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WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

BAROMETER REPORT

SOUTH SUDAN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental
NGO	Organization Non-Governmental
PoC	Protection of Civilians Organization
RBF	Results-Based Financing
(S)GBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

SOUTH SUDAN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT – RESULTS FROM THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY BAROMETER

South Sudan Empowerment project

Cordaid in partnership with Hope Restoration South Sudan is implementing the European Union funded South Sudan Women Empowerment Project (SSWEP) in Bor and Malakal Counties of Jonglei and Upper Nile States respectively. The project's overall objective is to narrow the "gender gap" through the synergy of economic, political and social empowerment of women in Malakal and Bor counties of South Sudan. The project has two specific objectives.

1. To promote women's economic empowerment at the local level, with specific attention to those in the most vulnerable situations through promoting Climate Resilient Livelihoods, Market System Development and Business Development Services.
2. To promote a culture of respect for women's social, economic, and political rights at the local level in identified states/counties through strengthening and reinforcing capacities of key actors.

The project supports 4000 direct beneficiaries (2000 in Bor and 2000 in Malakal). The beneficiaries come mainly from the rural areas of Bor and Malakal and include host communities, IDPs, and returnees.

Executive summary

With this report we share security needs and perspectives of local women in South Sudan and use this report to show their findings and recommendations. Unfortunately, their views of daily safety are vastly negative and require urgent and coordinated action. Their feelings of (in)security are directly linked to the actors who are perceived to provide or threaten their safety.

Our findings indicate that for women in Bor and Malakal, their main security providers are:

- Community leaders
- Family members
- National & international) NGOs and civil society
- Military

Women felt threatened by men in general but specifically by:

- Armed groups
- Their husbands

Some of the key the consequences women in Bor and Malakal are confronted with daily are:

- A weakly implemented legal framework on women's rights and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Lack of awareness of the diverse roles' women play in the conflict. They can be both victims, survivors and drivers of the conflict, and the last category is often overlooked.
- Increasing rates of (S)GBV in the household and at the community level due to the conflict.
- Discriminatory practices that create obstacles for women's meaningful participation in security, justice and peace processes. Such as traditional views on women's roles and responsibilities in the household.

Women's ability to participate meaningfully in security, justice and peace processes, and at all levels of decision-making, is limited. As a consequence, their most immediate security and safety concerns are easily left out of the priority list.

From the WPS Barometer emerged the following urgent security concerns:

1. Wife inheritance
2. Polygamy
3. Early and forced marriage
4. Child abduction
5. (S)GBV
6. Limited freedom of movement due to local insecurity
7. Limited livelihood opportunities for women and girls
8. Denial of resources
9. Lack of meaningful participation
10. Insufficient awareness on implementation of legislation protecting women's rights
11. Extra vulnerability of widows
12. Cattle raiding

Based on the stories and data local women suggest the following recommendations:

1. Support livelihood opportunities for women and girls
2. Ensure political commitments to implement laws that call for the protection of women and improve their rights
3. Include men in accountable practices to reduce instances of (S)GBV
4. Provide physical protection for women, especially in public spaces
5. Address cultural norms affecting women and girls negatively, especially regarding their meaningful participation

Why this report?

The peace that greeted South Sudan's birth was interrupted in 2013 when disagreement in the political arena threw the country into conflict. Since then, the security situation has continued to deteriorate with increasing human rights violations and an enormous rise in violence and other atrocities. Unfortunately, one of the most pressing consequences of the prolonged civil wars is the spike in cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. As a result of the insecurity women, girls and boys have become more vulnerable to forced labour and sexual exploitation, inter-ethnic and criminally instigated abductions, insecurity and limited access to basic needs. It is paramount that considerations are put in place to address the aforementioned challenges through an effective community driven approach that assures the different groups of their protection rights. It is from this lens that Cordaid and Hope Restoration South Sudan emphasize the need to look at the security priorities of local women in South Sudan through an inclusive community driven approach where women's views are considered and taken into account with an intention of ensuring their well-being sustainably.

THE WPS BAROMETER

Sexual and Gender-based violence has been widespread and has been widely used as a weapon of war in South Sudan. While the precise number of incidents remains unknown, it is clear that sexual violence has increasingly become normalized on both the local level and in higher political forums. In addition, harmful gender norms and traditions limit the meaningful participation of women which further compromises the effectiveness of peacebuilding processes. With the Barometer on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), we aim to adopt a bottom-up approach to security and peace that is in line with the priorities of women who are most exposed to the realities of (S)GBV and conflict-related violence.

Why the WPS Barometer?

Women are powerful agents in coping with insecurity and contributing to peace. But their security situation in South Sudan shows insufficient improvement. This is often due to security initiatives based on incomplete analyses. Macro indicators focusing on state security, for example, do not measure the daily situation and quality of life at the community level. Involving women and basing our work on their priorities leads to more effective programmes. Therefore, the WPS Barometer aims to:

- Bridge the information gap between (inter)national policymakers and local women and men
- Produce a robust way of measuring and documenting the security needs and concerns of local women
- Provide contextualised information and contacts for local women, organisations, and policymakers
- Equip women to share their perspectives on daily peace and security issues in their community

Sustainable peace can only be achieved if local women are meaningfully involved in peacebuilding, security and conflict prevention. But because of unequal power relations, most women have limited access to political participation, resources, and information. We believe that women's perspectives need to be taken up in all stages of decision-making and represented in all spheres of power which is essential to their empowerment in all aspects of their daily life, as well as to the promotion of a culture of protection of women's social, economic and political rights.

When women are empowered and encouraged to communicate their collective concerns, they are in a stronger position to find new ways to address conflict and insecurity. Coalitions of local women can forge connections with other actors such as the peace movement, the development sector, and the (in)formal governance and security sector, as well as the military and the police. The Barometer helps women to become integrated into and acknowledged as stakeholders in peace and security processes.

Using the WPS Barometer furthers the process by which the SSWEP can achieve its objectives. Conducting the WPS Barometer study allowed us to provide first hand information about the most immediate and urgent security needs and circumstances of local women through networks of local civil society organizations. Extracting information directly from the local context shifts the power to the voices of women and opens a window for them to share and adopt active roles in society.

These include meaningful participation in governance processes as provided by the 35% R-ARCSS quota on affirmative action. In this report, their stories serve to formulate demand-driven recommendations and design a targeted advocacy strategy to contribute to their economic empowerment and the protection of their rights. This report seeks to catalyze both the general and specific goals of the SSWEP from a security and justice perspective.

“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth; peace agreements that include women are more durable; and parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.”

Ban Ki-moon, Former UN Secretary-General



APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The WPS Barometer approach is based on a standardised process but remains flexible enough to consider the particular realities in South Sudan. Every step is informed by the core idea: giving women the power to define what security means for them and what their priorities are. Throughout the WPS Barometer trajectory, local women are involved to ensure that the data are meaningfully interpreted and appropriately translated into an evidence-based lobby and advocacy strategy. By doing so, the WPS Barometer complements existing statistics with nuanced information from the ground.

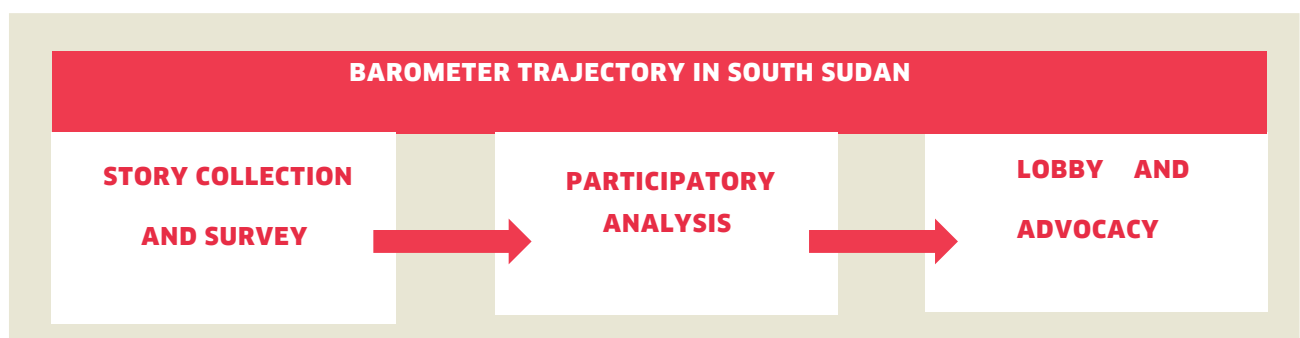
THE STEPS OF THE WPS BAROMETER PROCESS

STORY COLLECTION. With the Barometer, women express their unique concerns by sharing a story about a security incident within the last six months. The story is accompanied by a survey that allows diving deeper into the circumstances of the shared story. While some sections of the survey are standardized allowing us to compare results across countries and time, we added a number of unique questions to better grasp the complex situation in South Sudan and to align our efforts to the mandate of our local partner organizations. The data are digitally collected using tablets and secured by the cloud services of CommCare. Our local partners, trained in gender-sensitive interviewing techniques, interviewed a total of 82 participants (the number of people who agreed to share their story, out of 220 people from Bor and Malakal) have interviewed 82 participants of which the vast majority were female (76 women and 6 men). Our local team was already familiar with working in these two counties and became aware of the strong (S)GBV needs in the areas. Having formed a strong network with local partners, our WPS Barometer study was conducted in Bor and Malakal to provide effective and knowledgeable insights on the security issues of women in these places.

PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS. After a preliminary analysis, the results are brought back to the communities to discuss the outcomes and make sense of the results. By combining women's individual perspectives and translating them into a collective view, the data become a meaningful instrument to advocate for women's empowerment and rights. Consultations take place in all communities and are based on mixed dialogues between men and women as well as on women-only discussions where sensitive issues can be shared in a safe space. We ensure that important stakeholders, such as community leaders or local police representatives, are included in these activities to foster accountability and meaningful participation.

LOBBY AND ADVOCACY. The collective security concerns and priorities are consolidated into a multi-level advocacy strategy aiming to advance women's rights, their meaningful participation in peace processes and their security on the community level. By bringing local perceptions into national and global forums, women gain a voice that can shape the policy discourse and security-related development cooperation. This helps to close the gap between (inter)national policymakers and women affected by fragility and conflict. We act as a facilitator to ensure access to relevant decision-making bodies, in close cooperation with our local partner organizations.

DATA QUALITY



Collecting reliable data in fragile contexts is difficult. With restricted access to remote communities and stigma on sexual violence, retrieving and understanding the daily realities of insecurity is a challenge. By working together with our local partners, we are able to collect in-depth narratives and include communities at all stages of the research process to ensure that the right conclusions are drawn. Through an intersectional approach, the research ensures that the different needs and challenges across societal groups are taken into account.

BEYOND GENDER

“A widow like me goes through a lot every day. A widow endures a lot.”

“If I go out looking for something, he will come after me with a stick and beat me. I am afraid of him and avoid going to the bore hole in the evening and just stay home. He wants me to fear him. I don’t have any one to help me.”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons

A diverse data set is necessary to challenge simplified representations of women’s daily security situations. All too often, women are seen as a homogenous group leading to inefficient interventions or culturally insensitive initiatives that can put specific groups at higher risk. By gathering stories and quantitative data from different age groups, from rural as well as urban locations, from people with different ethnic and migratory backgrounds and from women with disabilities, the Barometer is able to grasp the complexity and diversity of women’s realities in South Sudan from an intersectional approach. This allows us to go beyond simplified images of women as victims and to indicate how the gendered impact of conflict plays out on the local level. Our local partner organizations were trained to conduct gender-sensitive qualitative interviews and visited communities to collect stories and surveys from 82 participants. While the focus lies on story collection, the survey data complements the results with quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, the quality of the results stems from the participatory analysis at the community level where our local and national partners re-visit the communities to discuss the preliminary results and discuss with women effective entry points for improving their daily security situation.

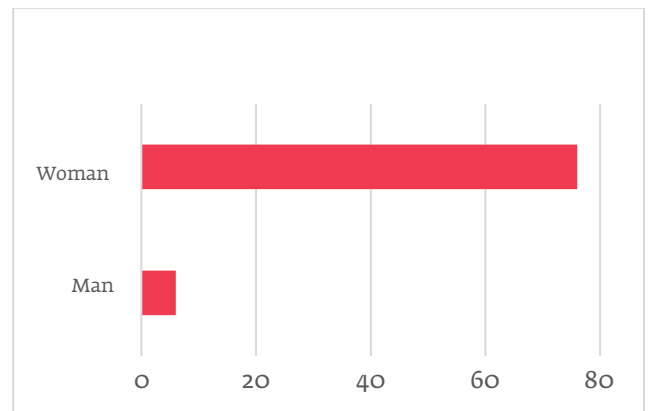
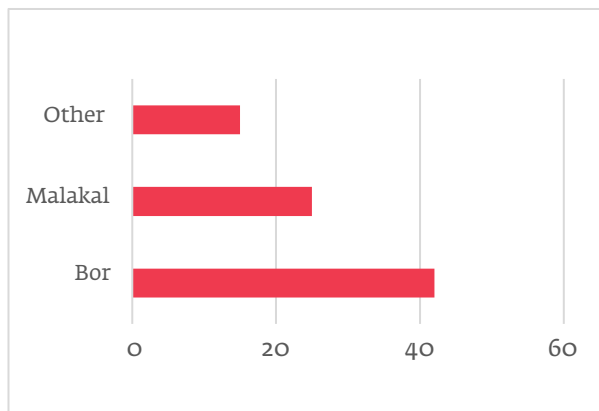
Throughout the process, the power to define security lies in the hands of those women who are affected by conflict and fragility on a daily basis. Some of their most representative and descriptive stories are quoted within this report, however due to the sensitivity of peace and security issues of women in South Sudan, anonymity and confidentiality commitments became essential to ensure effective and comfortable participation and by extension the data collection. To stand by these commitments, details like age and location of the women whose stories are shared in this report have not been added.



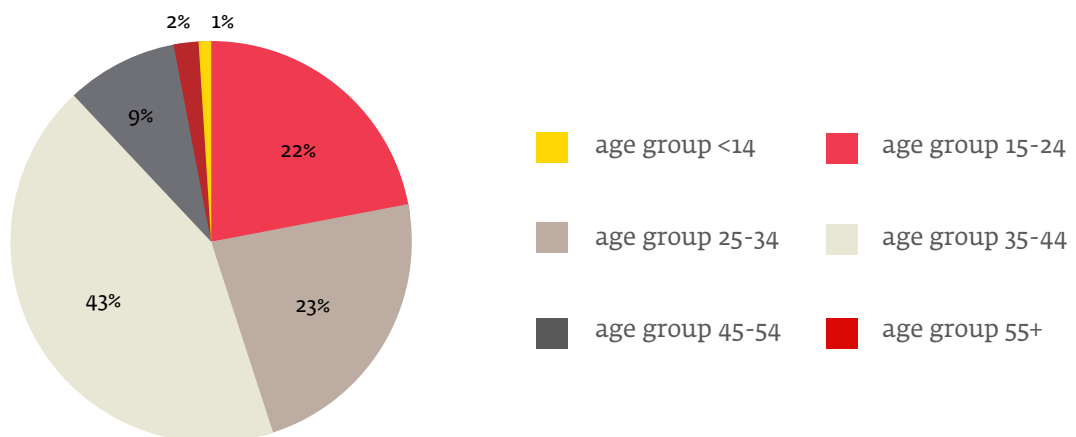
Participatory analysis in one of the workshops for a women-only group.

» INFORMATION ON THE INTERVIEWEES

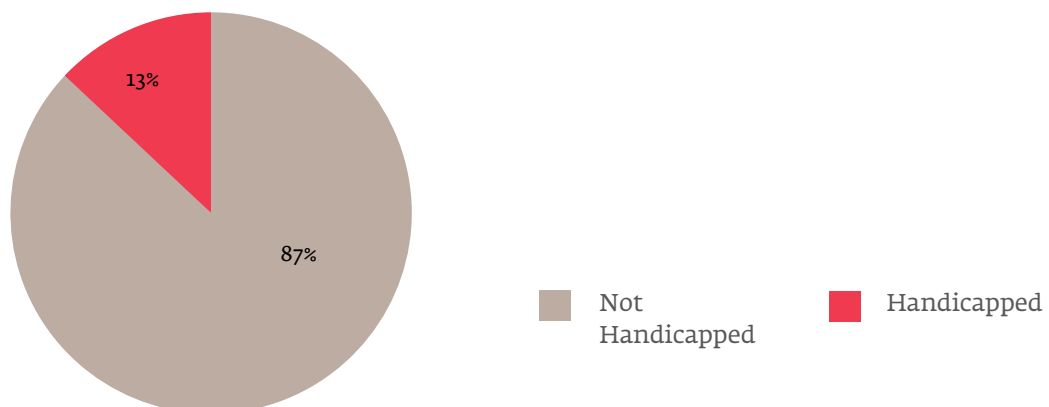
LOCATIONS



AGE GROUPS OF THE PARTICIPANTS



PARTICIPANTS WITH A HANDICAP



WOMEN'S SECURITY – SAFETY AND THREATS

In our participatory analysis and survey, the participants received questions on their views on safety and security. The responses allowed us to map the actors which negatively impacted security perceptions, and those who positively impacted security perceptions. In addition, we were also able to understand the coping strategies of women around security and what they would need to improve their security and safety situation. More than 80% of the participants tended to have a feeling of insecurity and claimed that leading their day-to-day life is dangerous.

Through the stories and the data on security perceptions we can on the one hand identify the core impediments to the inclusion of women in socio-economic environments as well as in decision-making at different levels, and on the other hand identify agency. Searching for agents of safety and threats allows us to examine and outline the cultural and social aspects of a strategy to protect women's rights and pursue their economic empowerment.

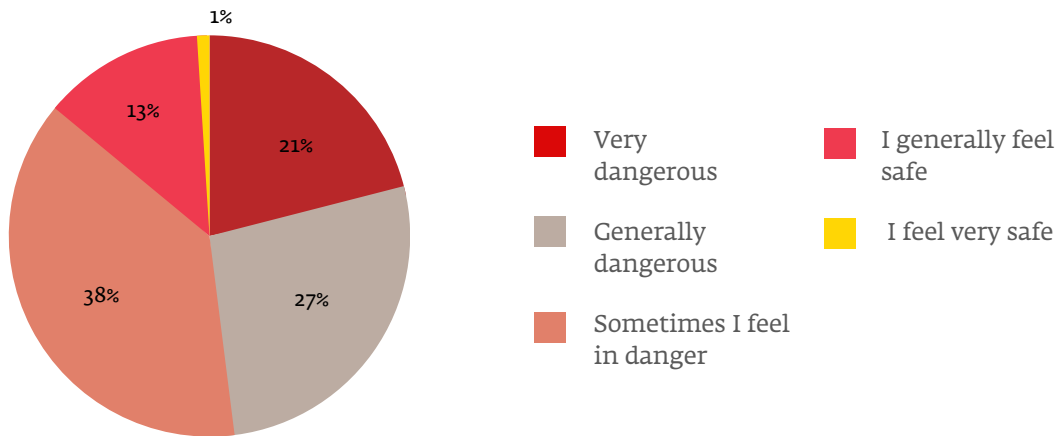
“The incident occurred when I was at home and a cousin who stayed nearby came to my house while I was cooking. He asked me for water and I gave him water to drink. He asked me who was in the house and I told him that everybody was home. He then asked me what I was doing and I told him I was cooking. In my kitchen there were a bed and a chair and I was on the chair when he stood up and began to push me down from the chair. He was trying to rape me and I resisted saying that it was not possible, that I would call the neighbours. I said to him that he was my brother and he said I should not call the neighbours. However, I went to the house of the neighbour and found an old woman who I told everything and then came. When the woman asked about what had happened, he started slandering and lied saying he had only pulled my her because I did not give him water. I answered that if that was what he was saying, I would tell my brother and my mother so that they would solve the problem. He told me not to tell my brother because the problem started while my brother was away. I wanted to tell my sister, but I did not tell her up to now. I did not tell anybody”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons



The Barometer survey on Women's perspectives.

» OVERALL PERCEPTION OF SECURITY



Given the negative security perceptions of women in their day-to-day life, participants proposed several options and coping strategies that could mean opportunities to improve the security of women in their communities. Among these were:

- Starting a business
- Making a priority that children are fed
- Staying in the PoC to avoid getting hurt
- Avoiding dangerous and lonely places
- Improving governments deployment of security to protect its citizens
- Police deployment
- Having more female teachers in school
- Having someone who can accompany girls to school

PROVIDERS OF SECURITY VERSUS THREATS TO SECURITY

In this chapter we elaborate on the individuals that women perceive as facilitators of safety and as actors of danger. Identifying these groups allows us to understand who the insecurity is coming from at a localized level. Recognizing these groups can serve to identify entry points for change and improvement of women's safety in South Sudanese rural areas. Involving the people who are perceived as threats is an opportunity to address a culture that allows or even encourages violating the rights of women. Hence by engaging both women and threats to their security in accountable ways, structural change can begin.

“In the beginning there were no troubles. It all started after I gave birth to my first child. And at the time my husband married his second wife and started acting strange to me, he would abuse me and terribly beat me. And his new wife decided not to speak a word with me. Even his mother, too, decided not to talk to me. So, my mother said I should go back to my family. And I came back to my family. While at my family, whenever I went to church, and he saw me on the street he would just hurl on me verbal abuses. I reported all those to my mother. And therefore, that case was raised and seen before the court of chief Adam Ajak. That problem was solved in that court. Just as we were coming here for this meeting, he was following us. He was not invited though. He follows me whenever I go and I don't feel safe with him doing that all the time. I fear he can do something bad to me someday when he finds me in an isolated place.”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons



The Barometer survey on Women's perspectives.

» PERCEPTION OF SECURITY ACTORS

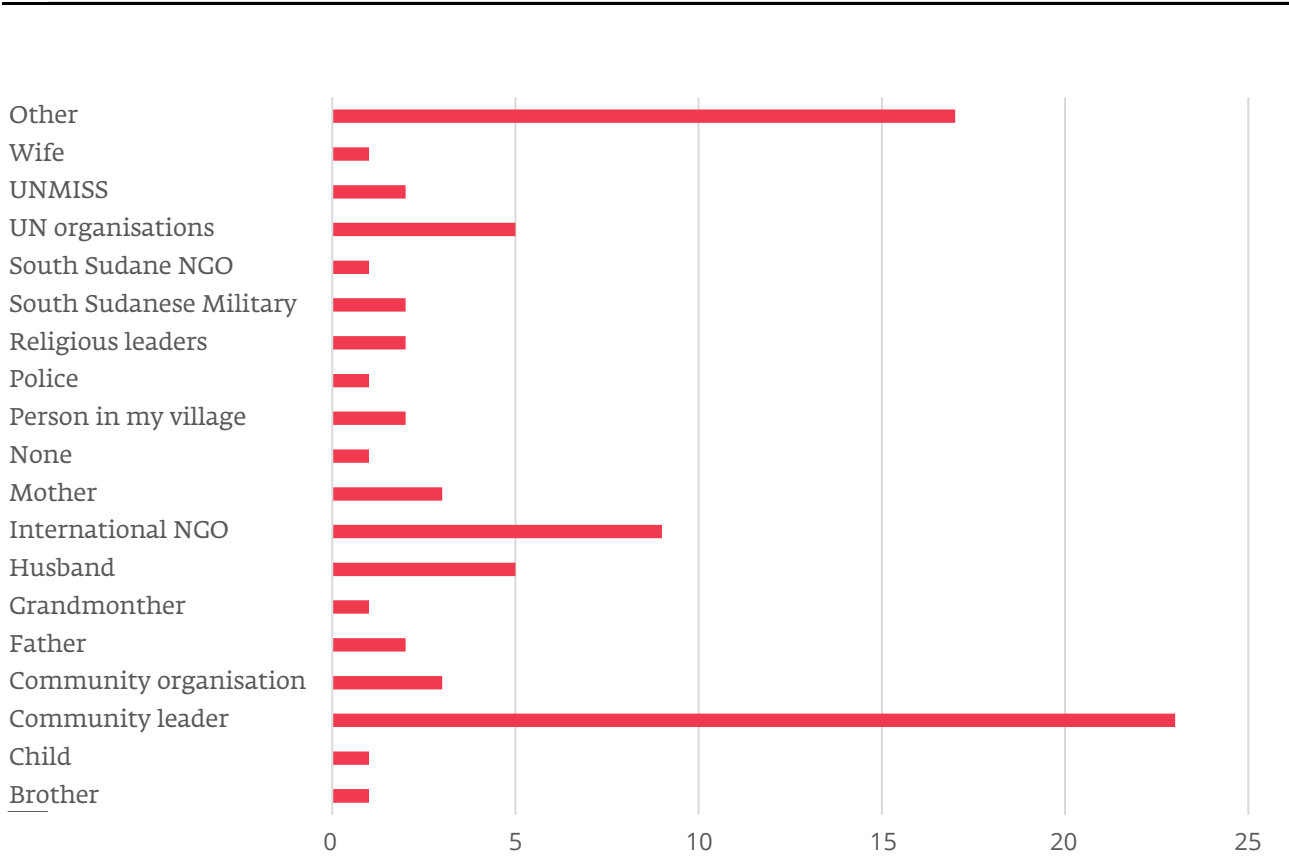
In the context of Bor and Malakal several actors were perceived as providing security to women:

- Community leaders,
- Family members (regardless of whether they are male or female)
- NGOs and civil society organizations (local and international origins)
- State military

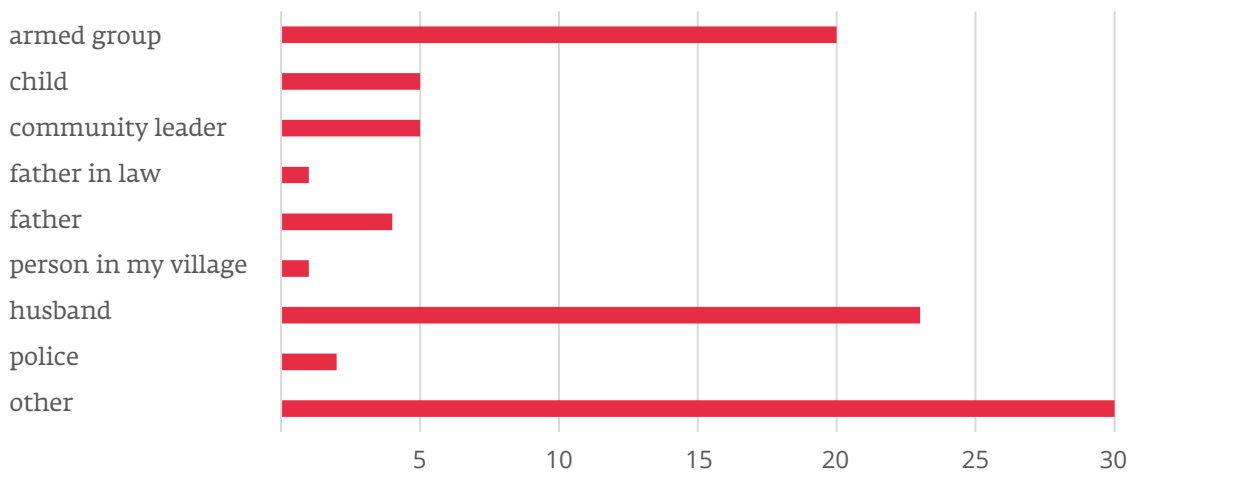
On the contrary, (young) ‘men’ in general appeared to be the most recurring agent of threat and insecurity to women’s safety through harrassment and other forms of (S)GBV.

Husbands endangered women by excluding them from household decision-making, or being violent and or returning to the home drunk. Armed groups were perceived to be putting women in danger almost to the same degree as women’s husbands.

PARTICIPANTS WITH A HANDICAP



ACTORS -THREATS TO WOMEN'S SAFETY



There were some interesting additions by participants on their perceptions about actors creating insecurity. The participants who mentioned husbands as a source of insecurity for women commented that needing their husbands' permission to do anything is a big constraint in their lives. In addition, husbands tend to be the breadwinners and providers of livelihood in the household which entitles them to budget management excluding women. Women also felt like husbands did not value women in general and tended to mistreat them, as well as pursuit younger women.

A majority of participants who selected other as an insecurity actor, indicated 'men' in general as their source of insecurity. Participating women explained that men are able to do whatever they want because they are the leaders of the household and the community. They receive impunity from community leaders (which was cited as a reason for community leaders being perceived as a threat to security), and are freely able to return home drunk and become aggressive. Their freedom is also connected to their wealth. For example, men who own cows have more power. Other participants mentioned youth as a security threat, given that they often have nothing to do, are susceptible to joining gangs and harass women when they are outside the house. Lastly, brothers in law were mentioned as a threat to women's security in cases of wife inheritance (discussed in the following section).

Armed groups were a perceived threat in general, particularly in targeting women and abusing them sexually.

WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION DURING CONFLICT – THE SOUTH SUDANESE CONTEXT

The security problems women in Bor and Malakal counties face are not isolated to the locations of our project. These structures that endanger the wellbeing and the safety of women emerge from a wider context of conflict and a failing governance framework. South Sudan as a young nation-state has ambitious prospects for the protection of women's rights and ensuring their meaningful participation and representation at all levels of decision-making. However, these efforts are not yet sufficient, as our results demonstrate. In this chapter we consider the context where we are working and elaborate on broader security problems. Finally, we evaluate the most concerning and problematic issues and offer suitable recommendations based on our study.

The context – Meaningful participation of women: A national initiative and a local challenge:

After South Sudan gained independence in 2011, attempts at peace building have been underway. However, women have not always been meaningful participants of this process at different levels of governance. Meaningful participation implies that women are able to participate, speak up, provide input and have their contributions listened to. It entails that women are official parties to the decision-making processes at all levels and are able to influence them formally. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

Several legal frameworks in South Sudan such as the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) calls for 35% affirmative action for women's participation in government institutions, at all levels, not just the national level. Currently, 28.5% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women in South Sudan, where more than half of the population is female. There are still many challenges to achieving this quota country-wide but it has become clear that there is more participation at the national level than at lower levels of decision-making. For example, the proportion of elected women in deliberative local government bodies is 0% (1). However, due to conflict and political instability, the processes of monitoring progress in nation building and gender equality are weak, which makes it difficult to find and collect abundant and reliable data on women's participation and representation at all levels of government.

Local partner organizations highlight that while some women are emerging as tribal and community leaders in rural areas like Bor and Malakal, these remain the exception. The reality is that at the local level, women representation is lower due to the strong prevalence of cultural stereotypes and patriarchal gender roles concerning women and leadership. This adds to the perception of women being the 'weaker sex', lacking the ability to govern and influence decision making.

Women as survivors and as drivers of conflict:

The conflict in South Sudan affects men and women differently. While men tend to be seen as perpetrators of violence, women are often seen as the victims and survivors of conflict. However, in our context, the difference between who is what is not so clear-cut. The conflict in South Sudan is having a huge and particular impact on the lives of women, how they relate to men in decision-making. This has affected women's ability to make informed decisions and claim their rights to amplify their voices in community matters, as well as in issues that affect their security and safety in a belligerent environment.

1. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/south-sudan>

This report offers a practical and focused account of these issues through first-hand information by the women living under the outlined circumstances. It defines the security and safety needs, perspectives and priorities of women while understanding their role in driving inter-communal conflict, for example in cattle raiding.

(Sexual) and Gender Based Violence is rampant:

An important conclusion from the WPS Barometer is that domestic violence against women is rampant with a number of participants stating that it happens regularly at the household and community level. However, cases go unreported due to stigma and shame surrounding it. Domestic violence and other forms of (Sexual) and Gender Based Violence ((S)GBV) such as early child marriage, forced marriage, wife inheritance are also culturally permissible. The enabling factor is the wide-spread assumption that women are the property of men and of their family and this defines the way they are expected to participate and be represented as in the decision-making spaces.

Meaningful participation in peace & security processes - a challenge:

The ability of women to participate in peace and security processes at all levels is set back by harmful and negative gender norms, roles and values, as well as by backward practices that show unequal power relations and patriarchal structures favouring male authority. Despite many women being educated and the Government of South Sudan aiming for a 35% quota of women's participation, cultural norms and practices against women still limit their participation at all levels of Governance.

Essentially, the ability of women to take part and be represented in these processes is strongly dependent on their relationship to men and how these processes play out in practice. For example, local leadership, mainly composed by men, can conduct meetings that can be scheduled or run late into the night. Because of prevailing security concerns, women are reluctant to attend meetings organised late in the night for fear of their safety. In South Sudan, like many parts of Africa, a woman usually has the sole responsibility of the household and has commitments that may keep her away from attending meetings. As such, women's participation in decision making is inhibited leaving the role of decision-making entirely to men who in most cases do not seek input from women. This has resulted in some punitive and detrimental decisions that do not favour women.

Another issue which comes back to the unequal power relations between men and women is that women are only able to access decision-making positions upon their appointment by men. This has two noticeable effects. On the one hand, men reinforce their feeling of ownership and the image of women as property, and on the other hand it cripples women's sense of urgency and competence in these processes. This creates and maintains a culture where women feel insecure about their capacities and where their work is connected to the expectation of men, who feel empowered to influence women and their contributions to peace and security.

Overall, this leads to the perception of women as weak and 'unable', which reinforces the logic that women should be excluded from decision-making spaces and focus on their household duties. The lack of participation by women is not restricted to peace and security but escalates to other aspects including local governance initiatives and trainings.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

The following table summarizes issues that have become evident throughout the Barometer process and remain relevant to all communities. The indicated solutions are mainly based on the participatory analysis at the community level which has translated local concerns into demand-driven recommendations for peace and security. While the table collects an overview of the most prevailing grievances, any solution needs to be inclusive and grounded in the local context.



The Barometer survey on Women's perspectives.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY INTERVIEWEES

Topic	Problem	Suggested solutions
Wife inheritance	<p>In the larger ethnic communities of Bor, the Dinka and Nuer, it is a cultural custom that widows are inherited by the relatives of her deceased husband in order to keep women in the marital home. While this is not the case for the whole of South-Sudan, and is context specific, the safety of women is put at risk. In principle, wife inheritance seeks to ensure the continuity of the deceased's name as his children will still be considered his, even after his death and his wife being inherited. The man who inherits the widow should be responsible for her and her children, however several women report being left to fend for themselves, and involving relatives for intervention or support can turn violent. The women being inherited do not have a say on this practice and are usually forced into it by them in the family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address harmful cultural norms, values and roles that affect women girls/women education in schools. • Engagement with men on the negative effects of harmful cultural practices on women through community dialogues. • Conduct forums in local communities to increase public knowledge and open up discussions on what is often considered a taboo . • Engagement with traditional courts and community leaders to have alternative avenues women who seek to redress for such situations. • Develop support mechanisms for women who want to use traditional courts - to strengthen the role of women and their rights with local communities and existing structures (such as civil society organizations) • Discuss harmful traditional laws and seek for solutions that take into account gender equality with traditional local structures and religious leaders. <p>Discuss with legislators at state level to implement national laws on wife inheritance</p>
Polygamy	<p>In the communities of Bor and Malakal, as well as in the whole country, it is common practice for men to marry as many wives as they can afford. This limits family resources and spreads them thinly in the household. This results in women facing the risk of abandonment from their husbands while they (most often) don't have a say in this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address harmful cultural norms that affect women through education for women and girls. • Engagement with men through local community dialogues on the negative effects of such practices on women. • Engagement with traditional courts and community leaders to find amicable alternative avenues for women who seek redress for such situations.
Early and forced marriage	<p>Cultural norms allow for underage girls to get married which tends to also be motivated by the prospect of a bride price being paid to the girl's family.</p> <p>In most cases, the girls have no say on the choice of husband and resisting to marry can result in violence by their family, who will pressure the girl into acceptance. This practice tends to be very common in pastoralist communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with men on the negative effects of such practices on women and girls through local community dialogues. • Strengthening communities in peaceful resolution for dispute; the advantages of having education for women and girls through local community dialogues • Conduct forums to increase public knowledge on the negative consequences of forced marriage and open up discussions on what is often considered a taboo subject. • Address harmful cultural norms that affect women and girls negatively through education for women and girls to increase their ability to make informed choices over their lives. • Have support/commitment and political will from leadership and government actors to end early child marriage and forced marriage. • Create awareness about national law that prohibits (Child Act) Child marriage and forced marriage • Community dialogues and education around the dangers of early and forced marriage discussing the assumptions that younger girls are more fertile and that younger girls are submissive - and the harm these assumptions cause.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY INTERVIEWEES

Topic	Problem	Suggested solutions
Child Abduction	<p>This practice is most prevalent in Bor where women have reported their children being abducted especially in remote areas or when they are moving from their homes to schools, markets, to fetch firewood. (anywhere more than 10km distance from their home is not safe)</p> <p>These abductions are part of the culture of the Murele, a community in Pibor Administrative area, neighbouring Bor, Jonglei State.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved protective initiatives by government actors such as increasing patrols for security agencies and having a quick response unit for the recovery of children. • Implement provisions in the South Sudanese legal framework that address child abductions in addition to the traditional courts that currently exist. • More commitment and support from government actors and leaders to reduce child abduction by working together with local communities.
(S)GBV, Domestic violence, Rape, Sexual Harrasment	<p>Incidences of rape are still common in South Sudan, especially when women go to fetch firewood for cooking or on roads.</p> <p>Instances of rape in the home are rarely reported, therefore there may be limited evidence on the frequency of these.</p> <p>Domestic violence is prevalent as it is permissible for men to use physical violence against women. Some women reported that defending themselves or exchanging blows can lead to severe punishment by the family and or the clan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have support/commitment and political will from national, regional and local leadership and government actors to reduce prevalence of (S)GBV in South Sudan. • Address harmful cultural norms, values and roles that affect women and girls negatively by educating women and girls to increase their ability to make informed choices over their lives. • Address harmful cultural norms, values and roles that affect women and girls negatively by educating men and boys – to ensure they no longer commit these crimes. • Implement provisions in the South Sudanese legal framework that address (S)GBV in addition to the traditional courts that currently exist. • Ratification and implementation by government actors and leaders at local, regional and national level of Human Rights instruments that aim to protect women from human rights violations including (S)GBV. • Promotion of safe spaces (women and child friendly) for survivors of (S)GBV and domestic violence where their immediate needs can be met. • Promote set up of support networks for women in child and women friendly spaces.
(Local) insecurity that hinders freedom of movement, especially for women and girls	<p>Strong presence of armed groups, and civilians who hold arms, which leads to increased violence with weapons. Direct consequences of high rates of civilian armament are growing levels of criminality with limited follow up by the judicial system, leading to impunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more improved protective initiatives by government actors such as increasing patrols by security agencies. • Enforce Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration strategy to reduce the prevalence of arms and as a component of peace building with a gender focus.
Limited opportunities for livelihoods for	<p>Limited economic opportunities for men and women as well as the lack of skills and training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase more livelihood opportunities for men and women through training and capacity strengthening, and providing business opportunities for them to have more agency over women and girls their lives by specialized CSOs. • Establish vocational training centers for men and women that are tailored to meet interests and market needs for various populations by specialized CSOs

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY INTERVIEWEES

Topic	Problem	Suggested solutions
Denial of resources	Women do not have decision-making power over the resources held by the family or the community. They mostly have access to these resources, however they do not have control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up public forums and dialogues to provide public knowledge, especially, for men to change their mindsets on how family resources should be managed. This should also include benefits of women participating in the decision making over these resources. • Promote education for women and girls in order to increase their ability to make informed choices over their lives. This will also go a long way to ensure that women and girls have skills to fend for themselves in the future.
Denial of rights	It is difficult for women to hold autonomy over their lives also due to their lack of awareness about their rights, such as their right to property, to inherit, to follow education, to participate in decision-making processes, economic rights as well as sexual health and reproductive rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of women and girls through education of their rights in order to increase their ability to make informed choices over their lives. • Engagement of men to promote positive attitudes towards women's rights in order for women to access their rights and not perceive it as a threat to their masculinity. • Awareness raising for communities on the benefits of women having their rights.
Lack of meaningful participation by women at the community level	Women's ability to participate meaningfully in their communities tends to be limited. Specifically, there are cultural norms that constrain women's capacity to express themselves in the presence of men. Overall there is a deficient level of education for women and girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of women and girls through education of their rights in order to increase their ability to have voices in the public spaces, leadership and be able to represent themselves in decision making. • Engagement of men to promote positive attitudes towards women's rights to allow women to access their rights without men perceiving it as a threat to their masculinity. • Support current women leaders in the family unit to ease their domestic responsibilities so they can continue or increase their representation of issues affecting women in legislative development at the local, regional and national level. • Stimulate exchange of information by women leaders at the national level, to motivate them to set up sessions with women at the grassroots/local level. • Community dialogue with community members on the added value of women's participation and women's leadership.
Gaps in awareness about and implementation of legislation	South Sudan has several frameworks in place that include provisions on the protection of women and entitle them to certain rights. Nevertheless there is a limited education and awareness about this in women, men, boys and girls, as well as a weak or failed implementation of this legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard educational programs in schools for girls and boys on women's rights. • Community dialogues on women's rights and gender equality. • Lobby and advocacy with (traditional) leaders on women's rights and gender equality, and the added value for the whole society.

IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS BY INTERVIEWEES

Topic	Problem	Suggested solutions
Extra vulnerability of widows	Cultural norms sustain a dependence of women on men, especially economic. The women who depend highly on their husbands are very vulnerable if their partners were to die or if they are abandoned by them. The deceased husbands family can abandon the widow and even take away any property from the marriage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement provisions in the South Sudanese legal framework that address inheritance and entitlement to property ensuring protection for widows - working with traditional and formal courts. • Support mechanisms to address the immediate safety needs of widows due to social and economic isolation (e.g. resorting to prostitution to provide an income which can result in sexual exploitation) • Support social and economic activities and initiatives that include widows • Support and recognition of The South Sudan Transitional constitution, 2011 which states that "Women have the right to own property and share in the estates of their deceased husbands together with any surviving legal heir of the deceased", from government actors and leadership over cultural practices.
Cattle raids	<p>Cattle raiding is a practice motivated by the need to pay a bride price for marriage. This causes subsequent insecurity incidences. The value of the prospective wife is measured against the amount of cattle that can provided to the marriage.</p> <p>Moreover, cattle raiding is usually performed by the younger male members of the family and these become practices associated with their masculinity. These fuels intercommunity clashes as the raids can involve stealing cattles from other families. If the situation escalates, there are usually subsequent murders as part of retaliatory attempts. Cattle raiding as a violent practice undermines efforts for peacebuilding that are undertaken at the community level</p> <p>This practice is very common in Bor and Malakal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set limits for bride price payments given to women's families to deter the occurrence of cattle raiding for these. Engage for this in community dialogues and with traditional leaders. • Address harmful cultural norms that affect women and girls negatively through education for women and girls in order to increase their ability to make informed choices over their lives. • Work with women and girls to limit their stimulation of violent cattle raiding - awareness raising about the negative effects • Work on positive masculinities - to eliminate the negative element of cattle raiding.

Comment: These issues were mentioned frequently across the whole sample and omit crucial differences among the different communities

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations elaborates on the more general and most essential problems and demanded solutions that our project has collected and processed for this report.

“I was married off to my husband when I was around 15 years old. I soon after gave birth to three children and we depended on him for everything. The trouble began when he decided to take another wife. My husband left me to fend for myself and children, if I try to press him for support it turns violent. When I went back to my mother, he came there and made trouble for me and I was forced to go back to our marital home, but he is not around. I never know when he will come by and if he will peaceful or beat me. How can my children and I continue to live like this? He paid bride price to my father and my family, so I cannot go anywhere.”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons

1. Support livelihood opportunities for women and girls.

During the participatory analysis many of the women stated that they lacked overall economic autonomy and depended highly on the male figures in their household or the community in general. This lack of independence rendered them vulnerable to socio-economic isolation in a context where neglect by their families or husbands is not uncommon. Death of a husband or other women entering the marital relationship due to widespread polygamy are a couple of the causes. Challenging these norms, can put women at risk of violence.

The female participants said that they would want to be employed or have a business/ means of livelihoods to enable them make financial contributions within their homes. It is arguably factual that women who contribute financially to their homes experience less violence and have more decision-making power in the household. On the one hand, their economic contributions serve for the improvement of family life and on the other hand, they spend less time in the house, which reduces the instances of domestic violence.

Solving these problems will need initiatives that promote the education of women and girls, the strengthening and building of skills and their capacities to create a livelihood for themselves and their families. This should also include vocational trainings for both women and girls as they can be used almost immediately.

Women who have their own means of income have more freedom to participate in leadership, make and influencing decisions in the community.

2. Ensure political commitment to implement laws that call for the protection of women and improve their rights.

While efforts to include women in decision-making processes are being recognized (especially by women), such as having a female vice-president and the appointment of a number of women at key political and leadership positions, the effects of these are not noticeable at the lowest levels. A lack of implementation of laws that protect women, provide for their rights and for their participation at all levels of governance, remains.

This gap in implementation is tightly related to the cultural norms that continue to hinder women's participation and rights. A female participant in Bor asked that leaders be serious about the issues that affect women across South Sudan, that they be brave and committed and do not fear challenging some of these exclusive norms and traditions.

A male community leader also said that all leaders especially those who are elected/appointed on an annual basis, need to receive training and capacity strengthening on how to implement the legal frameworks, including those that protect women. Thereby when women's issues are being dealt with, they are knowledgeable about the law, and how it relates to the problems and needs the female community faces and what their rights are.

To put this kind of change in motion, there is a need for leaders of all genders and at all levels of governance to push for the inclusion of women. That will entail nation-wide education on the rights of women and the benefits of their enforcement and on female empowerment and gender equality. There is a need to engage with leaders to become educated and knowledgeable about the legal and institutional frameworks in place that are aimed at the protection of women and the guarantee of their rights. An overall informative initiative that through dialogue and education ensures awareness about and enforcement of women's rights, as well as policies that protect them.

“When I arrived [to his office], he started his amorous advances towards me. I resisted but he insisted and wanted to forcibly have sex with me. He eventually let go of my hand. I'm now depressed by this. Now because of his behavior, the passion for school has entirely degraded from my heart. It has reached the extent that I don't go to school because of him. Sometimes I go to school sometimes I don't go to school. Whenever I find him at school, I would wish a quick end of that day so that I go to a place where I can't see him again.”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons

3. Include men in accountable practices to reduce instances of (S)GBV

In our participatory analysis, women pointed out that men were mostly the aggressors in cases of (sexual) and gender-based violence ((S)GBV).

(S)GBV remains a prevalent security and safety risk for women in the community and is a complex issue to address given that it is culturally and traditionally perceived as taboo and a problem isolated to women. Moreover, often, instances of (S)GBV tend to occur in the home, and these domestic violence cases tend to emerge due to disputes over the management of finances and resources when the woman is the breadwinner.

In the society, this continues to be perceived as an issue detached from the general political priorities at all levels, which is problematic since support from leadership is necessary. Drawing from the demands of our participants, solutions to the (S)GBV problem should include targeted assistance for men. There is a need to create livelihood opportunities for them in order to avoid tensions in the household that might trigger or exacerbate the risk of (S)GBV, as well as to include them in capacity building efforts on conflict resolution to reduce incidences of violence in the home. Furthermore, mechanisms that support dialogue at all levels need to be put in place to de-stigmatize the topic of (S)GBV. Lastly, leaders need to be made allied to these issues.

4. Provide physical protection for women especially in public spaces

A lot of women cited lack of security patrols from security agents such as police as a reason why there is so much (S)GBV in the community. Some of the women assured that the places where they felt safer were public spaces within the Malakal PoC because of Community Watch Groups. They also pointed out that the PoC has a gate and a security fence that is difficult to replicate outside of the Protection of Civilians Cites (now being renamed IDP camps though the name hasn't been adopted fully) due to the large area to be covered and a overall lack of resources.

(S)GBV as a security and safety priority for women hinders their ability to perform their daily duties, especially those that concern their livelihood activities.

Moreover, given the high degree of civilian armament, women report being harassed and assaulted by armed people when moving away from their homes to remote areas, when, for example, they go to fetch firewood. Overall the threat of (S)GBV for women, cripples their freedom of movement and their overall security.

There is an urgent need to increase the number of government patrols and security actors dedicated to and knowledgeable about the security and safety needs of women. Having bodies like the police or the military can protect women against armed people and reduce the instances of (S)GBV. However, it should be noted that these bodies may also be part of the problem, and they might engage in (S)GBV that can further deteriorate the security situation of women.

“Going to the bushes to fetch firewood is hard for us women. I went to get firewood. When I reached, there was some man who wanted payment to allow me to cut down the trees that I needed. I did not have any money with me. He started chasing me away and when I refused, he got angry and he threatened me. He then grabbed me and forced himself on me. I shouted but there was no one to help me. I went back home and I did not tell anyone.”

WPS Barometer research participant, anonymity is maintained for safety reasons

5. Address cultural norms that affect women and girls negatively.

The participants, especially those in Bor, reckoned the link between bride price and the worth on the women and their lives, which would ultimately determine how they are treated. This is part of a consolidated culture where women learn to measure their value against the amount of bride price (cows in pastoral communities) they can bring to their families once they are married. The bride price is often seen as the only significant financial contribution women can bring to the family household. Because younger women are perceived to be sexually purer, more obedient and more fertile for childbearing, families have the motivation to force women into marriage at the earliest age possible, given that the bride price will be larger in contrast to older women.

Considering the collected stories and demands, the culture linked to bride price ought to be stopped. The starting points, should be to enforce the laws that limit cattle raidings, such as the implementation of the Penal Code of South Sudan, to punish those who engage in the practice. Moreover, limits on bride prices should be set to reduce the instances of cattle raidings. Hereby, the amount of cattle needed by men to pay for the bride price would be reduced. This is relevant, given that resources and livelihood sources are already scarce in a country where 82% of the population survives on less than \$1.90 per day.

Trainings and building vocational skills for eventual (self-) employment also emerged as a good alternative to raise or accumulate the resources to pay for bride prices, vis a vis cattle raidings, in combination with bride price caps.

These should be aimed at both men and women, since, as aforementioned, financial contributions by women allow them to have more decision-making in the home and the community.

CONCLUSIONS

The local needs and perspectives from local women in Bor and Malakal are clear. There is clearly a need for more WPS intervention. The reality is that while institutional mechanisms that entitle women to rights and protection already exist, like the different provisions in the Transitional constitution of South Sudan of 2011 and other legal frameworks such as the Child Act (2008) and the Revitalized Peace Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (2018) regarding women's rights and the protection of women against all forms of abuse and discrimination, in practice this does not suffice to ensure an improvement in the lives of women. Especially at the local level, many women still do not feel safe and have limited recourse when something happens to them. The current laws in place to protect and support women are not enough to guarantee their peace and security, which results from the failure to implement them, the failure to change cultural attitudes as well as to educate the women at the local level for them to claim what is rightfully theirs.

This report has collected the stories of real women suffering the real impacts of this gap of the failure of implementation which is the direct consequence of patriarchal norms and structural inequality. Based on their experiences we have developed our recommendations which stem directly from local demands for rights and protection. An important aspect to consider in the next steps to take is the push to include men in the process by which women are supported to be more involved in peace and security and protected from any form of violence or discrimination. An approach that engages men and women at all levels of governance will ensure that solutions are sustainable.

This is also relevant because the patriarchal structure and norms installed in the South Sudanese context, have not only made survivors out of women, but also perpetrators of harm. Hence it is not only men and women as actors that need to be engaged with, but it is a culture and an environment that incentivizes violence, insecurity and discrimination that need to be challenged. Male and female leaders at all levels should not fear defying those values and practices that impede female empowerment and women's inclusion and representation in decision-making and should amplify their voices, so that these decision-making processes can account for the needs and priorities of women.

Aside from working towards closing this gap, women need to be supported in finding sources of livelihood. Moreover, by empowering women economically and promoting their meaningful participation, their image as weak and as male property can be transformed, as well as the negative masculinities that promote male ownership of women whose value is measured against material resources. Therefore there is a need to train and educate women and men, a need to build and strengthen their capacity in an inclusive way.

To achieve the above aims and pursue the given recommendations we need, as previously noted:

1. To create livelihood opportunities for women and girls,
2. To engage men in practices that improve their safety and security, as well as that of women,
3. To seek political commitments for the implementation of the legal frameworks that protect women and bestow them rights
4. To improve and increase the degree to which women receive physical protection from authorities in public spaces
5. To challenge the cultural norms that measure the value of women against material resources in order to avoid violence and forced early marriage.

ABOUT CORDAID

Cordaid is a value-based international development and emergency relief organisation, based in the Netherlands with offices in 14 countries . We work in and on fragility and support communities in their efforts to improve health care, education, food security, and justice. Where disaster strikes, we offer humanitarian assistance.

Cordaid is deeply rooted in the Dutch society with more than 250 .000 private donors. The Christian values of human dignity, justice, compassion and care for the planet guide us in our work . Cordaid is a founding member of Caritas, CIDSE and ACT Alliance .

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