People's Perspectives on Peace-making in South Sudan
An initial assessment of insecurity and peacebuilding responses in Jonglei State

As the largest and most populous of South Sudan's ten states, Jonglei has occupied a central place in the history of South Sudan. It was in Bor that the 1975 mutiny took place and it was in Bor that the 1983 revolt from the Sudan army occurred leading to the establishment of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). In November 1991, the state capital cemented its place in South Sudanese history when forces loyal to Riek Machar split from John Garang's SPLM resulting in widespread inter-ethnic violence and massive civilian displacement. Residents of Jonglei State have found themselves vulnerable to the civil war that raged until 2005 as well as to inter-ethnic tensions that regularly escalated into violent confrontation.

Even after the signing of the 2005 peace agreement and the declaration of independence in July 2011, residents of Jonglei still face serious security threats which impede development. During the early part of 2011, there were two rebel militia groups active in Jonglei having resorted to violence to ostensibly express discontent with the April 2010 election results. Also there are intractable inter-ethnic tensions which regularly deteriorate into violence either as part of cattle raiding practices or revenge attacks. The heightened insecurity in Jonglei has stunted peacebuilding and development efforts and hampers national and international support.

Jonglei State Profile

- The main ethnic groups are the Murle, Jieng Dinka, Naath Nuer, Anyuak and Kachipos
- Total land area of 122,479 km² with a population of approximately 1.4 million people
- 11 counties – Twic East, Duk, Bor South, Akobo, Nyirol, Uror, Pibor, Pochalla, Ayod, Pigi and Fangak
- 51% of the population is below the age of 18
- 84% illiteracy rate
- 48% of the population live below the poverty line requiring emergency humanitarian aid

Data collected from the Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation 2008 and 2009

During May and June 2011, in partnership with the Jonglei State Students for Peace Network (JSSPN), Saferworld conducted a series of interviews in Bor South to gather information on people's perceptions of conflict and peace-building in Jonglei State. Consultations were held with 21 stakeholders from government, civil society, security services and international agencies[1].

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[1] Saferworld and JSSPN have both conducted extensive field research in Jonglei as part of other projects and this information was also used when developing this report. For example in 2010, JSSPN produced a report on the root causes of conflict in Jonglei. In 2010, Saferworld produced a report on community policing perceptions, which included Jonglei. Saferworld and the Southern Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control, *Report on consultations on community-level policing structures in Jonglei and Upper Nile States, Southern Sudan* (Saferworld, 2010). In 2011, Saferworld together with local partner UNYMPDA conducted a community security assessment and action planning exercise with residents of two *payams* in Akobo and Pibor.

The purpose of this report is to:
- Outline some of the key sources of insecurity affecting Jonglei State
- Present perceptions on security and development responses
- Propose implications for future programming

Key sources of insecurity in Jonglei State

According to data gathered from key informant interviews, the primary sources of insecurity are:

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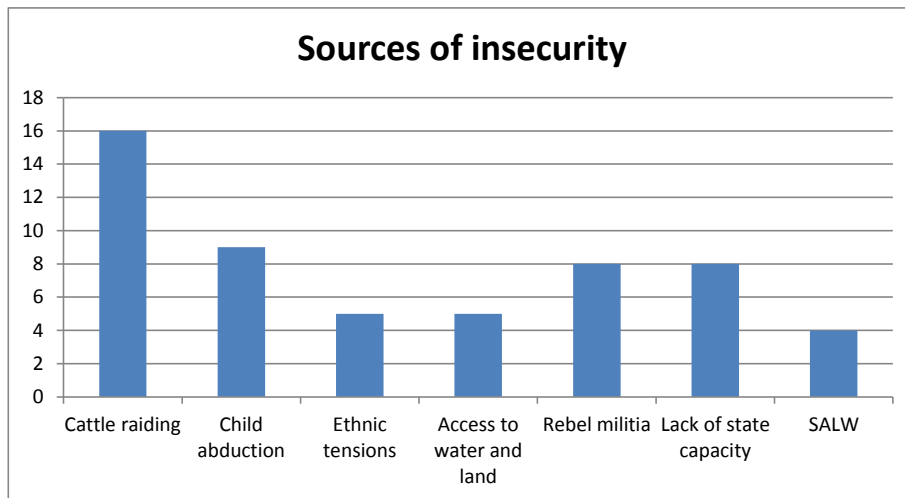
The above chart captures the number of key informants that mentioned the specific issue as a source of insecurity. Most people interviewed mentioned more than one source of insecurity and all these responses are captured above.

Cattle raiding is the most prevalent source of insecurity for many communities across Jonglei. In 2009, more than 350,000 people were displaced as a result of violence amongst pastoralist communities in Jonglei[2]. There are close linkages between cattle rustling and ethnic tensions although some respondents referred to these as separate sources of insecurity and that is reflected in the chart above. A key part of the cattle and ethnic conflict dynamic lies with **access to water and grazing land** for pastoral communities. Ethnic communities occupy largely homogenous regions and come into conflict when they need to migrate into rival groups' territories in search of water and grazing lands. A key component of this conflict dynamic is that the Lou Nuer need to migrate seasonally because they have a geographical disadvantage which causes them to seek out water in Dinka, Jikany or Murle territory[3] bringing them into direct competition and often violent confrontation.

Child abduction is a source of insecurity, as groups often abduct children as part of cattle raids. The Murle is frequently accused of being the key perpetrators of abduction, however, other ethnic groups in Jonglei and other states also regularly abduct children. In Jonglei the exact scale of this phenomenon is difficult to ascertain as there is a large amount of fear and heightened negative perceptions of the Murle. The Murle make up around 4% of the total population of South Sudan and are based almost exclusively in Pibor County in Jonglei[4]. Child abduction by the Murle is thought to be related to the need to sustain their numbers due to low reproduction rates, but no verified data exists to confirm this. Moreover, since other ethnic groups are also perpetrators of abduction, there are

[2] International Crisis Group, *Jonglei's Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan,* Africa Report No 154, 23 December 2009, p 2 Online http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/Jongleis%20Tribal%20Conflicts%20Countering%20Insecurity%20in%20South%20Sudan.pdf (accessed 14 September 2011)
[3] *Ibid,* p 2
[4] *Ibid,* p 28

likely to be multiple reasons for abductions including as part of revenge attacks.

There have been several **rebel militia** groups active in Jonglei over the years. Following disputes over the April 2010 gubernatorial elections George Athor, Gatluak Gai and David Yau Yau launched an armed challenge to the authority and legitimacy of the SPLM-led government. Although these groups were very active in parts of Jonglei in the first half of 2011, including during the time when the primary data collection was conducted, there have been important developments to reduce the threat of non-state armed groups in Jonglei. Both Yau Yau and Gai accepted an amnesty offer following July's independence. Gai was later killed by a former loyalist. After serious clashes with the SPLA in April and May 2011 leading to civilian casualties and displacement in Fangak County, Athor's forces have withdrawn to rural areas, possibly even outside of Jonglei, and there have been no new reports of violence.

Respondents highlighted **lack of state capacity to deliver services** as a key component of the dynamics that perpetuate insecurity. Only two respondents pointed to a lack of state capacity to provide security and justice services, particularly noting the lack of police presence in some rural areas and the inability of the state to bring perpetrators of abductions, theft and murders (mostly related to cattle raiding) to justice. Most of the comments relating to the lack of state capacity were focused on issues of underdevelopment and lack of infrastructure. Key amongst this was the need for access to education to overcome the illiteracy problem and to provide avenues for alternative livelihoods.

The possession and availability of **small arms and light weapons (SALW)** is a major issue in Jonglei. There have been several attempts at disarmament[5] which have led to perceptions of ethnic bias and fuelled rivalries. Pre-existing tensions, the seasonal migration needs of pastoralist communities and competition over grazing land and water reinforce perceived needs for weapons. The dichotomy of us-versus-them that leads to pervasive ethnic violence in Jonglei reinforces masculine identities associated with protection, machismo and virility. The possession of weapons plays into these dynamics and obstructs efforts at disarmament.

The security complex in Jonglei state is played out across political, social and economic realms. There is a perception that insecurity related to rebel militia, cattle raiding and SALW are tied to political actors and contestations for political power. The ease of transition from political competitors to rebel militia is evidence of these close linkages. But there are also perceptions of political complicity in certain inter-ethnic clashes and the use of inter-ethnic conflict to influence and affect state-level political power arrangements. The socio-economic conflict enabling factors relate to demographics, culture and basic economics. Firstly, there is a high youth population in Jonglei (51% under the age of 18) with massive developmental challenges. The combination of the high youth population with the lack of opportunities for escaping poverty and dependency creates high levels of frustration. High bride prices and food insecurity reinforce the centrality of cattle to people's survival and prosperity. Furthermore, social and economic status is tied to cattle and raiding is part of expressions of masculinity as well as social cohesion[6]. Violent cattle raiding is the product of an intricate web of political, social and economic factors in which gender identities, ethnic identities and social hierarchies create an enabling framework.

Security and development responses

There have been several targeted interventions in Jonglei State by the government and international actors to improve stability and development. These have met with mixed results. Some respondents expressed positive views about the peace dialogues that have become a standard feature of conflict

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[5] See for example, Small Arms Survey¸ *Anatomy of civilian disarmament in Jonglei state,* online http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/pdfs/HSBA-SIB-3-Jonglei.pdf

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

mitigation and resolution in Jonglei. Others felt that dialogues and conferences are all that international actors are willing to offer and fail to deliver tangible results. There have also been targeted efforts to improve the visibility of security actors around this large state. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) used temporary bases in areas such as Pibor and Akobo to create a more visible presence during periods when clashes were expected. Similarly, the South Sudan Police Service (SSPS) has used mobile security patrols and targeted deployments to high risk areas to prevent the escalation of clashes. The SSPS in Bor now also has a mobile livestock patrol unit, the first of its kind in South Sudan, which will be focused directly on cattle rustling responses.

One of the gravest challenges for security responses in Jonglei is finding the right combination of activities that can break the cycle of violence that has become an ingrained part of inter-communal relations. Merging active security responses with more tacit dialogues has been the primary strategy but this seems to have fallen short. It is perhaps not so much an issue of flawed programme design in having targeted the conflict issues but rather in the depth and breadth in implementation.

The primary challenge to improving security noted by respondents was the lack of road and communications infrastructure which severely hampers the ability of the government to extend its reach into rural areas. In answering what the main obstacles to security and development are in Jonglei, respondents noted the following (in order of frequency of response):

- Poor road infrastructure
- Lack of police presence
- Lack of communications infrastructure
- Lack of human and financial resources for development
- Lack of military capacity to endure security
- Lack of education
- Proliferation of SALW
- Presence of armed rebel groups

With 43% of responses highlighting the lack of roads and mobility, this is perceived as the gravest obstacle to stability and development. There remains a distinct cleavage between the quantity and quality of services available in towns and county headquarters and those available at *payam* level. Extending the reach of law enforcement capacity was positioned as vital. This echoes findings from previous research reports such as a 2010 report by Saferworld and the Southern Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control which noted:

> "Across the different counties, formal police presence is limited, ranging from at most two to five police officers per *payam* to none at all. In all the *bomas* consulted in Pibor County, police were totally absent. Where the police are present, their capacity is very weak.
> In Akobo County, the existing police are few in number and poorly equipped. With no police present at the *boma* or *payam* level, crimes are reported by somebody travelling (usually on foot) to the county headquarters to make a verbal report. Some *payams*, like Walgak, are four or five hours from these headquarters by car. Communications and mobility are therefore extremely difficult[7]."

The need for improved visible policing is tied to the issues of roads, mobility and communication as indicated above. Security and development responses are also enabled by the commitment of resources and respondents noted the lack of state resources (human and financial) as a key obstacle. This links in to the need for improved access to health care and education as the basis for transforming social dynamics and behaviours. There are many initiatives being undertaken to improve access to basic services, including policing and justice, across Jonglei. The scale of the challenge however is immense and requires strategic long-term planning and the commitment of predictable funding for extended periods of time.

There is a security and development response gap which may create some problems for the

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[7] Saferworld and the Southern Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control, *Report on consultations on community-level policing structures in Jonglei and Upper Nile States, Southern Sudan* (Saferworld, 2010), p 3

independent government. In response to the question, what will improve the security and development situation; respondents provided answers as indicated on the graphic below:

Peace-building requirements
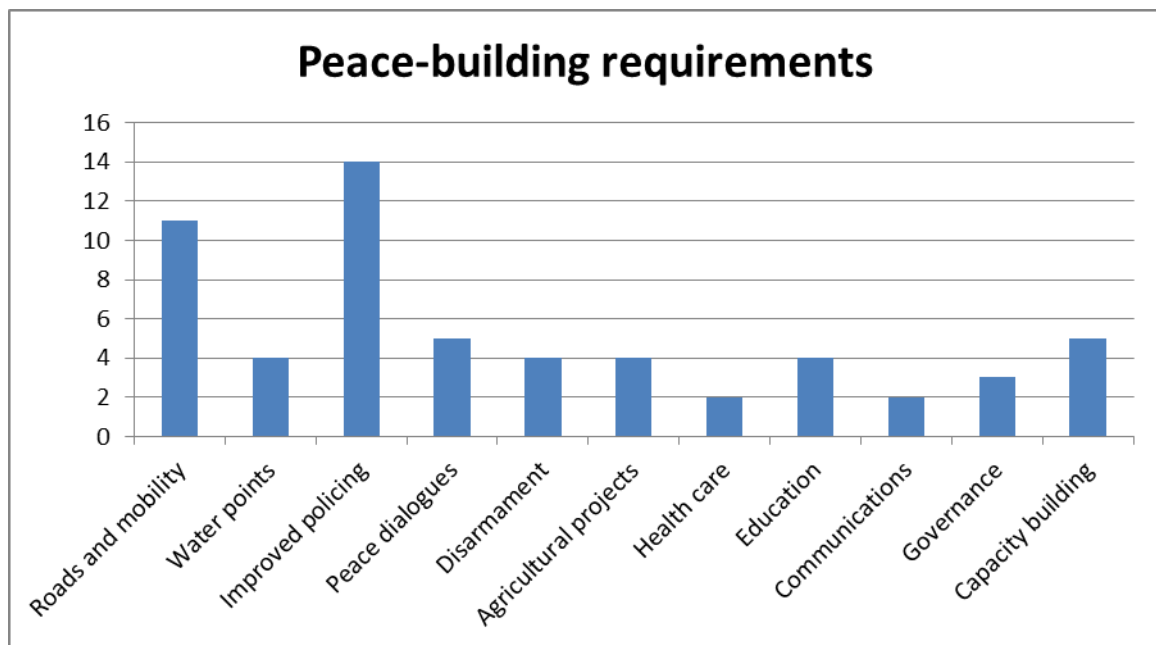
The above chart captures the number of key informants (21 informants in total) that mentioned the specific issue as a requirement for peace-building. Most people interviewed mentioned more than one need and all these responses are captured above.

These results continue to emphasise the importance of roads and mobility for stakeholders in Jonglei. When asked about what is expected of the international community, constructing roads was the most echoed response, followed by capacity building of government actors and education. What is also interesting is the perception that security and development will be guaranteed through improved policing and security service delivery by the SSPS. The role that the livestock patrol unit plays and how it operates may be a litmus test for policing in Jonglei state and could determine whether or not the perceived linkages between policing and improved security (given that cattle raiding was positioned as the gravest source of insecurity) result in tangible community security dividends. These dividends perhaps would be best sought through access to basic services (including water, health care and education), transparent and fair disarmament programmes and improved inclusive, democratic governance.

Interestingly, there are very few concrete proposals on security and development responses in Jonglei that would be able to address concerns with child abduction. In 2011, a family tracing programme was launched which assists with family reunification. However, there is a lack of critical thinking about how to prevent child abductions outside of criminal justice responses. Given the deficits in the law enforcement capacity, other avenues to mitigate the impact of child abduction should be considered. There are components of health care and social welfare programming that intersect with security responses and a more comprehensive approach should be sought that can create better linkages between the humanitarian and security sectors. A purely security sector response will be unsustainable at best and come at grave human cost at worst.

Implications for programming

1. *Investigating child abduction* – more information is required as to the reasons for and manifestations of child abduction between different ethnic groups. This may require more coordinated responses specifically targeting the issue of child abduction as separate from cattle raiding and other forms of criminality and violence.

2. ***Investing in inclusive, transparent governance*** – as there is a perception of political complicity in many of the manifestations of insecurity in Jonglei, there is a need for more open dialogue, information-sharing and consultative decision-making and implementation between the government and citizens.

3. ***Moving from peace dialogues to peaceful processes*** – there have been many peace dialogue initiatives in Jonglei and these have moved very little beyond temporary commitment to peaceful co-habitation. Negotiation, mediation and dialogue remain central in overcoming the inter-ethnic violence. However, more concerted efforts at lessons learning are needed to better understand what has been tried, with what results and why to move beyond mere rhetoric of peace to processes that enable the manifestation of less violence. Peace dialogues should also be linked to firm commitments and action plans which guide programming implementation and enable accountability.

4. ***Building a better future*** – youth frustration is central to the conflict and peacebuilding dynamics in Jonglei. More targeted youth programmes are required to effectively engage youth both through vocational training and job creation programmes combined with violence reduction programmes.

5. ***Enabling access*** – infrastructure development will be a key component to enabling the delivery of services throughout Jonglei state and will be a long-term development goal for the government and international partners. Efforts should be made to link infrastructure projects with efforts to reduce conflict and to mitigate violence. Additionally, large-scale infrastructure projects should entail job creation and local economic development imperatives as central components.