>Amangat</i> (when one <i>Amangat</i> decides to fight the other)	1		

<sup>1</sup>Aggregated score from a group of six female participants; each participant could take more than one picture.

<sup>2</sup>Aggregated score from a group of six male participants; each participant could take more than one picture.

\* Concretely, participants highlighted a border dispute with Magwi county and a border dispute with Nyong *payam*. Customary leaders had recently resolved an internal dispute between two *bomas* in the *payam*.

The types of violence were further discussed when drawing the flow diagrams, showing the causes and effects of different types of violence, and the linkages between forms of violence. In the discussions, men referred to themselves as the providers for the family in relation to their identity as the *Monyomiji*, who are responsible for food security. The problem of landmines was therefore ranked very high because their prevalence limited the possibilities for cultivation and restricted people's mobility. Demining agencies have cleared most of the important roads and fields, but many areas have not been done. In the participatory photography exercise all male participants had taken pictures of objects reflecting the problem of landmines in the area.

Fights within the community, also ranked high by the men, caused disunity, which could subsequently weaken collective capacities to take care of food security and protect the community. Protection was particularly needed in relation to land disputes, also ranked by the men. They referred to three concrete cases of border disputes, which they as *Monyomiji* have had to monitor.



Many men took pictures of these piles of sticks left behind by the demining agency, which warn the people that the area behind the sticks still has mines that need to be cleared.



Of course, physical harm caused by fights was also emphasised. The men considered alcohol to be a major cause for fights in the community as well as for violence against women. In the ranking exercise alcohol was therefore included as a form of violence in itself. Interestingly, the men had not taken any pictures that represented fights or wife-battering (or other forms of violence against women), but several pictures were taken that reflected alcohol consumption. In the ranking exercise, girl-child compensation and forced and early marriage of girls were recognised as forms of violence.

The discussions with the women, during the flow diagrams exercise, focused predominantly on forms of violence against them as women, such as domestic violence and the cultural practices of girl-child compensation, forced and early marriage and widow inheritance. What stood out during these sessions was the tension between, on the one hand, a certain acceptance of rules and cultural practices and, on the other, feelings of grievance and injustice over the effects of these rules and practices on their agency and bodies. When women are victims of physical or sexual violence, there is a strong sense of shame and embarrassment, as D'Awol highlights (2011). Even if an argument does not lead to a physical fight there is a sense of shame, expressed as 'neighbours will think you are a bad wife or person'. The women acknowledged that local dispute resolution mechanisms often put the blame on the women.

The findings presented here show that the experience of violence and insecurity is strongly gendered. Women are exposed to a much broader spectrum of violence than men, including that caused by men themselves. In these initial discussions about violence and security, the contours of masculinities became visible: the ways in which men and women expressed themselves about their security was informed by their respective social roles in the *payam*. Women largely depend on men – and male-dominated institutions – for their protection, while these institutions also form



a threat to their bodily integrity and security. The men talked about their roles as protectors. But within this seemingly highly restrictive context women did find small opportunities to exercise agency. The following sections elaborate two of the prevailing forms of threats to security (domestic violence and insecurity stemming from intra/inter-community disputes) and describe how men and women exercise agency in response.

## 7.2 Violence against women

According to the women, instances of domestic violence and physical violence against women in the community occur on a daily basis. One of the participants said: 'Every day at least five women are beaten here.' Men recognise that wife-battering is a common form of domestic violence in the community. They insisted on having alcohol listed separately, which they considered a major cause of domestic violence and fighting in the community. In relation to girl-child compensation the efforts of the Eastern Equatoria State government to eliminate this practice were mentioned. Most of our participants reported to us that it is indeed a cultural practice that violates women's rights, but that no proper alternative has been found. One of the customary leaders, an important elder, strongly defended the practice, saying that it is the only proper way for a killing to be compensated.

As mentioned, men consider alcohol to be a major cause of marital disputes, domestic violence and fights in the community. Also many women see alcohol as a major cause of the violence. Women brew alcohol to earn some cash, despite the consequences of over-consumption among men. As mentioned, men in focus groups insisted on listing alcohol as a form of violence in itself. The meaning of alcohol consumption in a social setting requires further investigation. The men and boys talked about alcohol as 'your best friend and your biggest enemy' and as part of their culture.<sup>9</sup> It was impossible to hold ceremonies without alcohol, such as when a child is named or a funeral. Alcohol is consumed after cultivation and the owner of a plot is responsible for organising alcohol for the group of people who worked on his land. One participant exclaimed: 'It encourages people to work, it is a driving force for hard work! If there is no alcohol they [other men] will stay home!' This comment provoked laughter in the focus group, but then everyone agreed he spoke the truth. The men also recognise that they also drink to cope with stress and that they sometimes drink in the morning if there is no food for breakfast.

Some of the men talked about the roots of alcohol consumption in the war. They referred to the togetherness among the soldiers, which was accompanied by drinking. Alcohol was a reward for the hardships they endured. The men emphasised that, now, drinking is again a social activity that supports togetherness among men. They felt that peer pressure among *Monyomiji* encouraged them to drink, especially among those within the same age group. This suggests that the consumption of alcohol in today's social settings is a substitute for the past sense of togetherness among the soldiers. The occasions for drinking alcohol have become times where the construction of the masculine identity of *Monyomiji* is maintained. But in the post-conflict situation the *Monyomiji* are reasserting their

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9 Focus group with men, Imurok, 30 April 2013.

The plastic bottle on the thatched roof of the *tukul* (hut) is a sign that locally brewed alcohol is sold by this household.



authority in the community and in their homes. The excessive use of alcohol exacerbates the motivation to show authority, which contributes to the increase in domestic violence as drunken husbands molest their wives.

### **7.2.1 Women's agency in response to domestic violence**

The women listed a number of reasons why a man beats his wife: when a woman has not kept the house clean, when a woman has used some cash from the house (labelled as 'theft'), when a woman has insulted her husband when he is drunk, when a woman refuses to have sex, when a woman has drunk alcohol, when she has been lazy or careless, when a wife has shown disrespect, and when a wife cannot have children.<sup>10</sup> Alcohol abuse was mentioned in relation to many of these causes.

At an individual level, the most important strategy for women to cope with domestic violence and physical assault by community members was *avoidance*. In the home, this meant avoiding any situation or behaviours that could provoke the irritation or anger of their husbands and co-habiting relatives, mainly concerning the reasons listed above. Thus, women will show respect to their husbands and make sure that all tasks are properly carried out each day: cooking, fetching water and firewood, taking care of the children and working in the gardens. One respondent commented: 'Even if he [the husband] has just beaten you and you are hurt ... when he asks for water you will be silent and go out to get the water'.<sup>11</sup> In the community, avoidance was expressed in avoiding going out after dark, avoiding the places where men drink alcohol, and moving in small groups to the gardens and water points or to town.

10 Focus groups with the women, Imurok, on 29 and 30 April 2013.

11 Focus group discussion with women, Imurok, 30 April 2013.

Brewing alcohol on the compound. Women earn cash through selling alcohol, but alcohol abuse increases incidents of domestic violence.



There are not many options for women to resist domestic violence. The bride price that was paid for them is a major obstacle to claiming any rights, because they feel they are 'owned' and are their husband's most expensive asset. Most of the time, they live with the idea that a certain level of beating is acceptable, which is also the norm shared by the wider community. Women are reluctant to share incidents in public, because a marital dispute is considered a very private issue and presenting it in public damages the good reputation of a home. Only when a woman is seriously injured, or in the words of one of our respondents 'when blood comes out', the *Monyomiji* will intervene by gathering some of the *Monyomiji* and the couple. In most cases they will reprimand the wife for not respecting her husband, but among themselves they will tell the husband not to repeat what he has done.

One of the key objectives of this study was to identify forms of agency among women that contribute to mitigating violence. Apart from collective agency and actions taken by women, the study looked for forms of social leadership as expressions of agency. The study identified two types of social leadership among women. The first are the women leaders who are regarded as legitimate representatives of the women in the *payam* and who are called upon for advice on a range of issues. They are the elderly women who do not hold any official title or function, but who command respect for their seniority, experience and wisdom. The second type are the few female customary leaders who have a 'formal' role in the local governance set-up, who have the respect of the community for the functions they perform, and who can use this position to protect women and advance their position.

Both are present in Imurok *payam* and played a role in settling marital disputes, trying to avoid domestic violence, and talking to the men who had beaten their wives. These women leaders can act as safe havens. 'When a beating is really bad, we can go to their homes, even at night. The woman leader will let you sleep in her hut and you are now under her responsibility. The next day she can call the



This stick is called the 'eluk' and is wooden with a metal head. It is supposed to be a local weapon for protection. A woman took a picture of the *eluk* to represent domestic violence.



husband to settle the issue'.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the female Rainmaker no longer resided in Imurok, due to marital problems. She had to move to Torit town. Thus, despite being in a respected position, this did not help her resolve her own situation.

These women leaders can speak to the *Amangat*. They cannot enter the *Adufa*, but will stand at an appropriate distance and speak to the gathering of the *Monyomiji*. One of the older women in the focus groups had raised the issue of 'taking responsibility for a family and staying in peace [refers to domestic violence]'.<sup>13</sup> Also the female Rainmaker and Chief of the Land had spoken to the *Amangat*, who, in their position of customary leaders, can be invited to advise the *Amangat* and may use the opportunity to raise concerns the women have. They will try to package the issue of domestic violence and present it as a threat to the harmony of the entire community. They emphasise that disharmony can make the community vulnerable. In this way, they seek to turn a private issue into a public concern. The men stated that these women are listened to because they have special powers.

### 7.3 Potential violence between communities

In the participatory exercises about forms of violence and insecurity, men and women indicated that border disputes were a potential source of violence, both within the *payam* and between the population of this *payam* and other communities. Cattle raids were not common, but were still considered a potential threat. This section first explains some of the responses to these sources of insecurity, using concrete examples of a past raid and two border disputes. It shows that local security mechanisms tend to play a greater role than the *payam* administration and that women are largely excluded from these responses. A vignette about the border dispute with Magwi county illustrates how in the experience of the *payam* population, the county government is not responsive. The section subsequently describes women's agency in relation to conflict within or between communities, showing how they seek to influence the local security arrangements.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the older woman leader, 8 November 2013.

Lack of border demarcations and land disputes are a major cause of inter-community tensions across South Sudan, often exacerbated by political competition over natural resources.



### 7.3.1 Responses to inter-community violence

Cattle-raiding is not common in this *payam*. One of the few instances happened in June 2011, when raiders from a different *payam* took cattle from a *boma*. It occurred overnight and no violence was used. Early in the morning the *Monyomiji* followed their traces and found out in which direction they must have gone to hide. When they discovered who had carried out the raid, they suspected these raiders were a heavily armed group – to reclaim their cattle could lead to a violent confrontation. They therefore retreated and called in the county government. Involving the county government to resolve this incident can be seen as an act of citizenship. However, rather than thinking that this was the right thing to do, the decision seemed rather to be based on a calculation of risk. Many men emphasised that Imurok had been disarmed and that the people possessed few arms.

Border disputes are far more complicated, particularly because they often occur as part of the politics over the struggles for resources and involve political actors at various levels (Walraet 2008; Vaughan *et al.* 2013). Border demarcations are a major source of violent conflict across South Sudan (Pendle 2014), and Eastern Equatoria State is no exception (UNDP 2012). In Imurok, two ‘active’ border disputes and one recent dispute arose in the focus groups and were represented in the participatory photography exercise. These were a dispute between the *payam* and neighbouring communities over the border demarcation with Magwi county (see vignette below), a dispute over the *payam* border with Nyong *payam*, and an internal disagreement over the border between two *bomas* that had been resolved. Although none of these disputes led to violence, it was clear that the likelihood of violence had been anticipated.

Customary leaders resolved the internal dispute between the *bomas*. The *Monyomiji* and the women of one *boma* (A.) had started to cultivate a particular strip of land, which the people of the other *boma* (B.) believed was theirs. Moreover, the *Monyomiji* from A. had brought some of the traditional weapons, which to the *Monyomiji* from B. was a sign that they were wrongly claiming this

land. The *Monyomiji* from B. prepared for a confrontation and gathered with their arms. The Chief of the Land of *boma* A. then stepped in, calmed the people down and claimed the responsibility for resolving the issue. The women asked the men to listen to the Chiefs of the Land. Communication went out to the Chief of B. that the two Chiefs of the Land would meet by what residents of *boma* A. claimed as their border. On the appointed day, the Chief of the Land from B. did not turn up. The explanation given was that he knew the land belonged to A. and did not want to risk performing the swearing ritual (see section 6.2.1). The people from B. did not return to the land and this ended the dispute. In this case, there was no involvement of the county. When the *payam* administrator informed the Commissioner, he delegated it to customary leaders.

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### **Vignette: the border dispute with Magwi county**

During our first visit to the *payam*, it became clear that the dispute with the Acholi people over the border with Magwi was quite serious, although there were many different and sometimes contradicting accounts of what had happened. Although the majority of our participants referred to a certain tension between the Latuko in their *payam* and the Acholi from Magwi, a number of respondents mentioned there is now no problem at all. It thus proved a challenge to reconstruct the case, but the research team asked about the issue on each of the three visits. As the research team had no permission to carry out the study in Magwi county, the Acholi community could not be interviewed about their side of the story. This vignette is based on the narratives of a very subjective account of the dispute, which must be kept in mind when reading it. Important for the purpose of this report is the way in which the people of Imurok responded to the problem, based on their perception of its causes.

According to the respondents, tensions first emerged when Riek Machar, the then vice-president, visited Eastern Equatoria State and travelled from Magwi to Torit. To welcome him, residents from Magwi reportedly came deep into Imurok *payam* where they stood by the road. To the residents of Imurok this indicated that the Magwi people view that part of the land as theirs. People narrated a second incident about the county commissioner of Magwi county, who travelled to Torit town. As a rule, the driver has to take down the flags of the car as soon as the vehicle crosses the border. But this time, according to our respondents, the flags remained up until quite a distance into the *payam*. The *payam* inhabitants felt very offended by this act, which could only be interpreted as a public statement that the county commissioner was claiming that land. The *payam* Administrator informed the county government, which strongly denounced the act. Some of our participants claim the Magwi commissioner still refuses to lower the flag on their territory.

It is alleged that, a while after this incident, the people from Magwi crossed the border and cut bamboo and timber from the lands on the side of Imurok. This was seen as a major offence because bamboo and timber are an important source of income. The men explained that the *Monyomiji* of the *boma* went to the border, bearing arms. It did not come to a violent confrontation, but the *Monyomiji* chased the offenders and reclaimed the goods. Because of the tensions, the women were for a long time afraid to farm near the border or travel to Magwi town.

According to the men the possible causes of the dispute were discussed in the *Amangat*. What they recalled from these discussions reflect two problems commonly associated with border disputes. First, the impact of the war and displacement and the subsequent challenges of demarcating borders. The men explained that many people from Torit moved to Magwi for safety during the war. Therefore when Magwi county was created, parts of Torit territory were allocated to Magwi. The same problem, they said, now causes tensions between the Acholi and the Bari of Magwi. Secondly, it was thought that the politicians from Magwi wanted to expand their territory, because Magwi is not very big. The politicians would like larger constituencies to win more votes. The people of Imurok suspect that the Acholi from an area further south are instigating the conflict, rather than the community on the border.

The *Amangat* reconfirmed that the border is at Isora stream. The *Monyomiji* agreed: 'The land is ours. We have to fight to the bitter end, since the land is ours. If they encroach again we shall gather [the men] from all *bomas*, we shall face them and stop them'. According to the men, the women had suggested that if they sold out the land the children would then suffer and there would be no land for them to cultivate. The women had told the men: 'If they [people from Magwi] encroach too much we will be their women',<sup>14</sup> implying that the women may be claimed by the men from Magwi. This illustrates how women try to influence security arrangements. They may not participate in the local public sphere, but by appealing to the men's pride they strategically seek to influence planning.

The people believe that the county government has done little to resolve the dispute, which is complicated because it involves a county border. For some people, this automatically implied that the county government should be involved in resolving the issue. The *payam* authorities had referred to the previous county commissioner, but the people did not recall his taking any action. His successor had promised a signpost would be placed at the border, but the people reported that this had not been done. There was confusion about whether this issue could be resolved by customary institutions, because apparently the Torit county government had communicated to the community that disputes over county borders were the responsibility of the state. It had indicated that the State government was going to redraw and confirm all county borders, but likely only after the next national elections. Thus, even though the county government may have taken action in reality, the discussion reflected that many residents viewed the government as ineffective.

Amid the confusion about whose responsibility it was to resolve the dispute, the Chiefs of the Land from both sides met to perform rituals to determine to whom the land belongs. They swore on the border and slaughtered a goat. County government officials were invited to witness the event. The rumour is that the Chief of the Land on the Magwi side died after this, which was interpreted as the sign that the land belongs to Imurok. The people of Magwi who live near the border have since 'given up'. Respondents stated that the people resumed interacting freely in the markets and that the men are drinking together. To some, the issue has thus been resolved by their Chief of the Land, while others feel the conflict is still simmering. The comments from some of the men suggest that the *Monyomiji* are ready to fight, should there be any suspicion about new attempts to claim the land.

### **7.3.2 Women's agency in response to potential inter-community violence**

From the descriptions about the responses to insecurity presented above, it becomes clear that men predominantly shaped these responses: they got together in the *Amangat* where all information is shared, and the *Monyomiji* were in control until the chief of the land stepped in. The governance of protection exacerbates a gender divide, since protection is a defining trait of the *Monyomiji* identity and women are excluded from these 'formal' decision-making processes. Apart from female chiefs of the land, women are not expected to participate in the resolution of land disputes, because 'women cannot be expected to have the historical knowledge of the borders.'<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, women exercise agency in trying to prompt and shape protection strategies.

The women were evidently concerned about the effects of (possible) violence on social relationships within the community and neighbouring communities, and about their mobility in conflicted areas. For instance, women need to be able to go to Magwi town to sell products on the market and increasing tension may prevent

14 Focus group discussion with women, 5 August 2013.

15 Interview, man, Imurok, 28 July 2013.

them from accessing the road. They also need to use the land in the border area for cultivation. During the period when tensions were considerably high, women refrained from going near the border. They thus have every reason to try to influence the actions taken in response to insecurity.

There is some room for women's agency and women will tactically use the few options available to them. One important strategy is to appeal to the men's responsibility to protect, using the defining traits of the prevailing masculinity. In the vignette about the dispute with Magwi, the men mentioned that the women spoke about the consequences for their children, who might lose the land as their resource for production. This directly appealed to the *Monyomiji's* responsibility for food security. By saying 'we will be their women' the women used the notion that they are 'owned' by their men, who would thus risk losing their pride. In everyday life, the fact that women are 'owned' after the bride price is paid is a cause of domestic violence. Here, they used it to prompt actions. But although women wanted their men to act, they did not want the situation to escalate into violence. The women therefore emphasised that there was a lot of inter-marriage with the people across the border. Women live in Imurok as wives, while daughters of Imurok are married in Magwi. They stressed it would be wrong to fight with in-laws, thus appealing to some of the values that were recognised in the *Amangat*.

Women also seek to influence the debate in the *Amangat* itself. The *Amangat* was represented as a 'men only' space, which it officially is, but women reported a few tactics to influence the agenda or discussions. Although these tactics offer them perhaps a marginal, indirect voice and no equal representation in the *Amangat*, they represent practices of engagement that could offer avenues for increasing women's political voice in the community.

A first tactic is that wives may call upon their husbands to take issues into the *Amangat* on behalf of the women. These cannot be minor or 'private' issues, but issues that affect the wider community. Also, it cannot be the opinion of an individual woman, but it needs to be endorsed by a group of women. Secondly, a group of women may approach some of the *Monyomiji* before the *Amangat* and ask them to raise an issue. An example from one of the *bomas* concerned the start of the season for cultivation. Last year, many of the men had been drinking before they went to the garden and this had led to many fights. Concerned that this would happen again this year, a group of women had approached one *Monyomiji* and asked him to raise it in the *Amangat*. On a different occasion they had approached the *Monyomiji* to plea to the Rainmaker, because there had been no rains for a long time.

A second tactic is that a woman leader may indicate to the *Monyomiji* that she has a concern she wants to raise in the *Amangat*. At the time of the *Amangat* gathering, some of the *Monyomiji* will come out of the *Adufa* to listen to her and subsequently convey her message. This may be followed by a discussion in which the woman takes part, standing at the appropriate distance from the *Adufa* and answering questions from the *Monyomiji*.

This, of course, begs the questions of how effective this form of agency is and to what extent it reflects a political voice among the women, if it is an indirect voice rather than direct participation in an institution like the *Amangat*. These questions are difficult to answer. But the fact that some of the men narrated to back to us



what the women had told them may be an indication that their voices had an influence. Importantly, if these tactics are considered valuable to women, then they may offer entry points for building women's political voice.

#### **7.4 'It may approach as quickly as a bushfire' – About conflict elsewhere**

This section will explain the reasons why the *Monyomiji* feel urged to come up with protection strategies aside from those in response to the existing border disputes. It is based on the outcomes of the participatory photography exercise and follow-up interviews. Men and women know that they live in an insecure state and are aware of violent conflicts elsewhere in Eastern Equatoria State and beyond. The perception that the state offers no guarantee for their protection, combined with the perception of an unbalanced and violence-provoking political settlement, deepens the sense of insecurity. Again, the responses to this insecurity are gendered. The actions of the *Monyomiji* become entangled with forms of domestic violence discussed above.

##### **7.4.1 *Women and the dangers of 'the bush'***

Several women had taken pictures of the bush to represent the threat of unknown enemies. One of the women had staged the scene and asked two men to stand in the bush, pretending to be militias. The women related the possibility of enemies to several security challenges elsewhere, with different enemies in each case. Although cattle-raiding rarely occurs in Imurok, it is common in other parts of Eastern Equatoria State; the women were afraid that raiders may one day come into their area, or that they would encounter raiders on the way to their gardens when raiders escape through their area: 'If [the raiders] find you in the bush they will kill you, because they are afraid that you will inform the village. They know we have to inform the *Monyomiji* when we see strangers in our area'. Some women mentioned the Toposa ethnic group in particular, but cattle-raiding was seen as the major security threat affecting all parts and groups of Eastern Equatoria.

Women were also afraid that members of the Murle tribe would come into their area from the north to kidnap children. There are many stories about the Murle tribe and their alleged involvement in child abductions for infertility reasons (Rolandsen and Breidlid 2012). The women explained that the Murle sometimes go across the mountains and enter Eastern Equatoria from Pibor. They recalled an incident that happened a few years ago, when the Murle abducted a number of women and children from Eastern Equatoria State, who were not retrieved by the state authorities. The women had heard that the Murle had come as far as Liria and Lowoi (along the Juba-Torit road). This was much nearer to Imurok than the Jonglei border and was experienced as a threat. When members of the Murle have been sighted in Torit town residents from Imurok will inform their community about it.

The women had also heard about the Yau Yau militia in Jonglei. They all knew that the Yau Yau are far away and some were not too concerned by it. The majority, however, felt that the Yau Yau were a threat to their security, because Jonglei State borders Eastern Equatoria State and the government had not been able to resolve this insurgency for a long time. In April and May 2013, factions of the Yau Yau

The woman had her picture taken to show the bushy surroundings, which some of the women associated with the possible threat from militias or raiders.



moved to Kapoeta,<sup>16</sup> leading to violent clashes with the military. The women had heard about civilian casualties over the radio. It reinforced their concern that violence could cross the border into Eastern Equatoria and subsequently come further south.

Finally, women were afraid that the conflict over oil and the international borders between Sudan and South Sudan would one day escalate and take the countries back to war. In the case of the Yau Yau and ongoing tensions between Sudan and South Sudan they do not just fear such conflicts or enemies coming to Imurok *payam*. They are also worried that their children would be recruited into the army, deployed in those areas and killed. Several young men from Imurok serve in the army and are stationed in Jonglei and around Bentiu. Many had not been home on leave in a long time, which to the women was a sign that the security situation in those areas was really bad, deepening their fears that conflict would one day escalate. Talking about it among themselves, they stress the importance of knowing what is going on:

*We hear over the radio that things have happened in Jonglei. Women and children have been killed, cattle has been taken and houses burnt. We are worried about it. Our children were killed in the war with the Arabs. Now again, children are killed. Why is that?! When I hear news about Jonglei, I will tell my neighbour that there is no good news. It is important to share this, because what if my neighbours have plans to travel? Many of our men in the army stay*

16 *The Sudan Tribune* reported on 5 May 2013 that the Yau Yau had issued a statement that civilians and NGO personnel should leave the towns of Kapoeta and Pibor. The news was widely announced on local radio stations.

*in such places, but their wives should not go visit them when the situation is bad. Also, it is important to know this for our own security. Because if those people [Yau Yau] move this way, then we will have followed their movements.*<sup>17</sup>

#### **7.4.2 Men, masculinity and the responsibility to protect**

Men in the *payam* were initially very keen to emphasise that there were no security issues in the area and that they were not afraid of anything. This representation was not entirely correct, as three border disputes were simmering and there had been a cattle raid in a *boma* in the north of the *payam*. It was only after a number of days of intense focus group discussions that the men revealed that there were some issues of concern.

The way they spoke about their *payam* was in line with their role of protector: they meant to communicate – especially to new visitors who might bring ‘some development’ – that the area was safe *under their protection*. Unlike the women, who emphasise the effect of violence on their bodies, the men emphasise the safety of the community as a whole, including its properties.

Men emphasise different aspects of insecurities elsewhere in the state or the country. They are often better informed about what is going on than the women. Some of the men are therefore not as concerned that for instance the Yau Yau rebels would suddenly relocate their struggle to Torit county. On the other hand, most of the men recognise the volatility and unpredictability of many of the violent conflicts in South Sudan, which may affect the *payam*. This was captured by this participant:

*Once the bush is burning, the flames may very quickly extend. The violence may approach as rapidly as a bushfire. That conflict of Yau Yau is politically motivated. We and the people of Jonglei are under the same [national] government. We are worried these things can happen here, since the government is applying the same rules and policies to administer us here.*<sup>18</sup>

In addition, men are concerned about cattle raids, which they perceive to be the main cause of insecurity in the state, followed by border disputes. In the *boma* in the north of the *payam*, where people keep cattle, the *Monyomiji* sleep in shifts while others are on guard to protect the cattle and the territory. Even if a raid has not taken place in the *payam* itself, raiders are mobile and their actions may affect the *payam*. One man explained: ‘If the raiders hide themselves and the cattle on our territory, others may think we support them. This may lead to retaliation by those who were affected.’ He referred to an incident in 2011, when county security forces retrieved 600 head of cattle from a criminal gang that had come to hide in Imurok.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the existence of these forms of violence and the uncertainty of the context they live in, the men continue to be called upon to act in their role as protectors. They need to protect their people and their land. The masculinity of the *Monyomiji* has been constructed not only out of tradition, but also out of war, and the gender

17 Focus group with women, Imurok, 7 November 2013.

18 Focus group discussion with men, Imurok, 9 November 2013.

19 This incident was also reported on the Catholic Radio Network, 8 October 2011, <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/5049>

The presence of only small numbers of goats and cattle were a concern to women that there could, one day, be a raid in their village.



divide has become marked by violence. This appeal to the *Monyomiji* is deepened by their perceptions of the state and the political settlement as being highly insecure, as the next section shows.

### 7.4.3 Perceptions of the political settlement

The current perceptions of the political settlement must be seen against the historical background of how the notion of a state developed in Eastern Equatoria. For the people in this state, the way they were governed was never ‘theirs’: after the colonial regime the North dominated, during the second civil war it was the SPLA that was predominantly Dinka, and now the feeling prevails that the political settlement continues to exclude Equatorians.

*Of course poverty is a cause [of violence]; it makes people go steal and carry out raids, which may lead to revenge by those other communities. But power struggles at the top and tribal politics is the major cause of conflict. That is why violence persists. In the government, only a few tribes occupy the important government positions. Such people often have direct influence on the distribution of services to communities. Those people who lack representation [in the government] often lag behind in terms of employment, because they have no schools and remain uneducated.<sup>20</sup>*

Men and women agreed that the imbalance in the distribution of power at the top of the government was the root cause of most conflicts in South Sudan. The findings in this study echo what others have found about the perceived Dinka

20 Focus group discussion with men, Imurok, 9 November 2013.

domination in the government (Schomerus 2008; Schomerus and Allen 2010; Johnson 2003), the power struggles between the Dinka and the Nuer and their political leaders. The Yau Yau rebellion is seen as an expression of resistance against Dinka domination, against the background of the Dinka-Nuer competition for power. This study also encountered the frustration among Equatorians, also found in other studies, about their contribution to the war that is not acknowledged or rewarded in terms of the distribution of resources and political appointments. An older man, who fought in both the first and second civil war, explains:

*I feel disgusted by the unbalanced development in the country. Some payams are well-developed with good schools, yet Imurok is not developed. This tells me we [Equatorians] have fought for other people. During the war I was convinced that when we achieve our goal that there would be equal development. But to my surprise things are moving in a different direction. We are not equal because others claim that they were 'born to rule'. Who is born to be ruled? The Dinkas are not good people and [are] responsible for our suffering. They have created income inequality, they enjoy life while we are suffering (...) The majority of us who started the movement during the Torit mutiny feels we are left out. The current government is not doing the things we want. That is why Imurok is the way it is, despite the fact that the liberation struggle started from our mountains.<sup>21</sup>*

About the Yau Yau, one participant said: 'The government is trying to resolve this. But we hear the news about people being killed every day on the radio. We also hear about peace talks, but the Yau Yau are still invading areas'.<sup>22</sup>

Integral to these power struggles are the 'bad politicians' who cause, deepen and sustain violent conflict. This perception was shared among men and women. Participants in this study for example referred to politicians as the ones providing ammunition to communities, because 'ordinary peasants' are unable to acquire bullets. It is important to stress that citizens do not just feel that the government lacks the capacity to resolve violent conflict, but also that they are convinced that competition among political leaders of specific groups makes the state unwilling to end violence that serves their political interest. As a consequence, citizens feel that they are largely left on their own to protect their communities. The next section describes some of the strategies they have developed, which again shows that the responses are gendered, with women excluded from the processes where strategies are defined.

#### **7.4.4 Gendered protection strategies in response to insecurity**

Men and women share the notion that the state is incapable of protecting citizens, prompting men to develop their own protection strategies. These strategies are embedded in local social and political institutions, the *Amangat* and the *Monyomiji*, informed by a notion of masculinity that defines men as protectors and fighters. At the same time, these strategies produce a new social reality. Part of this reality is that certain forms of violence against women have increased.

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21 Interview, *payam* chief of Imurok *payam*, 31 July 2013.

22 Focus group with men, Imurok, 5 August 2013.



As with any local issue of concern, the *Monyomiji* can decide to discuss national and state-level security issues in the *Amangat*. At the time of research in November, a raid and revenge attack had just happened in Hiala *payam*, Torit county. News of it was shared in several *Amangats* in the *payam*. It was decided that no action needed to be taken, but that all *Monyomiji* had to be alert, especially in the northern parts. In relation to the Yau Yau rebellion, the senior *Monyomiji* and elders advised the members of the *Amangat* to stay united, so that they could fend off attack by these militias – or should other militias emerge within Eastern Equatoria.

When asked about the numerous security concerns people have, the answers and discussions conveyed an important message: the *Monyomiji* are always ready to fight and are always vigilant. They demonstrated their vigilance in various ways, which were explicitly mentioned in the context of discussing insecurity caused by ‘enemies’ from elsewhere and not only in relation to local communities of raiders. Particular areas in the *payam* are regularly monitored to see if any intruders have entered. The junior *Monyomiji* are sent to look out for footsteps and any other traces. Each and every *Monyomiji* will monitor his surroundings whenever he is travelling, hunting or moving to his gardens.

This practice of monitoring the area is a key responsibility of the *Monyomiji* and one of the practices that defines his social, masculine identity as *Monyomiji*. Each individual *Monyomiji* regards upholding these responsibilities as highly important, especially in relation to the peers in his age set. An interesting discussion in one of the focus groups with the men revealed that this identity may be the dominant identity among the others that men may possess. For example, the men stressed that anyone who is part of the local government administration will have to join the defence when ‘the drum is beaten’. Thus, much as *payam* administrators and chiefs are obliged to report pending violence to the county government, their membership of the *Monyomiji* requires them to join in non-state responses.

It is concerning the protection of women that the strategies of the *Monyomiji* could be seen as detrimental to gender equality. For men, the security concerns over violent conflict elsewhere have become sites where particular versions of masculinity can be confirmed and reproduced, and the identity of the *Monyomiji* reasserted after having been largely dysfunctional during the war. On the one hand, *Monyomiji* will carry out genuine protection activities. They inform the women about any security concerns, advise them on how to behave and ask them to report anything or anyone unusual and unknown. When the presence of enemies is suspected they will accompany women to the water points and their gardens, sometimes climbing the trees to survey the area. On the other hand, the *Amangat* may impose rules that restrict the mobility of women. They have to be home in the afternoon, long before dark. They have to avoid certain places and cannot move without the permission of their husbands. Women may be punished when they break the rules. Yet it is impossible for women to obey them all. ‘If you need to take vegetables to the market and you use the road, then it is between you and God. You have to go, out of poverty. You cannot not go’.<sup>23</sup> Also, women explained that they do not manage to complete all their tasks within these limitations. As explained above, perceived ‘negligence’ in completing duties easily leads to domestic violence.

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23 Individual interview with a woman, 5 August 2013.

To conclude, this section argues that a sense of security among men and women is shaped by the threat of violence associated with violent conflict in other parts of Eastern Equatoria State and the country. The uncertainty about conflicts elsewhere is deepened by lack of trust in the government of South Sudan to resolve them and by the perception of an unjust balance of power in the current political settlement that is sustaining some of the conflicts.

In response to this sense of insecurity, a number of factors come together that shape the behaviour of the *Monyomiji* in relation to the women in the *payam*. First, any planning about the security of the *payam* is primarily the responsibility of the *Monyomiji*. Secondly, many *Monyomiji* have – to a certain extent – inherited traits of militarised masculinities as part of the legacy of the war and they are collectively trying to reassert their authority after ceasing to exist during the war. Thirdly, the *Monyomiji* are obliged to their peers and to the *Amangat* to enforce rules and protection mechanisms. Finally, alcohol is associated with the social life of a *Monyomiji* and is part of his identity; overconsumption seems to heighten sensitivities about not challenging his authority. Thus, while domestic violence and inter-community violence seem to be two different problems, one of the ways in which they are connected is through the rules and protection strategies developed by the men. What has *not* developed are new mechanisms to keep the *Monyomiji* in control, as the old system of disciplining by the senior age group seems no longer effective.

## 8 Legitimacy of local government and customary institutions

The previous sections demonstrated the importance of customary institutions in maintaining order and security. But when explaining the roles of the *Monyomiji* and customary leaders, respondents often refer to the *payam* administration and its involvement, highlighting the negotiation between the two forms of authority that occurs on an everyday basis. This final section of Part 2 further unpacks citizen perceptions of the state and reflects on negotiated statehood (Hagmann and Péclard 2010) as it unfolds in the *payam*. The roles of local state actors was discussed when drawing institutional diagrams and during the focus group discussions about responses to violence. The participatory photography exercise included a question about the role of the government in responding to insecurity.

Vaughan *et al.* (2013) have highlighted the competition and collaboration between customary and local state institutions in South Sudan. Various forms of collaboration exist between the state administration and the *Monyomiji* and customary leaders. This is possibly enabled by the fact that several customary leaders in Imurok double as local government chiefs. For instance, the head chief of the *payam* was one of the important Chiefs of the Land and some of the *boma* chiefs are respected elders. The men state that the *payam* authorities often consult the *Amangat* and that, when a problem or dispute is reported to the *payam* administrator, he will involve a number of *Monyomiji* to discuss the issue. It is around such concrete, local issues that continuous negotiation between local state and customary institutions takes place, producing the ‘negotiated statehood’ (Hagmann and Péclard 2010).

The lack of a state presence is associated with negligence and lack of political will to guarantee citizen security.



At the level of the *payam*, local state actors like the *payam* administration have blended in with the customary institutions when minor issues need to be resolved. For example, physical fights among men were said to happen very frequently in the community, often under the influence of alcohol. Usually these fights were stopped and settled among the *Monyomiji* themselves, who would 'put the culprits down to advise them'. A group of *Monyomiji* with involvement from older age groups and sometimes the elders would tackle this. The *payam* administrator has to intervene if a fight results in serious injuries. This is an accepted norm among the *Monyomiji*. The preferred solution was to resolve the dispute internally and not to involve the police because this could threaten community unity. Mindful of this, the *payam* administrator would try to settle the issue locally with some of the elders involved. In relation to domestic violence, it is interesting to note that all women referred to the chiefs as the institutions they could go to in case of serious abuse, but only one out of the 15 women interviewed had actually done so, even though the majority had experienced domestic violence.

Both men and women consider the customary institutions as the more legitimate actor in resolving problems concerning land and border disputes. Chiefs of the land, rainmakers and elders hold knowledge of the boundaries. They know the history of the *payam* and they know the people who live there well. It is thought that they are much better placed to mediate between local communities, because they understand the people 'socially'. The people recognise that certain problems go beyond the capacities of their customary leaders. When conflict escalates into lethal violence on a larger scale most people prefer the government to step in. They recognise that many young men do not listen to customary leaders and that they may be harmed. At the same time, people know about the risks of involving the military, for they have heard about conflicts elsewhere where the military harmed civilians.



People generally had low expectations about the responsiveness of the county and state government. Not surprising therefore, the majority of the pictures returned for the question 'Who is important for your security?' represented the *Monyomiji*. Both male and female participants had taken pictures of individual *Monyomiji* and the *Adufa*. The main reason for identifying the *Monyomiji* is that the higher-level local government (county and state) is not reliable when it comes to responding to insecurity. The lack of response regarding the border issue with Magwi was often mentioned. 'The government should intervene before there is bloodshed', was one of the comments. Participants pointed out that there is still no police post in the *payam*, which was interpreted as an instance of negligence on the part of the government. The lack of response to cattle raids elsewhere in the state only confirmed this notion of unreliability.

This is not to say that citizens have no normative ideas about the roles of higher-level government regarding security – on the contrary. Participants included numerous pictures representing the government in the exercise. But in the discussions it emerged that these pictures represented the *wish* for the government to become involved, especially in cases of lethal violence. Both men and women in our research locations wanted to have more presence of state institutions, in particular the police, to reduce crime and violence in the area. Thus, to conclude, while the *payam* administration has to a certain extent blended with the local political institutions, the county and state government are perceived as untrustworthy and unreliable.

## Part 3

# 9 Conclusions and recommendations

Two other studies carried out within the PVCA programme showed that citizen perceptions of a political settlement shape local actions. In Kenya (Scott-Villiers, Ondicho, Lubaale, Ndugu, Kabala and Oosterom 2014) and Egypt (Tadros 2014) local actions, including violent ones, are directed at both state actors and groups of citizens in order to resist domination in the political settlement. This research in South Sudan demonstrates that citizen perceptions of power imbalances in the political settlement influence local and gendered strategies aimed at enhancing security, in order to mitigate any potential violence caused by the settlement. Citizens suspect that the national government does not have the capacity to protect its civilians. Even more so, citizens suspect that the often violent struggles for power are sustained by political actors and that the state itself can be violent. This shapes people's sense of security: they feel that existing conflict might extend to their areas or that similar conflicts may erupt in their state. Violence and insecurity are always anticipated. In response, people have developed a vigilance and a constant state of alertness. Men are always ready to act out of self-defence. Women prefer to stay away from the bush. Even young girls, who have never experienced a raid, have adopted such behaviours in anticipation of one.

This study shows that the threats to security that people experience in the post-civil war era constitute new channels through which the young men of the *Monyomiji* can reassert their previously overshadowed masculine identity. The *Amangat* is an important space to do this. These findings show that masculinities are not just constructed in gender relations, but also within the wider political context in which the sense of insecurity strongly figures.

Women express various forms of agency along a spectrum of types of agency, from avoiding threats to influencing security arrangements (Barter 2012). Women are coping in various ways with the types of violence they experience. At first sight, it seems as if they are coping with violence rather than resolving its causes (Moser and Horn 2011). Yet the women do use the existing opportunities for exercising citizen agency, within the challenging post-civil war context and faced with the many restrictions imposed by customary institutions. They use the existing institutions in which women have some political voice: inherited forms of customary leadership and the senior, respected older women. Both are legitimate authorities in the eyes of women and men. Besides using them as channels for engagement with the *Amangat*, women have more indirect forms of agency that encourage or discourage their men to take action by appealing to their masculinity, thus reproducing and legitimising this masculinity.

These findings support what has long been recognised in feminist critiques of post-war situations: violence does not end when the 'official' war is over and women especially have to deal with insecurities on a day-to-day basis (Pankhurst 2003; Sjoberg and Via 2010). This report adds to this insight that certain civilian strategies that have developed in response to ongoing insecurity have created other security challenges for women, especially in the domestic sphere.

### Box 9.1 **Local civil society activities addressing violence**

This box outlines the activities and some of the challenges highlighted by representatives from community-based organisations. As mentioned in the methodology section (see section 5.3), it was not within the scope of this research to interview a cross-section of local, national and international aid agencies in Eastern Equatoria State. This box only gives an overview of community-based organisations' strategies.

#### ***Activities targeting the security of women***

Community-based organisations (CBOs) active in peace-building usually carry out activities aimed at resolving local conflicts over land and cattle. These often take the form of mediation activities, like peace conferences, in which the organisations bring together community representatives and customary leaders. Women's organisations try to have women represented in those meetings. When violence has erupted in a certain place, the county government is the first to respond and CBOs may choose to respond as well, if resources are available. The second most common activity is awareness-raising, which involves discussing the importance of peace in the communities. In both activities women's organisations promote women as peacemakers in the communities. To this end, several CBOs run training for local women peacemakers.

Forms of domestic violence are dealt with separately from community violence. CBOs consider customary traditions and alcohol abuse to be the most important causes of domestic violence. The CBOs expressed grave concerns about the forms of sexual violence against women. Their staff told of horrific cases of domestic abuse and gang rape. Based on anecdotal evidence, there has been an increase in suicides (and attempted suicides) among women over the last two years, which staff relate to sexual violence. Most CBOs interviewed take a legal approach through awareness-raising about women's rights in the communities and explaining the legal frameworks that prohibit violence against women and certain customary practices, like girl-child compensation. CBOs acknowledge the authority of customary leaders and the *Monyomiji*, and they will first ask the customary leaders for permission to carry out their activities. They will ask for good representation of these leaders and the *Monyomiji* in the local meetings. Several organisations have undertaken lobbying activities to state parliament to ban practices like girl-child compensation. When CBOs discover cases of sexual violence, they assist the victims by following up their cases at the Gender Desk of the police and by ensuring that the victim receives medical assistance.

#### ***Challenges to local civil society actors***

Local organisations felt that there was a wide gap between the local organisations and the UN agencies and other international aid agencies, which hampers the planning of new strategies and effective implementation of programmes. Many respondents expressed their frustration about the international actors, saying: 'You see them moving around in their big vehicles, but they do not do much.' CBOs question the legitimacy of international actors who do not have the knowledge of the local context and have different understandings of what peace-building entails. Generally there appeared to be a lack of communication between the local and international agencies, despite the periodical meetings in, for example, the Working Group on Protection and the Working Group on Gender, where all organisations can meet. One of the consequences attributed to this problem is that local organisations cannot tap into the resources available from the international actors: they all have plans that cannot be carried out. Two Voluntary Service Overseas volunteers working for CBOs narrated the difficulties of collaborating with the UN agencies. In working group meetings, UN agencies often invite CBOs to work with them, yet when the CBO puts forward concrete proposals the ideas either do not fit in 'the UN mandate' or get lost in bureaucratic procedures.

CBOs are not neutral actors in the local setting. Their operational space is to a great extent defined by state actors, which limits their freedom to work on security issues that are often highly sensitive and political. In the current political climate it is very

difficult for CBOs to name politicians involved in these conflicts, even if they are fully aware of the details. As a consequence, CBOs identify the 'root causes' of conflict at the community level and can only work on inter-community relationships, while political causes remain unaddressed. Furthermore, the relationships among CBOs themselves and between CBOs and local communities are affected by local politics, including the politics within the local women's rights movement. At the time of researching, the activities of the Women's Association of Eastern Equatoria State had stalled after one of the women MPs had allegedly manipulated the elections for the leadership of the association to become its president. Several member CBOs interviewed were angry about this, while international actors were reluctant to fund the association as it was perceived to be 'too close to politics'.

The final section of this report gives suggestions for peace-building activities aimed at countering forms of violence against women and inter-community violence. They have been formulated specifically for the research partner Voice for Change, and more widely for civil society actors in South Sudan.

It is clear from our study that if agencies and local people are to respond to violence in ways that avoid further violence, they must take account of the particular configuration of actors and institutions in the local setting, their different expressions of agency in response to insecurity in the locality and their perceptions of threat in the wider polity, as well as to the different expressions of masculinities and the spaces where they are constructed. The overall recommendation of this report is that strategies should start from local understandings of the meaning of security and its demands on men and women, and from existing efforts move towards positive citizen agency.

1. **Enhance the understanding of the causes of gendered violence.** There is a risk that the causes of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women are reduced to culture and tradition, including ideas about the effects of alcohol. Tradition is used as an all-encompassing concept to refer to customary law, the tradition of cattle-raiding, and the cultural role model of the men as fighters. The report shows that customary institutions are given new meaning and impetus, partly because the modern state cannot guarantee the security of its citizens. What is more important, it seems, is how this reinforces role models and strategies that have negative effects on women's security.
2. **Working with women and men to counter violence against women.** Currently, awareness-raising about legal frameworks is disconnected from the social reality of men; from those institutions where their masculine identity is constructed, where decisions are taken and where authority is confirmed. Women and men in the *payam* indicated that the only way forward is when the *Amangat* adopts resolutions to which the *Monyomiji* hold each other accountable. Interventions could more directly address predominant male role models for men and actively involve men to find a way forward.
3. **Build on existing forms of citizen agency.** The report shows that women at a local level exercise agency to influence men and decision-making in the local political sphere, and that certain women at local levels are legitimate authorities in the eyes of women and men. Peace-building activities should start with identifying these forms of agency and leadership and look at how these could be expanded. Initiatives will then be effectively linked to people's real worlds and reduce the risk of being disconnected from crucial local

When two communities resolve a dispute and make peace all individuals involved drink water in which leaves have been soaked.



institutions. Local expressions of agency can provide the small stepping stones in long-term processes of social change.

4. **Increase, but also deepen, women's participation.** It is important to nurture women's leadership at all levels, but increasing representation is only part of a solution. This report echoes Arabi (2011) who states that 'enhancing women's participation in other spheres of influence will be just as important'. Or, in other words: communities are unlikely to nurture strong, female political leaders if women do not participate in communities as equal citizens. Existing interventions could consider expanding their approaches in the following way. First, the report shows that women use some strategies that they consider relevant and legitimate, which could be built on to enhance their need to amplify their political voice in the community. There is potential in nurturing the collective capacity of women. Secondly, awareness-raising needs to include a focus on how women and men contribute to maintaining male and female role models, and the real barriers to gender inequality. Thirdly, interventions that aim for the inclusion of women in male-dominated spaces, from customary courts to county councils, need to work on the gendered norms that dominate in such spaces. These spaces have functioned based on a logic that confirms certain hierarchies and norms.
5. **A realistic discourse about women and peace.** The image of 'women as peacemakers' reproduces the stereotype of women as peaceful carers versus violent men. The equal representation of women and men in peace and reconciliation mechanisms does not need to be justified in such terms. Similarly, interventions should be realistic about women in leadership positions and not assume that women would be less involved for example, in patronage networks or the messy politics that shape the local security situation. Increasing the number of women in leadership positions may make the system more inclusive, but this will not necessarily resolve other democratic deficits.

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