Evaluating the Effectiveness of United Nations Peace-Building Strategies in South Sudan

Kelly Otieno Opiyo[1]

[1]kellyismael26@gmail.com

[1]Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the effectiveness of United Nations peace-building programs in South Sudan. The study aimed to identify the main United Nations peace-building strategies, determine how local perceptions impact United Nations peace-building strategies, and illustrate the effectiveness of United Nations peace-building strategies in supporting sustainable peace in South Sudan. The study borrows from liberal institutionalism and conflict transformation theory. The theories explain the collaborative approach to addressing the root causes of conflict in South Sudan. The study employed a mixed-methods design, utilizing descriptive statistics including SSP version 28 for quantitative data and thematic excerpt evaluation for qualitative data. This enabled the study to explore the effectiveness of various peace-building strategies, gaps, and interventions. It targeted military peacekeepers, including troops, staff officers, military observers (MILOBs), and police, including both UN police and GOSS local police, accumulating to 3280. A sample size of 354 was determined by the Yamane's formula, and participants were sampled through cluster sampling, convenience sampling, and purposive sampling. Primary data collection methods included questionnaires, focus group discussions (FDGs), and interview schedules. Secondary data was collected through a review of various publications. Specifically, it highlights the impact of DDR and SSR programs and other economic reforms as conflict management and prevention mechanisms. The findings show that the mission in South Sudan has provided essential support during and post-conflict, improving local and national coping mechanisms. Despite challenges in funding, coordination, and sustainability, the mission has significantly impacted peace-building efforts. Recommendations include enhancing resources, integrating third-party donors, and focusing on mental, physical, and vocational well-being. Additionally, follow-up interventions for ex-combatants will boost sustainability. Strengthening conflict resolution, protecting civilians, and fostering inclusive dialogue will help UNMISS achieve lasting peace in South Sudan.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Demobilization, Disarmament, Economic Reforms, Ex-Combatants, Peace-Building Programs, Prevention Mechanisms, Reintegration, Security Sector Reform

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I. INTRODUCTION

In some situations, conflict emerges as the only way to manage existing issues and overcome negative peace. When this happens, the conflicting parties should consider participating in conflict resolution practices such as negotiation, mediation, and arbitration processes (Cilliers & Mills, 1999). At the global level, the United Nations, made up of member states, provides specific guidelines on how international interventions should act when intervening in conflict within or among countries. The United Nations (UN) Charter specifies this step in Chapter VI, a non-binding recommendation that entirely relies on members' willingness to cooperate. However, the UN Charter employs Chapter VII if the situation becomes harmful and violent (Shapiro & Lampert, 2014). These guidelines provide scope and limitations for external measures to be used in controlling conflict escalation and restoring peace.

It requires the Security Council (SC) to use drastic measures, such as military action and economic or diplomatic sanctions that are binding and enforced by the parties (UN, 2024). The financial sanctions can vary from freezing the country's assets to restricting their participation in the global market. The diplomatic sanctions can be as severe as expelling ambassadors and restricting diplomatic ties. Military use is always the last resort, as international troops have the authority to use force to protect civilians and restore peace. It requires forceful UN participation in conflict resolution and violence control. The main goal of the UN mandate is to help nations under conflict and violence gain sustainable peace.

At the regional level, every regional community has its own guidelines and scope of intervention in conflict. The European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) promote sustainable peace by using various mechanisms for preventing, managing, and resolving conflict upon involvement. Some of the interventions have been successful, including the signed treaty between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018, which was due to the involvement of the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (UN, 2024). The regional community interventions are

successful because they have structured the mandate according to the deeper understanding of the countries involved paying keen attention to their culture and structure of governance.

The UN has utilized its mandate to develop the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in an attempt to restore peace. The mission's main aim is to cease fire and be at the forefront of the development of peacebuilding strategies and implementation. Significantly, peacebuilding in South Sudan has complex multispectral frameworks (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). It has involved the participation of international, regional, national, and local actors in the development of strategies that would address the root causes of conflict and develop sustainable peacebuilding initiatives. The strategies target the establishment of effective governance, rule of law, and promotion of democratic institutions, which will consider the needs of all key actors in South Sudan.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The United Nations has implemented external measures and provided assistance to a member state. The Mission in South Sudan involved a military component as the last resort and sanction that could alleviate conflict. The mission engaged both regional and international forces, acting as external experts, to manage the conflict through dialogues, reconciliation programs, and rebuilding strategies, with the aim of peace restoration and sustainable development (Shapiro & Lampert, 2014). The UN mandate, through the mission, focuses on reducing hostility and creating a suitable environment for dialogue and reconciliation.

The missions' goals also entail economic development initiatives that target livelihood wellness at the local and national levels. The program entails economic empowerment events with vocational and technical training that will eventually reduce reliance on humanitarian assistance (Nyandera, 2018). These tools also promote peace-building strategies by developing interdependent business ventures and positions that increase the pool of income.

Despite being in South Sudan for over two decades, the mission has faced several challenges in the implementation of these goals. The multiple cycles of conflict in South Sudan have adversely affected the progress of implemented initiatives and the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs for former combatants (Nyandera, 2018). It has also affected the relationships of local actors in the UN due to the diversity of perceptions of the approach used. However, there needs to be further research exploring the role and impact of the mission's strategies on the path of peace and sustainability that addresses the root causes of conflict and the engagement of local actors.

1.2 Research Objectives

i. To identify the main United Nations peace building strategies in South Sudan.
ii. To determine how local perceptions impact United Nations peace-building strategies in South Sudan.
iii. To illustrate the effectiveness of United Nations peace-building strategies in supporting sustainable peace in South Sudan.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study utilizes liberal institutionalism and conflict transformation theories to explain conflict in South Sudan and UNMISS peace building efforts.

2.1.1 Liberalism institutionalism theory

Liberal institutionalism explores the South Sudan conflict from an international perspective. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye describe the theory as international interventions for individual states that promote unity (Keohane & Nye, 1977). They focus on using collaborative efforts to facilitate diplomatic negotiations, promote cooperation and coordination among member states, and encourage global peace through international law. The mission is a collaborative action to resolve the conflict in South Sudan. The mission has partnered with other international, regional, and national actors agencies and programmes to promote peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. The mission faces challenges related to varying interests, insufficient resources, and coordinating diverse actors' representatives. Regardless, it has structured the interventions to align with the complex nature of the culture and needs of South Sudanese citizens. The interventions emphasize the inclusivity of national, armed groups, and local community representatives through dialogue and decision-making processes.

2.1.2 Conflict Transformation Theory

The conflict transformation theory, developed by John Paul Lederach, recognizes the complexities of conflict and the need to use complicated approaches in developing positive, sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997). It emphasizes that peace processes should consider the relationships of involved parties, explore multi-level approaches, and focus on implementing long-term changes. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are considered temporary solutions because they fail to address the root causes, according to the theory. The UN mission in South Sudan focuses on developing political, economic, and social peacebuilding initiatives.

The mission has employed collaborative efforts to develop problem-solving strategies. It has also emphasized the significance of including marginalized communities, women, and youth in developing sustainable and effective peacebuilding solutions (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Thus, conflict transformation theory provides an extension of liberal institutionalism. While the latter explains UNMISS's collaborative inclusion of international actors in South Sudan's peacebuilding efforts, conflict transformation theory explains the need for processes addressing root causes and the significance of inclusivity at all levels.

2.2 Empirical Review

In line with the first objective of identifying the main united nations peacebuilding strategies, it is evident that the main aim of the mission is to restore peace and help South Sudan develop sustainable peace-building initiatives that would help improve the fragility of peace in South Sudan. Investing in SSR programs also entails improving security (Belloni, 2012). The mission aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of security forces by offering adequate training to impact their knowledge and skills and change their approach to align with the conflict situation in South Sudan. Additionally, the mission aims to participate in developing legal and institutional frameworks, specifically those for security governance. These strategies will promote the judicial system's legitimacy, transparency, and accountability in delivering justice and promoting the rule of law.

One of the main determinants of the success or failure of United Nations peace-building strategies is the level and effectiveness of coordination among various groups in a mission area. According to Smith's (2017) study, conflict areas face significant challenges in multi-stakeholder coordination within a single mission. This is due to the fact that the mission area comprises multi-dimensional actors and partners, including the military component, the civilian component, and the police component, which have diverse operational capabilities and professional dimensions. The various local government agencies, national agencies, and regional and global parties further exacerbate this situation by collaborating to lessen the harsh realities and impact of conflict on the vulnerable population. In any integrated mission, all partner stakeholders and actors work together in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

According to Smith (2021), another perspective suggests that the main role of coordination mechanisms is to enhance the coherence and efficiency of peace-building efforts. These activities include joint planning, resource mobilization, intelligence, and information sharing. The study by Nyadera (2018) provides valuable insights into the critical roles and challenges faced by various mission actors in the process of achieving seamless coordination and collaboration.

In line with the second objective on the perspectives of the locals on the impacts of peacebuilding strategies, the study established that the perceptions of the local population have influenced the effectiveness of UN peace-building strategies. A study by Baker et al. (2023) highlights the complicated interplay between local perception and the success or failure of various peace-building strategies. The study accentuates the importance of understanding and incorporating the perspectives and opinions of the local population into various peace-building strategies. The study asserts that this framework plays a crucial role in enhancing the trust of the local population, fostering legitimacy, and guaranteeing local ownership among the conflict-affected community members.

Similarly, Smith (2021) emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and contextual awareness in shaping external perception and promoting intervention efforts in conflict environments (Kumalo & Roddy-Mullineaux, 2019). These insights underscore the necessity for various international organizations, such as the United Nations and other peace-building agencies, to further engage in participatory strategies aimed at

empowering local stakeholders and parties, and further aligning interventions with the needs and desires of the local community.

Consistent with second objective, the local perception is also envisioned through Alao (2017), in his study titled "Local Perceptions and the Effectiveness of United Nations Peace-Building Strategies," emphasizes the dynamic nature of local perceptions and the roles they play in ensuring both long-term and short-term sustainable peace-building initiatives (Shapiro & Lampert, 2014). The study suggests that there is a need to prioritize and focus on the local attitude in peace-building initiatives, which provided invaluable insight for policymakers and other conflict practitioners in fostering sustainable peace and stability in conflict-affected regions like South Sudan (Kumalo & Roddy-Mullineaux, 2019). For peace-building strategies to succeed, they must incorporate local perspectives into their designs, implementation programs, and evaluation strategies, as this will ensure their effectiveness, suitability, and sustainability.

In line with the third objective on the effectiveness of United nations peacebuilding strategies, it is evident that the security situation in South Sudan has deteriorated due to the numerous conflict surges. This has changed people's perception of the rule of law, the government's ability to restore peace, and people's respect for human rights (Belloni, 2012). The ongoing instability has jeopardized every intervention implemented to restore peace and help the building process, leading to the destruction of progress and rendering it ineffective, complicated, or unstable. These changes influenced international and regional actors to intervene through the mission.

To illustrate the effectiveness, the study has developed independent and dependent variables from a theoretical and empirical standpoint. The independent variables entail reducing violence and conflict, improving security, enhancing social cohesion, increasing political stability, developing socio-economic development, and protecting human rights and civilians. These variables align with the mandate and main objectives of the mission. The dependent variables include SSR, DDR, economic development, social-cultural strategies, dialogues and negotiation, the rule of law and human rights, and community engagement. The structure, involvement, and implementation of these variables will determine the success or failure of the peace-building initiatives.

Aligned with the third objective, the study also assessed the role of communication institutional infrastructure and leadership roles in enhancing peace-building coordination efforts. Scholars such as Jones and Smith (2017) emphasize the importance of leadership dynamics and various power relations, as well as how they influence and shape coordination mechanisms and end states. The findings accentuate the need for proper political, social, and cultural perspectives to positively influence coordination mechanisms, which are necessary for sustainable peace in South Sudan.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods design across five regions: Juba, Aweil, Malakal, Rumbek, and Wau in South Sudan and Nairobi in Kenya. The study had a target population of 3280, which comprised both military and police personnel, Payam administrators, religious leaders, United Nations international staff, diplomats, humanitarian affairs heads, and personnel from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).

To select settings and participants, the study utilized a sample size of 354 combined with both probability and non-probability sampling techniques consisting of purposive, clusters, stratified proportionate, and simple random sampling (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Yamane's (1967) formula was used to achieve recommended sample confidence (Louangrath & Sutanapong, 2019). Questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interview schedules were used to collect primary data from the respondents while secondary data collection involved literature review and analysis of academic papers, policy documents, reports, and relevant publications from reputable sources such as the United Nations, governmental agencies, and NGOs (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999).

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were utilized with quantitative data being analyzed using numerical techniques and statistical methods while excerpts were used to explain plausible interpretations of qualitative data. Equally Face and content validity processes were considered alongside data triangulation from numerous methods and sources to evaluate the nature of UN missions and peacebuilding strategies in South Sudan.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

The study aimed to identify the main United Nations peacebuilding strategies, determine how local perceptions impact United Nations peace-building strategies, and illustrate the effectiveness of United Nations peace-building strategies in supporting sustainable peace in South Sudan. To facilitate an in-depth investigation, the study collected data from a sample size of 354 individuals with a response rate of 82% and used a self-administered survey method. The response rate of 82% was achieved by the successful completion of 290 surveys, and FGDs, and the use of an interview schedule highlights the integrity of the data collection process. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), any response rate above 72% is recommended and holds statistical significance for a reliable conclusion and findings as presented below.

Table 1
Response Rate

S/No	Category	Total Participants	Response received	Response rate (%)
1.	Surveys, FGD and Interview schedules	354	290	82%

4.2 Security Sector Reforms

The mission has been successful in promoting SSR in South Sudan. The mission cooperates with national police to conduct joint patrols around key zones (Nascimento, 2018). These patrols demonstrate a unified approach to restoring security in South Sudan. It also provides an opportunity for the police and the mission to develop an improved applicable approach that includes the current trends and South Sudan culture. Moreover, the mission has engaged civil society organizations in SSR processes.

They understand the gaps and opportunities that would enhance SSR's practicality, effectiveness, and sustainability. They ensure that the amendments reflect the local community's needs and the people's peace vision. The mission provides training and workshops for these representatives, a strategy that enhances competency and creates a sense of qualification and belonging in conducting and participating through dialogue processes in rebuilding the security sector.

The study sought to explore how the mission has utilized SSR and the effectiveness of SSR as a peace-building strategy for promoting sustainable peace in South Sudan. This was done by surveying 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives. The study analyzed various dynamics and patterns relating to violence and conflict and the findings are presented in Figure 1 below.
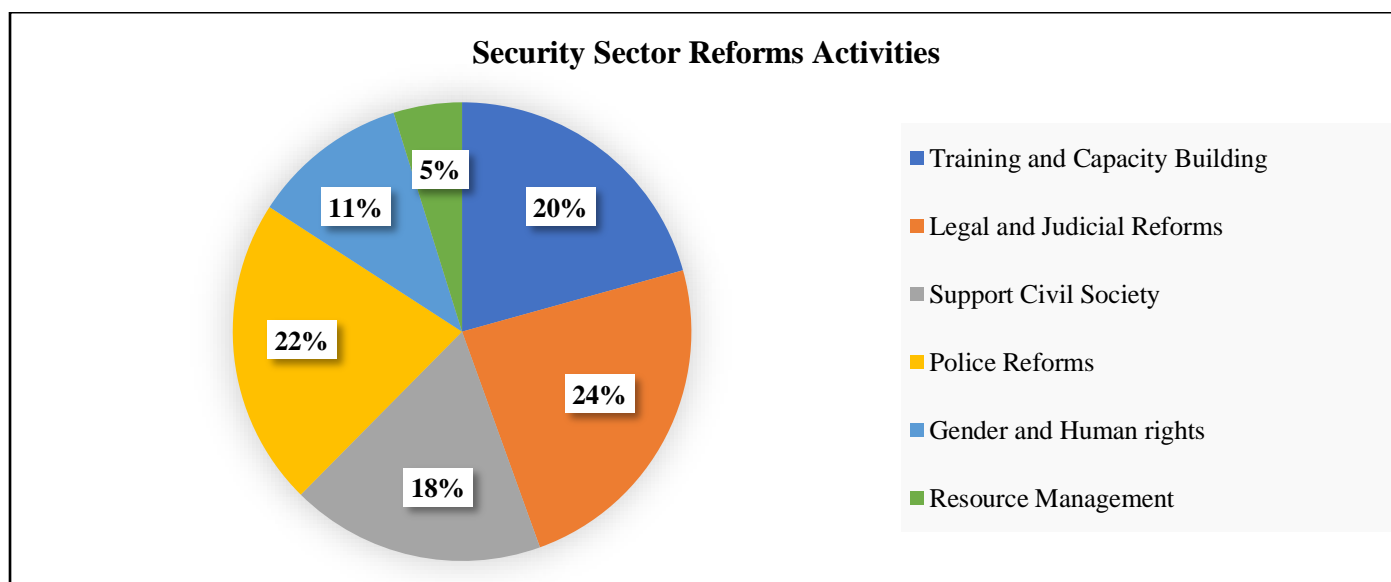

Figure 1
Security Sector Reform and Peace Building

The study findings above illustrate the mission's proactive efforts in utilizing SSR as a peace-building strategy in South Sudan. 24 % and 22% of the surveyed respondents observed that legal, judicial and police reforms respectively were critical in ensuring the success of the SSR programs and promoting sustainable peace (Nascimento, 2018). The mission has immensely contributed to the promotion of peace and a stable environment which aligns with the mission's border comprehensive approach to SSR programs and sustainable peace in South Sudan.

The findings provide a clear understanding of the respondents' perspectives and viewpoints thus highlighting the roles SSR has played in promoting peace and stability in the country (UNSR, 2021). The study findings also record training and capacity building, support to civil society gender and human rights and resource management are equally important in ensuring accountability transparency and effectiveness of security institutions in South Sudan.

The mission has been efficient in supporting SSR processes. Its existence in South Sudan for more than a decade has strengthened its awareness of conflict cycles and structures of formal and informal settings. It has allowed the mission to develop more stable strategies that would be effective through its second chance. The initial opportunity was in 2013 when the mission used its military forces to cease the war, a plan that was rendered ineffective. Applying international intelligence in managing the South Sudan conflict and war cycles was impractical since the mission's mandate was detached from the situation, culture, and war dynamics in South Sudan.

The second chance to implement SSR was in July 2011, in which the aim was not primarily to use military functions but to develop peace agreements through negotiations and state-building dialogues ("South Sudan Monitor," 2011). This way, the SSR processes will entail the government to local representatives, including all components. It also included representatives from marginalized groups and informal armed groups, who may seem insignificant but had influence and links to opposing political parties. This strategy enhanced participation and was a more organized structure for promoting peace-building in South Sudan.

One of the most tremendous missions' successes is the implementation of the United Nations Security Resolutions (UNSR) that aim to promote SSR reforms. UNSR 2577 (2021) emphasized renewing the sanctions present in South Sudan to curb ongoing conflict (UNSR, 2021). Reducing the distribution of firearms will eventually reduce up rise of violence within South Sudan. These sanctions aim to limit sources of future conflict and violence cycles.

Travel bans also target the movement of key stakeholders who are key players in the ongoing conflict. Moreover, the mandate implemented a travel ban on specific individuals, including group leaders and political leaders, who might be linked with parties in conflict, and government officials who oppose peace negotiations. The ban also applied to monitor rebel leaders of armed militia groups. Limiting their movement limits the movement of weapons through porous borders. Controlling the black market's influence on the conflict helps the military and police focus on borders' root causes of conflict and limit human rights violations.

The mission, through the mandate, has involved a Panel of Experts in South Sudan. This independent body, appointed by the UN, comprises individuals with candid knowledge and experience in implementing sanctions and guiding the nation through SSR processes. They also observe and report the security patterns in South Sudan, providing detailed reports and evidence necessary to further SSR approach improvements. This resolution did not necessarily introduce any new sanctions. It focused on reaffirming and extending the existing, only with more aggressive and informed approaches. A former sector commander Sector noted that:

> UNMISS supported the development of the National Security Policy and the National Security Strategy, which were launched in 2014 and 2018, respectively. These documents provide a framework for the reform of the security sector and outline the government's vision for security sector governance, management, and oversight.

The other resolution entailed accountability issues in South Sudan. UNSR 2206 (2015) established a working framework that ensured the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) took responsibility for the SSR and peace processes (Beny, 2015). It did not authorize using force in South Sudan, but it pressured the conflicting parties to participate in finding programs that promote sustainable peace. For example, the resolution emphasized GoSS be responsible for protecting civilians from war crimes, including ethnic cleansing, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), and crimes against humanity (Sedra, 2011).

The government would also lead in re-establishing the rule of law by addressing human rights abuses and violations. The resolution created a committee that conducted observation and reporting of the progress and performance of the government in executing these roles to the Security Council. The information was influential in developing programs that engaged local and state-level government participation, improving the reconciliation and justice processes in South Sudan.

The implementation of SSR by the mission faced challenges. Funding, oversized forces, and prioritization of police and military reforms at the expense of judicial and transitional reforms were the main threats to implementing the

UN-based SSR projects. The multiple cycles of violence and destruction of SSR progress instilled fear among experts in taking significant steps toward implementation (van der Lid, 2023). Thus, they invested much in local-level projects and less at the state level due to fear of taking such intense risks and failing. Moreover, it took time for the international and regional actors (African Union and IGAD) to understand the conflict dynamics (van der Lid, 2023).

Thus, the local interventions are diverse and geographically based in South Sudan. The varying needs of each location inhibit the unification of the SSR local structures. Additionally, the locally recruited experts, under the peace-building police and military, are tied, reported, and dependent on the commanders. Thus, the funding challenges led to low and delayed salaries, fueling cases of corruption and willingness to participate and condone human rights violations, extortion, and looting. These actions inhibited the success of restoring the rule of law and justice in South Sudan, rendering the mission's efforts insignificant, resulting in more harm than good.

4.3 Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

DDR programs happened in two phases. The first phase occurred in Sudan and South Sudan under the United Nations mandate through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 (Lamb & Stainer, 2018). The aim was to resolve existing conflicts by creating a conducive environment promoting reconstruction, security, and development. In the initial stages of peacebuilding, the efforts were less effective than the mission perceived. The plan was attractive on paper but highly insignificant upon implementation. The DDR process failed to align the security and violence situation in South Sudan to the goals and implementation process of the DDR.

The study sought to explore the effectiveness of DDR programs in promoting sustainable peace in South Sudan. The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on the role and effectiveness of DDR programs and their views were summarized. The study analyzed various activities and dynamics relating to DDR. The findings are presented in the subsequent 2 table below.

Table 2
Impact of DDR on Peacebuilding Initiatives

DDR Activities	Population	Percentage
Community-Based Peacebuilding	74	26%
Reconciliation and social cohesion	84	29%
Economic Empowerment	58	20%
Reduced armed conflict	74	25%
Total	**290**	**100**

The study findings reveal that the mission has had an effective DDR program which has supported peacebuilding initiatives in the country. The findings further highlight the critical role played by DDR programs in disarming ex-combatants, demobilizing them into civilian life and further re-integrating them into society. According to the findings, DDR has been able to support the restoration of the communities affected by conflict (Day et al., 2019). Through reintegration, the mission has been able to address the socio-economic and psychological needs of the ex-combatants as they transition from military to civilian life. It was observed that acceptance by society, and productive participation in civilian life is important for the seamless integration of ex-combatants. One local elder observed that;

> ....*Some of the main challenges facing DDR implementations include; intercommunal violence, recurrent armed insurrections, widespread insecurity and border conflict with Sudan in the North...*

Moreover, the program targets the elderly, disabled, and child combatants from armed groups (Lamb & Stainer, 2018). It aimed to reintegrate them into the community by equipping them with skills and counselling to help them find a position in the local community. Phase II of this project began before South Sudan's independence, hoping to customize the program to suit the structure, culture, and security issues in South Sudan under UNMISS.

Different from Phase I, the new DDR program operated on various dynamics. It aligned with the UNSR 1590 (2005), which aimed to monitor strategies that deter violence in support of CPA (Lamb & Stainer, 2018). It also considered the sensitivity of peace in Sudan and South Sudan, focusing on ending both countries' civil war and reconstruction. It had zero tolerance for CRSV, SGBV, and human rights violations.

The program also considered a multi-framework approach. It included international actors such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations through the mission, and GoSS through the South Sudan Peoples Defense Forces (SSPDF) (UNDP, 2021). It aimed to use local organizations to disarm civilians, reduce the spread of firearms, facilitate training, and reintroduce them to the local community. This project was more fruitful than Phase 1.

DDR steps are specific in roles and purpose. Disarmament is the process in which community leaders voluntarily collect small arms from civilians (Day et al., 2019). The mission trains representatives on weapon identification, communication approaches, and collection techniques. In the demobilization stage, the mission, through representatives, identifies and screens eligible candidates, confirming that they were not perpetrators of human rights abuses. Statistics have shown that 5,000 ex-combatants make it through the screening process (Donais & Solomon, 2022). The mission then sets centres through which they distribute necessities and register them. The centres also offer medical and psychological support, preparing for the last phase. One key informant observed that:

> *Reintegration is the most involving and complex process of the three. This is because, while the other two processes, disarming and de-mobilization focus mainly on the physical disarming and demobilization of ex-combatants, reintegration explores deeper into the far-reaching socio-economic and psychosocial aspects of transition back into civilian life.*

This step requires vast human and technical resources and support. It entails offering vocational training in carpentry, mechanics, and agriculture. The 2018 Yambio program provided training and start-up equipment to 600 ex-combatants, as the setup assistant (Researcher's Findings). Despite reducing the number from the previous step, the recording is better than the first phase of the DDR program. Psychological support at this stage is crucial, especially among ex-combatants struggling with trauma and stigma.

The mission has faced various challenges through the DDR programs. Funding and scarcity of resources, as the greatest of all, are the main reasons for the reduced output of the program. It has affected the quality of training, especially since most professional facilitators resigned after the first phase (Lamb & Stainer, 2018). This adversely affected the quality of the vocational training, as many figured the program might need to live up to its goals. Additionally, the DDR program in South Sudan was more technical and involved various organizations.

This congestion affected information sharing, planning, and implementation coordination. Many organizations approached the program with individual goals and different expertise. This situation created challenges in aligning the program with the needs of ex-combatants and the varying cultures (due to geographic location). Moreover, there was an increased risk of voluntary donors withdrawing their donations without the possibility of providing alternatives in the future. These issues among stakeholders at the controlling level influenced the behaviour of the DDR program.

These challenges affected ex-combatants on their reforming journey. For instance, reintegration is the most sensitive of the three stages. The program needed more resources to support the evolution process by identifying areas of livelihood opportunities. Lack of income-generating jobs, inadequate training, and insufficient start-up resources hinder the sustainability of the program's effects. Moreover, illegal trade and porous borders make the disarmament process insignificant. Upon perception of failure, the ex-combatants would turn to armed militia groups for survival and protection due to frustration and poor coping capability.

4.4 Social and Cultural Strategies

The mission invested in social and cultural strategy as an approach strategy to the deep causes of conflict. It targeted resolving identity and association crises, cultural differences, and ethnic and social differences on individual, social, and governing levels. The investment would promote the significance of reconciliation and dialogue processes, enhancing the sustainability of the peacebuilding initiatives. The competition for scarce resources, historical grievances, mistrust, historical issues, and revenge missions have caused different uprisings of conflict and violence among citizens of South Sudan.

The study sought to investigate how the mission has applied social and cultural strategies and their effectiveness in promoting sustainable peace in South Sudan. The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on the effectiveness of social-cultural aspects as a peace-building strategy in South Sudan. The study analyzed various activities and dynamics relating to social-cultural strategies and the findings are presented in Figure 2 below.
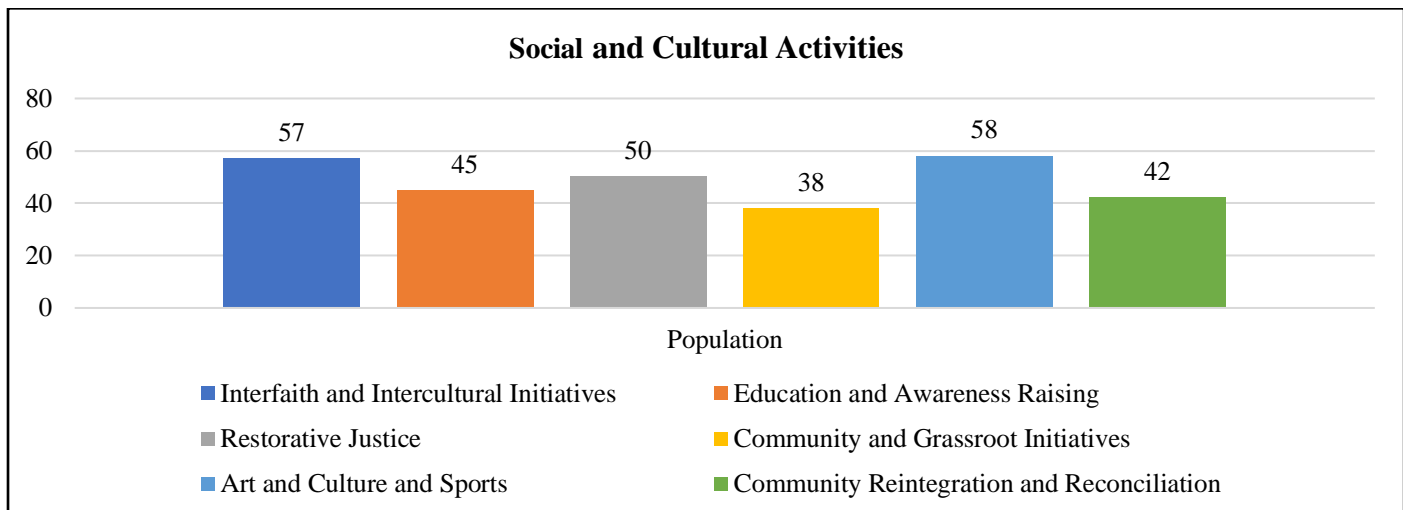
Figure 2
Social and Cultural Factors

The study findings highlight the implication of social and cultural factors as a key strategy employed by the mission to promote stability and sustainable peace in South Sudan. The findings reveal the critical roles played by the mission in promoting social cohesion reconciliation and healing thus empowering and encouraging local communities to embrace peace transparency and understanding. It is therefore necessary to adopt a holistic approach embedded in social and cultural dimensions to achieve efficient and sustainable peace efforts.

Social and cultural strategies of peacebuilding used the holistic approach in addressing conflict issues in South Sudan and promoting sustainable peace. Initiatives, such as intercultural and interfaith dialogues and events, target changing myths, misconceptions, and negative beliefs. Cultural events, celebrations, and performances help communities appreciate their history and differences. Thus, they develop a sense of identity and belonging from the perception of inclusion and participation in a unified decision-making process.

Art, music, crafts, and storytelling strategies have helped communities express their version of South Sudan and their conflict experiences (Pahrenholz, 2010; Zehr & Mika, 2017). This display has enabled others to understand and relate to suffering and pain, creating a favourable environment for reconciliation, forgiveness, and trust development. Consequently, community members can express themselves without fear of judgment, developing victim management programs, justice pursuit, and mediation processes.

The mission has used empowerment strategies to enhance the community's coping mechanisms, especially at the individual level. Civil mass education equips individuals with knowledge and skills to participate in democratic and peace dialogues with an understanding of the role of their leaders in promoting peace. This way, the mission ensures the community and governance systems are sustainable, especially after the withdrawal of post-conflict support.

Peace education equips people to understand conflict dynamics, analysis, and management strategies. It ensures that people can de-escalate conflict situations among themselves before they turn into violence. It also ensures that people can identify and use non-violent mechanisms to oppose negative propaganda and ideas from leaders that could potentially ruin the peacebuilding processes, protecting the infrastructure.

The mission has enabled the community to understand its position in reconciliation and reintegration programs. They have become active participants in generating locally driven solutions on opportunities to address social grievances, the election of leaders, and maintaining their peace investments. Thus, they develop a sense of ownership due to inclusivity and consideration of their needs.

Such solutions are long-lasting because they align with the cultural practices, available resources, and current needs. For reintegration and reconciliation, the mission has trained experts to coordinate the returning home, resettlement, and reconciliation processes. They facilitate dialogues, public apologies, and truth-telling commissions. The mission involves the community in resettling schemes by supporting individuals in setting up businesses, finding appropriate job opportunities to utilize the ex-combatants' new skills, and rebuilding homes.

4.5 Dialogue and Negotiation

The mission has been at the forefront of leading dialogues and negotiation processes in South Sudan. The work entails increasing participation and inclusivity of individuals from local and national levels in dialogues about peacebuilding and sustainability programs. The programs also aim to facilitate local-driven solutions in the management

of armed groups, who have strong links to the national level and keep perpetrating violence despite the signing of the 2018 peace agreement (Spink, 2020). Participation will also remove the barriers between local and national governments, effectively conducting conflict analysis, defining linkages, and curbing perpetration at all levels. This way, people will actively shape the government system that would effectively serve them and promote peace processes on all governing levels.

The study also sought to investigate the effectiveness of dialogue and negotiation as a peace-building strategy and how it influences the effectiveness of the mission. A total of 290 respondents were interviewed on their views of dialogue and negotiation as a peace-building and the outcome is presented in table 3 below.

Table 3

Dialogue and Negotiation as a Peace-building Strategy

Dialogue and negotiation Activities	Population	Percentage
Inclusivity and Representation	48	17%
Mediation and Facilitation	55	19%
Confidence-Building Measures	47	16%
Consensus-Building and Compromise	47	16%
Peace Agreements and Implementation	42	14%
Sustainability and Long-Term Engagement	51	18%
Total	**290**	**100**

From the study findings, it is evident that the mission has played a critical role in promoting the rule of law as emphasized by the respondents. The perspectives and opinions of the respondents point to the fact that the rule of law is important in ensuring the effectiveness of Mission and thus it has been employed by the Mission to promote a just fair and accountable legal system capable of upholding and promoting human rights and ensure transparency of the judicial processes within the mission (UN, 2022). The findings indicate that there is a need for the mission to promote political processes and support the government and the rule of law.

The respondents listed the key activities which they consider important in promoting the rule of law with the majority being of the opinion that mediation and facilitation, sustainability long-term engagement and inclusivity were effective and played a crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of the mission in ensuring sustainable peace and stability.

Inclusivity also increases the scope of details on things to discuss and observe while pursuing sustainable peace. For example, justice conversations from communities of Fangak and Ayod focused on holding human rights abusers accountable for the suffering of the victims, as described by traditional leaders, women, and youth present in one of the meetings (Samuel, 2023). The conversation also highlighted inherited hatred, violence, and rivalry. From understanding the conflict situation, the meeting developed several recommendations, including setting up healing centres that would offer counseling and constructing prisons to deter crime.

Dialogues and negotiations also consider the position of regional actors and neighbouring countries in promoting peace sustainability in South Sudan. For instance, in 2017, President Salva Kiir launched a national dialogue that included other leaders, including David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and representatives from China, Ethiopia, and the United States, among others (UN, 2022). The conversation highlighted the deployment of additional troops to Juba, peacebuilding progress, sanction issues, and the humanitarian crisis after the onset of seasonal rains around the camping sites. Including regional and international actors helps in accounting for progress in South Sudan, highlighting problems and issues that affect the implementation of peacebuilding initiatives.

The mission has played an essential role in improving coordination between GoSS and other structures regarding co-existence and stability. In 2015, GoSS, under the leadership of President Salva Kiir, signed the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) ("ITI," 2021). ARCSS aimed to provide a detailed national reconciliation and reintegration plan. However, the agreement failed and led to another violent uprising in 2016. The agreement had a poor implementation plan that resulted in confusion and friction between the locals, the government, and the military.

Consequently, in 2017, South Sudan used the Transformative Initiative to support the South Sudan National Dialogue (SSND) ("ITI", 2021). The program ensured that representatives from the government, civil organizations, and marginalized communities were present. With lessons from South African experience, the mission used the program to ensure that all peace projects were practical and inclusive of governance from all levels. It also aimed to change the local community's focus from violence survival to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The missions' involvement has improved South Sudan's peace restoration approaches. It has increased people's confidence in the national efforts through ceasefire, prison releases, and developmental projects. These initiatives foster goodwill and show government responsibility in addressing national needs at the local level. The development projects address infrastructure-related needs such as water supply, food availability, and access to conflict zones to supply relief aid. Confidence-building measures (CBM) projects, including DDR, are sensitive and require all parties' commitment. Any failure would be a sign of weakness and might have a more prolonged effect on strengthening the rule of law.

4.6 Rule of Law and Human Rights

The rule of law is dependent on existing legal frameworks and human rights. The evaluation of the rule of law assesses the performance of legal frameworks and how judicial bodies have promoted their independence and accessibility and ensure that people are active in protecting peace and justice (Ansorg & Gordon, 2020). It helps identify gaps in the justice system by determining how best to strengthen courts, improve the application of the law, and deal with crimes against human rights violations.

The study also sought to investigate the impact of the Rule of law and human rights as a peace-building strategy and its influence on the effectiveness of the mission. A total of 290 respondents were asked about their opinion of the rule of law and human rights and its effectiveness in consolidating and promoting peace-building initiatives in South Sudan and the outcome is presented in Figure 3 below.
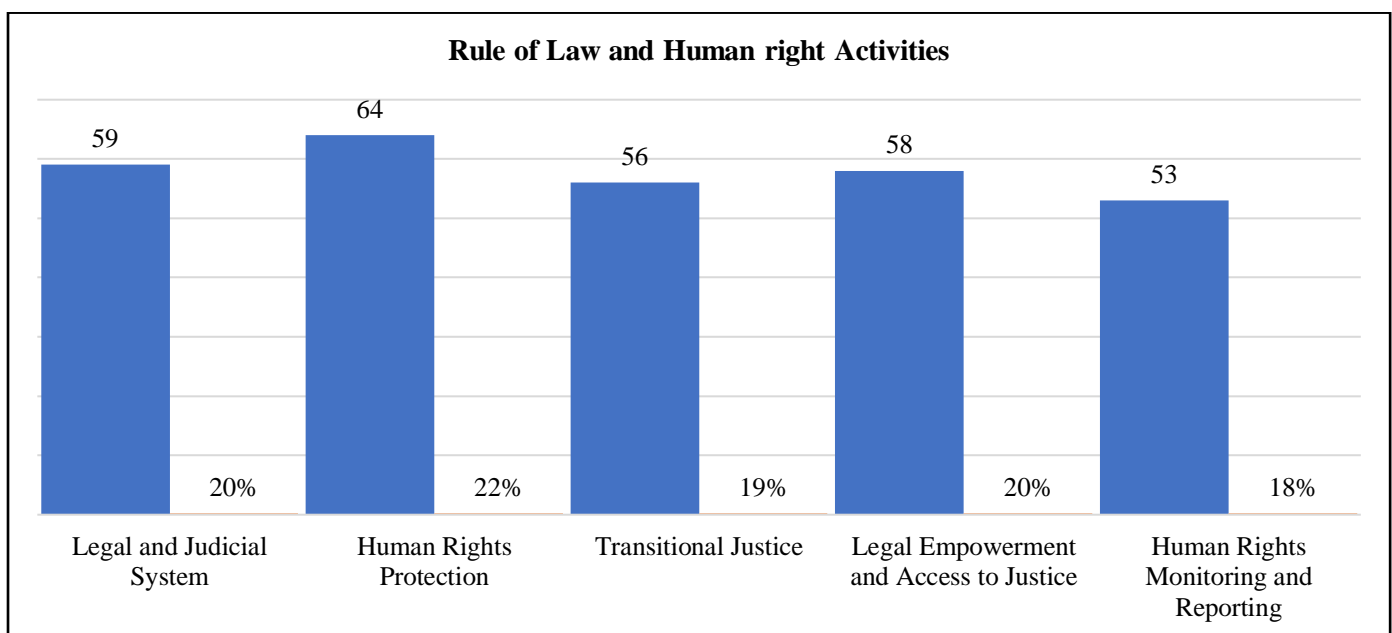

Figure 3
Rule of Law and Human Rights Activities

From the study findings, it is evident that the mission has played a critical role in promoting the rule of law as emphasized by the respondents. The perspectives and opinions of the respondents point to the fact that the rule of law is important in ensuring the effectiveness of Mission and thus it has been employed by the Mission to promote a just fair and accountable legal system capable of upholding and promoting human rights and ensure transparency of the judicial processes within the mission (Ansorg & Gordon, 2020). The findings indicate that there is a need for the mission to promote political processes and support the government and the rule of law.

The respondents listed the key activities which they consider important in promoting the rule of law with the majority being on the opinion that human rights protection, proper and working legal and judicial systems, and transitional justice were key in promoting the rule of law in the mission and thus have played a crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of the mission in ensuring sustainable peace and stability.

On the other hand, protecting human rights is essential in determining the relations within a community and between people and the government. Human rights promotion mechanisms aim to establish the truth and use reconciliation strategies to reduce conflict tension, build a suitable negotiation environment, and foster trust. Human rights is a framework that provides measures for understanding grievances, measuring crimes against humans, and promoting justice and reconciliation.

The mission has played a significant role in setting the pace for re-establishing the rule of law. It was an active participant in the baseline survey that helped GoSS identify the needs and situation in South Sudan (Baker et al., 2023). The mission assessed the structure and coping capacity of individuals and institutions that promote national justice. The studies identified judicial system gaps and opportunities to increase effectiveness and operations. These measures provided the starting areas for the development of inclusive and practical structures toward the rule of law.

The rule of law approach included all levels of government. Within the South Sudan structure, this included administrative officers, political parties, and national police within the national, state and local government. The civilians included the local community, marginalized groups, and internally displaced populations' representatives. The mission provided experts and advisors from UNDP, IOT, and UNDP. International and regional partners included the AU monitoring squad and the Norwegian Refugee Council (Baker et al., 2023).

This inclusivity ensured that the scope of resolutions was adequate and considered the roles of various administration bodies. However, the mission struggled to provide sufficient positions for women in the council, having the highest score at 35% (Baker et al., 2023). It involved women as legal advisors and consultants in human rights issues. Despite this issue, the mission's efforts and inclusive nature improved the performance and efficiency of the resolution programs. One key informant from Payam administrators observed that;

> *Inclusivity is quite a priority for the success of the mission as it helps to address many underlying grievances, foster a sense of ownership and legitimacy and help build trust in the peace process.*

The mission's involvement in the Rule of Law promoted the success of the justice chain in South Sudan. The mission was present when matters of peace and stability were sensitive in South Sudan. There needed to be more transparency in public revenues, poor trust in the justice system, a high probability of new conflict cycles, and an unstable political structure of leaders with links to local armed groups (Merry, 2006). The mission participated in setting up mobile courts and training for justice actors at the community level.

These structures allowed the actors to establish the truth and reflect on the damages associated with violence and crimes. The availability of experts from the local, national, regional, and international actors played a significant role in structuring the systems effectively to suit people's needs and promote justice sustainably. The mission also established reform projects that helped victims and affected populations of conflict-related crimes. For instance, victims of CRSV in need of psychological, emotional, and medical support had access to professional assistance, shared their experiences, and gained coping skills.

The courts could only handle low-ranking cases in significant areas to improve the established judicial structures. In most cases, the court cannot involve generals and commanders for assessment and prosecution. Impunity was a matter of concern, but participants in these courts needed to be highly-ranked stakeholders. Moreover, the mission needed help finding common grounds for interlinking customary and statutory justice systems (Baker et al., 2023).

The customary law ruled at the local level and needed a clearer understanding of the statutory law, especially concerning the rights of women and children. As an intervening measure, the mission organized workshops for traditional leaders on human rights, holding discussions on merging constitutions and resolving complicated cases. The mission also organized a conference for livestock farmers to address the violence of cattle rustling in different states. Such forums helped to establish the truth and counter misconceptions about people and law.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The mission has been involved in South Sudan both during conflict and post-conflict which presents an opportunity period for rebuilding and implementing peace-building initiatives. The mission has significantly provided operational and human technical support through the reconstruction period. As a multi-sectoral body, the mission has used its expertise and resources to improve South Sudan's local and national coping mechanisms. Despite funding, information distribution, and cultural diversity challenges, the mission has dramatically improved people's views on peace and unity. The ongoing efforts have strengthened the nation's capacity to restore the country's governance stability and promote justice.

5.2 Recommendations

The mission's outcome had limitations related to funding, coordinating involved organizations, and creating sustainable projects. The mission has the opportunity to accumulate resources to improve the results of these programs. It also has the chance to acknowledge third-party voluntary donors with temporal projects and interests in South Sudan and merge projects to enhance the effect and outcome of the initiatives. Moreover, reconstructing programs should go beyond reestablishing governance.

It should focus on promoting mental, physical, and livelihood well-being. Psychological well-being and vocational training programs empower the community to become dependent on external humanitarian aid. The mission should also develop follow-up interventions to promote DDR effects to ex-combatants. The initiatives will enhance the program's sustainability, promoting economic sustainability and encouraging more to enroll. These measures will improve the resilience of the initiatives. By promoting conflict resolution mechanisms at the grassroots level, enhancing the protection of civilians, bolstering inclusive political dialogue and enhancing national reconciliation, UNMISS will be able to secure a remarkable milestone in achieving sustainable peace in South Sudan

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