



Promoting the Peace

Ensuring conflict-sensitive development in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State

About the organisations

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a Non-Governmental Organisation mandated to provide direct assistance to refugees, internally displaced people and host communities in conflict-affected areas around the world. DRC has been active in South Sudan since 2005 starting with operations in Central Equatoria State and more recently in Northern Bahr El Ghazal. DRC's work in South Sudan focuses on providing durable solutions for communities affected by conflict and includes significant portfolios in the areas of livelihoods, small-scale infrastructure development and protection.

Danish Demining Group (DDG) is a unit within DRC that focuses on improving human security through Humanitarian Mine Action and Armed Violence Reduction programming. DDG has been operating in South Sudan since 2006, first with operations in Greater Equatoria and more recently expanding into Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap states. In response to the complex and inter-linked nature of development and violence reduction, DDG increasingly seeks to work with DRC and other partners, adding value to existing work by making projects more sensitive to conflict.

Acknowledgements

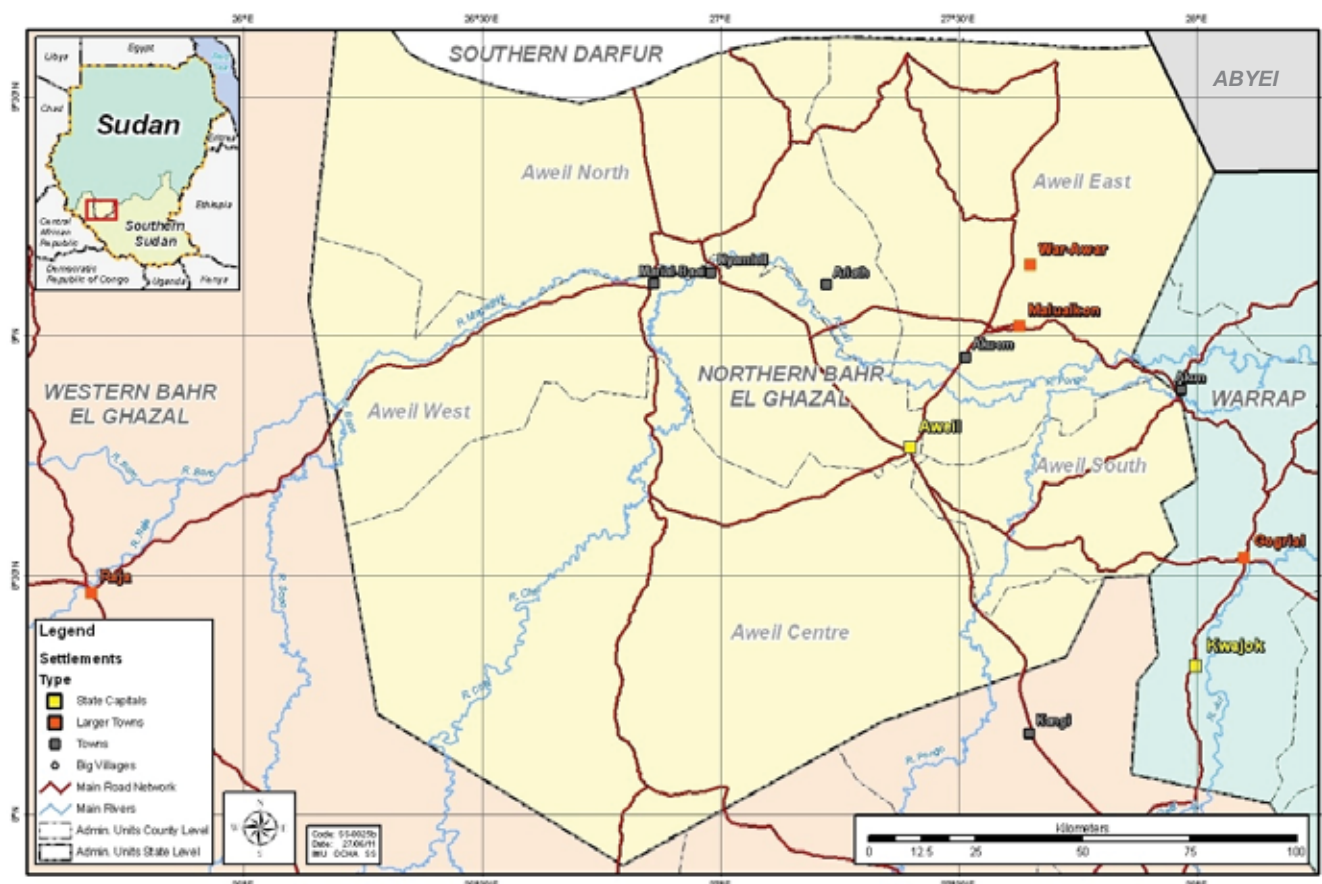
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DDG would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of Danida in producing this report. The report does not however indicate any formal position or opinion on the part of Danida.

Access to Data

DDG will always seek to share field data when requested. For further information on aspects of this research, including access to the data collection tools and full household survey dataset (in SPSS databases or summary Excel spreadsheets), please contact avrddgsudan@drc.dk

Map of Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan



Map reproduced courtesy of OCHA South Sudan

Acronyms

AVR	Armed Violence Reduction
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDG	Danish Demining Group
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organisation Migration
NBGS	Northern Bahr El Ghazal State
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
RoS	Republic of Sudan
RoSS	Republic of South Sudan
SALW	Small Arms & Light Weapons
SSRRC	South Sudan Relief & Rehabilitation Commission
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement

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Chapter 1 Overview

This paper reports research commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)'s human security unit, Danish Demining Group (DDG) in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State (NBGS), in the Republic of South Sudan through the middle of 2011. The paper is designed to highlight potential sources of conflict in the state, especially those associated with rapid socio-economic change. It is intended to help development actors to design and implement their programmes in conflict-sensitive ways. This 'conflict-proofing' of development work is a key element of DDG's Armed Violence Reduction (AVR) approach with DRC and other partners. This research shows how, although the level of armed violence in the state is currently low compared with other parts of the country, there is a considerable risk that rapid social and economic change, if not addressed in the right way, could lead to a deterioration of the situation in the future. State authorities, local leaders and aid agencies have done well to manage these pressures in the last few years. The positive message of this paper is that recognising the potential drivers of future conflict - and acting promptly to mitigate them - can help maintain a sustained peace and ensure the state's positive trajectory is maintained.

The formal end to decades of war in southern Sudan, agreed in 2005, has reduced armed violence in a very obvious way. But the peace which it has created is fragile. South Sudan is now officially independent of the Republic of Sudan (RoS) but many points of contention with it remain. Renewed full-scale war is not inconceivable but now seems far less likely. Short of that, there may well be a long continuation of limited conflict over disputed borders, and of proxy war, in which the two states covertly assist rebel groups in each others' territory. NBGS, situated next to the border, is vulnerable to both of these.

Although the AVR approach is directly concerned with the causes and consequences of conflict among widespread social conditions, rather than with high politics or military strategy, the latter are both contextually relevant. Such exogenous threats can connect with grassroots conflict drivers. In particular there is a risk that rapid erosion of traditional social norms, alongside high unemployment and very low living standards, will produce many young men who could be recruited by armed groups, political or criminal.

In NBGS the war brought major famines in 1988 and 1998. The peace agreement found the population in a devastated landscape and at the edge of survival. People's wellbeing has increased significantly, but by many measures living standards are still appallingly low (see below). This is despite a dramatic increase in trade and investment, kick-started by oil revenues and aid funds. The questions of whether this will lead to sustained economic growth, whether such growth will benefit the poor, and how far it will destabilise existing social arrangements, are critical to the issue of armed violence in such a fragile situation.

The destabilising effects of economic change are increased by the extraordinary influx of returnees that NBGS has seen since 2005, and may continue to see. These are people who had migrated to northern Sudan and other countries during the war years, and their children who had been born in exile. The returnees bring with them sets of skills, wants, and attitudes different from those of the population that remained in the area during the war. In many ways they are suited to a process of modernisation. But they also have the potential to accentuate the strains, injustices, and other ill-effects that modernisation can bring. In the short term, the arrival of the returnees places additional pressure on the occupation of land, and on the extremely thin infrastructure of social welfare, particularly health facilities and clean water points.

Tensions over access to these scarce resources have so far been well handled on the whole, due largely to ethnic homogeneity and shared local views of solidarity and justice. Yet the values, practices and relationships upon which this success rests may be eroded by a process of development if it rests too heavily on the pursuit of profits for larger investors. Absolute levels of human suffering and mortality in the population have so far remained alarmingly high, and it may be that seeds of future conflict are being sown.

The paper begins with important background information on the generally low level of welfare and services in NBGS, and the immediate impact of returnees. It goes on to report the specific findings of the research on conflict drivers in the state. Then, taking a broader social science view, it describes the potential for the seeds of conflict to grow. It ends with recommendations to the government and aid agencies designed to reduce the threat of future conflict.

Box 1 **Research process**

This paper is mainly based on a major exercise by DDG in consulting the views of representatives of the population it seeks to assist in NBGS. Conducted in March and April 2011, it involved focus group discussions and structured survey interviewing at household level. Questionnaire and focus group interviews were conducted in three of the five counties of NBGS: Aweil Centre, Aweil East and Aweil South. The counties were selected due to the presence of operations of Danish Refugee Council and other Danida-funded partners, including Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children.

Focus group discussions took place at two locations in each county (in the payams of Aroyo and Nyaletth in Aweil Centre; Baac and Mangartong in Aweil East; and Tialiet and Panthou in Aweil South). The payams including the county HQ were pre-selected, with the second payam selected at random, in order to ensure contrast between more and less urbanised/developed locations. In each place, separate focus groups were held with women, elders/leaders, traders and youth.

The household-level survey sampled 1,197 households, divided equally between the three counties. In each county, the same two payams as selected above were included in the sampling frame using the same justification; a third payam was then added at random from those not yet sampled. The survey strategy aimed to sample an equal number of females and males during the household survey but in the event, nearly two thirds of respondents were female. When survey results are quoted in this paper, it should be borne in mind that they primarily reflect the three counties where the survey took place, however due to the similarity of results garnered in each of the three counties and for ease of writing, generalised results may be described as representative of the situation in NBGS as a whole. These generalised results have been weighted to reflect the different populations of the counties, as measured in the Sudan Population and Housing census of 2008.

A preliminary analysis report of the focus group discussions held was drafted at time of collection. This initial report and the data it was based on were then analysed in conjunction with the household survey data and augmented with key informant interviews carried out between 16th May and 15th June 2011 and drafted into this report.

Chapter 2. Challenges for duty bearers: low, ill-served and ill-monitored levels of welfare

In order to understand the nature of conflict risks in NBGS it is important to realise how difficult most people find it to meet their basic needs. 96 per cent of the population surveyed by DDG considered their family income to be either 'very poor' (60 per cent) or 'quite poor' (36 per cent). 65 per cent said they had a household income of less than five Sudanese Pounds (about US\$1.60 at the market exchange rate) per day. This income figure partly reflects the prevalence of subsistence over a cash economy in rural life. But, given the reported mean household size of 7.7 (3.3 adults and 4.5 children), it strongly suggests a serious level of deprivation.

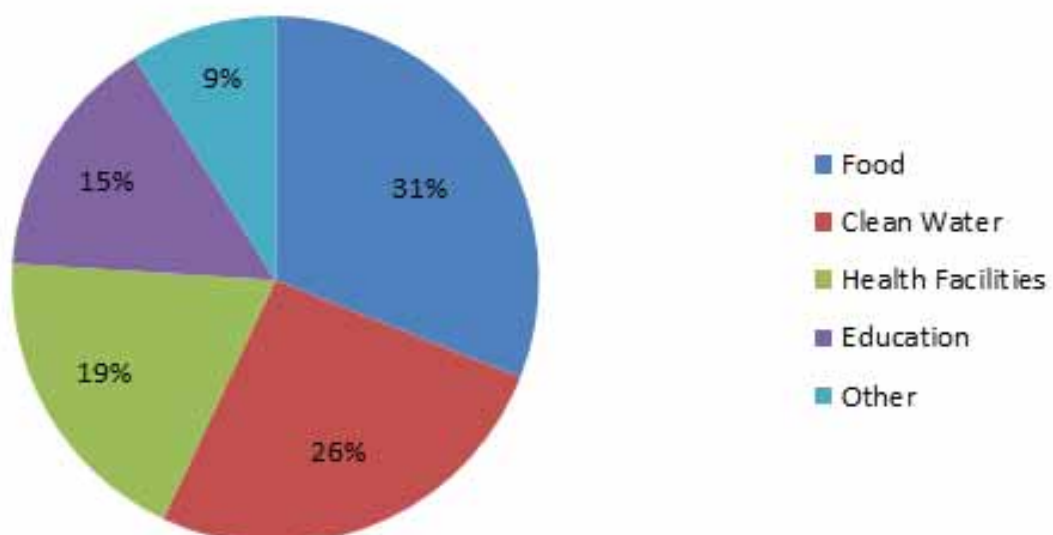
The seriousness of this is shown by people's prioritisation of food and water as their most pressing problems. In 33 per cent of households, there is only one meal each day. The shortage of places where people can get safe water is such that 82 per cent cannot easily access it. After food and water, the most commonly-prioritised wants in the survey were health and schooling (see Figure 1).

NBGS is one of the most deprived areas in South Sudan. In the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey (still a definitive reference document in 2011) NBGS ranked:

- 3rd highest under-5 mortality rate among all the states (or nearly one child in six)
- 4th highest maternal mortality rate (more than one woman dying from every fifty pregnancies)
- 2nd highest rate of severe stunting in children (at 22 per cent)
- 2nd lowest rate of full immunisation at age one year (5.9 per cent)
- 2nd lowest ratio of primary school attendance (at 5.7 per cent of the age-group)
- lowest ratio of primary school attendance for females (less than 4 per cent)

Annual Needs and Livelihoods Assessments carried out by the World Food Programme have consistently shown NBGS as one of the areas of greatest food insecurity. This partly (but only partly) explains why in November 2010 the rate of Global Acute Malnutrition was assessed as 'critical' (15-20 per cent) in the two southerly counties of NGBS, and 'very critical' (more than 20%) in the three northerly counties.

Figure 1 - What is the most serious issue in this village?



¹ <http://southern Sudan medical journal.com/assets/files/misc/SHHS.pdf>

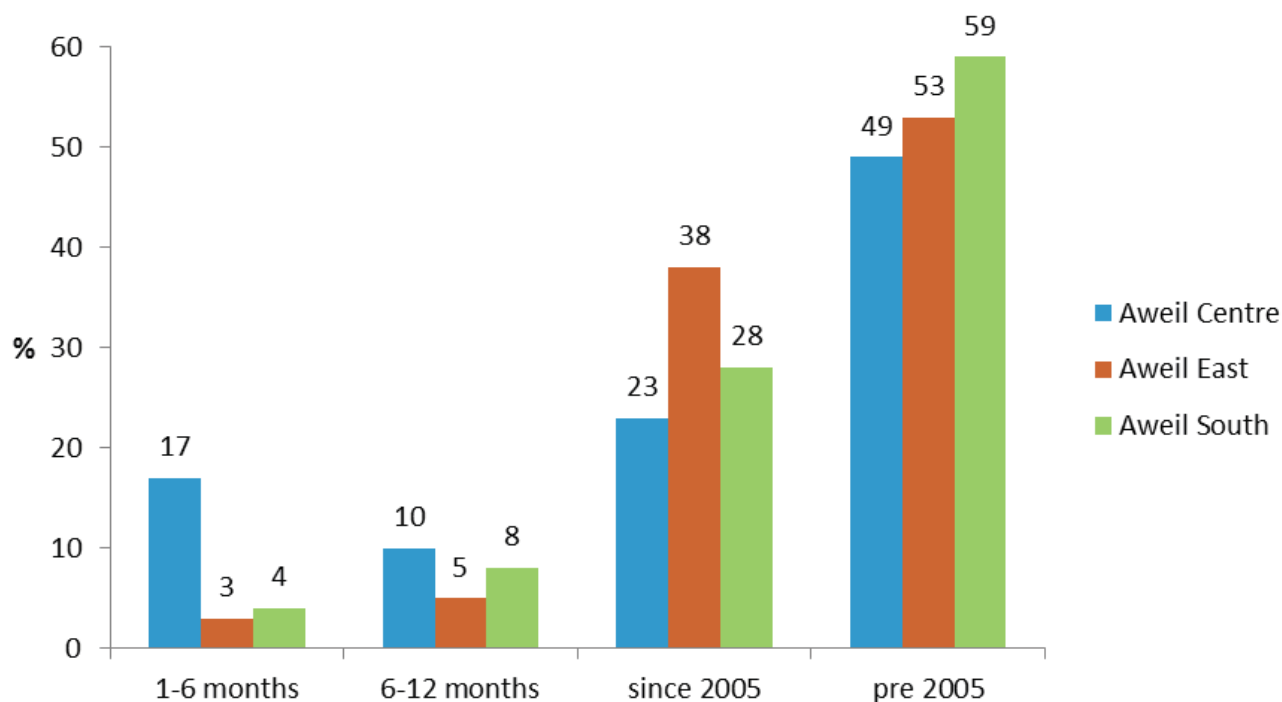
² WFP, GOSS et al (2011) 'Annual Needs and Livelihoods Assessment 2010/2011'

These indicators of human suffering represent a massive challenge to both government and the international aid system. A near-comprehensive survey of NBGS led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2009 found that 30 per cent of villages had improved sources of drinking water; only 27 per cent had a functioning school; and only 7 per cent had a healthcare centre facility with properly trained staff. Clearly, significant improvements have been made since then; but sparse coverage is indicative of a social welfare net that, even where it is present, struggles to meet demand. Where supply is exceeded by that demand, there will be a danger of accusations of impartiality, unless transparent and objective decision-making processes can be demonstrated. These challenges make the planning and monitoring of service delivery extremely important, as, without the proper data, it is difficult not only to analyse gaps in coverage, but also to demonstrate the objectivity of provision.

2.1 The immediate impact of returnees

Such planning and monitoring is particularly important because of the additional stress put on welfare infrastructure and services by the influxes of returnees. The 2009 IOM survey found – startlingly – that returnees made up more than half of the population of NBGS (about 400,000 out of 791,000 people). This was even before a surge in late 2010 and early 2011, when many more people came back to vote in the January 2011 referendum on self-determination for South Sudan, and then to be part of the new nation when it separated from northern Sudan in July. IOM and the UN estimated that 53,000 individuals returned to NBGS between October 2010 and March 2011. In early June 2011, the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) stated that this figure had risen to 126,000.

Fig. 2 - how long have you lived in this place?



Such figures must, of course, be treated with caution. But they are broadly compatible with the finding of the DDG survey that 46 per cent of households had moved to their present location since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

Yet only 26 per cent of those interviewed claimed to have previously lived outside Bahr el Ghazal. There is scope for confusion in the label 'returnee', which may be seen by some as a pejorative term. Although, in the Sudan context, it is often taken to mean a Southerner who has lived in northern Sudan or another country, this definition is merely suggested in the IOM report, not stated explicitly, and the IOM figure may have included people displaced and relocated more locally. It is also unclear how many people would have come and gone more than once, and how these would have been counted.

It must also be noted that the statistics of needy populations has long been a subject of contestation – and consequently of ambiguity – in NBGS, as in other parts of Sudan. The international aid community generally feels that the figures of those in need provided by local authorities are inflated, and the authorities blame the aid agencies for bringing too little assistance. Amid these two positions, it is easy to find poor households or communities who argue convincingly that they have been excluded from relief registrations or service coverage, but hard to establish clearly whether this is because they are being diverted elsewhere, or whether because there was not enough support overall. A case can probably be made for both. Regardless, a proportion of 26% for cross-border migrants is highly significant and suggestive of the human and social turmoil involved in post-conflict recovery.

When the CPA was put in place, in 2005, the IOM and other international agencies foresaw that many would wish to return to their ancestral home areas in South Sudan. It sought to organise the process through programmes of 'assisted return'. By 2008, however, the donors of the main IOM programme were pulling out. It had become apparent that greater numbers of people were returning in other ways: ways which were labelled as 'spontaneous' even though they often involved considerable planning and organisation by families and community groups themselves. The official assisted return packages involve a fairly lengthy registration process, medical screening, and pre-scheduled transportation arrangements, as is necessary when planning a centralised movement plan for a large number of people. Those who joined the assisted returns received the added incentive of receiving aid packages to help them start their new lives, but in many cases people seem to have preferred the greater flexibility of planning their own return rather than being locked into internationally-organised schemes.

In any case, commentators argue that the assisted return process took an overly individualistic approach⁵. More important is help at the final destination, for reintegration in ways which would also directly benefit the host communities and boost social cohesion. Reintegration involves more than simply relieving the strain on scarce resources through the provision of physical goods or additional services, although this certainly plays a part. Reintegration also involves recognition of cultural, psychological and legal difficulties – both for returnees and for those who stayed behind during the war. People who have lived for many years in an environment very different from that of NBGS – particularly in Khartoum and other towns of northern Sudan – often find it hard to adjust to their new circumstances. They may need to learn or re-learn the skills of a more rural livelihood; to accept different social disciplines; to come to terms with the gap between the hopes and realities of their new nation; and perhaps even learn new languages. These challenges, if not addressed fully and holistically, may fester and slow the social development of NBGS for years to come, or worse still, raise the spectre of yet more dispute and conflict.

⁵See especially: Pantuliano et al (2007 and 2008) 'The long road home'. London: Overseas Development Institute; Duffield (2008) 'Evaluation of UNHCR's returnee reintegration programme in Southern Sudan'.

<http://www.pogar.org/publications/other/unhcr/sudan/evaluationprog-08e.pdf>; Brethfield (2010) 'Unrealistic expectations: Current challenges to reintegration in southern Sudan'.

Chapter 3. Conflict drivers and their effects

DDG's household survey, focus groups and other research highlight a catalogue of factors which contribute to conflict. The following table summarises these conflict drivers, which are then elaborated on in the following sections. It is important to remember that conflict drivers are not necessarily the triggers for violent outbreaks. However when several conflict drivers combine, a single dispute or isolated incident of conflict can often escalate in terms both of its breadth, seriousness and complexity. This complexity can make solutions difficult to find and can lead to chronic repetitive outbreaks of conflict. Each round of conflict can lead to an escalation in the level of violence as more people become involved on both sides and conflicts between individuals or households mutate into violence between larger groups.

Table 1 - Summary of conflict issues, drivers and responses⁶

Key focus points of conflict	Possible causes of conflict cited (conflict drivers)	Potential response (RoSS / UN / INGOs)
Access to clean water sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New returnees and IDPs put more pressure on water-points • Rate of pump breakdown exceeds maintenance capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More water-points (carefully situated using participatory methods to avoid bias) • Wider representation in water management committees • More support for maintenance of water-points
Land for dwelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New returnee households reclaim land they vacated • returnees or evicted people try to live on the land of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster survey and allocation of suitable land to displaced households • Provision of infrastructure and services in new dwelling areas to encourage uptake (but not to the detriment of existing areas) • Incremental harmonisation of customary and legal land laws • Services for counselling, negotiation and reconciliation
Land for crops and animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased animal numbers • Animal grazing areas and migration routes varied due to climatic factors or other pressures • Increased areas of cultivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater investment in water points on agreed migration routes • Clear and equitable allocation of land for grazing • Services for counselling, negotiation and reconciliation • Develop alternative economic possibilities and provide appropriate training
Allocation of relief and development assistance and services (where allocation is perceived as unfair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting of aid to returnees/IDPs while excluding host communities • Faulty registration and distribution processes • Unclear justification for allocation of assistance or services • Unfair criteria for allocation of assistance or services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply greater quantities of assistance (or advocate for this) so that targeting on grounds of scarcity is unnecessary • Invest more in community discussions and information-spreading about assistance, including criteria for allocation • Improved co-operation with SSRRC and other local partners to understand and improve allocation
Stolen cattle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to raise bride price • Other economic pressures • Feuding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for counselling, negotiation and reconciliation; for example, Conflict Management Education • Awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns to alter payment of bride-price

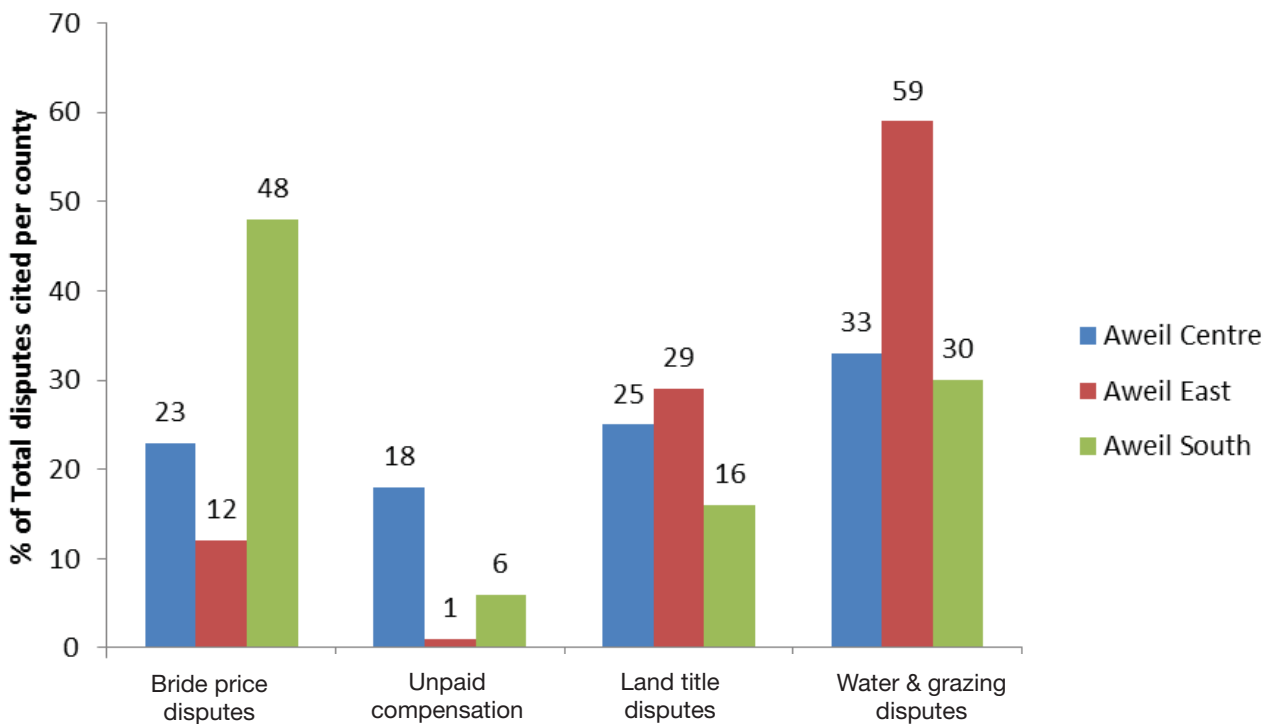
⁶ The findings in this table were drawn primarily from the focus group discussion of the research and supported by data from the household survey

Key focus points of conflict	Possible causes of conflict cited (conflict drivers)	Potential response (RoSS / UN / INGOs)
Control of girls and women (gender-based violence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence of patriarchal norms • Clash of traditional and modern norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and sensitisation on gender equality and rights • Services for counselling, negotiation and reconciliation
Government jobs and patronage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of unemployment • Culture of clientelism in government and society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and capacity-building with government • Encourage move towards meritocratic and technocratic government • Other long-term development work (e.g. livelihoods etc.)
Alcohol abuse	High levels of unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and health interventions

3.1 Conflict over clean water

According to the research one of the most common kinds of conflict – experienced particularly by women and children – is over access to water points: particularly sources of safe water such as the capped wells with hand pumps commonly provided by aid agencies. Eighteen out of 24 focus groups identified this as a serious problem. Such facilities usually have to serve a wide area (more than a third of people in the survey said they had to walk more than 30 minutes) and there are often very long queues. People with an emergency at home may try to get to the front, and this is likely to be resisted by others. In many places fights occur on a daily basis, with men becoming involved beside the women and children. Weapons are rarely used beyond sticks and stones, but serious injuries can still be sustained. At a returnee centre visited by the researcher, a woman's thumb had reportedly been bitten off the previous week.

In the focus groups it was generally agreed that such disputes are becoming more frequent and serious, in part due to the increasing number of people trying to access a limited number of pumps. Returnees were not directly blamed for this increased pressure but it was implied in a number of places. Broken or badly maintained pumps also exacerbate the problem, and because community members are not trained or equipped to maintain the pumps a damaged pump may remain unusable for a substantial period of time. Although competition for water is most graphic between members of different households in the queues at the pump, it also has an inter-community dimension. When one community does not have a working water-point, its members may try to use one in a neighbouring place, and sometimes this access is denied. There is potential here for conflict to escalate into a broader inter-community feud. It is vital therefore that simple measures are taken to ensure waterpoints are situated sensitively and are packaged with measures to ensure they can be maintained effectively.

Fig. 3 - Issues causing disputes

3.2 Conflict over a place to live

Land issues were raised in 12 out of 24 focus groups. Elders and youths were the most likely to raise this as an area of dispute. A common scenario since 2005 has been that of returnees looking for places to resettle. Sometimes they claim land and buildings which they held previously, despite the fact that these had later been occupied by others.

Many of those who went north during the war came back to find their houses inhabited by other people. When they asked them to leave it often caused problems. Land is not easy to get and if a person is asked to leave they may not have anywhere to go.⁷

The evicted are then in a similar plight to returnees who cannot reclaim property. But in most cases it was agreed that cases could usually be discussed in the community, and those who had settled on land that wasn't theirs would move on. This does however raise the question of where they have to move on to.

Land is also a big problem regarding returnees in groups. While the policy of the government, supported by many aid agencies, has been to encourage returnees to go to the villages where they have family links, this is not always what happens. The more recent returnees in particular have proved reluctant to leave the reception sites near towns or large villages where they first arrive in NBGS. There are several reasons for this reluctance. One is simply the difficulty of onward transportation. Returnees had often originally understood that the government or aid agencies would provide assistance for this relocation, but in many cases this has failed to materialise. And the longer they stay, the more they invest in their current situation, in terms of clearing land, building shelters, and starting cultivation. Such work seems to give them an element of moral right to the land. Moreover, many of the returnees are used to making a living in an urban or peri-urban environment, in Khartoum or other towns of northern Sudan or East Africa. They are understandably reluctant to abandon the kind of access which this affords to work and business opportunities, and facilities like schools, health services and mobile phone

⁷ Focus group discussion with youth in Pariak, Aweil East, 24 March 2011

coverage. A presence near the town can work well for an extended family which also has a homestead in a more remote village, making it easier for family members to move to and fro as circumstances demand. The government has shown a reluctance to support investment in permanent services in these locations, to encourage the groups to move on. It is possible however that this policy simply obliges the groups to rely on services of neighbouring communities. As shown above in the case of water points, this may in itself represent a potential conflict driver if demand outstrips supply; a situation made worse if this demand is then attributed explicitly to a returnee population. Local government must carefully consider this.

Box 2

Apada/Udhaba: Confrontation over land for a group of returnees

The tensest confrontation over land so far between government and returnees seems to be one which exists at the time of writing (June 2011), in the place known as Apada or Udhaba, a few kilometres south-west of Aweil town. Most of the people living there (now estimated at about 12,000 in number) have arrived since late 2010, having travelled to Aweil in chartered trains and bus convoys from Khartoum. A large and well-spaced settlement has grown up, in which people have constructed shelters from poles, straw matting and plastic sheeting. A few public pit-latrines and wells with hand pumps have been provided by international agencies.

The community leaders who came with the returnees organised a committee for the settlement. There are four area chiefs, corresponding with the counties of NBGS (Aweil West and Aweil Centre being put together). Initially the government tried to make the people go to their ancestral villages throughout the state. County Commissioners and MPs were called in to assure them of a good reception when they moved. But the returnees almost unanimously refused to move. They found it hard to consider abandoning an urban or peri-urban lifestyle. One feature of this was reluctance to move to a place without coverage for one's mobile phone. Another was the availability of schools in Aweil in which children who had begun their education in the medium of Arabic could continue learning through that language.

For a while the government threatened compulsory relocation but this threat was later withdrawn. This was doubtless largely to avoid civil conflict, particularly as uncomfortable parallels might have been drawn with the many previous forcible-relocations of displaced Southerners by the authorities in Khartoum. The presence of aid agencies may also have been influential. According to one government official, 'the humanitarian community had looked at us as if we were committing a crime'. So it was decided to allocate another piece of land, a little further westwards along the road to Aroyo, in Aweil Centre County. 10,000 plots were to be demarcated. This process was facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which provided surveyors and town planning consultants. Other aid agencies will be expected to provide boreholes, schools and health facilities in the new area.

As of late May, returnee representatives still appeared adamant that they would not move. They claimed a right to stay, on the basis that they had cleared the land – which was previously bush – and that the 2005 Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (Article 31) gives '[e]very citizen...the right to freedom of movement and the liberty to choose his or her residence...' Government officials hope, however, that when the application process is opened for land rights in the 10,000 plots, the squatters in Apada will change their minds. Applications will also be open to others currently living in Aweil (including a large group currently living around the airport in Maduany). When the Apada people see others acquiring a legally-recognised landholding, they may follow, despite the fact that it is slightly further away from the hub of economic activity and services in Aweil town – especially if aid agencies cooperate in helping provide better basic services in the new area compared with the old one.

The problem is, however, unlikely to be completely solved in this way. The allocation of a legal plot to someone from Apada does not necessarily mean that their previous non-legal home will be abandoned. It is hard to see how such a trade-off can practically be achieved, especially as there is a strong possibility that further returnees will arrive.

There are about 15 returnee reception sites in NBGS. In these places, the local government has usually negotiated with the owners of (or stakeholders in) relatively vacant land – whether a chief's community or a branch of government itself – for it to be made available. When returnees have not responded to threats or incentives to move on, they have sometimes (after many months in limbo) been given a title to the land they occupy. Alternatively they are offered a plot in a newly-surveyed area more or less nearby. Sometimes they have resisted this kind of relocation. And on occasion, to evict them the government has destroyed dwellings, and fights have ensued, most recently in Aroyo.

3.3 Conflict over land for animals and crops

While people in rural (and some peri-urban) areas usually cultivate a small patch of land around their dwellings, their main area of crops may be several kilometres away. Those who have many cattle are likely to use established ranges and routes of transhumance together with other members of their clan. Disputes can easily occur between members of different clans and communities when animals pass through cultivated areas, and when different groups try to access the same pastures and watering-points. Conflicts are particularly likely when animal populations increase (as seems to be happening following the end of the war), or new areas become cultivated, or unusual climatic conditions make pastoralists change their routes. These risk factors all appear to be applicable in the recent past and near future. Yet conflict was not often described in these terms in DDG's survey and focus group discussions. More widely mentioned were the trigger disputes over boundaries, including the boundaries of government administrative zones - particularly payams and counties. Such disputes partly reflect the complex situation in local politics, where competition between communities over resources is carried over into local politics, where different groups vie for dominance in their area to assert their side's claim to resources, often to the detriment of the other side. This issue of patronage is covered in greater detail later.

The question of seasonal grazing and watering rights is particularly vital in relation to the northern border of NBGS. The land around the border is fertile and attractive to herders not only

Box 3

DDG's approach to Armed Violence Reduction: addressing the root causes

DDG is best known for its work in Mine Action. However in the last few years, there has been increasing realisation that armed violence represents a major obstacle to developing countries achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In recognition of this DDG expanded its work into AVR.

In its AVR programming, DDG uses the OECD AVR Lens to analyse the agents, institutions and instruments of armed violence. Interventions seek to address both supply and demand drivers for Small Arms & Light Weapons (SALW). In countries like South Sudan, where SALW proliferation is endemic, addressing the underlying reasons for demand is particularly vital, as constraining supply is extremely difficult.

DDG works to ensure that DRC and other organisations fully understand the conflict drivers present in their operational environments and have appropriate mitigating strategies in place to address them. Sometimes this may involve detailed area-specific conflict analysis; it may also include assistance such as staff training or direct activities on issues such as conflict management education or community-police cooperation. Wherever possible, DDG seeks to put communities themselves at the centre and in control of interventions, to empower them to take ownership of their own safety.

from the Dinka of NBGS, but also the Rizeigat of South Darfur and the Misseriya of South Kordofan⁸. There is a long history of engagement over this resource involving mutual understandings, outbreaks of fighting when understandings break down, and inter-tribal peace meetings. The recent secession of South Sudan from RoS, making this border an international one, complicates the management of disputes, and raises the risk that territorial encroachment will escalate into major incidents between the two countries. While various efforts have been made to enable peaceful cross-border movement, grazing and trade, it is unclear whether past agreements will be robust enough to ensure this continues in the longer term. Significant work remains to be done at a government level to ensure such local level peace-building efforts are not simply reactionary 'fire fighting' without higher level government support.

Box 4

Case study: Anger at soap distribution in a hygiene promotion event

A useful illustration of how conflict sensitivity is important even in seemingly-peaceful situations is this example of a training event in NBGS. An NGO team travelled from Aweil to a large village in the countryside. The team was composed of women from the state who had been educated partly in Northern Sudan and Uganda; women who were themselves returnees. As planned in an earlier visit, they delivered a presentation on household hygiene to a group of returnee village women. It was viewed largely as a training session for these women to spread the messages to others. To encourage them, at the end of the session each of the trainees was given a long bar of soap.

The meeting was held in a public space of the village, under a large tree. Many people came to listen and participate in the discussion; men as well as women. The event combined serious attention and good humour until the soap distribution. The names of the trainees – about 50 of them – were read out, and each came to collect her bar. At the end there was furious shouting from several other women who had not been called. As recriminations and quarrels went on, the NGO team – which was behind schedule for the return home for reasons of security and curfew – left the scene.

Perhaps the excluded women had not been present at the previous meeting. Perhaps they were not known to the village health worker who compiled the list of trainees, or there was favouritism, or criteria for inclusion which people did not understand. Perhaps the excluded were very new arrivals in the village. There are many possible causes of scenes like this. There are also many available ideas for improving things: ideas which may or may not be effective (or cost-effective) in practice. For instance:

- Make a bigger effort at the start to consult widely and publicise the project clearly in the village, and to make a comprehensive register (Costly in terms of extra personnel time needed).
- Do not rely on a registration system for distribution of the soap, but bring plenty of soap and get the people at the meeting to queue up for it (More risk that the distribution would degenerate).
- Hold the meeting with registered trainees only in an enclosed space (Less immediate interaction with the community; possible creation of a sense of secrecy and of ill-feeling arising from that).
- Do not link hygiene training with the distribution of soap (Possible reduction of interest and goodwill from the local people; weaker tangible results for the NGO to report).

It can be argued that such situations are unlikely to result in actual conflict; that these recommendations would be an unnecessary and disproportionate response. Conflict Sensitivity is not however a single activity bolted onto a project. It is more an approach that minimises the possibility of conflict occurring in the community as a direct result of the project and, perhaps more importantly, reduces the risk that actions can contribute to a growing number of inter-connected conflict drivers. It is these complex combinations of overlapping conflict drivers which can cause conflicts in the future that are far more difficult to resolve – and which can occur long after governments and agencies have withdrawn from an area.

⁸Concordis International (2010) 'More than a line: Sudan's North-South border'.

3.4 Conflict over aid

Only 24 per cent of the surveyed population said that their communities had received aid. Of these, 34 per cent said that it had caused friction between people. 88 per cent of the whole population said that nobody had explained to them why some people received aid and others did not. It is possible that the first of these responses may have been affected by a belief that they might encourage more aid to be delivered in future; however the suggestion that few people understand the grounds on which assistance is distributed is significant.

In several of the focus group discussions, a general belief was expressed that access to assistance was unequal. Distributions of food aid, seeds and tools and other assistance were perceived as being unequal, and as creating animosity between people. Participants in the discussions claimed not to know in particular cases why some people benefited and others did not and there genuinely seemed to be little awareness about existing projects and activities.

Box 5

Addressing conflict in the project cycle

Organisations which are implementing activities in the field are faced with an ever-growing list of best practice standards to adhere to. These can seem onerous at times but if incorporated into project plans from the start they can add real value to interventions and achieve far more than just a tick in a box.

A detailed contextual analysis is an obvious starting point for any project. However adding a conflict dimension to the questions and tools used in data collection enables organisations to identify not just the symptoms of development challenges in their operational areas but if there are underlying causes relating to conflict. In this way, actors can ensure that their interventions are designed not only to be conflict sensitive but also to actively address conflict drivers and contribute to peace-building through their development interventions.

Even once projects are under way, there are a number of simple steps staff can take to ensure that these projects remain sensitive to changing operational environments. One such step involves tools such as the real-time conflict assessment, as shown in Annex III. Tools like these allow staff to make tactical changes to the way they implement their activities to ensure maximum conflict sensitivity – but they can also play a significant role in bolstering agencies' security planning, as they clearly highlight where risk to staff or beneficiaries might present itself.

It is certainly very difficult to distribute aid in ways which people see as fair. This is especially the case when aid is targeted at specific sections of a population; or where the social and administrative links between all the people in an area are not very well established – which is often the case when there are rapid or large-scale population movements. (*For an example see Box 2.*)

Research done at the time of the 1998 famine suggested that it was unrealistic for aid agencies in a Dinka context to attempt to target groups of displaced people without also assisting the host population⁹. To do so ran so against cultural perceptions of fairness, such that local leaders would find ways of ensuring that any highly-targeted aid would effectively be redistributed. This appears to have been demonstrated anew in the recent case of fleeing to the eastern part of NBGS from fighting in Abyei. (*See Box 3.*)

⁹Harragin and Chol (1999) 'The Southern Sudan Vulnerability Study' [second edition]. Nairobi: Save the Children.

People will support each other within close personal or family relationships, but when everyone is very hard-pressed, mutual assistance may not go far beyond that. As a market trader in one of the focus groups put it:

If someone in your community receives tools, they will help you but if no one in your community receives anything, you can expect no help from anyone outside¹⁰.

3.5 Conflict over cattle

The escalation of disputes over grazing land can lead to raids into the territory of the opposing group. The theft of cattle is usually one of the prime aims and incentives for this. During the war, such raiding by members of the Rizeigat and Misseriya dovetailed with the military strategy of the Khartoum government, helping to produce terrible famines in northern Bahr el Ghazal in 1988 and 1998.

Cattle theft also occurs at inter-clan and inter-family levels. In the DDG survey 18 per cent of respondents said it was a security concern in their village. The matter was raised in 7 out of 24 focus groups, predominantly in the groups of elders/leaders and of youth. Cattle are central in traditional Dinka culture, and fighting over their theft or disputed ownership is often seen as a matter of honour. In every FGD that cattle theft was mentioned participants said that if a culprit was found, then either they or the culprit would be badly injured, if not killed. This sort of individual incident can easily escalate to the community level and become an entrenched feud. 'If you know the person who took your cattle or can recognise your cattle then you can try and take them back but fights often happen. If you fight and kill someone then their relative might try and kill you¹¹.'

3.6 Conflict over bride price

The centrality of cattle in traditional Dinka culture means that they play a role in structuring the relationships of extended families. This happens largely through the paying of cows as bride price, from the family of the young man to the family of the young woman when they marry. But for young men and their families it can be very difficult to mobilise sufficient cattle for marriage. This difficulty is often cited as a reason for cattle theft. At the same time, one of the most frequently-mentioned sources of dispute in focus group discussions (17 out of 24) was the non-payment of bride price. It was widely agreed that to take a girl without paying was unacceptable and caused big problems with her family as well as potentially sparking wider disputes amongst relations. As one elder in Panthou said: 'if someone takes your daughter for free, you cannot forgive them¹²'. In many places, disputes over dowry are the most common issue that is dealt with by the chief's court. Even distant family members may be held responsible for what has happened.

The return to NBGS of thousands of people who have lived long in distant towns and cities highlights the difficulties in the bride price system, but also demonstrates a number of options for flexibility in its implementation. Sometimes a marriage in exile may take place between a couple whose families back home know each other and who go ahead with the cattle transaction in their absence. Sometimes it may involve a bride price of cash calculated in terms of a certain number of cows. It can also be agreed for bride price to be paid in instalments to allow young men to marry earlier than they otherwise could. But of course there is scope for confusion in such arrangements, and there have also been many marriages and other relationships which have not been condoned by the extended families. In these latter cases, it is difficult for the couples concerned to return to the home village; it is one reason why migrants may choose not to return and returnees may prefer to resettle in a town or city, where less traditional mores make their decision less important.

¹⁰ Tieraliet, Aweil South, 18 March 2011

^{11,12} FGD with elders/leaders in Panthou, Aweil South, 19 March 2011

3.7 Conflict over the control of girls and women (gender-based violence)

The idea of unpaid bride price can be used euphemistically to cover cases of elopement and rape, and even adultery. In Dinka customary law, the rape of a girl or woman is seen a civil rather than a criminal violation. It is not so much an offence against the woman herself as against her family, which has an interest in her as a material asset, an asset which has been stolen or devalued. The question of her consent is often treated as irrelevant¹³. What must be done is usually either to have her married after the fact, or to obtain cattle or money as restitution. Cases which are not settled amicably by discussion or in the local courts, may then develop into inter-family conflict.

Violence against girls and women – and violation of their human rights more generally – is usually addressed by aid agencies as a matter of Protection rather than Conflict Sensitivity. Within the former field there are many possible activities for deterrence¹⁴. However, such gender-based violence and oppression must also be recognised as a possible driver of conflict on a larger scale, and there is need for some co-ordination in projects of the different sectors. Many family and community leaders in NBGS seem to see a need to maintain and increase their control over girls, instilling traditional ethics partly as a way of avoiding quarrels with their neighbours. This is potentially at odds with programmes which try to develop the concept of women's autonomous rights through the legal and educational systems. Careful communication with all segments of communities prior to any intervention is vital to ensure Do No Harm principles are adhered to.

3.8 Conflict associated with alcohol abuse

9 out of 24 focus groups have identified drunkenness as a major source of disputes in their community, and it is a problem which is believed to be on the increase, especially amongst young people. During the war the consumption of *aragi* – locally-distilled alcohol – was recognised as a threat to the discipline – although perhaps not the courage and endurance – of SPLA soldiers. The end of the war has seen the importation of large quantities of canned beer. One of the most popular of these is Baltika Extra 9, an extra-strong brew.

Drunks are seen to pick fights, borrow money and not repay it and generally cause trouble. Alcohol has been blamed for ruining relationships and friendships and generally having a destructive influence. 'People who are drinking are our enemies, more than the SAF soldiers, because a slight argument escalates into an armed fight with guns¹⁵'. In Panthou the women fear walking back from the market in the evening because of the threat of being attacked by drunken men on the way¹⁶. In Tieraliet, a payam official addressed a public gathering with an impassioned and humorous appeal to resist alcohol, at the same time recommending that the government should tax it more highly.

¹³Ward (2005) "Because now men are really sitting on our heads and pressing us down..." Report of a Preliminary Assessment of Gender-based Violence in Rumbek, Aweil (East and West), and Rashad County, Nuba Mountains'. Washington, DC: USAID.

¹⁴See Ward op. cit.

¹⁵FGD with market traders in Titchak, Aweil East, 25 March 2011

¹⁶FGD with women in Panthou, Aweil South, 19 March 2011

¹⁷Focus group discussion with elders/leaders in Aroyo, Aweil Centre, 22 March 2011

3.9 Conflict over jobs, patronage and politics

Several of the focus group discussions brought out complaints of government unfairness or corruption, particularly in the allocation of public employment.

If job opportunities come up they usually go to people who are already working there who pick their relatives. It is hard to get opportunities unless you know the right people as people in office will just pick all their relatives. Officials are eating the money. If someone came to attack them then we would not help them.¹⁷

Such feelings, besides increasing the risks of violent conflicts between individuals, families, clans and parties, are even more worrying in suggesting limitations on the capacity of government to act as a neutral arbiter and fair enforcer of law and order.

The Government of South Sudan is dominated by the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), a party which, during the war, developed as the civil and political face of the main Southern rebel army, the SPLA. The functioning of government (or the SPLM/A) partly as a vehicle for patronage and personal ambitions has frequently led to catastrophic violence in the past, when senior figures who considered themselves slighted or thwarted broke away with followers, often becoming enemy warlords. Such figures are usually suspected of receiving material support from the Khartoum government in order to divide and weaken the southern Sudanese. A notable example in the history of northern Bahr el Ghazal is Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, one of the founders of the SPLA, who, in the mid-1990s led a militia in the region, whose activities – even more than those of Rizeigat and Misseriya raiders – created the conditions for the 1998 famine. More recent examples in other parts of South Sudan have included Peter Gadet, Gabriel Tanginye and George Athor, whose groups' activities have been associated with military instability in the states of Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei.

In the 2010 elections for the governorship of NBGS, the SPLM candidate, General Paul Malong Awan, was challenged by his former military deputy, General Dau Aturjong Nyuol, who temporarily resigned from the SPLM in order to do so. The election was contested with some bitterness and violence but, after General Malong was declared the winner, great efforts were made both by the Governor and the President of South Sudan to achieve reconciliation between the candidates, including through some allocation of posts to supporters of General Dau. Those efforts appear to have been successful. Attention has now shifted to another general from the area, Abdel-Bagi Ayii Akol, who, having been dismissed as a presidential advisor, was reported to be considering alliances with other renegade groups. Around independence, contrary rumours and opinions were circulating in NBGS about the potential of General Abdul-Bagi to bring insecurity to the state. Some feared that he – or another dissident leader – would not find it hard to gain a following from desocialised and disaffected youth.

Chapter 4. Success so far: relative peace and good conflict management in NBGS

In the context of very low levels of welfare and services, respondents did not generally see armed violence as their main problem at present. This is hardly surprising given the relative peace currently enjoyed and in the context of such low levels of welfare, services and livelihood options. None of the 1,197 survey respondents identified the security of household members or of animals as the most serious concern in their village. Only 2 identified it as the second most serious concern, and only 14 as the third most serious. More than half said they had no 'main security concern'. Of the others, more cited fires and other natural hazards than human conflict and crime.

The low profile of human conflict and crime in NBGS places it in sharp contrast with several of the other states in South Sudan, particularly Lakes, Warrap, Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria. However even in Eastern Equatoria, respondents who were asked the same question in late 2009 ranked security as only their fourth most serious concern¹⁸. NBGS's favourable condition in this respect is largely attributed to its relative ethnic homogeneity. An estimated 80 per cent of the population belongs to the Malual section of the Dinka people, with most of the remainder belonging to the people known as Lwo or Jur Chol¹⁹. There has been much intermarriage between these groups, and little recent record of mutual antagonism. The present state of NBGS corresponds closely to the district of Aweil established in the 1930s under Anglo-Egyptian rule, and the network of traditional governance under 22 executive chieftainships established then is still recognised by government. Thus there exists a fairly stable and respected framework for resolving family and clan disputes within the area. These kinds of dispute seem to be being handled fairly successfully through informal or traditional processes of discussion and arbitration.

The state government treats security as a top priority, and this is not purely a matter of imposing control by military and police. It has also shown a capacity for strategic compromise. Reference was made above to the concern for political unity after the 2010 elections. Regarding tensions between local pastoralists and members of the Rizeigat and Misseriya peoples over the northern border, the government has built on the long tradition of meetings for peace and restitution between these groups²⁰. With its active support, community elders from both sides arrived at substantial agreements in 2007-8 for future non-aggression. The Governor is reported to have paid restitution from public funds for a subsequent theft of cattle by persons unknown.²¹

It must be emphasised however that the current low level of armed violence in NBGS is only relative. It is low relative to levels in recent history, perhaps compared to other states in South Sudan, and relative to the fear and hardship caused by severe shortages of food, clean water and health services. But it is not negligible. That incidents have not deteriorated into longer or larger conflicts is fortunate and a credit to existing conflict management mechanisms. However given the strains put on these mechanisms and the state as a whole, there is a danger that they may be able only to contain potential conflicts, storing up problems for another day. This need to address the causes of 'over-the-horizon' conflicts before they occur should be at the heart of planning developmental interventions. Just because there is a lower level of conflict in NBGS now than elsewhere is not a reason to underestimate the possibility that it could occur at a later point. Prevention is better than cure.

¹⁸Data from the research for 'Perceptions of Insecurity in Eastern Equatoria', HSBA Issue Brief, April 2011, SAS-DDG

¹⁹Ateny Wek Ateny (n.d.) 'About Aweil'. <http://madingaweil.com/abuot-aweil.htm>

²⁰Bradbury et al (2006) 'Local peace processes in Sudan'. Rift Valley Institute.

²¹For further accounts of efforts to keep peace along the border see Concordis International (2010) 'More than a line'; Schomerus (2010) 'Southern Sudan at odds with itself'. DESTIN, London School of Economics. pp73-74.



DDG team conducting Conflict Management Education classes

Chapter 5. Prospects for NBGS: breaking down the issues

On the whole, NBGS has fared better than might have been expected since the end of the civil war. A combination of strong local leadership and external support has allowed the government to achieve some successes in delivering services and peaceful development. The situation has certainly been helped by the state's relatively homogenous ethnic make-up. The state does however still face a number of risks to its continued peaceful development, amplified by the massive proliferation of SALW that the state faces, as elsewhere in South Sudan. These risks are broken down in the sections below.

5.1 Political/military risks

The economic, social and political relationship between Khartoum and South Sudan has been complex since the CPA. The situation has not changed since Independence. Khartoum's military intervention in Abyei was extremely antagonistic to South Sudan. The move has had massive economic impact, as the border has been closed to trade and movement for extended periods. However as the fighting in the Republic of Sudan has spread to South Kordofan and Blue Nile, accusations have been made by Khartoum that South Sudan is supporting rebels in the north. It seems unlikely that these actions and accusations will lead to a renewal of all-out war between the two countries, however there are a number of scenarios in which NBGS could feel the negative impact of geo-political competition between Juba and Khartoum.

One such scenario perhaps is an increase in covert and indirect aggression. Sudan and its neighbours in the Horn and East Africa have a long tradition of proxy warfare, in which governments give unacknowledged support to rebel groups and tribal militia which carry out attacks in their neighbours' territories. Khartoum has in the past accused South Sudan of assisting insurgents in Darfur and, more recently, armed groups in South Kordofan and Upper Nile. The SPLA has long accused Khartoum of similar acts, particularly in the arming of Rizeigat and Misseriya pastoralists in the border area and allegedly more recently, the South Sudan Liberation Army in neighbouring Warrap state. If Khartoum were to resume and expand such practices, NBGS would quickly feel the impact.

5.2 Pressures within the local economy: Integrating returnees

Youth unemployment is one of a group of risks related to rapid economic and demographic change in the post-war period in South Sudan. Due to the huge number of returns, many of these young people grew up in urban or peri-urban environments around Khartoum and received schooling there. It is uncertain at present how far their aptitudes and ambitions will be accommodated within the NBGS economy.

The hope and strategy of the government, supported by the aid agencies, was that returnees and their families would disperse to villages throughout the state. Returnees would hopefully be able to take advantage of supportive kinship networks and, at the same time, find a local market for any new ideas and scarce skills which they brought with them. And this seems to have happened in many places. People coming from northern towns have often become engaged in carpentry, construction, brick-making and small business such as the burning and sale of charcoal. Many of those who were previously in Darfur, and returned - especially to the counties of Aweil North and Aweil West - have successfully adapted and begun to spread techniques of ploughing using donkeys.

There is widespread agreement that the new nation of South Sudan needs to reduce its dependence on aid and oil revenues, and that agriculture is key to its prospects of a healthy economy²². Directing returnees into areas where subsistence agriculture is the norm would seem to promote their self-reliance as individuals, and the economic soundness of society as a whole. But the extent to which returnees from towns are willing to engage in farming is unclear. As mentioned above, the signs are that the later returnees – and there may still be many to come – are those who are comparatively committed to a modern and urban lifestyle. While many will bring valuable skills and entrepreneurial attitudes, there is a large question-mark over how far they will find jobs and opportunities to satisfy them.

In some visible ways the economic future of the state is exciting. The peace has seen a great deal of new road construction in a region where, during the war, vehicle travel between neighbouring payams could take hours, and which was virtually inaccessible from north or south by truck during the rainy season. This, combined with relative security, has helped produce an increase of trade and investment opportunities. Yet most of the productive investment so far has been financed by aid, and much of the effective demand for goods and services is fed by salaries in the government sector which are based on South Sudan's oil revenues.

A major unknown in the state's development is the quality of relations between North and South Sudan after the latter's secession, and the conditions of trade and security along the border. In a favourable scenario Aweil may be able to use its geographical position to prosper as a centre of trade between North and South, and to build industries on that. But the corollary is that its

²²See IRIN (2011) 'Sudan: Farming the future in the South' 17 February.

economy, reliant on northern imports and with long and precarious alternative supply lines, is vulnerable to blockages on the movement of people and goods. In the months following independence this reliance was bought into sharp relief as the price of diesel and other basic commodities rose dramatically. Under present political conditions, such obstructions seem all too likely to recur.

5.3 Urbanisation and the spectre of de-socialised youth

The preference of many returnees to live in urban areas has led to dramatic increases in the size of Aweil and other towns. The built-up area of Aweil has increased approximately ten-fold since the end of the war. And, as has been shown across the globe, urbanisation with high levels of unemployment brings risks of conflict and crime.

The risks are illustrated in the phenomenon of street-children²³. Not all street-children are unemployed or criminal, of course. In fact many work extremely hard in insecure jobs such as shoe-shining, collecting and selling plastic bottles and other re-usable refuse, fetching water for people, and portering in the market. Some of these children are attached to families in town, but others are not. Many sleep in the market area at night. They may have lost their close family members, or become separated during the war. Some may deliberately have run away. There have been reported cases of returnee children and youths who, unable to accept the material and cultural constraints of rural life, have attempted to move back to the North independently, only to be forcibly returned to their communities by the police or army. Some such individuals may have ended up on the streets of the towns in NBGS.

There, they are vulnerable to being drawn into criminal or dangerous activity. Children can be seen in public scavenging for food leftovers and sniffing pieces of cloth sprayed with spirit-adhesive. Some also use cannabis which, although illegal, is grown fairly widely in NBGS. Some are resorting to prostitution. 'Street-boys' are commonly blamed for a recent upsurge in the burglary of cash and mobile phones. Evidence of emerging gang-culture has been seen: there are frequent fights between bands of children and youths, using sticks and stones, and many children bear scars on their bodies. It does not appear at present that these gangs are involved in serious criminal activity, but there is clearly potential for escalation of the problem. A mind-set of adventure and aggression is fostered by the fare of action-packed movies offered in mini video-cinemas.

While at present the street children provide the most graphic illustration of the risk of crime and violence with modernisation and development, it would be a mistake to think that the problem ends with them. Others may have relatives with whom they can share basic shelter and food, yet in time be driven to desperation by a lack of legitimate opportunities. More generally, a process of development in which some groups are seen to prosper while others languish would contribute to resentments and instability throughout the state.

5.4 Returnees, social divisions and political culture

The confrontation between government and returnees in Apada outlined earlier is indicative of more general social and political tensions that are likely to persist into the future. The returnees there have shown a remarkable degree of confidence and cohesion in their defiance. This comes largely from the shared experience of living in marginal areas of Khartoum and other parts of Northern Sudan, where they learned to survive – and even sometimes prosper – in the face of national government authorities that were in many ways hostile to them. This is not to say that they see no difference between government in the South and the North. Indeed some of

²³The understanding of street-children in this paper owes a great deal to Mr Francis Mukula, who has been trying to assist them while working as a teacher in Aweil for several years.

their assertiveness seems supported by the conviction that they must now be treated with greater justice. One chief said:

In the North we had enough food [unlike present conditions in Apada]. But here we are more comfortable because we are in our own country. In the North you can make your fence but someone can jump in and arrest you. That is not the case here. Our government here does not do that.

But the local government is nevertheless seen as antagonistic in some respects. Another community leader, presenting a request for assistance to foreign aid-workers, lamented:

If you had come down from the sky and were taken back up there, we would feel confident. But since you are going back through Aweil I am fearful that our messages will be washed away.

A third explained that many of the returnees were loyal members of the SPLM, and had been arrested many times in the North because of this. But within the movement there could be political struggles. He alluded to a widespread perception that the positions of real power in the government are controlled by officers who had fought in the SPLA during the war.

The situation in Apada suggests the potential for the returnees – or a subset of the returnees – to endure as a distinct social group, with its own collective interests, culture, and political organisation. If such a group – containing a relatively high proportion of relatively well-educated people – remained cohesive, it might mount serious challenges to the dominant group in the government, hastening forward the question of whether and how South Sudan will evolve from a virtual one-party state to a more open democracy. Such a transition will involve difficult questions of stability and security, and some risk of violence along the way.

It is partly with a view to avoiding the threat posed by such a clear-cut social division that the authorities have pursued the policy of dispersing returnees. The new plots near Apada are to be allocated by lottery: not because there are too few places for everyone, but as a way of mixing the new returnees with others.

5.5 Friction between urban and rural, traditional and modern

An even more fundamental social division is between urban and rural populations. In the last few years, Aweil has ballooned in size and some former villages are becoming bustling towns. During most of the war, these populations were largely separated from each other, Aweil being the centre of an enclave held by the Khartoum government, while the countryside tended to be under the sway of the SPLM/A. In terms of physical access, the coming of peace and the road-building programme may have brought a significant reconnection. But the new travel and transport links intensify the economic relationship between the two groups and make more salient the differences in their material interests and ways of life. They expose the rural population rather suddenly to the pressures of modernisation.

Of course, a process of economic and cultural modernisation has been going on for a long time. But it has been slow. In the past, the typical way of life for Dinka people in northern Bahr el Ghazal was dominated by cattle. Children would grow up largely in cattle camps, learning the skills and elaborate culture of animal husbandry. The betrothals and marriages of youths, the relations of friendship and feud between families and clans, were interwoven with cattle transactions. Annual migrations between dry- and wet-season pastures militated against sedentary cultivation. A more settled pattern of agriculture has however been gaining ground



Child with cattle in Aweil East County

over the last century, along with opportunities and incentives to send children to school, to trade and acquire fixed assets. Care of cattle is increasingly left to older family members, and the culture of cattle is no longer so deeply imbued in the young.

Although much cultivation is still for the direct consumption of the grower's family, the peace and the roads are causing a quicker increase of trade and the monetisation of the rural economy. Cash-cropping of ground-nuts, sesame and vegetables is becoming more important, largely to serve the urban markets. But the benefits of this are uneven: more likely to help farmers who are relatively close to the town or the road. At the same time, opportunities have opened up for mechanisation of farming, which will lead to increased competition for land in many areas, as some farmers try to expand, and businesses attempt to acquire tracts of land. There will be a tendency for more rural people to become paid labourers rather than subsistence farmers and pastoralists.

These economic changes are likely to cause tensions as some gain more than others, in ways which may appear to be unfair. And the shift to a new way of life undermines the historical culture and the patterns of traditional authority and moral norms associated with it. Disputes over land and bride price, for instance, may become not only more common, but also harder to resolve, because the chiefs' courts and the customary law which they administer, will not have such clear applicability and authority as in the past.

Chapter 6. Recommendations

In order to minimise the potential for conflict and armed violence in NBGS, government and aid agencies should:

Increase the provision of basic facilities whose scarcity tends to lead to conflict. This especially means clean-water points for people and also for cattle, and means by which they can be maintained and promptly repaired. However, it is also important to increase the general provision of essential welfare services not only for the fulfilment of peoples' basic needs and rights, but in order to pre-empt widespread desperation and instability.

Work against social conditions likely to lead to a growth in armed crime. In the towns this could mean programmes to reduce unemployment through vocational education, and to provide quasi-parental protection and care to children not presently living in families. This is likely to be a more effective approach than the practice widely adopted by governments in South Sudan of forcibly taking street children to the villages where they have family connections. Often in such cases it has turned out that the families are unwilling or unable to give the children the kind of support and protection they need.

Implement more vigorously existing government policy to reduce the number of small arms in private ownership, and to prevent the loss of the small arms held by the government security services. At present, progress on these accepted goals appears to be very slow. It is true that in some areas of South Sudan, civilians feel they are safer when allowed to keep their own weapons²⁴, and disarmament programmes have sometimes proved very costly and ineffective²⁵. But it is possible that the present condition of relative stability in NBGS may provide a better opportunity. This is not a recommendation to rush in with an off-the-peg programme, but for the relevant actors to devise appropriate strategies, based on local research, copious consultation and lessons learned from elsewhere.

Use conflict-sensitive principles and knowledge in aid distributions. It is important to recognise in the Dinka context that providing aid to displaced populations while denying it to host communities is likely to cause frictions, and to be ineffective. The contribution of the host population to the welfare of the displaced should be recognised and encouraged through distributions which are regarded as equitable according to the norms of the local culture. This approach actually reduces reliance on external assistance in the longer term, as it binds the two groups together more tightly. Actors in the field obviously may not have much control over the volume of aid available, but they should be prepared to look squarely at the problems caused by how it may be targeted, and to document lessons learned. When targeting is necessary, conflict sensitivity demands as much investment as possible in making the process of selecting the recipients transparent – and to the widest audience (both within recipient communities and among their neighbours).

Use staff training and project processes to enhance conflict-sensitivity. The table of conflict drivers provided earlier in this paper could be used as a workshop resource to help aid staff and government officials think about the relationship between their work and conflict. The examples of conflict – and perceptions about its causes – should then be incorporated into the situational analysis on which agencies base their decision-making. The information can then be continuously used during planning events such as workshops and trainings to ensure appropriate mitigation strategies are built in at every stage of the project cycle.

²⁴Murray et al. (2008) 'Surveying armed violence, arms and victimisation in southern Sudan; findings and challenges'. Households in Conflict Network; Mosel and Murray (2010) 'Symptoms and causes: insecurity and underdevelopment in Eastern Equatoria'. Small Arms Survey.

²⁵Small Arms Survey (2008) 'Anatomy of civilian disarmament in Jonglei State: Recent experiences and implications'.



Community members completing a Conflict Analysis exercise

Strategic monitoring of conflict and the potential for it. The present paper has indicated many areas in which conflict is not yet very overt in terms of armed violence, but in which the risk could increase quickly. Government and the aid community should regularly assess developments in these areas from an AVR perspective. This might be done partly through further commissioned research, but it could also be a matter of assigned staff members in various organisations and government, for example the Bureau for Community Security & Small Arms Control, periodically meeting to share their perceptions and analysis, and prepare briefings for wider dissemination and possible action.

Aim to address issues before they become problems: use a conflict analysis to help identify areas which would benefit from targeted programming and would perhaps not normally be immediately obvious. For example the potential for violence implicit in the linked factors of unemployment, frustrated youth and increased alcohol consumption might stimulate a youth activity project. It is important to look for the underlying drivers of the problem rather than just the visible symptoms, such as drunken behaviour in this case, for example.

Annex 1 - Focus group and pair-wise ranking guideline²⁶

Facilitators	2 people for each focus group discussion - 1 lead facilitator and 1 support facilitator / note-taker. When interviewing the women's group, both should be women
Location	Aweil South Aweil Centre Aweil East 2 payams in each county: total of 6
Participants	<i>In each payam:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders/traditional leaders • Women • Youths - young men/mixed • Market traders and/or community based organisations <p>Between 8-15 people in each group</p>
Equipment	Notepads and pens for the facilitators, white boards
Objectives	To develop an understanding of the key issues and challenges (including areas of conflict/dispute) and any differences in perspectives of women, men, youth and other groups
Method	Pair-wise ranking tool followed by guiding questions
Time allowance	1 - 1½ hours

Introduction

Introduce yourselves to the group and explain the purpose of the meeting... We are trying to get a better idea of some of the challenges and problems faced in NBGS and in particular looking at issues that have caused disputes in the past and/or are problems now. The information collected will be used to assist DDG, DRC and other agencies to better plan their activities in South Sudan in the future (*Note that you cannot promise though, that we will specifically come back and assist their community*). In this FGD we would like to explore some of the challenges and problems you face in your community. It is important that everyone here is able to freely participate and respond and that people should feel welcome to add their opinions or experiences even when they differ from the majority in the group. We will start by doing an exercise which we will explain and then follow up with some other questions.

Ask the group to introduce themselves and introduce the facilitators

Remember: As the facilitator your role is not to tell participants what they should do, but to create space in which the participants can explore the issues affecting them and think about ways in which to address them.

²⁶This tool together with the household questionnaire were the primary data-collection tools used for the survey

Opening question: What are the main concerns/issues in this area? (discuss for 5-10mins)

Question for pairwise ranking: What disputes and safety issues are there here?

- Introduce the session and session objective
- Ask the question and let the group discuss for 5-10mins amongst themselves
- Make a list of **maximum** 6 issues
- Draw the matrix on the white board and explain the next steps.
- Fill in the matrix using the issues the groups have identified.

Remember: Use pictures too but don't spend too long agreeing what these are.

You don't need to compare an issue with the same issue or with another issue more than once.

When you draw the matrix, block out the squares you don't need.

Issues						

- Start asking people "Which do you prefer, A or B?" and note down answer in respective cell.
- Once they give you an answer, ask what the reason is for that: "Why do think this is more important?" Make sure that the note-taker writes down all answers carefully.
- Facilitator continues with the other combinations. A against C, A against D, B against C etc.
- When all combinations are asked and all cells are filled, count the votes each item has received.
- Write a list, ranking the items according to the number of times they were chosen. Discuss within group whether the result of the pair wise ranking reflects the opinion of the group well.
- Facilitator and group finalise the priority issues.

Follow up questions: Are any of these issues new? Are they getting better or worse?

If you have a dispute or a problem who do you go to and does this vary depending on what the dispute or problem is?

Additional questions (*Ask these if the group have not discussed the issues yet*)

What sort of assistance has your community received?

Is the assistance that was provided what was needed?

Do you think they helped the people who most needed help here?

Have there been any problems between people who have and haven't received assistance?

If yes, what kind of problems?

Annex II - The real time conflict assessment tool: conflict issues and actors and your project²⁷

Staff discuss areas/issues of conflict together and fill in as many blue boxes as relevant to their area of operations. Staff then look at each blue box and list all the project-related issues concerning that area of conflict. Once this is completed, the issues are then prioritised by placing them on either red orange or green cards to indicate whether they are urgent, immediate or longer term concerns. The process is then repeated for the same conflict areas for actor issues. Once the process is completed, staff have a clear objective indication of where and what concerns they must address and with what priority.

Conflict areas

Access to water	Payment of dowries	Land	Access to opportunities and aid	Alcohol and drunkenness	Cattle raids/ theft	Generational divides
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Project related issues

two communities have been fighting over access to a borehole			Staff challenged by community members who don't understand why they got nothing	some NFIs from previous projects have been sold and the money used for buying alcohol		
		the land where the project is sited is subject to ownership dispute				
						Elders have expressed concerns about youth being disrespectful

Conflict areas		Actor issues				
Access to water						
Payment of dowries						
Land		Necessary authorities have not committed to full survey of land				
Access to opportunities and aid						
Alcohol and drunkenness			Local authorities pledge to address the issue			
Cattle raids/ theft						
Generational divides		Elders refuse to engage				

²⁷This tool was originally developed as part of the USAID Spring Programme in northern Uganda and has since been adapted for use in South Sudan. The information within this table is given as an example from DDG's own conflict analysis data



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