

20 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTING UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOUTH SUDAN

RESEARCH BRIEF



INTRODUCTION

By adopting the resolution on Women, Peace and Security, South Sudan recognized the political significance of women and gender in sustaining peace and security. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) was adopted in an effort to protect women's rights during armed conflicts, prevent impunity for gender-based crimes,

mainstream gender aspects in peacekeeping operations and increase women's participation in the various peace building processes before, during and after armed conflicts. In response, the South Sudan National Action Plan (SSNAP) 2015-2020 on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions was developed by the Government of

South Sudan to provide a framework for guiding decisions on women's participation in leadership, peace building and reconstruction, security sector reform, and efforts to prevent and protect women and girls against any form of violence.

Under the guidance of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW), government institutions, commissions and other stakeholders, including development partners, UN Agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations, academia, civil society, faith-based organisations and the private sectors, have implemented the SSNAP. A qualitative and quantitative study¹ carried out in Juba, South Sudan commissioned by the Women International Peace Centre sought an in-depth understanding of the progress made, successes, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations for implementation moving forward. This included interviews, focus group discussions and an on-line survey with diverse individuals including gender focal points from government ministries and people living with disabilities.

KEY FINDINGS

There have been some strides made at the country level to promote women, peace and security. Generally, there was political will for the domestication of UNSCR 1325 in South Sudan. The SSNAP framework has been accepted as a significant tool for the promotion of the women, peace and security agenda and has facilitated the enactment of various national gender responsive policies and laws.

1. Research conducted by Q&A Management Consultancy Firm, Juba under the leadership of Dr. Angelina Mattijo-Bazugba, Esther Ikere, Hakim Jumason and Catherine Baga

Progress in Promoting Women's Participation and Protection from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Women participated in peace negotiation processes as mediators and delegates out of which seven of them were signatories to the Revitalized-Agreement on the Resolutions of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) signed in September 2018. Similarly, women's roles have continued to be recognized in the public arena with some promoted to executive decision-making positions. The R-ARCSS contains key gender provisions, which are being used by at least 48% of respondents interviewed, to address issues of participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery.

The 25% quota for women was enshrined in the legal framework - Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS 2011) and other key policies that include Gender Policy (2013); Elections Act (2012); Education (Act 2012); Child Act (2008); Local Government Act (2009) and Labour Act (2017). With the signing of the R-ARCSS, which provides for 35% quota for women's representation in decision-making structures, the TCSS has been amended to include 35% quotas. As a supreme law of the land, the R-ARCSS calls for the review and development of gender responsive laws in South Sudan that observe the implementation of 35% quota.

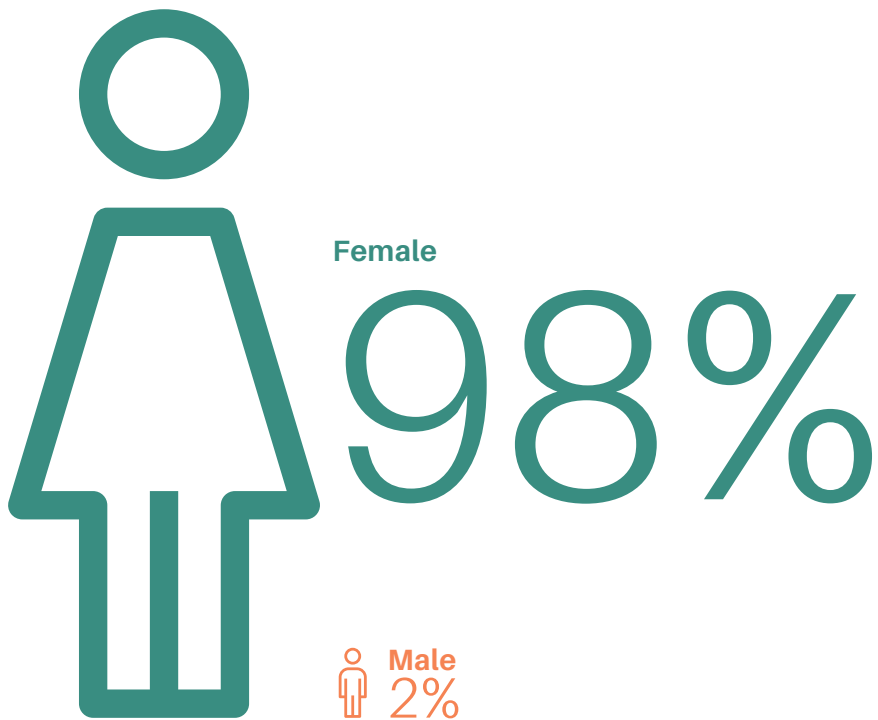
To respond to the prevalent issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), a Marshal Court was established at the Army headquarters to investigate and act upon the reported cases. The Special Protection Unit at the police stations and the one-stop- centres at the hospitals have been established to provide prevention, protection, psychosocial services and facilitate access to legal support to survivors of SGBV. The Standard Operating Procedures underlining the different roles and responsibility of each sector are in place.

The SSNAP framework has increased public awareness of the need to protect women's rights, prevent conflict and gender-based violence (GBV), increase women's representation and participation in leadership and promote their economic empowerment. Eighty-one percent of the respondents are aware of the existence of various policies developed to protect women and girls' rights and prevent GBV and 48% of them are using such policies including the SSNAP on UNSCR 1325 and the R-ARCSS to inform their organizations' activities to address issues of sexual offences, including rape, early marriage, trafficking and slavery of women among others.

The SSNAP is a very valuable policy framework, which provides guidance on integrating Women, Peace and Security issues in the post conflict and reconstruction era of South Sudan. The framework requires wider dissemination and coordination to ensure that national and international actors are able to share information on the implementation as well as monitor and evaluate the outcomes of their activities.

Gaps

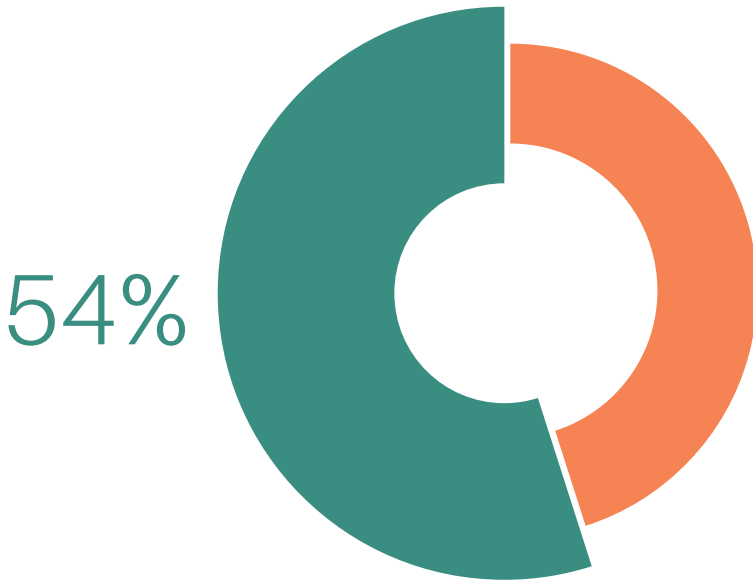
Despite the progress, gaps exist between policy and practice, which continues to undermine the inclusion of women and the implementation of the 35 percent gender quotas provided in the R-ARCSS. This is mainly due to persistent gender norms in institutions of political recruitment most of which prefer men to women leaders, a culture of self-centredness, harmful cultural practices, violence against women and limited allocation of resources to women, peace and security programmes. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by GBV with 98% of incidents affecting female survivors and 2% of the reported incidents involved male survivors. One in five of reported GBV survivors were children below the age of 18 years, while 80% of survivors were adults (South Sudan GBVIMS 2019)².



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2. South Sudan Gender Based Violence Information Management System 2019

For this study, 54% of respondents indicated that women and girls continue to face insecurity, while negative cultural and customary practices continue to subjugate women and girls' rights and positions. Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents indicated that the major problems are early/forced marriages/child marriages, high dowry/bride price, and poverty, which contribute to increased sexual exploitation and abuse experience by 68%. School attendance denial and drop out among girls in favour of marriage accounts for 12%.



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Despite this, hurdles continue to constrain the effective implementation of the SSNAP. Some of these include limited information dissemination and sharing among the wider communities; weak sectoral coordination mechanisms; absence of platforms and forums by which stakeholders can regularly share information and lessons; the absence of a common data base for SGBV survivors; lack of or poor allocation of resources; and limited capacity of gender focal points to undertake activities on participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery in the WPS agenda (WIPC Report 2020)³.

In terms of participation, it has been noted that political parties continue to underplay the inclusion of women in decision-making position. Moreover, there are no oversight mechanisms or affirmative action bill to hold norm breakers or parties accountable.

96% of the respondents stated that there is still inadequate attention paid to the specific needs of women and girls living with disabilities during and after the conflict. Many are affected by SGBV including rape, discrimination and neglect from community members, high illiteracy level and economic hardship. There is also limited access to security or protection services, humanitarian assistance, insufficient access to information and communication facilities and services including sign language interpretation, hearing and speech aids.

Over 72% underlined the presence of slackness in the investigation, reporting and taking punitive measures against perpetrators of violence.

Emerging security threats are undermining the successful implementation of women, peace and security agenda and the R-ARCSS. These include on-going war and intertribal conflict in some states, conflict among pastoralists and between pastoralists and farmers, armed robbery, unknown gunmen including 'Toronto boys', food insecurity and limited financial assistance to support women and girls' empowerment which often risks their involvement in commercial sex and abuse due to poverty. Aspects of reintegration and livelihood should be introduced and mainstreamed across existing sectors to allow the ex-combatants and survivors to cope and move on with their lives.

There are no specific funds set aside by the Government to support women's organizations and neither is there a special funding mechanism established by development partners to support women political aspirants and existing leaders. Organisations that embarked on peace building and conflict transformation face funding constraints and have capacity gaps in terms of skills related to the security issues associated with gender-based violence.

3. Women's International Peace Centre (2020). Report of Women, Peace and Security Training for Gender Focal Persons in line Ministries and Commissions. Held at Royal Palace Hotel, Juba, South Sudan. From August 10th-15th 2020 and September 21st-25th 2020.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review and revitalise the South Sudan National Action Plan (SSNAP) 2015-2020 on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions adapted to the current context and disseminate it widely across the country.
2. Conduct massive awareness campaign on GBV consequences and advocate for strong enforcement of laws preventing violence and protecting women and girls. This should go hand-in-hand with the abolishment of harmful customary practices and codification of useful customary laws and hence the need to harmonize customary and statutory laws as they become critical through the Constitution which recognizes the presence of a dual system.
3. Re-train the organized forces, professionalize the armed forces and enforce the Military Code of Conduct to minimize the incidences of crimes against women and girls as well as violence against men as proposed by Focal Persons from the Ministries of Health, Interior and Defence.
4. Strengthen service provision for GBV survivors to include clinical management of rape, psychosocial support, legal and protection services accessible within primary health care units at the lowest levels.
5. Restructure sectoral coordination mechanisms, create a unified forum for information, and experience sharing among stakeholders on the implementation of women, peace and security programmes.
6. Actively share information and involve Ministries of Gender, Education, Information, Judiciary, and Chiefs, women organizations, international NGOs, UN agencies and human rights organizations in coordinated efforts to minimise the harmful cultural practices.
7. Political parties should enact national and internal party strategies to ensure the implementation of the 35% affirmative action for women's representation at all levels. Women's rights organisation and CSOs to intensify advocacy and lobby to ensure that political parties adhere to 35% gender quotas in the appointments.
8. Engage CSOs and women organizations in coordination of efforts to improve timely collection of data, analysis and reporting on women, peace and security activities. Networking and information sharing can be enhanced through use of social media platforms.
9. Train and build the capacity of more women's groups and organisations on transformational leadership, peace building and negotiation to ensure their effective participation in policy reviews, analyses and dissemination.
10. Government should allocate funds to women's organizations and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of SSNAP by engaging diverse actors such as national and international organizations in the dissemination of progress reports.



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