SOUTH SUDAN

National Survey on Perceptions of Peace in South Sudan

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Acronyms

ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
ASPR	Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUCISS	African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan
CHRSS	Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan
CIESIN	Center for International Earth Science Information Network
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSRF	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
ECRP	South Sudan Enhancing Community Resilience and Local Governance Project
EPI	Everyday Peace Indicator
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
GRID3	Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development
HLRF	High-Level Revitalization Forum
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRB	Institutional Review Board
JMEC	Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
OPP	Other Political Parties
POC	Protection of Civilians Site
UN	United Nations
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
RSRTF	South Sudan Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-FDs	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Former Detainees
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSCSF	South Sudan Civil Society Forum
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

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Executive Summary

Perceptions matter. People's views on peace and security shape how they perceive peace processes with real world consequences. More optimistic views on prospects for peace among a population can give people a stake in their political future and help to generate political momentum for transitional processes. Positive perceptions of peace can reduce the attraction of armed groups, increase engagement with peace initiatives, and improve compliance with a transitional framework, both nationally and at a local level. The importance of public trust is sometimes lost in the South Sudanese context, where the transitional process has tended to focus on political accommodation and elite interests. Decades of humanitarian assistance have also perpetuated a notion of South Sudanese as passive recipients of international interventions with limited voice and participation.

A strategic shift is required to salvage the situation. For the peace process to be credible, it must go hand in hand with tangible improvements to security conditions in people's everyday lives. When people feel safe, they can invest in a sustainable future. They are able to recapture a sense of dignity and free choice that civil war undermines. Positive views can enable peace and security to grow from the bottom up, as people engage with the transitional process in a meaningful manner. When it comes to securing public trust in the transition in South Sudan, interventions that help communities to establish and protect security at a local level are more important than the 'deadline diplomacy' and implementation checklists that have characterized the transitional process thus far.

This report summarizes findings of a national survey on perceptions of peace in South Sudan. In August and September 2021, 2,276 respondents were surveyed across 8 primary locations – Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal, Pibor, Wau, and Yei – and 25 secondary locations (including IDP settlements and villages outside of these towns). The survey documents how people conceive of peace in their everyday lives and how their experiences shape their views on the peace process and on peace and security broadly. Two additional surveys will be conducted in 2022 to further substantiate the findings, explore new questions about emerging political issues (such as the electoral process and the role of public authority), enable longitudinal analysis, and examine other aspects of the peace process.

Sample Characteristics

All respondents were South Sudanese nationals 18 years of age or older. Respondents were primarily urban based, with 64 percent residing in their homes in urban areas, 23 percent residing in IDP settlements in or near the urban areas, and 13 percent residing in rural areas. Most respondents (57%) were age 18 to 35, 36 percent were age 36 to 55, and seven percent were older than 55. Women made up 51 percent of the overall sample and men 49 percent, except for Pibor where more women were interviewed than men due to enumerator absences. 50 percent of respondents self-identified as IDPs, 20 percent as returnees, and 29 percent as neither IDPs nor returnees. Of the respondents who had been displaced at some point in their lifetimes, 45 percent had been displaced three or more times.

The survey was conducted during the rainy season, which presented challenging conditions for the enumerators. At the same time, the survey provided a picture of perceptions during the rainy season will provide interesting comparisons with the second survey, which was conducted during the following dry season. Seasonal conditions are likely to impact the findings of this survey on several levels, including their influence on the cyclical patterns of armed conflict.

Everyday Peace Indicators

The survey incorporated the Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) approach to capture people's everyday experiences in their local settings and translate these into contextual indicators of conflict and peace. During an inception phase, researchers identified five EPI questions through in-depth discussions with residents in half the survey locations:

▶ EPI-1: How safe do you feel using the main roads between towns?
▶ EPI-2: How safe do you feel moving in the countryside?
▶ EPI-3: How safe would you feel leaving your house at night to tend to a neighbor who needs something urgently?
▶ EPI-4: How safe do you feel going to buy goods in the market?
▶ EPI-5: How safe do you feel participating in cultural activities, such as dances or other celebrations?

The questions reflect common expressions of how people observe peace and security across diverse rural and urban populations in South Sudan. To explore the development of these indicators over time, the EPI questions were combined with two 'anchoring events' – South Sudan's independence in 2011 and the signing of Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018 – providing an additional longitudinal component to the research.

Overall, the indicators show a substantial decrease in people's perception of everyday peace since independence. The biggest change was apparent with respect to the perceived safety of moving between towns and in rural areas. While the indicators show a slight improvement in the overall perception of everyday peace since the signing of the R-ARCSS, for EPI-2 and EPI-3 there was no significant improvement in perceptions of safety among respondents living in rural areas. Indeed, among rural respondents, the perceived danger of moving in the countryside actually increased since the signing of the R-ARCSS, which points to proliferating conflict at the subnational level and the difficulties of translating developments in the national peace process into conflict settings at a local level. Perceptions of everyday peace in Juba are also far worse than in the rest of the country. This may reflect the chronic insecurity on most major roads outside of Juba and the increasing levels of violent criminality, often attributed to 'unknown gunmen', in the capital city.

Conflict Trends

Conflict dynamics in South Sudan do not easily lend themselves to generalizations. National conflict may at times be driven by political interests at the state or local level, and grassroots conflict may involve acts of violence that disrupt livelihoods across large parts of the country. Policymakers must make sense of this complex and layered conflict landscape both in how they define the problem that they are seeking to resolve as well as how they respond to changes in conflict dynamics over time. Any generalizations of the conflict situation in South Sudan as a whole should be met with considerable skepticism.

At a macro level, the survey data shows the broad trends of the conflict, with violent episodes peaking in 2013 and 2016. However, the continuities with preexisting conflicts at the subnational level were also apparent. Sixty-two percent of respondents said that their community experienced challenging periods of conflict between independence and the outbreak of violence in Juba in December 2013. The continuity of conflict even during times of relative peace suggests that policymakers should avoid looking at peace as something that arises at a given moment in time and disappears during times of war and instead recognize the gradations of peace and conflict that coexist and interact in an ongoing manner. In Jonglei, for example, conflict persisted after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and independence in 2011 due to counter-insurgency campaigns couched as civilian disarmament and alarming levels of intercommunal conflict. A local peace agreement signed in 2014 creating the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) helped to insulate Pibor from conflict in the early part of the war, but since the signing of the R-ARCSS in 2018 conflict has again escalated in the area with a devastating impact in terms of casualties and displacement.

Survey data also substantiates a recent trend in increased subnational conflict, much of which can be traced to the political maneuverings of elites at the national and state levels. The survey assessed respondent views on three specific types of subnational conflict: cattle-raiding, land disputes, and tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers. Across the sample, considerable numbers of respondents saw the three types of conflict to be a 'very big' or a 'big' problem in their area, with more people seeing cattle-raiding (58%) or land disputes (58%) as a 'big' or 'very big' problem as compared to tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers (41%). When asked in which years since December 2013 were the three types of subnational conflict most serious, responses show a general trend of subnational conflict increasing in 2016 and remaining relatively high through 2021. The data can be explained by a shift in the conflict that took place in 2016 with the fragmentation of opposition groups and increasing conflict at the subnational level. The subnational violence persisted after the signing of the R-ARCSS and the more overt violence among signatories to the peace agreement receded as political elites began to advance their interests by proxy rather than through direct confrontation.

Perceptions of the relative severity of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) between the current conflict and the 22-year war also demonstrate differences among demographic groups on how they understand broader conflict trends. Overall, three-quarters of respondents thought that CRSV was more common in the current war. However, perceptions differed by gender with women (12%) twice as likely as men (6%) to say that CRSV was more common during the 22-year war.

Perceptions of Peace

Three-and-a-half years after the signing of the R-ARCSS, South Sudanese remain deeply uncertain about peace in the country. When asked whether South Sudan is at peace, nearly half (47%) of respondents responded, 'no'. Pessimism is especially stark for some groups: More than half of women, IDP camp residents and rural respondents said that South Sudan was not currently at peace. These statistics illustrate the shaky ground upon which the peace agreement is being implemented. Nonetheless, many people remain optimistic that the war will end, with 59 percent saying that the prospects for peace in the next three years are 'good' (33%) or 'very good' (26%).

Again, respondent perceptions of everyday peace were by far the most significant factor in evaluating prospects for broader peace in the next three years. While 87 percent of respondents with positive perceptions of everyday peace assess the prospects for broader peace as 'good' or 'very good', only 42 percent of those with negative perceptions of everyday peace have similarly optimistic views on the prospects for broader peace. This finding points towards the crucial importance of improving everyday security and investing in local peacemaking. Public trust in a process can help to shift the logics of armed actors from conflict towards non-armed strategies. Such a shift in thinking is indispensable when it comes to the implementation of core provisions of the peace agreement. For example, it is unlikely that the unification of the armed forces will generate trust in and of itself. Instead, increased mutual trust among the parties should be seen as a necessary precondition for the unification of forces to happen in the first instance.

Overall, respondents expressed relatively high levels of awareness with the IGAD peace process, with 65 percent saying that they were either 'aware' (46%) or 'very aware' (19%) of the process. However, nearly one-third (30%) of respondents said that they were 'unaware' (22%) or 'very unaware' (8%) of the process, indicating that large gaps remain. Levels of awareness were also substantially gendered, with over 70 percent of male respondents 'very aware' or 'aware' of the peace process compared to 58 percent of women. Respondent awareness was also positively correlated with their perception about the prospects for peace. Less than half of respondents that were 'unaware' or 'very unaware' of the peace process had a similarly optimistic assessment of prospects for peace in the next three years.

Levels of Trust

Restoring a basic level of trust between the government and citizens in South Sudan is critical to both short-term stabilization efforts and prospects for longer-term peace. Responses to a question about whether national, local, or international actors are most effective at building peace demonstrate the impact that the conflict has had on citizen trust in government. While the most common answer was that 'all of the above' actors (45%) were effective at building peace, respondents were almost three times more likely to say international actors (34%) were most effective than national actors (12%) and almost nine times more likely than local actors (4%).

As with the other indicators, trust in the various actors was directly correlated with respondent views on everyday peace and with the specific circumstances of conflict in particular locations. As perceptions of everyday peace grew more negative, respondents' trust with local actors decreased and their trust with national and international actors increased. For example, none of the respondents who heard gunshots every night for the past month thought that local actors were most effective at building peace, while 50 percent thought international actors were most effective and 19 percent thought national actors were most effective. The inverse correlation between perceptions of safety and confidence in local actors raises questions about the capacity of traditional authorities to resolve active conflicts. Respondents with negative perceptions of everyday peace also expressed less trust in a range of national actors, including the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGONU), Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) and faith leaders than those with positive perceptions of everyday peace.

These varying levels of trust present a dilemma for international partners. On the one hand, donor policies emphasize localization and the importance of investing in national and local actors as a means of making aid more sustainable and responsive to local needs. On the other hand, in fraught political contexts such as these, international support for actors that lack legitimacy in the eyes of their people can be inefficient or even damaging to prospects for peace. A conflict-sensitive approach that carefully assesses the local context and considers how external interventions might serve to bring people together or drive them further apart can help to reduce risks by identifying appropriate entry points for engagement. Eight years since the outbreak of conflict and in the face of reductions in donor financing, investing in South Sudanese organizations and institutions is more important now than ever to help stabilize the political context and help stimulate post-conflict recovery efforts.

Elections

The R-ARCSS calls for elections to be held 60 days before the three-year transitional period ends in February 2023. National leaders have sent mixed signals about their intentions in this regard, with the President and his allies suggesting that elections should proceed as scheduled and the First Vice-President and his allies suggesting that key provisions of the peace agreement must be completed before elections may be held. Survey data shows some divided opinion among respondents, though most (50%) thought that elections should be delayed and just a third maintained that they should happen on time. Interestingly, 1 in 10 said that elections should be called off entirely. This could be a sign of skepticism that credible elections could be conducted in such a politically charged environment, or alternatively, an indication that some people prefer a stronger style of governance to help restore law and order to the country. Unsurprisingly, respondents who said they heard gunshots every night over the past month were also the most likely (69%) to say that elections should be delayed, presumably for fear of political instability.

Respondents were less equivocal when it came to the risk of violence in relation to elections. Two-thirds of respondents viewed the risk of violence as 'very high' (38%) or 'somehow high' (28%). Respondents in towns (69%) and IDP camps (63%) were more likely to assess the risk as high as compared to those residing in villages (55%). Wide disparities were also apparent by gender and location. These findings raise the question as to whether the minimum security conditions are in place in much of the country to hold elections, and whether residents in these areas would participate were the elections to be held on time. Whether elections are held on time or delayed, the government and its international partners should have a plan for addressing the security concerns that elections will raise. If the unified force that the R-ARCSS envisages is ever established, this could be a part of the solution. However, given the lack of progress on this front, other security measures should be considered, including the involvement of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) peacekeepers, to deter violence and protect civilians, should the need arise.

National Dialogue

Over a four-year period, from 2017 to 2021, the Government of South Sudan held a National Dialogue process to "save the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity." The National Dialogue was launched at the height of the conflict and many South Sudanese viewed it as an effort to undermine the regionally-led peace process. While the SPLM-IO and other opposition groups declined to participate in the process on account of the ongoing war, the National Dialogue still managed to engage thousands of South Sudanese across the country in discussions about the causes of conflict and what can be done to address them. The National Dialogue produced a host of recommendations, but the most controversial was undoubtedly a recommendation from the National Dialogue co-chairs that the President, First Vice-President, and four Vice-Presidents should stand aside in elections at the end of the transitional period. This recommendation was made in a cover letter that the co-chairs attached to the final report, but it notably did not secure a sufficient consensus in the National Dialogue steering committee for it to be included in the final report itself.

Whether one views the National Dialogue to be an attempt to salvage a nation that was rapidly devolving into chaos or an attempt by the government to sideline the opposition and undermine the peace process, the National Dialogue represents one of the few attempts by a government in South Sudan to broadly engage citizens on matters of national importance. Indeed, survey data suggests high levels of awareness in the National Dialogue. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they were aware of the initiative, which is comparable to the 65 percent of respondents who said they were aware (46%) or very aware (19%) of the IGAD peace process. The high levels of awareness reflect efforts to publicize the National Dialogue in South Sudan, including coverage in local newspapers, on radio stations, and on South Sudan Television, particularly in the early stages of the process.

Survey findings suggest significant support (58%) for the recommendation put forward by the leadership of the National Dialogue that individuals in the executive at the national level not contest in elections at the end of the transitional period. But with 40 percent of respondents disagreeing with the proposal, it does not appear to have the overwhelming support that the National Dialogue co-chairs claimed in the cover letter to their report. Responses also varied widely across survey locations. Support for the recommendation was most pronounced in the former Wau POC (100%), Bor (92%), Malakal (82%), and Wau town (79%), while opposition to the recommendation was most pronounced in Yei (67%), Pibor (57%), and the former Bentiu POC (57%). Since the National Dialogue was essentially a political process that failed to secure buy-in from key opposition groups, some of this geographical variation may be attributed to skepticism among populations in areas that lean towards the opposition politically.

Interestingly, people's perceptions of safety were also strongly correlated with their views on the National Dialogue's recommendation. Respondents that heard gunshots every night in the past month (38%) were far less likely to support the National Dialogue's recommendation than those that did not hear any gunshots (65%), demonstrating how people's priorities can shift with levels of security. This correlation may also suggest a willingness to support proposals that may be more politically risky in the short-term but offer longer-term opportunities in terms of political accountability so long as their immediate security needs are met.

Federalism and Number of States

The issue of federalism – or whether the national or state governments should carry primary responsibility for the delivery of public goods and services, such as health, education, infrastructure, and justice – has been a central issue of contention in the peace process. Opposition groups have tended to champion the issue, which is deeply intertwined with contests among ethnic communities for control over state and local government administrations that drives many subnational conflicts.

Survey findings highlight the importance of this issue, particularly in the context of the management of diversity and the building of an inclusive national identity. Overall, most respondents (54%) thought that the national and state governments should be equally responsible for providing these services and the remainder were divided over those who thought the national government should carry primary responsibility (20%) and those who thought state governments should carry primary responsibility (23%). But responses varied widely by location, with Pibor (67%) and Yei (63%), both locations with considerable populations of minority groups and a history of locally rooted and politically motivated armed uprisings, showing a strong preference for state governments to be the primary service providers. These findings point to the pervasive fears among minority groups about domination by more populous ethnic groups that are manifested at both the national and subnational levels.

Another related issue concerns the number of states that South Sudan will have. Presidential orders in 2016 and 2017 increased the number of states to 28 and then 32, throwing the power sharing formulas of the 2015 peace agreement into disarray. A key breakthrough in the peace process came in February 2020, when the government agreed to revert to a 10-state model, paving the way for establishment of the R-TGONU at the national level. While the decision to increase the number of states was justified by a supposed popular demand among ethnic communities for self-governance, survey data suggests many South Sudanese were dissatisfied with 32-state framework in which service delivery ground to a halt and boundary disputes proliferated in many parts of country. Survey respondents (70%) overwhelmingly favored the 10-state framework, with just 10 percent of respondents opting for 32 states, suggesting that many South Sudanese appreciate the importance of shared administrative spaces in which they can manage intergroup relations.

Confidence in the Peace Process and Government Priorities

With just one year left in the transitional period, the lack of progress that the parties have made in implementing the peace agreement is a common source of frustration in South Sudan. This was evident in responses to a question about government priorities. Most (43%) survey respondents thought the implementation of the R-ARCSS should be the top priority for the transitional government. Yet, 79 percent of respondents had little (50%) or no (29%) confidence in the ability of the R-TGONU to implement the agreement. Again, the EPIs were the strongest factor influencing respondent perceptions of peace implementation. More than one third (35%) of respondents with a negative experience of everyday peace had no confidence in the R-TGONU's ability to implement the peace agreement. This finding shows how the perceived inability of the R-TGONU to establish peace at the everyday level reflects on people's assessment of their ability to implement peace at the national level. As noted above, this lack of confidence in the peace process can have real world consequences in terms of disincentivizing citizen participation and increasing the attraction of recruitment to armed opposition groups.

Next to peace implementation, respondents (26%) viewed security to be the next most important priority for the R-TGONU. All other issues ranked far below peace implementation and security in terms of respondent priorities. Nonetheless, public goods and services in the form of physical infrastructure (4%), health (4%) and education (4%) emerged as second tier priorities, alongside government efforts to fix the economy. Surprisingly, respondents were far less likely to prioritize the return of refugees (2%) and food aid (3%), perhaps reflecting a view of these areas as the domain of international actors and not commonly associated with visible government action.

Recommendations

Public perceptions of the peace process and people's experience of everyday peace both contribute to the trajectory of a transitional process. How people experience everyday peace is a decisive factor in determining their trust in the peace process. As the survey data suggests, people who feel less safe, who have negative perceptions of everyday peace, tend to be more pessimistic about the peace process. This is troubling on several levels. First, it provides further evidence of the psychological impact that insecurity has at both the individual and societal levels. This demands action at the very least from a social justice perspective, not to mention the implications for political stability and economic recovery. People trapped in such situations may also find themselves in a vicious loop of conflict and exploitation, in which insecurity causes a loss of voice and agency, leading to institutional mistrust and poor development outcomes that make them more susceptible to manipulation by political and military actors. Three main recommendations flow from these findings:

First, any support to the peace process should include initiatives designed to support communities to improve everyday security at the local level, and not just focus on the national level, to sustain public trust in the process. This factor appears more important than the timely achievement of concrete results along the transitional timeline or the availability of public information about the peace process. Enhancing road security and the ability of people to move freely, both in urban and rural areas, provides an important entry point. In addition, the gendered aspects of security, including issues of everyday peace, need to be accounted for in programming. For example, male respondents consider the movement elements (EPI1 and EPI2) as more risky than female respondents, while female respondents perceive more insecurity in household related tasks (such as leaving the house at night and buying goods at the market, EPI3/EPI4). Men and women also face different types of risk in the context of armed violence. Lastly, there may also be scope for humanitarian actors to more actively contribute to efforts to promote peace and security at the local level. Through their programming on protection, resilience, and negotiations to access conflict-affected populations, humanitarians are well-positioned to contribute to everyday peace.

Second, interventions of peace support should target the critical hotspots of violence.
Improving the conditions in areas with very low levels of perceived everyday security
promise considerable results towards the public buy-in into the peace process. The high
level of differentiation between contexts advises against broad geographical approaches
and support an area-based approach to programming that focuses on challenging areas
in a contextually specific manner. This could be complemented by cross-area or regional
programming that targets areas with shared security threats. For example, conflict
mitigation efforts could adopt common strategies to address cattle-raiding in the tri-state
corridor between Warrap, Lakes, and Unity States, child abduction among communities
in the GPAA and Jonglei, the impact of cattle migrations from Jonglei and Lakes States
into the Equatorias, or contestation over state administrations among ethnolinguistic
communities in Wau and Malakal. Aid programming in these situations must also
be carefully sequenced. While interventions at the humanitarian, peacebuilding and
development nexus can provide important space for people in less secure settings to begin
engaging with issues beyond their immediate needs, they must also be carefully designed
to avoid being instrumentalized by more powerful actors.

**Third, policymakers should focus their efforts on sustaining the transitional process
rather than achieving check lists within rigid timeframes.** Even though not directly asked
as such, findings point towards the public measuring the success of the peace process
less in achievements along the defined transitional program and more in the concrete
improvement of security in their immediate surroundings. While this finding gives rise
to huge challenges given the difficult and highly violent situation in various parts of the
country, it may also help to relieve growing pressure caused by timelines for R-ARCSS
implementation. Investments in everyday security appear as a more promising entry
point for peace support in South Sudan compared with deadline diplomacy, an approach
that has already failed to deliver meaningful results. Any such engagement should be
firmly grounded in a conflict sensitive approach that takes into account the potential for
unintended consequences, understands how people experience peace and safety, and
supports the local institutions that are able to service those needs.

Introduction

Peace means different things to different people. Its meaning can change over time as conflict-affected societies stabilize and try to come to terms with the underlying drivers of violence. Symbolic moments, such as when political leaders shake hands and commit to resolving their differences peacefully, can provide an important indication to people of a possible return to politics as normal.[1] But it is never that simple. Once unleashed, armed conflict tends to proliferate beyond the fault lines of national politics and restoring relations among political elites does not by itself bring lasting change. People in transitional contexts equate peace, first and foremost, with safety. If they do not feel secure, longer-term considerations of what it takes to build a peaceful and prosperous society carry little meaning.

Over the past eight years, the regionally-led peace process in South Sudan has struggled to contain the fighting among government and opposition groups in the country. The signing of the revitalized peace agreement in September 2018 has reduced open conflict among signatories to the agreement, but it also marked the start of a worrying trend towards increased violence at the subnational level. Fighting with armed opposition groups that refused to sign on to the agreement has also persisted in parts of the country. As South Sudan approaches the final year of the three-year transitional period provided for in the peace agreement, the country remains in a precarious situation. Four million people, or roughly a third of the population, are displaced from their homes, and more than two-thirds of the population need humanitarian assistance.[2] A more nuanced understanding of the country's transition is required to address the complexities of the current situation.

Meaningful peace must account for people's everyday realities. In the South Sudanese context, this requires policymakers to reckon with the insecure and uncertain circumstances in which people find themselves. This study aims to inform a more grounded approach to the peace process that takes these everyday realities into consideration. Through a series of three national surveys conducted between August 2021 and August 2022 and a preliminary qualitative study in early 2020, the research tries to better understand the factors that shape South Sudanese perceptions of peace and suggest policy prescriptions that can help to strengthen peace processes moving forward.

This report summarizes findings from the first survey conducted in August and September 2021. The sample was comprised of 2,276 respondents across 8 primary locations – Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal, Pibor, Wau, and Yei – and 25 secondary locations (including internally displaced person (IDP) settlements and villages outside of these towns). A key finding concerns how people's perception of safety influences their views on peace. Recognizing where people are situated along this spectrum and how their views are likely to change over time and across demographic groups can help to inform a more contextualized and inclusive approach to peace-making that is rooted in local priorities.

The report is structured in three parts. After an overview of the regionally led peace process and a summary of the research methodology, the second section presents the research findings across a range of thematic areas. The report concludes with a summary of the main points and recommendations to help policymakers better account for everyday realities in their approach to peacemaking.

Overview of the IGAD Peace Process

On 19 December 2013, days after fighting had erupted in Juba between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar and spread throughout much of the Greater Upper Nile Region, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) sent a high-level ministerial delegation to Juba for a three-day emergency visit.[3] The visit reflected the international community's alarm at the rapid deterioration of the security situation in the country. The two warring parties – the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO), which was quickly established by Machar after the initial outbreak of violence – met for the first time in Addis Ababa on 5 January 2014, starting more than a year-and-a-half of peace talks that would eventually culminate in the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) in August 2015.

From the start, the ARCSS was on shaky ground. The President had initially declined to endorse the agreement at the signing ceremony in Addis Ababa, maintaining that he would first have to consult with his constituencies in South Sudan. He ended up signing nine days later at an event in Juba attended by heads of state from neighboring countries, but he appended a list of reservations that covered more than a dozen fundamental issues relating to governance and security arrangements, among other matters.[4] A few weeks later, the President voiced his dissatisfaction with the ARCSS during a speech in Juba:

> "This IGAD-prescribed peace document on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is the most divisive and unprecedented peace deal ever seen in history of our country and the African continent at large … There were many messages of intimidations and threats for me in the last few weeks. To just sign the agreement silently without any changes or reservations. But because I put the interest of my people and country first, I refused to succumb to the pressures, which was mounted on me by IGAD, the Troika, AU and those who wanted to run the affairs of our country by remote controls from their capitals."[5]

The government's dissatisfaction with the agreement was reflected in the slow pace of implementation. After months of negotiations over the terms of his return to Juba, Machar finally assumed his position as First Vice-President in April 2016. But the new unity government did not last long, and after a few months, tensions between the parties boiled over. On 8 July 2016, a shootout at the presidential palace sparked large-scale violence in Juba for a second time since December 2013 and plunged the country back into conflict. Machar fled Juba on foot to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Eventually, he ended up in South Africa where he was kept under house arrest. The guarantors of the peace agreement, including IGAD, the United Nations (UN), the Troika (United States, United Kingdom and Norway), and the European Union, accepted Machar's former deputy, Taban Deng Gai, now an allied with the government, as his replacement in the transitional government and continued to push for implementation of the ARCSS.[6]

Meanwhile, the conflict continued to worsen. The war had been mostly contained in the Greater Upper Nile region, but it now spread to previously stable parts of Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal regions. Government offensives in 2016 and 2017 secured it the upper hand militarily, but at a dire humanitarian cost. The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS) accused the government of "ethnic cleansing" and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Prevention of Genocide warned of "potential genocide." [7] Then, in February 2017, a conflict induced famine was declared in two counties in southern Unity – the first famine in South Sudan since the late 1990s.

In light of the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe, the international community's position was becoming increasingly untenable, and on 12 June 2017, IGAD announced its plans to:

> "urgently convene a High-level Revitalization Forum [HLRF] of the parties to the ARCSS including estranged groups to discuss concrete measures, to restore permanent ceasefire, to full implementation of the Peace Agreement and to develop a revised and realistic timeline and implementation schedule towards a democratic election at the end of the transition period." [8]

After a series of pre-consultations with different stakeholder groups starting in August 2017, IGAD formally launched the HLRF in Addis Ababa in December 2017. The process had now expanded to include 14 armed groups and political formations, in addition to several other stakeholder groups, including civil society, faith leaders, and eminent South Sudanese personalities. By the end of the month, the HLRF had scored an early victory with the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and a commitment to further talks.

After several more interim agreements, including a permanent ceasefire signed in Khartoum in June 2018, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in Addis Ababa on 12 September 2018. The R-ARCSS adopts much of the substance of the ARCSS with the most visible changes made in Chapters I and II relating to governance and security arrangements. Over a two-year period, a new Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGONU) was meant to stabilize the security situation, open the way for humanitarian assistance, return and resettle displaced populations, implement a sweeping reform agenda, and prepare the country for elections and the subsequent normalization of politics.

The agreement has succeeded in reducing overt violence among its signatories, but fighting has persisted between government and SPLM-IO forces and non-signatory groups such as the National Salvation Front (NAS), particularly in parts of Central and Western Equatoria, and between competing factions of SPLM-IO in different parts of the country. Equally concerning is a dramatic increase in subnational violence that has been apparent since the signing of the peace agreement.[9] As of this writing, South Sudan is left with less than a year until elections are meant to be held under the terms of the R-ARCSS, but already senior political figures are sending mixed signals about whether elections will be held on time.[10] With other armed conflicts in the region and internationally occupying the bulk of the international community's attention, South Sudan faces an uncertain future.

Figure 1: Timeline of the Peace Process

15th December 2013
Fighting eruopts in Juba

5th January 2014
GRSS and SPLM-IO
begin peace talks

23rd January 2014
Sigining of CoHA

3rd March 2015
UNSC puts in place
sanctions regime

August 2015
ARCSS signed in Addis

8th July 2016
Fighting erupts in
Juba again

12th June 2017
IGAD announces HLRF

12th June 2017
HLRF preconsultation
phase begins

5th August 2018
Agreement on goverance
signed in Khartoum

6th July 2018
Agreement on security
arrangements signed in
Khartoum

22nd May 2018
Addendum to the ACoH
signed in Addis

21st December 2017
Agreement on the CoH
signed in Addis

12th December 2017
Launch of the HLRF in
Addis

12th September 2018
Revitalized Agreement
on the Resolution for the
Conflict in South Sudan
(R-ARCSS) signed in Addis

March 2019
IGAD gives 100-day
extension for formation
of R-TGONU

3rd May 2019
Parties extend the
transitional period by
6 months

22nd February 2020
Transitional period begins
with appointmnet of vice-
presidents

12th March 2020
Ministers and deputy
ministers appointed

Methodology

This study documents South Sudanese citizens' perceptions of peace across a range of geographic regions, conflict arenas and living environments. The team used satellite data and real-time information from contacts on the ground to randomly sample urban, rural, and displaced populations in the vicinity of Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal, Pibor, Wau, and Yei. These locations were selected to cover diverse conditions and for feasibility of access. The findings of the survey are generalizable to these locations but not to South Sudan as a whole.

Survey Instrument

The study drew from the Everyday Peace Indicator (EPI) methodology whereby community-generated indicators were used to develop a survey instrument through interviews and focus groups across five of the survey locations in January and February 2020.[11] The research team conducted a pretest in Juba in May 2021, during which it gathered respondent and enumerator feedback on question comprehensibility and emotional triggers. This information helped tailor a Likert scale to the South Sudanese context and enabled the team to refine 86 questions covering background data, displacement history, perceptions of peace and safety, perspectives on local versus national conflict, views on the peace process, and views on related issues, including elections, the South Sudan National Dialogue and federalism. The survey concluded with questions that prompted respondents to express how they felt about discussing the conflict and the history of their communities during the interview. This helped the team assess whether to offer respondents psychosocial resources, and to contextualize responses to other survey questions.

Sampling

The survey locations (Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal, Pibor, Wau and Yei) are a convenience sample of areas that represent principal regions and conflict theatres in South Sudan. Within each area, the team adopted an approximately self-weighting stratified random sampling approach to select individuals. Simple random sampling was not possible due to the absence of recent census data. Therefore, the team divided each location into environments (urban, rural and IDP settlement) and evaluated their relative population densities. The team sought to interview 50 percent men and 50 percent women, randomly across the full distribution of ages of adults 18 years and older.

Urban areas: The team used information from local contacts to understand how towns were divided into neighborhoods. The team then used the GRID3 South Sudan Settlement Extents, Version 01 dataset to create clusters and evaluate their relative population densities using the ArcMap GIS software of the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).[12] For security reasons, enumerators worked in male-female pairs that remained in walking distance during each workday for 12 workdays (producing a total of 192 surveys) in each town. The team allocated the 12 workdays across clusters in proportion to their relative population densities.

The team used ArcMap to randomly select map coordinates within clusters to serve as the starting point for each workday, to which the enumerator pairs would travel together. Each enumerator would then work for the day individually. First, an enumerator would use a smartphone app to select a random direction. Then, they would set a two-minute timer and walk, to the best of their ability around obstacles, in that random direction. When the timer went off, the enumerator would stop, select a random direction using an app, and sample the closest dwelling in that direction. After each sampled household, an enumerator would re-generate a random direction, and reset the two-minute timer to proceed to the next dwelling.

The exception was Pibor, because of its small size (3km from its most northern to southern points). Here, the team used satellite images to trace a path that passed each dwelling. The team used ArcMap to measure the distance of the path (28.6 km). The team assumed an enumerator walking pace of 5km per hour (so 343 minutes to walk the path) and randomized 192 walk minutes along the path from a starting point – the equivalent of sampling 192 dwellings randomly. The team then randomly assigned whether an enumerator would request to speak to a male or a female respondent. Each enumerator was given a map of the path and the most efficient walking route over 12 days to cover the sampled walking segments. They proceeded by setting their timers for the allocated minutes to walk along the path from one point to the next.

Internally displaced person (IDP) settlements/protection of civilian (POC) camps: The team combined UN maps of IDP settlements and POC camps with satellite data and used the most recently available United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) POC Head Counts and International Organization for Migration (IOM) IDP Site Multi-Sector Needs, Vulnerabilities and COVID-19 Impact Surveys to estimate relative population numbers and densities of each camp sector and bloc. The sampling clusters were the lowest level in camp organization for which there were population density estimates. At the time of the survey, five of the six POC camps (Bentiu, Bor, Wau, and the two camps in Juba) had already transitioned to IDP settlements under the control of the Government of South Sudan. Only Malakal POC was still being administered by United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The team sampled from each cluster in proportion to relative head counts or densities. To do so, the team traced a path that passed each dwelling in each cluster. The team used ArcMap to measure the distance of the path and estimate a walking time. Walking times were then randomly selected from a starting point for the number of sampled individuals in a cluster. The enumerators proceeded as they did in Pibor, with a map of the camp and clusters, and a list of walking times from a starting point.

Rural areas: The team selected a convenience sample of two to three villages within two hours' drive of an urban area. The pool of options was limited for each location, due to flooding and security challenges. The team used the GRID3 data to create clusters that encompassed each selected village's dwellings, then randomly selected a map coordinate within the settlement extent. This would serve as the starting point for each day. The enumerator pairs spent one working day in each selected village and proceeded from the starting point with the same approach (selecting random directions and using timers to walk) as they did in urban areas.

Sampling individuals from dwellings: The sampling unit for the survey was the individual and not the household. To minimize neighborhood effects, the team sampled individuals from different households that were never directly next door to each other. To sample individuals, enumerators would do the following when their walking timer went off:

► They would use an app to pick a random direction.
► They would approach the closest dwelling in that random direction.
► If more than one household was living in a dwelling, the enumerator would use a random number generator to select a household.[13]
► If nobody was at home or the household head was unwilling to cooperate, then the enumerator would pick another random direction, and select the closest dwelling in that direction.
► The enumerator would first introduce themselves to the household head and then ask how many people were at home of the gender they had been assigned to sample.
► The enumerator would use a random number generator to select somebody of that gender who was at home.[14]

Data Collection and Analysis

Enumerators worked in three-person teams comprising a field supervisor and a male-female enumerator pair. A member of the core research team traveled to each survey location, recruited enumerators from the local community, trained them in person, and then deployed them in their communities. This format limited COVID-19 spread by not bringing community-outsiders into contact with survey respondents.

Enumerators administered the survey anonymously on smartphones using KoboToolbox survey technology. This allowed a high-level of data protection and real-time monitoring of responses and enumerator daily work. The team analyzed the data in R and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Challenges

The most common challenge was that flooding or security issues precluded enumerators from reaching a selected map coordinate or following a walking path. In these situations, enumerators would travel as close as physically and safely possible to their planned point or path and make a note about why an obstruction had occurred. This allowed the team to evaluate where there were systematic biases in sampling. One clear bias is that the team could not reach respondents stranded by the flooding, although they reached many who had been displaced and reached dry ground. The team could also not safely sample respondents in rebel-held parts of Yei River County, or directly on the boundary of army barracks.

Another challenge was that people of different genders would leave their houses at different times of day. For example, men would often leave early to go to tea houses for the day in Bentiu. The enumerator teams varied their working hours in an attempt to reach respondents of both genders across an age range. If an enumerator under-sampled men or women they were assigned to reach, the field supervisor would conduct interviews to fill the gap.

Enumerators occasionally had to deviate from the sampling strategy. This report acknowledges in the analysis where these deviations affect data interpretation.

Ethics and COVID-19

This research has been overseen by the Yale Human Subjects Research Committee under Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol #2000026908. The enumerators were trained to recognize trauma signs and had long experience conducting interviews about similar issues. Respondents were asked to share their feelings at the end of each survey and had access to referral pathways for psychosocial support.

A COVID-19 protocol was developed with input from an independent panel of three experts on the ground in South Sudan and approved by a health-specific committee at Yale. The research team recruited, trained and deployed enumerators in a format that minimized contact between people traveling from outside the community and local populations. All activities were conducted outside and at social distance. The enumerators were masked and offered respondents masks and hand sanitizer. In addition, the consent scripts incorporated awareness-raising information about COVID-19. This approach allowed the team to use the project as a public-information-sharing vehicle to supplement the core survey objectives.

Findings

Sample Characteristics

The survey sample is comprised of 2,276 individuals across eight primary locations: Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Juba, Malakal, Pibor, Wau and Yei (see Table 1). The eight primary locations may be further broken down into 25 secondary locations (see Table 2) which include not just the towns themselves, but also IDP settlements and rural villages near several of the towns. Respondents were primarily urban based, with 64 percent residing in their homes in urban areas, 23 percent residing in IDP settlements in or near the urban areas, and 13 percent residing in rural areas. All respondents were South Sudanese nationals 18 years of age or older.

	Locations	State	Female		Male		Number (n)	Percent (pct.)
			n	pct.	n	pct.		
1	Aweil	NBEG	119	48.4	127	51.6	246	10.8
2	Bentiu/ Rubkona	Unity	208	49.9	209	50.1	417	18.3
3	Bor	Jonglei	119	50.2	118	49.8	237	10.4
4	Juba	CES	215	49.0	224	51.0	439	19.3
5	Malakal	Upper Nile	203	51.7	190	48.3	393	17.3
6	Pibor	Jonglei	47	67.1	23	32.9	70	3.1
7	Wau	WBEG	120	50.0	120	50.0	240	10.5
8	Yei	CES	136	58.1	98	41.9	234	10.3
		Total	**1,167**	**51.3**	**1,109**	**48.7**	**2,276**	**100.0**

Table 1: Primary Locations

Locations		Freq.	Pct.
1	Aweil town	191	8.4
2	Apada village	16	0.7
3	Kuom village	16	0.7
4	Nyalath village	23	1.0
5	Bentiu town	177	7.8
6	Rubkona town	47	2.1
7	Bentiu POC (transitioned)	193	8.5
8	Bor town	148	6.5
9	Bor POC (transitioned)	16	0.7
10	Anyidi village	16	0.7
11	Malek village	24	1.1
12	Pariak village	33	1.4
13	Juba town	347	15.2
14	Juba POC (transitioned)	92	4.0
15	Malakal town	222	9.8
16	Malakal POC (not transitioned)	171	7.5
17	Pibor town	70	3.1
18	Wau town	175	7.7
19	Wau POC (transitioned)	16	0.7
20	Atido village	18	0.8
21	Marial Bai village	18	0.8
22	Roc Dong village	13	0.6
23	Yei town	215	9.4
24	Konbeko village	9	0.4
25	Sobe village	10	0.4
	Total	**2,276**	**100**

Table 2: Secondary Locations

Other sample characteristics include the following:

▶ Gender – The enumerators did not reach exactly 50 percent women and men in each location due to non-responses and different working paces of enumerators. In Pibor, there were team absences which meant that the enumerator interviewing women reached more respondents than their colleagues. Without Pibor in the sample, women make up 51 percent of the overall sample and men 49 percent.

▶ Age range – 57 percent of respondents were age 18 to 35, 36 percent were age 36 to 55, and seven percent were older than 55.

▶ Marital status – 73 percent of respondents were married, six percent divorced or separated, five percent widowed, and 16 percent never married.

▶ Education – 32 percent of respondents did not have any formal schooling, 28 percent attended primary school, 29 percent secondary school, and 10 percent university.

▶ Occupation – 31 percent of respondents were unemployed, 19 percent worked in a small business, 17 percent worked as farmers, 11 percent were students, and nine percent were government employees.

▶ Socioeconomic status – 52 percent of respondents said their household's economic status was poorer than others in their community, 37 percent said it was the same, and 11 percent said it was better.

▶ Access to information technology – Indicative of both economic status and access to information, 25 percent of respondents did not own a phone, 53 percent owned a phone without internet, and 22 percent owned a smartphone with internet access. The analysis applies this indicator when appropriate to determine how people's access to information technology influence their views on peace.

▶ Ethnolinguistic groups – The sample included a total of 49 ethnolinguistic groups with the most populous being Dinka (32%), Nuer (26%), Shilluk (7%), Kakwa (7%), Luo (4%), Murle (3%), and Bari (3%).

Figure 2: Gender Distribution

Figure 3: Age Distribution
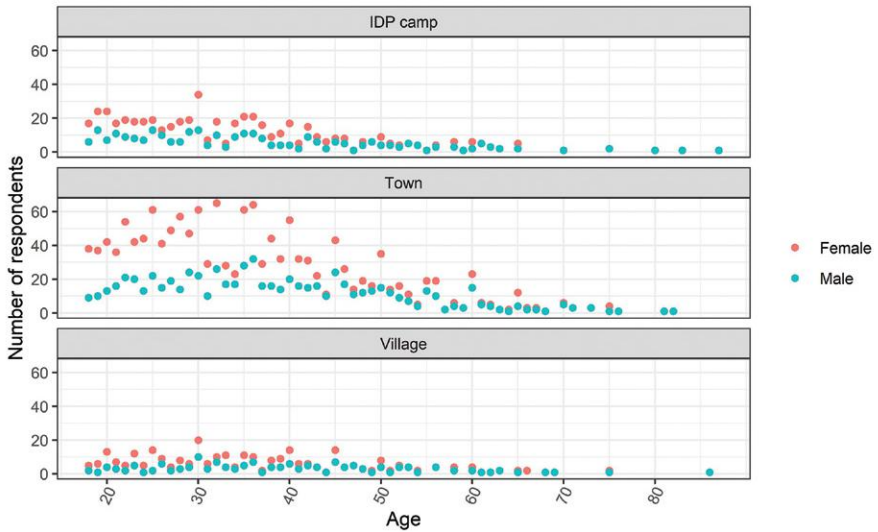
50 percent of respondents self-identified as IDPs, 20 percent as returnees, and 29 percent as neither IDPs nor returnees.[15] Of the respondents who had been displaced at some point in their lifetimes, 45 percent had been displaced three or more times, indicating high rates of multiple displacement.[16] In relation to the most recent experience with displacement, the vast majority of respondents were displaced from Unity (28%), Upper Nile (25%) and Central Equatoria (22%) states. Among returnees, the household head (84%) was most likely to return first and in 75 percent of the cases the person who returned first was male.

Figure 4: Self-Identified Displacement Status
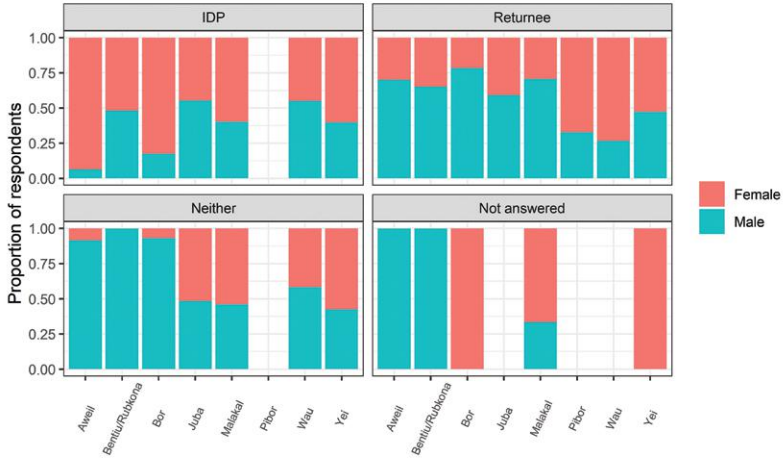
Figure 5: States from which IDP and Returnee Respondents Most Recently Displaced
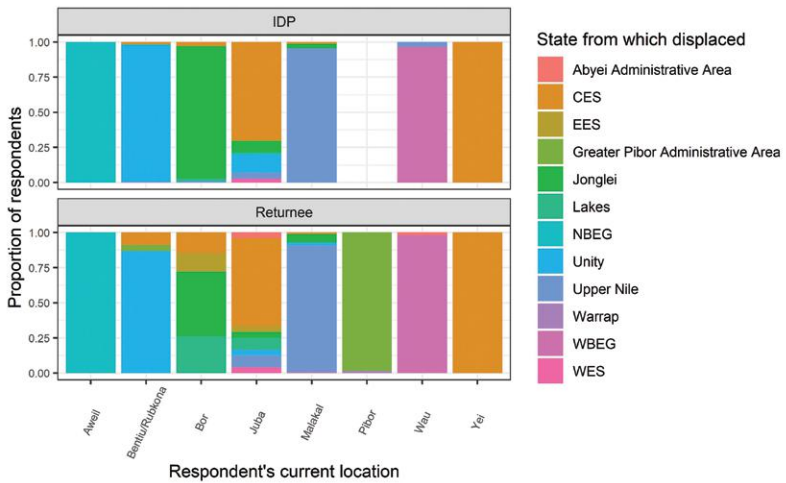
Everyday Peace Indicators

As noted in the Methodology section above, the survey incorporates the Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) approach, which is designed to reflect people's experiences in the peace and conflict setting on the ground. The perception of peace as an everyday reality is indispensable to people's trust and confidence in a political process. Opportunities to directly impact the political transition are severely limited for most of the population, but when people experience concrete 'peace dividends' in everyday life, for example through improved ability to move between states or counties or better access to goods in the market, it can still help to inform their expectations of and pressure on public authority. Indeed, peace processes can hardly be said to be successful if they are not able to impact people's experiences of safety and security.

The EPI concept was first developed by Roger Mac Ginty and Pamina Firchow in 2013.[17] It combines qualitative and quantitative elements in an attempt to have people develop bottom-up indicators of peace and safety that matter to them.[18] When indicators are developed in a top-down process by researchers or funding agencies, they run the risk of exploring a particular idea of peace and conflict that might be decoupled from empirical realities. The process of developing the indicators also shapes how researchers understand and define peace, thereby helping to safeguard against researcher bias. For this reason, the approach has also become increasingly popular with humanitarian and development agencies in recent years.[19] However, due to the significant time and resources necessary to properly implement the approach, these efforts often remain limited in scope.

In this survey, the EPI approach was applied in a three-step process. In the first stage, qualitative data was gathered in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to explore how people in a variety of South Sudanese communities identify and experience peace.[20] From these responses, researchers developed a number of specific EPIs that were deployed in a survey pretest in mid-2021. In this iteration of the survey, respondents were asked five EPI questions:

- ▶ EPI1: How safe do you feel using the main roads between towns?
- ▶ EPI2: How safe do you feel moving in the countryside?
- ▶ EPI3: How safe would you feel leaving your house at night to tend to a neighbor who needs something urgently?
- ▶ EPI4: How safe do you feel going to buy goods in the market?
- ▶ EPI5: How safe do you feel participating in cultural activities, such as dances or other celebrations?

Respondents were also asked how they would feel if they met government or opposition soldiers near their homes.

To explore the development of these indicators over time, these questions were combined with two 'anchoring events': South Sudan's independence in 2011 and the signing of R-ARCSS in 2018. The survey pretest confirmed that people, by and large, were able to recollect these events and to assess the questions from memory. In doing so, the results give an indication of how 'everyday peace' has developed since independence.

In addition to analyzing the indicators separately, this report aggregates responses to the five questions into a single indicator of everyday peace. This was performed by numbering responses (1 for 'very unsafe' up to 5 for 'very safe') and averaging across the five indicators for each respondent at each anchoring event. These averages were then translated back into a Likert scale reflecting a general feeling about safety (<= 1.0 for 'very unsafe, 1.0 < and <= 2.0 for 'unsafe', and so on). Some figures also compare a positive experience of everyday peace to a negative one. Respondents are classified as experiencing 'positive EPI' when their average response is >3, and 'negative EPI' when their average response to the EPI question is <= 3.

Overall, the indicators show a substantial decrease in the perception of everyday peace since independence. The biggest change was apparent with respect to the perceived safety of moving through the countryside.

Everyday Peace Indicators disaggregated by question and environment:

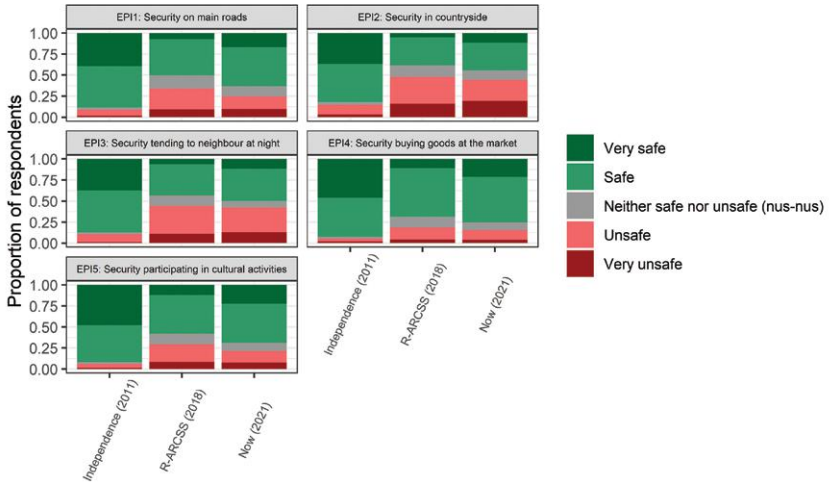Figure 6: EPI Findings - Urban Respondents

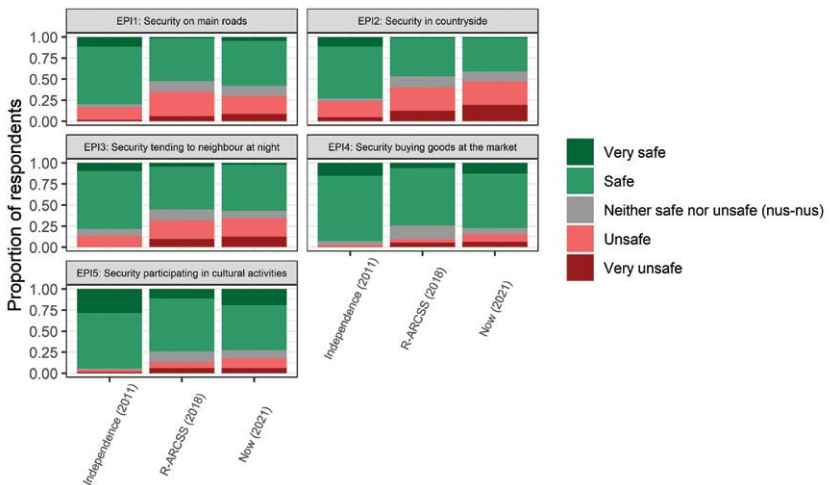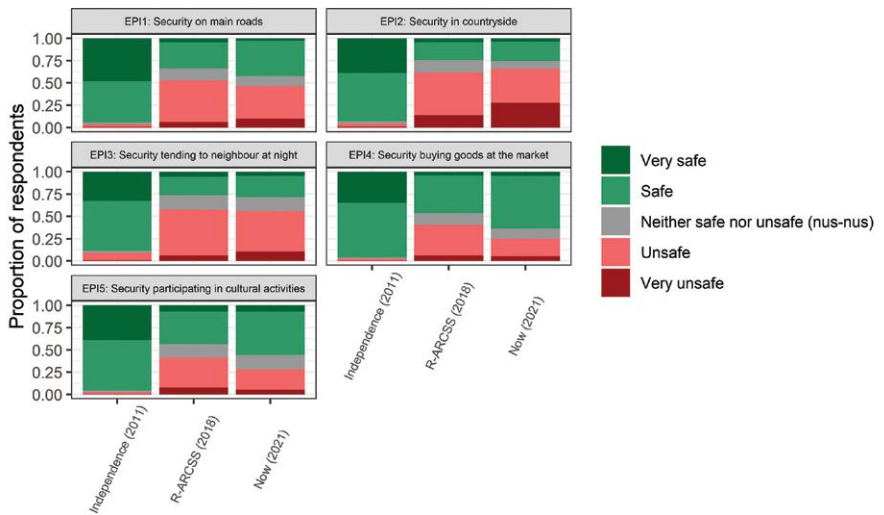

Figure 7: EPI Findings - Rural Respondents

Figure 8: EPI Responses - IDP camp respondents

General perceptions of safety expressed through an Everyday Peace Indicator average for each respondent:

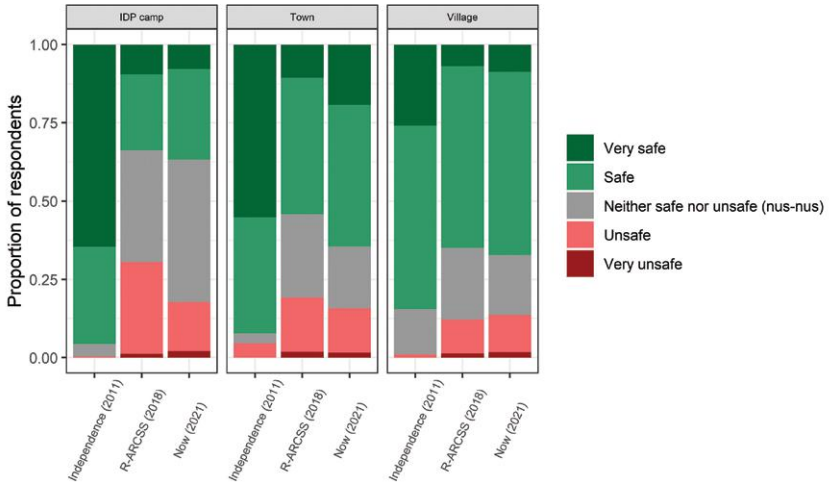Figure 9: Average response to EPI questions - by environment

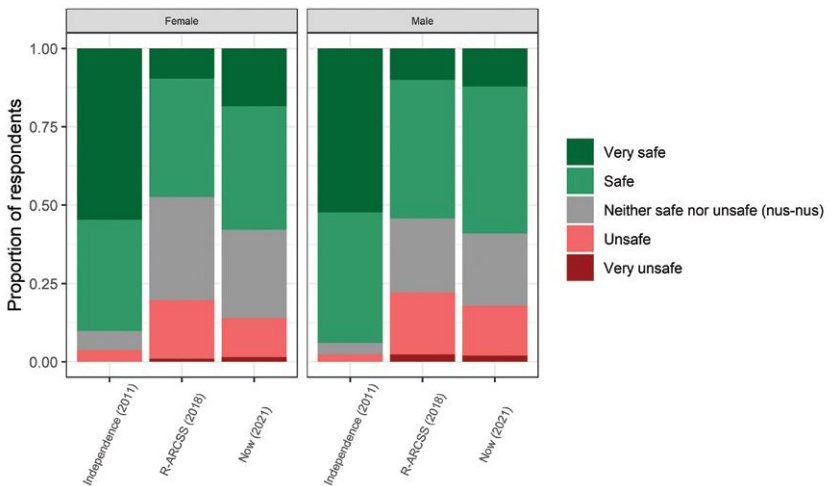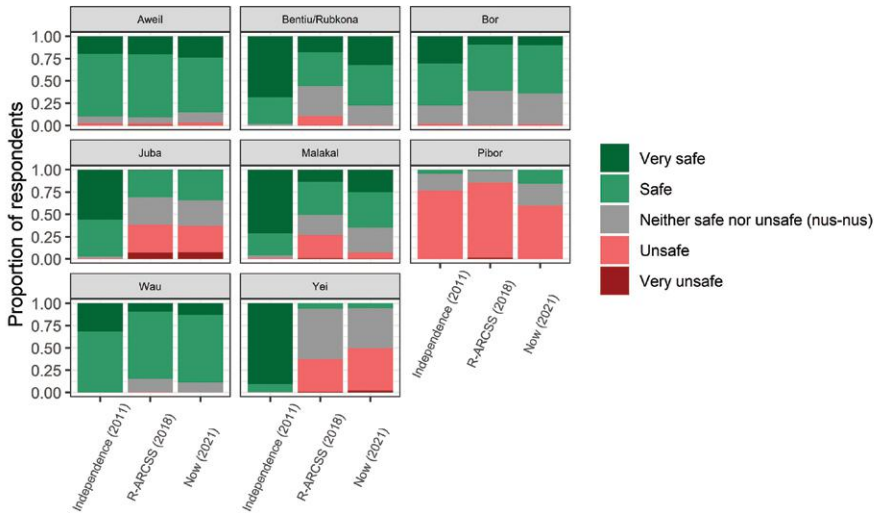Figure 10: Average response to EPI questions - by gender

Figure 11: Average response to EPI questions - by location

The indicators also show that the overall perception of everyday peace has slightly improved since the signing of the R-ARCSS. Of particular concern are EPI2 and EPI3 among respondents in rural areas. Here, no significant improvement is apparent between the signing of the R-ARCSS and the current situation. Even more, the perceived danger of moving in the countryside at the signing of the R-ARCSS has become substantially stronger now, which points to the difficulties of translating the developments in the national peace process into sustainable mitigation processes for local conflict settings.

At a more granular level, the results show a diverse complexion of everyday peace realities. Gender is among the factors that substantially influence people's views. While it is a widely acknowledged fact that security is gendered, the findings show that women do not always perceive the situation as more insecure than men. Rather, situations of insecurity reflect the gendered division of labor and associated risks. Male respondents consider the movement elements (EPI1 and EPI2) as more risky than female respondents, while female respondents perceive more insecurity in household related tasks (such as leaving the house at night and buying goods at the market, EPI3/EPI4) (see Figure 12 and Figure 13).
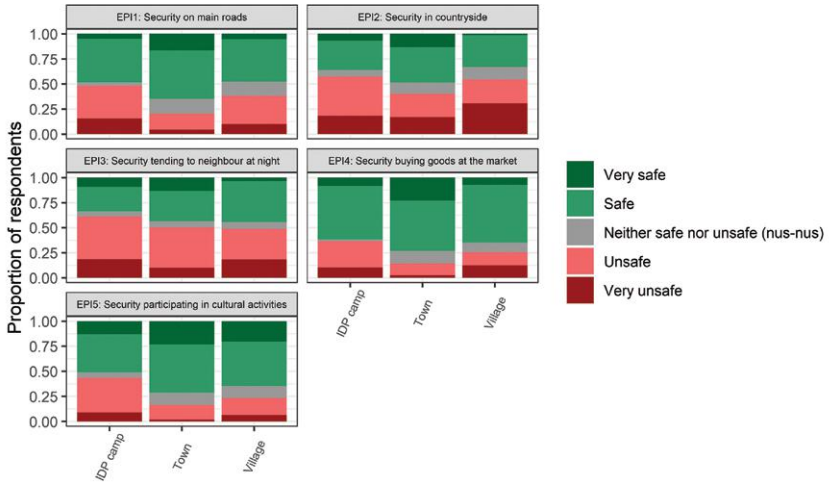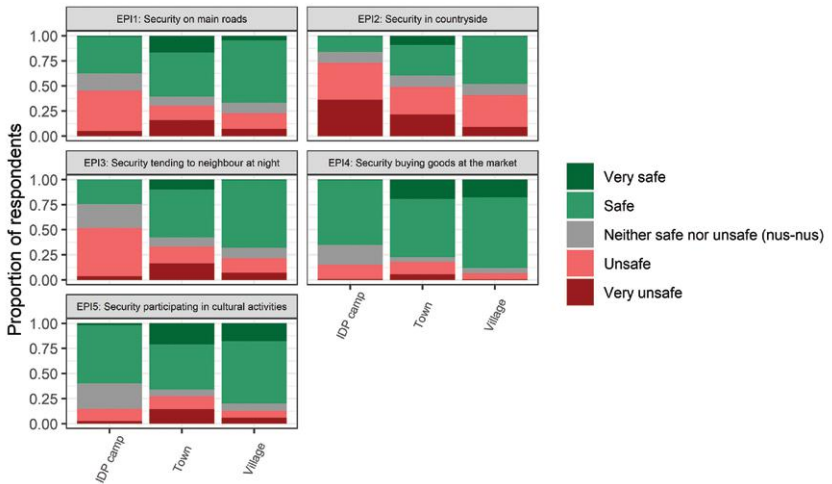
Figure 12: EPI Findings - Women in 2021

Figure 13: EPI Findings - Men in 2021

The exposure to armed forces was particularly relevant to perceptions of insecurity among male respondents (see Figure 14). 48 percent of male respondents said they would feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' meeting government soldiers near their homes compared to 40 percent of female respondents, which points to the importance of understanding gendered security needs from the perspective of both the male and female populations. Both genders, however, said they would feel more safe meeting government soldiers as compared to opposition soldiers.

Figure 14: At present, how safe would you feel meeting a government or opposition soldier near your home?
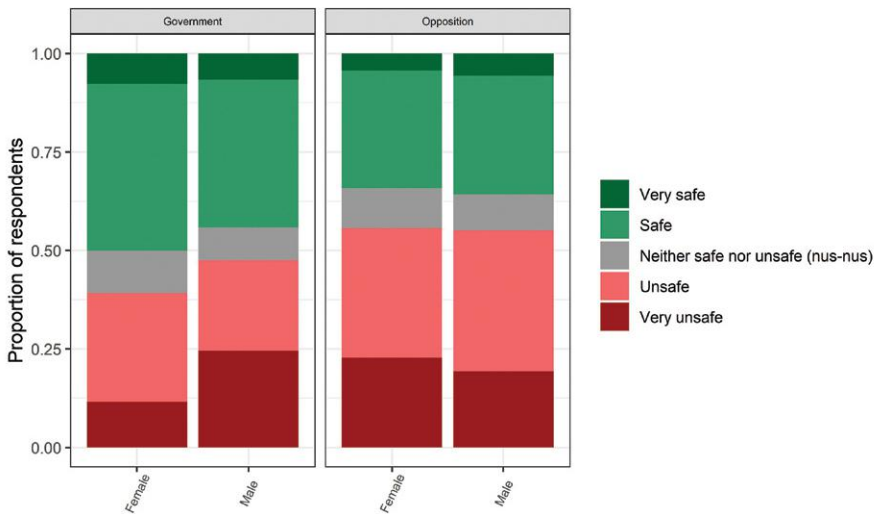
Another substantial difference relates to the geographical context. While this overall finding is hardly surprising, its implications are. Perceptions of everyday peace in Juba are far worse than in the rest of the country, even though Juba could be seen as objectively more secure than many of the other survey locations (see Figure 15). Likely, these perceptions reflect the chronic insecurity on most major roads outside of Juba, which often leads to short term displacement into Juba, and the increasing levels of violent criminality, often attributed to 'unknown gunmen', in the capital city. Movement in rural areas is seen as a particular area of concern for respondents in Juba, 77 percent of whom said they feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' moving in the countryside.
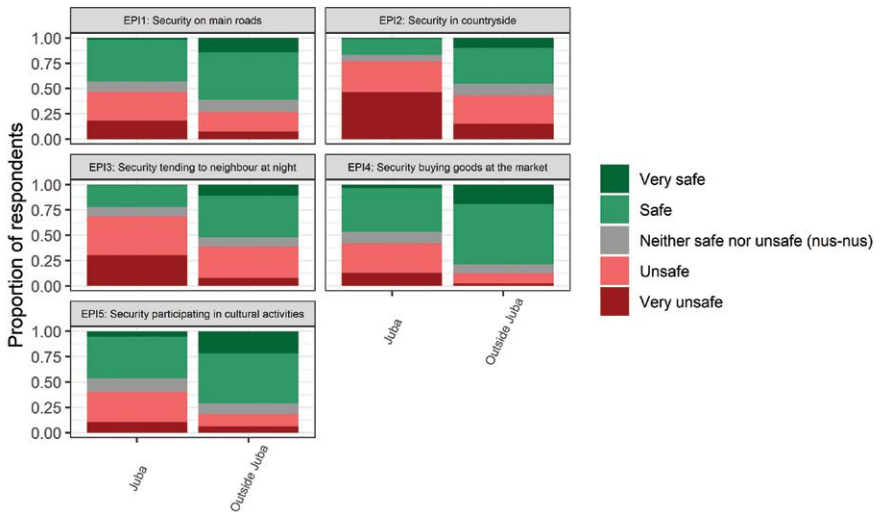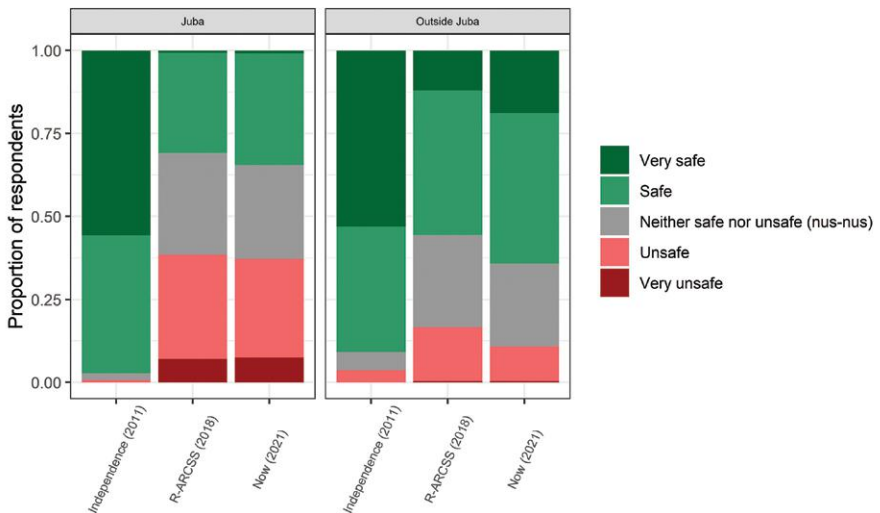
Figure 15: EPI findings within and outside Juba

Figure 16: Perceptions of everyday peace averaged across indicators inside and outside Juba

Respondent perceptions of exposure to armed groups also differ significantly between Juba and the aggregated responses across the other survey locations. This is particularly apparent with respect to their perceived safety around opposition forces, where 80 percent of respondents in Juba said they would feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' meeting opposition soldiers as compared to 62 percent who said the same about government forces (Figure 17). However, this discrepancy is not entirely surprising considering that the presence of significant numbers of armed opposition soldiers in Juba has been confined to a few, mostly violent, episodes of the war. When viewed against this background, these perceptions are likely not so much a reflection of current experiences as of this particular history.

Figure 17 At present, how safe would you feel if you met government/opposition soldiers near your home? (Inside versus outside Juba)
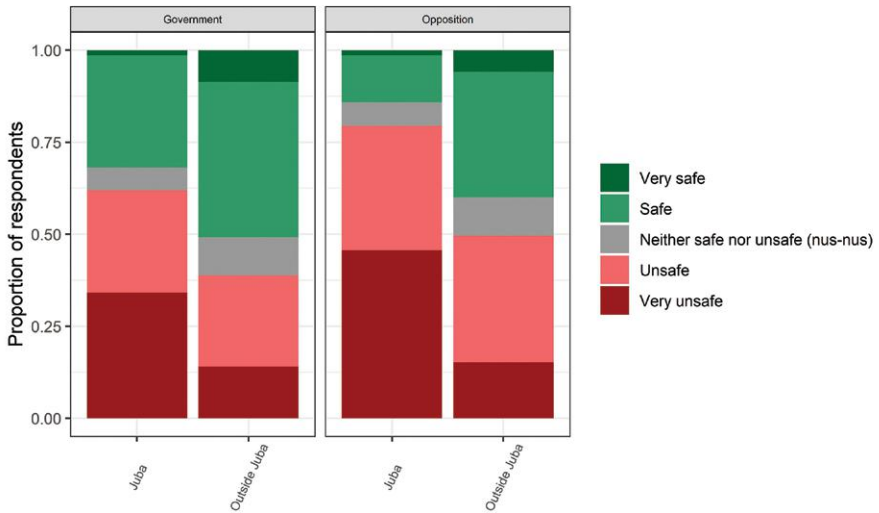
The perception of everyday security is an essential part of everyday peace. As an additional indicator in this respect, respondents were asked about two types of threatening events: how frequently they heard gunshots at night, and how frequently their community experienced robbery and looting in the past month. Figure 18 shows the results, differentiated between the IDP/POC sites and the rest of the country. Overall, the security level is certainly poor, but perhaps better than often portrayed. About 85 percent of respondents overall, and more than 90 percent in the IDP/PoC sites 'never' or 'very rarely' experience gunshots at night. People's exposure to robbery and looting, however, was substantially worse. On this point, the difference between IDP/POC sites and the rest of the country was significant. 62 percent of respondents in IDP/POC sites said that there had been cases of robbery or looting in their community 'a few times' or 'many times' over the past month.

The picture, nevertheless, is diverse. In general, the everyday security situation in the IDP/POC sites as reflected in these two indicators is not worse than the rest of the country, which suggests that the applied POC approach, by and large, has been working, at least for that portion of the displaced population that has managed to access the camps. It remains to be seen how the transitioning of the POC sites may affect that situation, and it will be interesting to trace how perceptions may shift over the remaining two surveys in 2022. The differences among IDP/POC sites are also vast. While the security situation in the two IDP sites outside of Juba is very poor, the IDP camps in Wau, which is in the process of disaggregation, and in Bor are widely seen as safe. These findings point towards the shortcomings of a universal policy towards the IDP/POC sites and the need for differentiated approaches that reflect the specific context. The perceived security also very much impacts the general perceptions of peace and conflict in the various locations (see the section on Perceptions of Peace below).

Figure 18: This month, how frequently have you heard gunshots at night? (By environment)
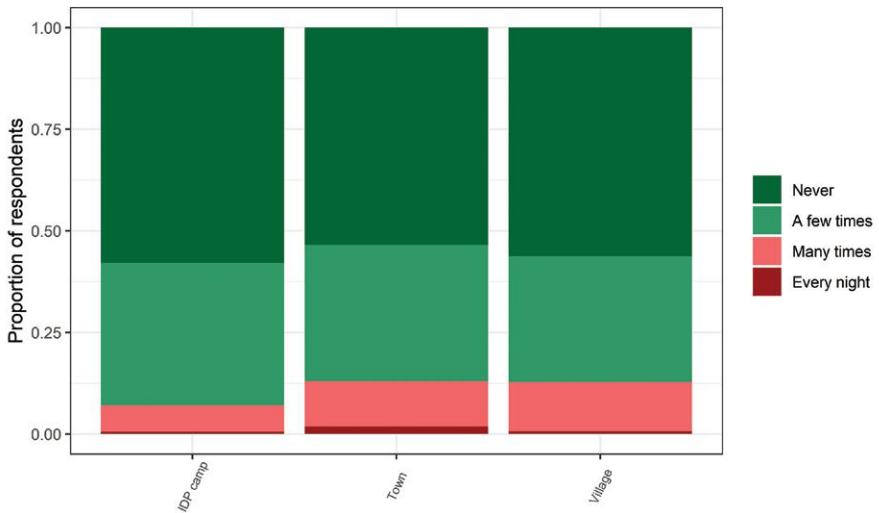
Figure 19: This month, how frequently did you hear gunshots at night? (By location)
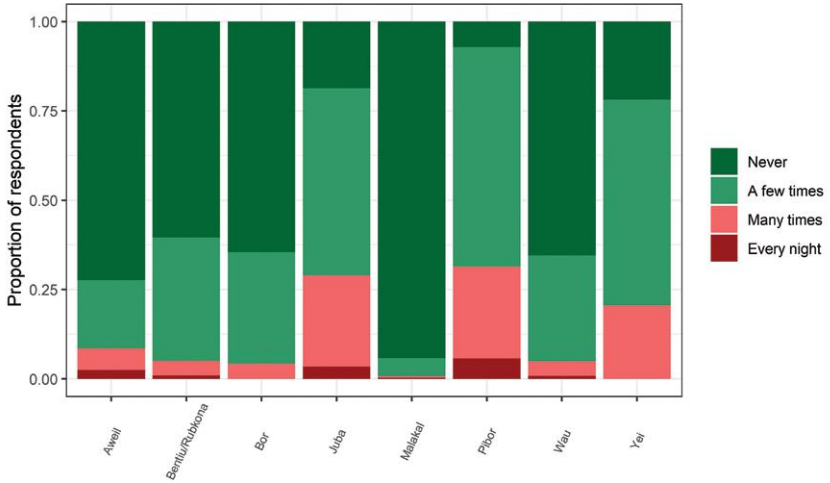

Figure 20: This month, how frequently have there been cases of robbery or looting in your community? (By environment)
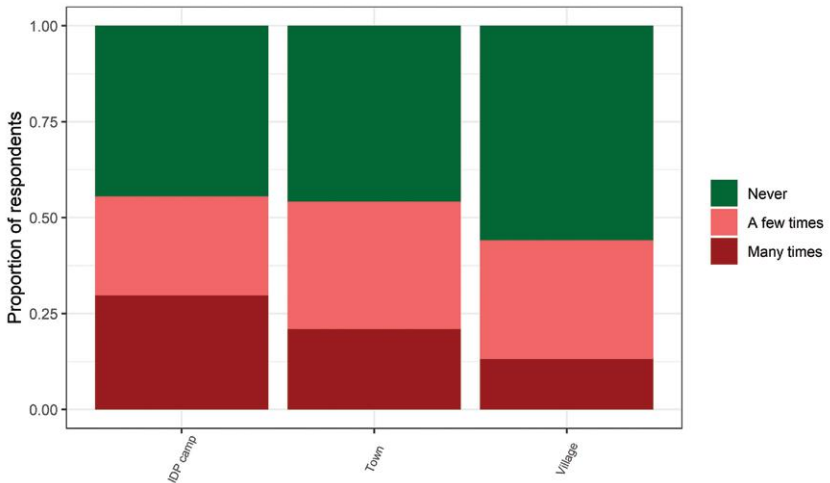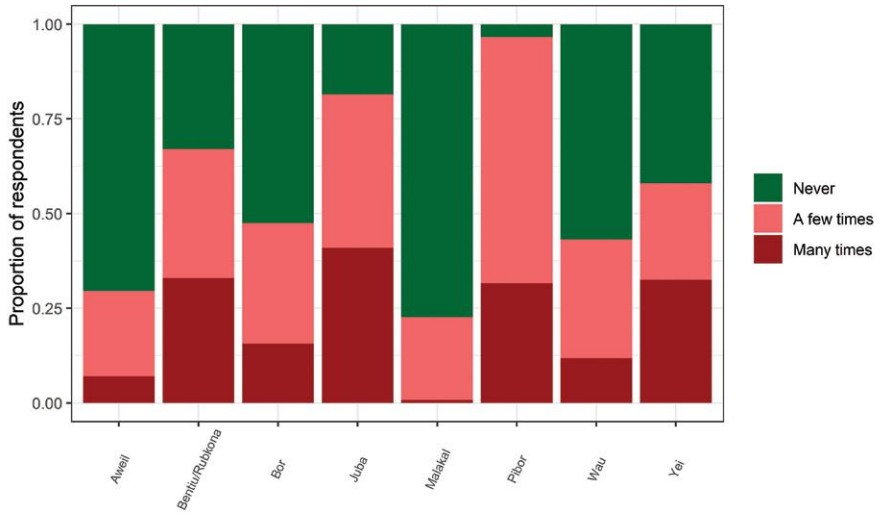
Figure 21: This month, how frequently have there been cases of robbery or looting in your community? (By location)

Conflict Trends

Conflict dynamics in South Sudan do not easily lend themselves to generalizations.[21] National conflict may at times be driven by political interests at the state or local level, and grassroots conflict may involve acts of violence that disrupt livelihoods across large parts of the country. Policymakers must make sense of this complex and layered conflict landscape both in how they define the problem that they are seeking to resolve as well as how they respond to changes in conflict dynamics over time.

The IGAD mediation's strategy mostly approached the conflict as a power struggle among leaders in the SPLM that erupted in open combat in Juba in December 2013 before spreading throughout the Greater Upper Nile Region. This framing prioritized the interests of the political leadership while downplaying some of the continuities between this war and previous wars. Had the mediation managed to secure a speedy resolution to the political crisis and contained the conflict, the strategy may have been more successful. But as time went on, the national conflict became increasingly intertwined with subnational conflicts in unpredictable ways.

At a macro level, the survey data shows the broad trends of the conflict, with violent episodes peaking in 2013 and 2016. Respondents indicate that 2013 and 2016 are the years in which there had been the most conflict between communities in South Sudan (see Figure 22) and the years when people felt the most despair (see Figure 24).

Figure 22: In what year since independence has there been the most/least amount of conflict between communities in South Sudan?
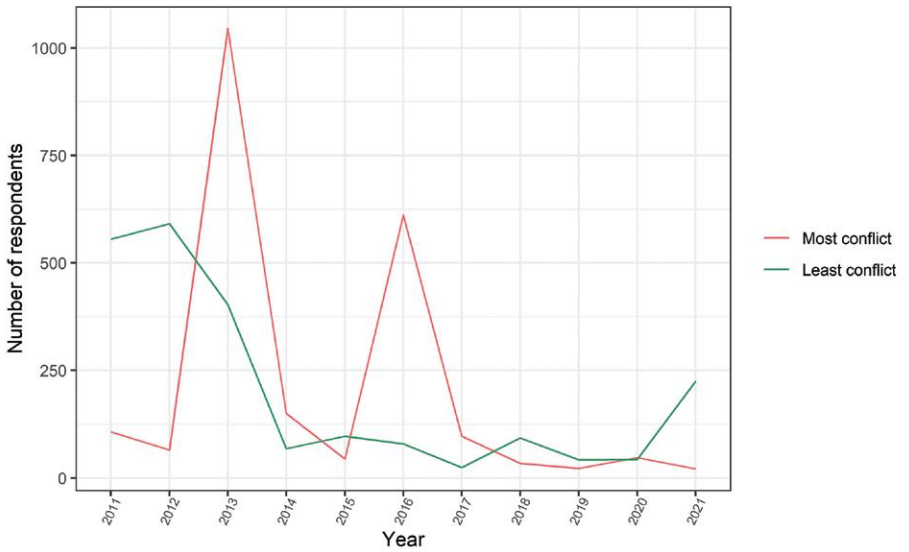
Figure 23: In what year since independence has there been the most/least amount of conflict between communities in South Sudan? (By location)
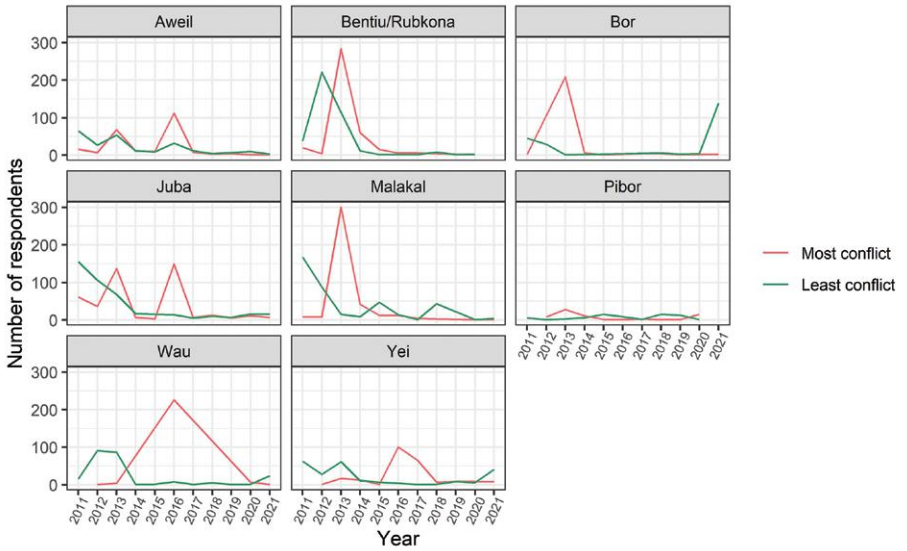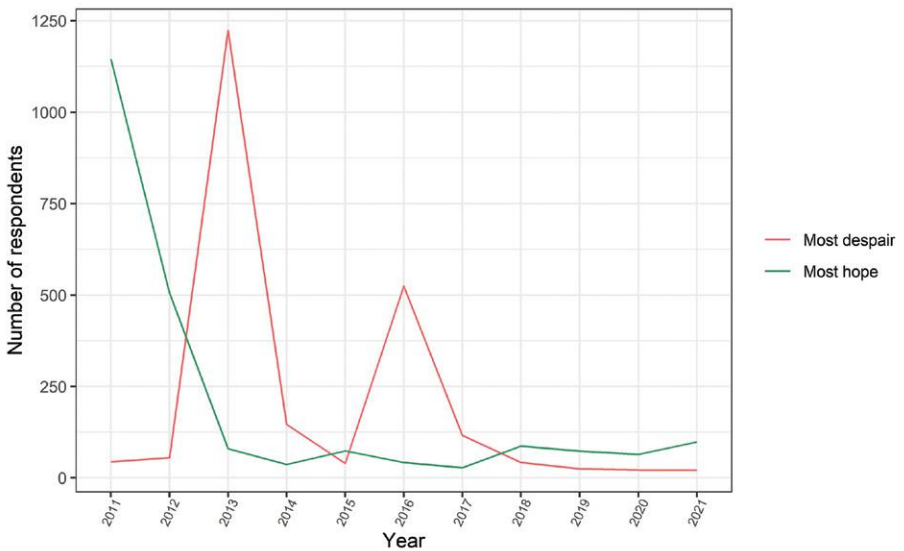
Figure 24: In what year since independence have you felt the most hope/despair?

However, the continuities with preexisting conflicts at the subnational level were also apparent. 62 percent of respondents said that their community experienced challenging periods of conflict between independence and the outbreak of violence in Juba in December 2013. The majority (78%) of these people attributed the cause of the violence to 'national politics' (see Figure 25). The continuity of conflict even during times of relative peace suggests that policymakers should avoid looking at peace as something that arises at a given moment in time and disappears during times of war and instead adopt an analytical framework that recognizes the gradations of peace and conflict that coexist and interact in an ongoing manner. Such an approach requires a longer-term perspective than that which typically governs a large humanitarian intervention such as that of South Sudan and a willingness to engage in conflict transformation efforts as a means of effective change, not in the more sequenced manner that such programming is typically conceived.

Figure 25: What was the main cause of violence from Independence to December 2013?
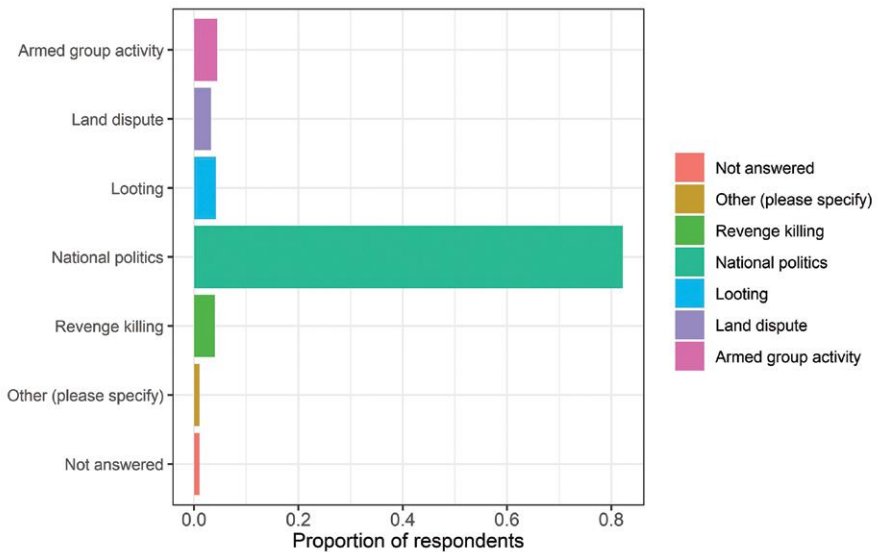
Disaggregating the data by survey locations also demonstrates how trends vary in different parts of the country. Respondents in Yei and Wau, for example, viewed conflict to be relatively low until 2016 when both locations experienced a dramatic spike in violence. Conflict in Yei also persisted beyond the signing of the permanent ceasefire in Khartoum in June 2017 while it reduced dramatically in all other locations. Responses in Bor, on the other hand, reflect the opposite trend with violence spiking in 2013 before falling off thereafter. Pibor is the only location that reported a significant spike in perceptions of conflict in 2020, reflecting high levels of subnational conflict in the area in recent years.

Another complexity of conflict dynamics in South Sudan is the way in which language can be used to depoliticize or downplay acts of violence. Conflicts may be reduced to cattle-raiding, revenge killings, or intercommunal violence even when they involve multiple armed groups of varying levels of organization and are being used to advance the political or military objectives of people at higher levels of government. Any long-term strategy for conflict transformation in South Sudan should be sensitive to these complexities and must find a way of disincentivizing the instrumentalization of conflict by political and military elites.

As a first step towards parsing citizen perspectives on the different types of conflict that they grapple with, the survey sought to assess respondent views on three different types of conflict: cattle-raiding, land disputes, and tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers. Across the sample, considerable numbers of respondents saw the three types of conflict to be a 'very big' or a 'big' problem in their area, with more people seeing cattle-raiding (58%) or land disputes (58%) as a 'big' or 'very big' problem as compared to tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers (41%) (see Figure 26).

Across survey locations, however, the prevalence of the different types of conflict varied widely. The perception that cattle-raiding was a 'big' or 'very big' problem was most pronounced in Bor (98%), Bentiu POC (98%), Bentiu/Rubkona towns (93%), and Pibor (82%) (see Figure 27). Areas where there were smaller concentrations of people who traditionally follow a pastoralist livelihood, such as Yei and Wau, predictably saw it as less of a problem. Interestingly, respondents in Juba saw cattle-raiding as a significant issue. These views probably do not refer to the situation in the city itself, but rather to places such as Luri and Mangala, where cattle-related conflict has become an issue in recent years, often causing people to flee to the city seeking refuge. Respondents in Aweil (57%) were the most likely of all the locations to say cattle-raiding is 'not a problem at all', despite high concentrations of pastoralist communities in the area. Understanding why some areas defy expectations and are resistant to conflict is as important to building peace as understanding why other areas struggle with chronic insecurity.

Figure 26: How much of a problem is cattle-raiding/land disputes/tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers in this area?
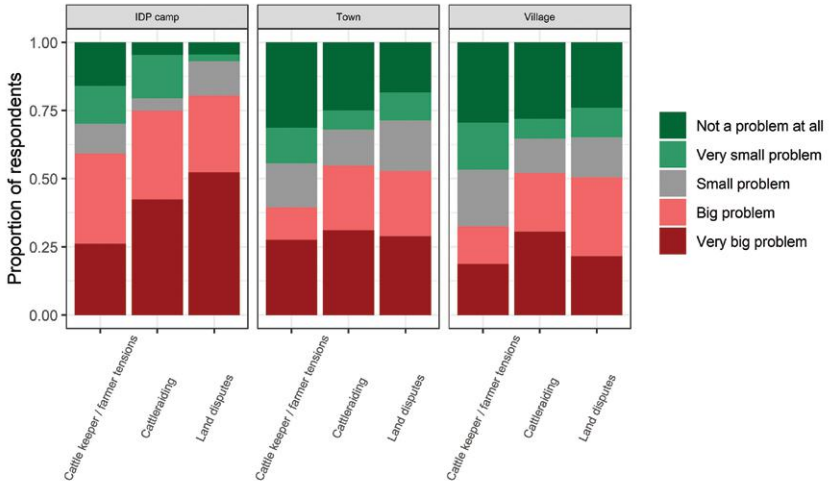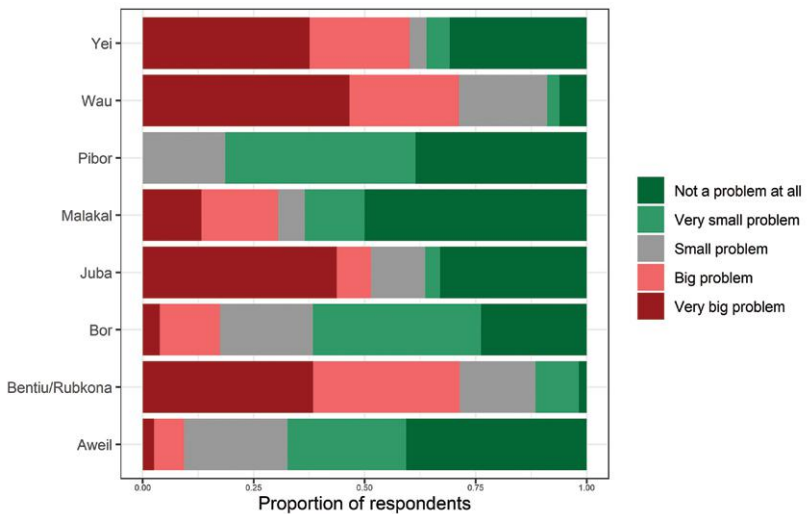

Figure 27: How much of a problem is cattle-raiding in this area? (By location)

The severity of land disputes also varied across the survey locations though in subtly different ways. For example, people in the former POCs perceived land disputes to be particularly pronounced, with 99 percent of respondents in Malakal POC, 95 percent of respondents in Juba POC and 94 percent of respondents in Wau POC saying that land disputes were either a 'big' or 'very big' problem in their area. Across the sample, IDPs (64%) were far more likely to identify land disputes as a major problem than returnees (53%) or individuals who were neither IDPs nor returnees (52%). Respondents in IDP camps (79%) were also more likely to identify land disputes as a major problem than respondents in towns (53%) or villages (50%) (Figure 31). Twenty-one percent of respondents in Juba town and 22 percent of respondents in Malakal town said land issues were 'not a problem at all'. These responses reflect the complexities of urban displacement problems associated with secondary occupation and the grabbing of land belonging to IDPs during their prolonged displacement. The disparate impacts that land disputes are having on populations in these areas reflect the impact that prolonged displacement has had in terms of marginalizing populations and entrenching the harms that they experienced due to the conflict.

Regarding tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers, perceptions of the scale of the problem are most pronounced in Wau town, Wau POC, Bentiu/Rubkona towns, and Bentiu POC, where more than two-thirds of respondents consider it to be a 'big' or 'very big' problem. While Wau has stood out as a hotspot for this type of conflict due to fighting between predominantly Luo communities in Jur River County and predominantly Dinka communities from Tonj that reached its peak in 2019 before subsiding in recent years, the problems in Bentiu and Rubkona are a bit more surprising. One possible factor to account for the prevalence of these disputes in Bentiu/Rubkona could be the historic flooding that the region has experienced in recent years and the impact that it has had in terms of shifting conflict patterns. Disaggregating the data by ethnicity further substantiates some of these trends. Among the seven most populous ethnolinguistic groups in the sample, perceptions that tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers were 'big' or 'very big' were most pronounced among the Nuer (63%), Luo (62%), Kakwa (57%), Bari (44%) and Chollo/Shilluk (40%) (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: How much of a problem is tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers in this area?
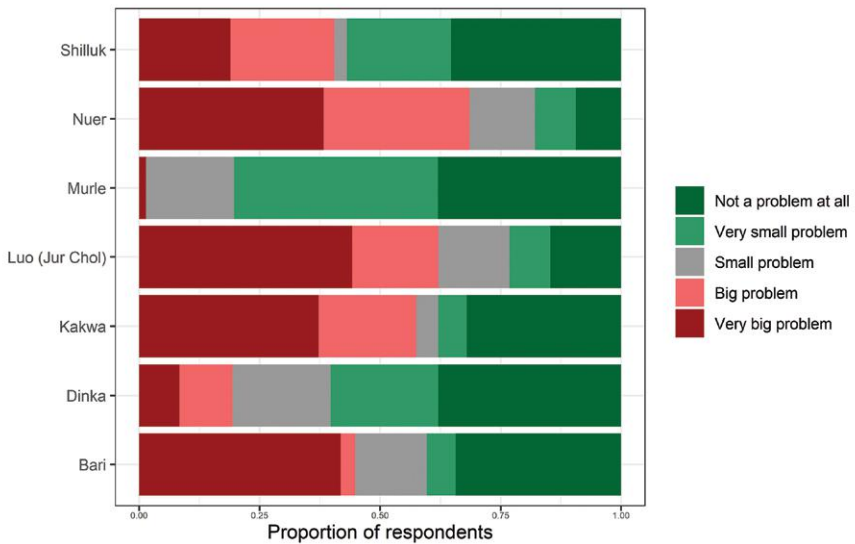
When asked in which years since December 2013 the three types of subnational conflict were most serious, responses show a general trend of increasing conflicts reaching a peak around the signing of the R-ARCSS in 2018. Cattle-raiding and land disputes dropped off after that and tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers increased for a few years before dropping off in 2020/21 (see Figure 29). Interestingly, these trends diverge from the trends for perceptions of when conflict among communities was most/least (Figure 22) in that they lag behind the peak in 2013/14 that was apparent in latter data. With the intensification of the national conflict in 2016, the three categories of subnational conflict appear to increase in a parallel manner and then remain relatively high through 2021. The data can be explained by a shift in military tactics that took place in the 2016-18 period with the parties increasingly recruiting community-level armed groups as proxy militia. The subnational violence then persisted after the signing of the R-ARCSS while the more overt violence among signatories to the peace agreement receded.

Figure 29: Since December 2013, in which years was cattle-raiding/land disputes/tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers in this area most serious?
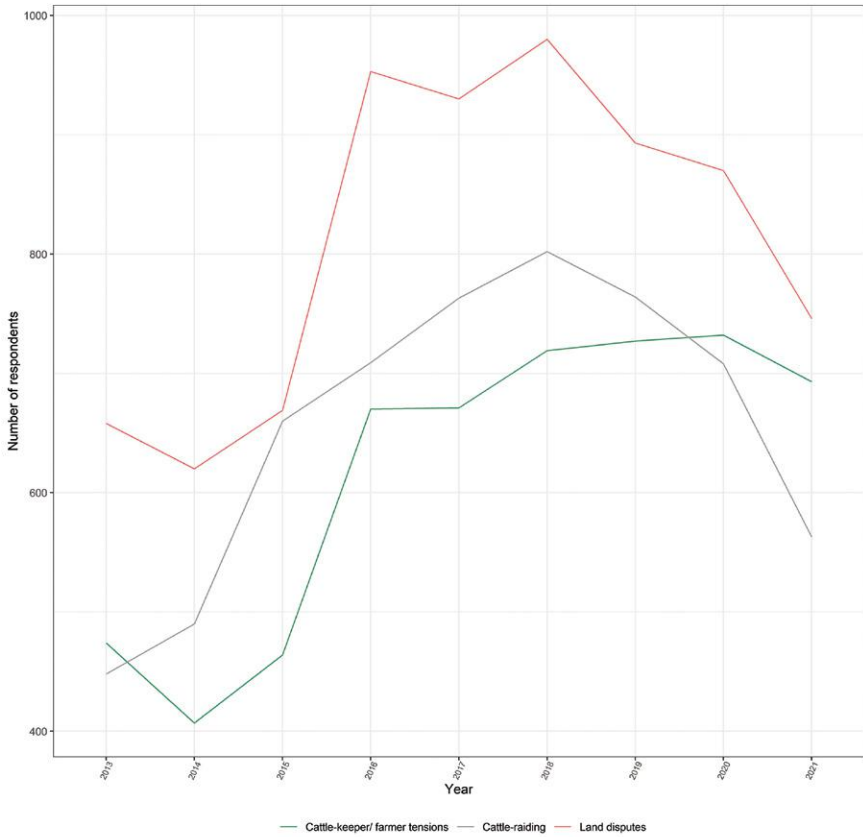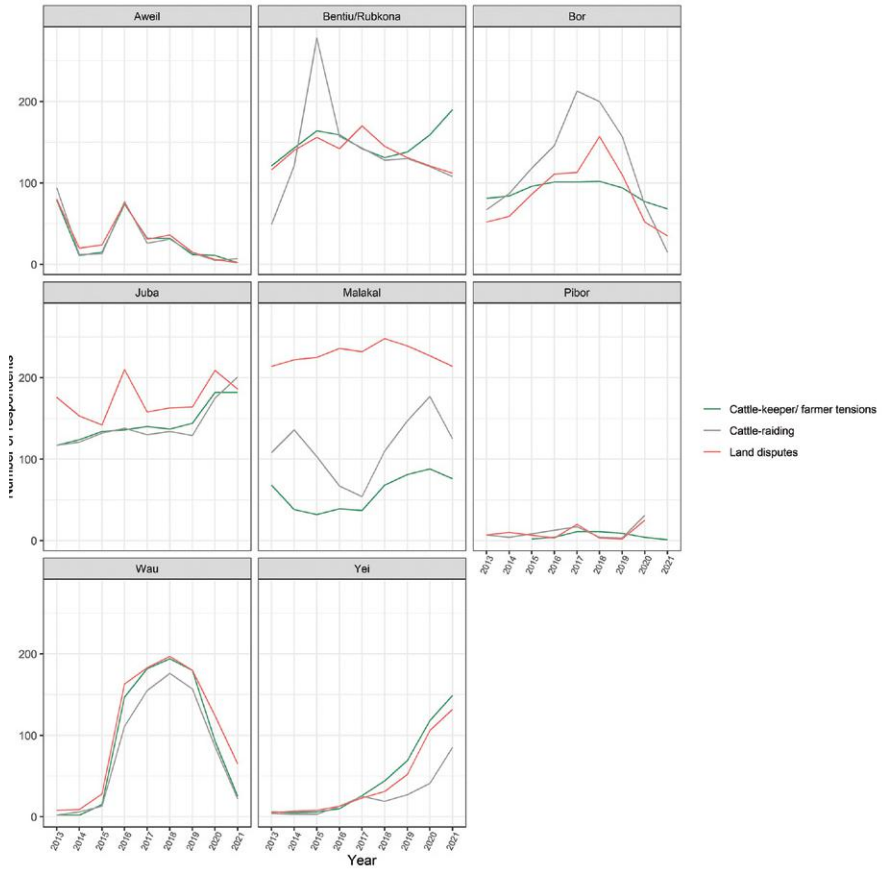
Figure 30: Since December 2013, in which years was cattle-raiding/land disputes/tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers in this area most serious? (By location)

In terms of how they perceive the local or national character of the subnational conflicts, survey respondents overall were more likely to impute more national characteristics to land disputes while emphasizing the more local nature of tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers (see Figure 31). However, significant divergences from these overall trends were apparent among subsets of the sample. For example, IDPs were twice as likely as other respondents in urban areas and three times as likely as respondents in rural areas to say that land disputes in their areas were mainly about national issues (see Figure 32). On the one hand, this may reflect the specific problems that IDPs in the POCs confront in terms of land grabbing and the sale of landholdings that they left behind to third parties.[22] On the other hand, the prevalence of this viewpoint among IDPs may reflect the politicization of the narrative that local conflicts are primarily driven by national politics, particularly among people in the POCs.

Figure 31: Since December 2013, has cattle-raiding/land disputes/tensions between cattle-keepers and farmers in this area been mainly about national issues, mainly about local issues, or equally about national and local issues?
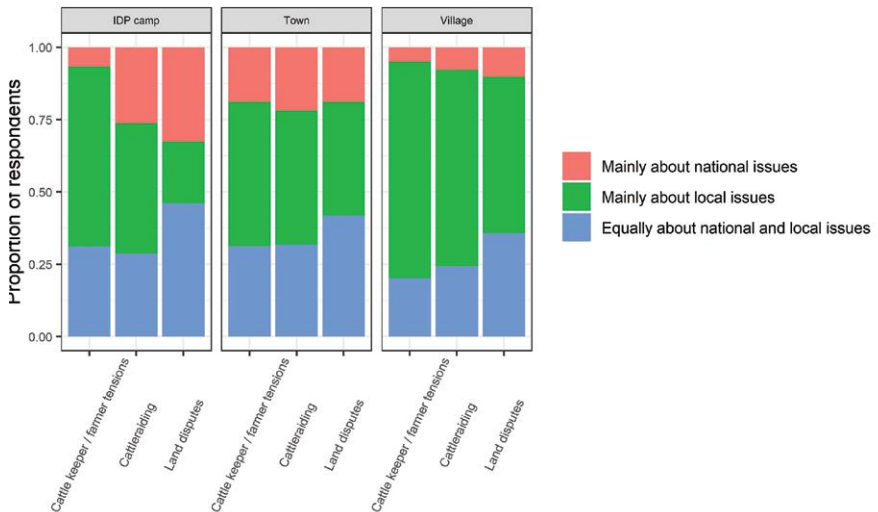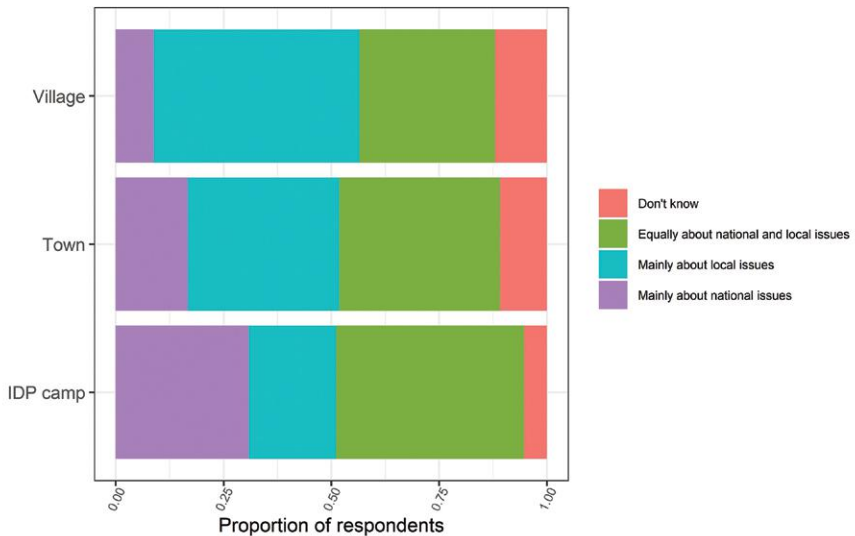
Figure 32: Since December 2013, have land disputes in this area been mainly about national issues, mainly about local issues, or equally about national and local issues?

Lastly, perceptions of the relative severity of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) between the current conflict and the 22-year war also demonstrate differences among demographic groups on how they understand broader conflict trends. Overall, three-quarters of respondents thought that CSRV was more common in the current war (see Figure 33). However, perceptions differed across genders with women (12%) twice as likely as men (6%) to say that CRSV was more common during the 22-year war. Responses also varied geographically, with respondents in the transitioned Wau POC (25%) and Aweil (22%) more likely to say that CRSV was more common during the 22-year war and respondents in Pibor (50%) most likely to say that it was the same in both wars.

Figure 33: Do you think conflict-related sexual violence was more common during the current war (2013-present), during the 22- year war (1983-2005), or that it was the same during both wars?
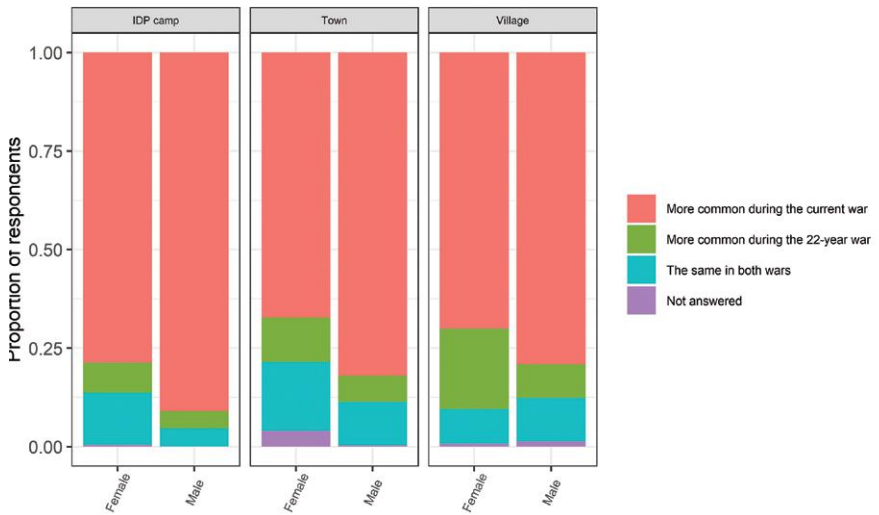
Perceptions of Peace

As this report argues, citizen perceptions of peace and the peace process are critical to any sustainable transition from conflict. When people do not believe that a peace process is making progress, it substantially lowers its chances of doing so. These beliefs, again, correlate with people's perceptions of everyday peace and their knowledge of the peace process.

One striking finding concerns the strong correlation between respondent perceptions of peace and their trust in the peace process. Indeed, perceptions of everyday peace are the by far most significant factor in determining people's views on the 'big peace', or a sustainable resolution to the conflict that erupted in December 2013. Everyday peace in this regard is far more influential than gender or awareness of the peace process. Worse perceptions of everyday peace strongly correlate with more pessimistic views on the prospects for peace in general.

Figure 34: Is South Sudan currently at peace?
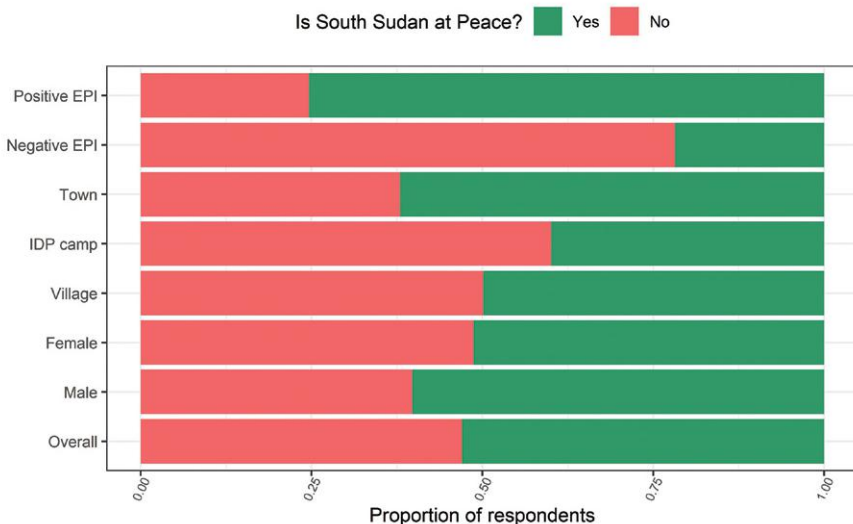
The detailed picture is, again, highly diverse across locations. While some locations, like Aweil, respond very positively to this question, places like the Juba IDP sites and the Malakal POC camp show an alarming rate of negative responses. This also suggests a significant impact from political tensions on perceptions of peace, since the latter two locations are subject to significant political contestation, especially along ethnopolitical lines.

Figure 35: Is South Sudan currently at peace? (By location)
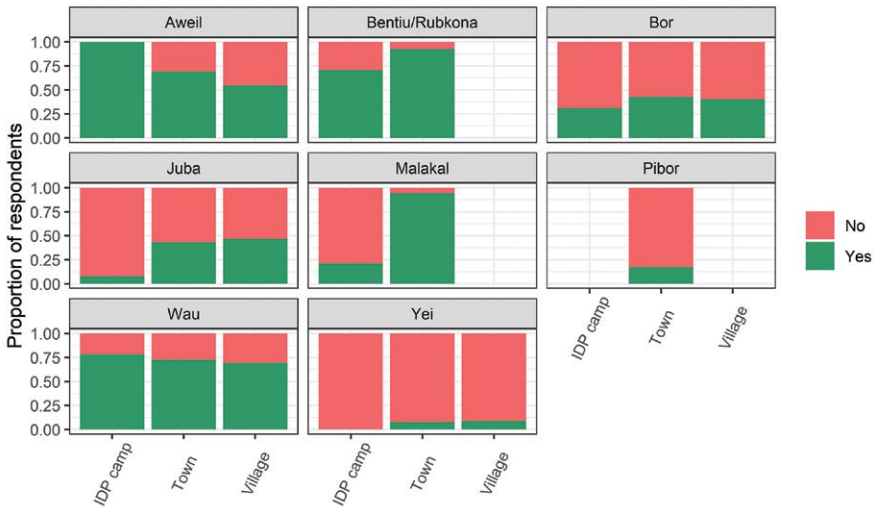
Overall, the general awareness among respondents of the IGAD-led peace process is 65 percent. Given the limited access to media and information in South Sudan, these relatively high levels of awareness are a sign of considerable public interest in the peace process. However, these findings need to be read against the urban bias of the survey. Broader surveying in rural areas, especially in difficult-to-access locations, was not possible in this first iteration of the survey due to the logistical constraints of the rainy season and ongoing insecurity in parts of the country. While it has been possible to access some displaced rural populations in towns, especially in the northern parts of South Sudan, people living in more remote rural areas who have more restricted access to media and political information are underrepresented in the survey.

Awareness of and the extent to which people are informed about the peace process were substantially gendered. This was not only demonstrated by the overall trends (72 percent of male respondents were 'very aware' or 'aware', in contrast to only slightly 58 percent of female), it was also confirmed by feedback from enumerators who reported that female respondents would often refer to gaps in their knowledge about political issues, especially with respect to the peace process.

Figure 36: How aware are you about the IGAD-led peace process in South Sudan?
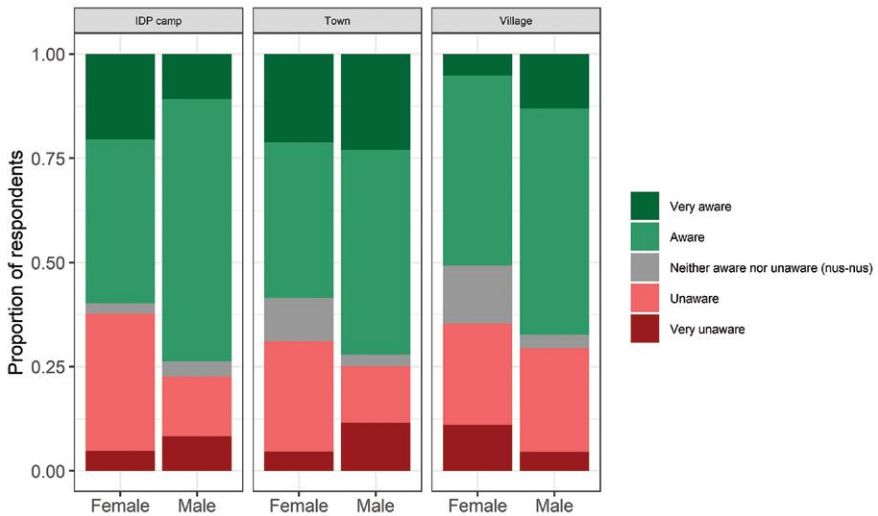
Respondent awareness of the peace process is positively correlated with their perception about the prospects for peace in South Sudan in the next three years. Overall, the assumptions are rather positive, with 60 percent of respondents saying that the prospects are 'very good' or 'good'. Only slightly less than half of the respondents that were 'unaware' or 'very unaware' of the peace process had a similarly optimistic assessment of prospects for peace. Again, respondent perceptions of everyday peace were by far the most significant factor when it came to evaluating prospects for broader peace in the next three years. While 87 percent of respondents with positive perceptions of everyday peace assess the prospects for broader peace as 'good' or 'very good', only 42 percent of those with negative perceptions of everyday peace have similarly optimistic views on the prospects for broader peace. This finding points towards the crucial importance of investing in local peace and everyday security as an indispensable means of supporting the transitional process at the national level.

Figure 37: What are the prospects for peace in South Sudan in the next three years?
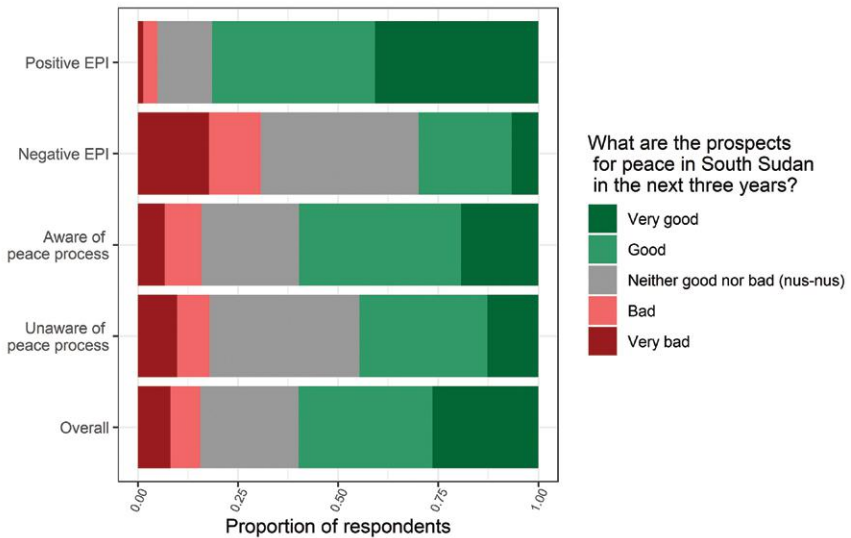
To assess both access to information and socio-economic status, the survey asked if respondents own a phone and if so, which type (simple phone or smartphone with internet access). Unsurprisingly, this 'phone status' is an important indicator for the awareness about the peace process. Only slightly above half of the respondents without a phone are aware of the peace process, in contrast to over 82 percent of those with smartphones.

Figure 38: How aware are you of the IGAD-led peace process in South Sudan?
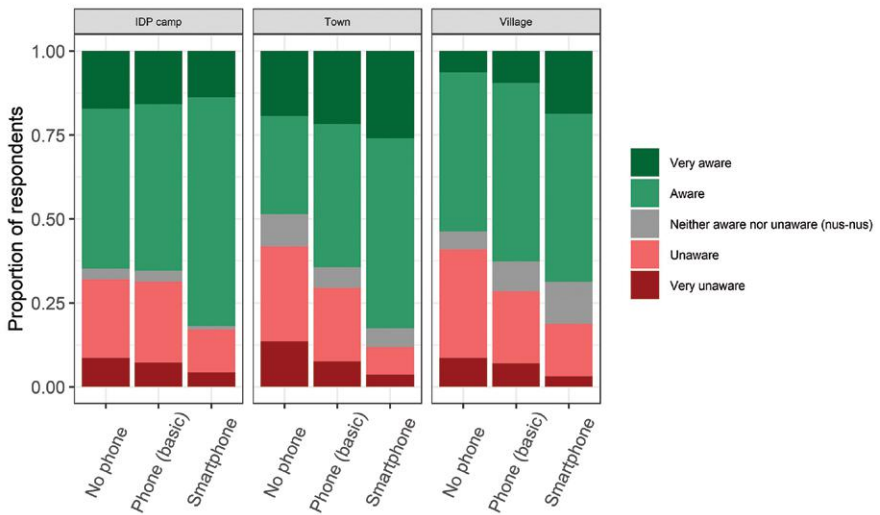
The perception of both peace and prospects for peace in South Sudan differs between these three groups. Smartphone users see a slightly better chance for peace in the forthcoming three years compared with the other groups. The responses about whether South Sudan is currently at peace diverges across environments. Whereas smartphone owners in towns and villages are more likely to think South Sudan is at peace compared to the other groups, smartphone holders in IDP camps are more pessimistic than those with no phone or basic phones. It is possible that access to news and social media may interact with IDP camp residents' views of their surroundings to feed perceptions that conflict persists.

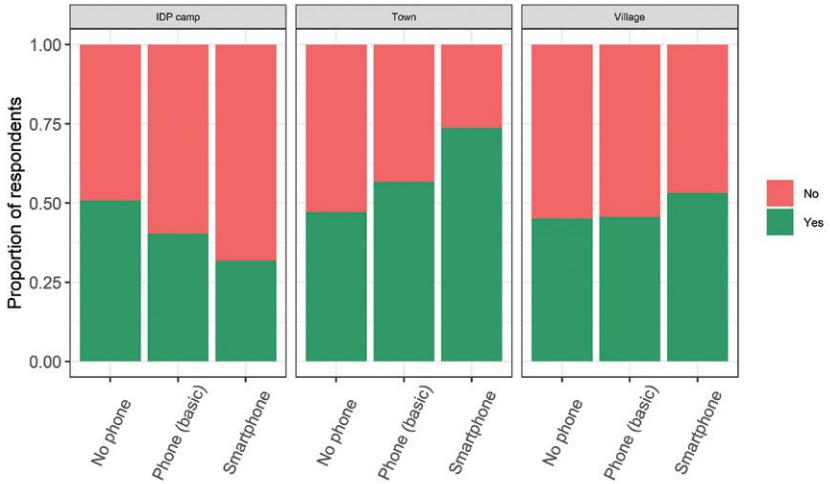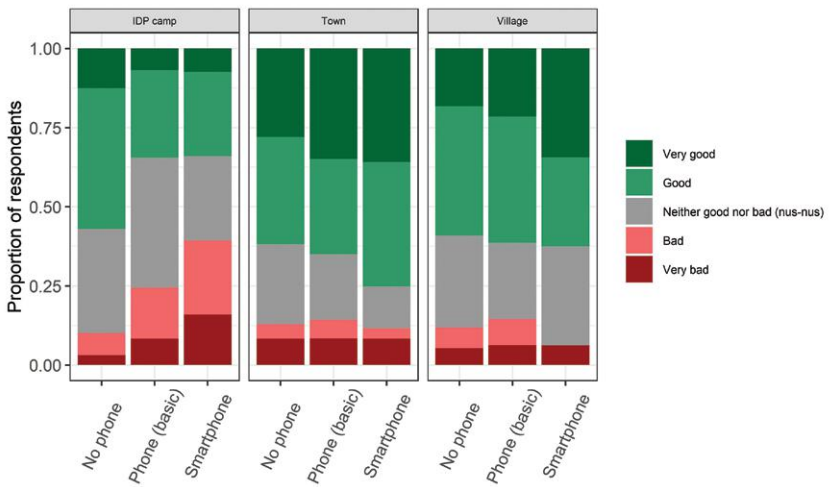Figure 39: Is South Sudan Currently at Peace?

Figure 40: What are the prospects for peace in South Sudan in the next three years?

Phone access is certainly only one of a number of relevant socio-economic indicators, but – given the importance of communication in South Sudanese everyday life – an important one. Phone access could signal two possible influences on perceptions of everyday peace. Phone access correlates with income, and higher income respondents may be more optimistic than others when not experiencing the vulnerability of living in an IDP camp. But, perhaps more credibly, phone access signals access to information. Those with smartphones are likely receiving more information about their environment, violence in other parts of the country and the fragile peace process than those without smartphones. Survey responses suggest that this type of access does not necessarily translate into a negative outlook.

Levels of Trust

Restoring a basic level of trust between the government and citizens in South Sudan is critical to both short-term stabilization efforts and prospects for longer-term peace. Responses to a question about whether national, local, or international actors are most effective at building peace demonstrate the impact that the conflict has had on citizen trust in government. While the most common answer was 'all of the above', respondents were almost three times more likely to say international actors were most effective at building peace than national actors and almost nine times more likely than local actors (see Figure 42).

As with so many other indicators, trust in the various actors is directly correlated with respondent views on everyday peace. As perceptions of everyday peace grow more negative, respondent trust with local actors decreases and their trust with national and international actors increases. None of the respondents who heard gunshots every night for the past month thought that local actors were most effective at building peace, while half thought international actors were most effective and a fifth thought national actors were most effective (see Figure 41). Responses also varied widely by location and gender (see Figure 42).

Figure 41: In your view, are local, national or international actors most effective at building peace? (Disaggregated by how frequently respondent reports gunshots at night)
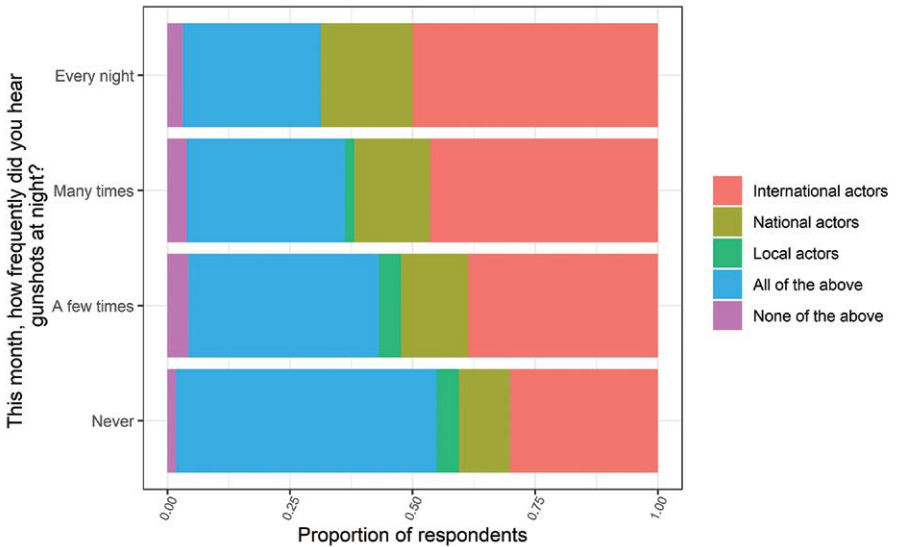
Figure 42: In your view, are local, national or international actors most effective at building peace? (Disaggregated by location and gender)
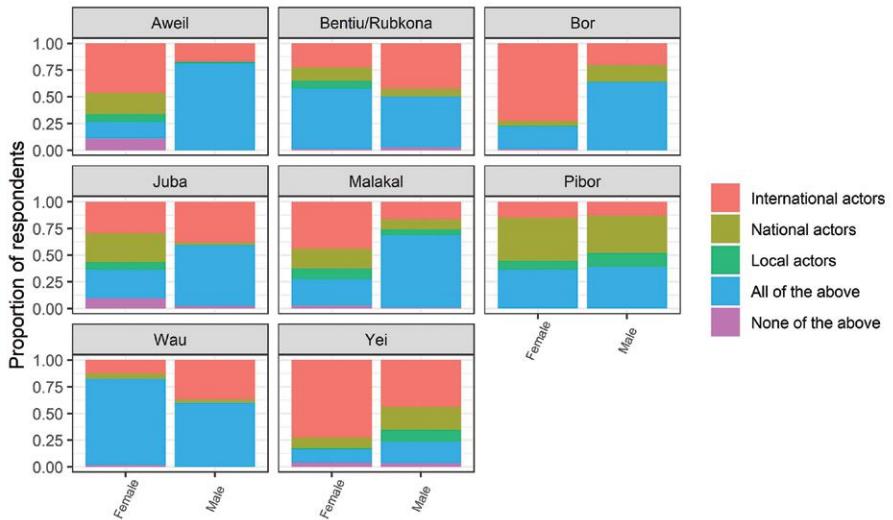
Similar correlations are evident in relation to the specific actors that respondents trust to build peace at the national, local and international levels. Respondents with negative perceptions of everyday peace expressed less trust in a range of national actors, including the R-TGONU, SPLM, SPLM-IO and faith leaders than those with positive perceptions of everyday peace (see Figure 44). Of all the national actors, respondents (48%) expressed most trust in the ability of faith leaders to build peace, followed by the SPLM (46%) and SPLM-IO (40%) (see Figure 43).

Figure 43: Which national actors do you trust to build peace? (By environment)

Figure 44: Which national actors do you trust to build peace? (By overall perceptions of everyday peace)
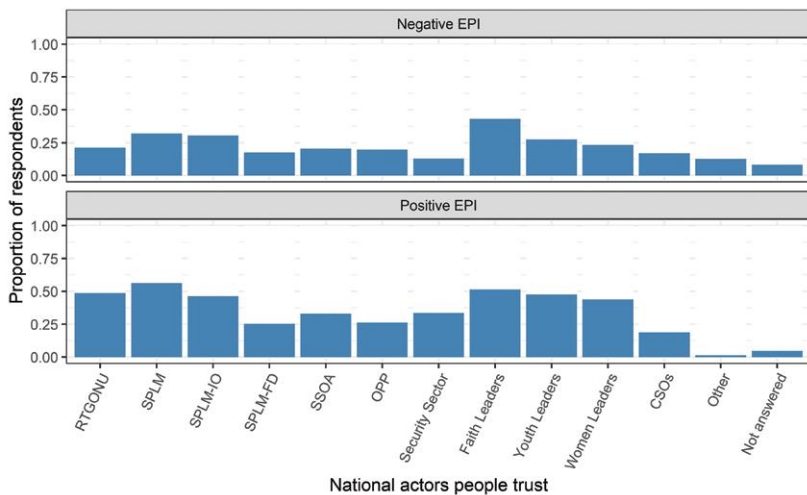
At the local level, respondents expressed the most trust in local government (53%), faith leaders (49%) and traditional authorities (45%) (see Figure 45). State governments (37%) were the seventh least trusted actor after youth leaders (39%). Interestingly, the trend of decreasing trust in the ability of actors to build peace with more negative views on everyday peace held at the local level as well, except with regard to faith leaders, for whom respondent views on everyday peace did not affect their trust one way or the other (see Figure 46). These findings support recent criticisms of the power-sharing logic of R-ARCSS in that it has sometimes led to contested appointments at state and county level that have exacerbated pre-existing tensions.[23]

Figure 45: Which local actors do you trust to build peace? (By environment)
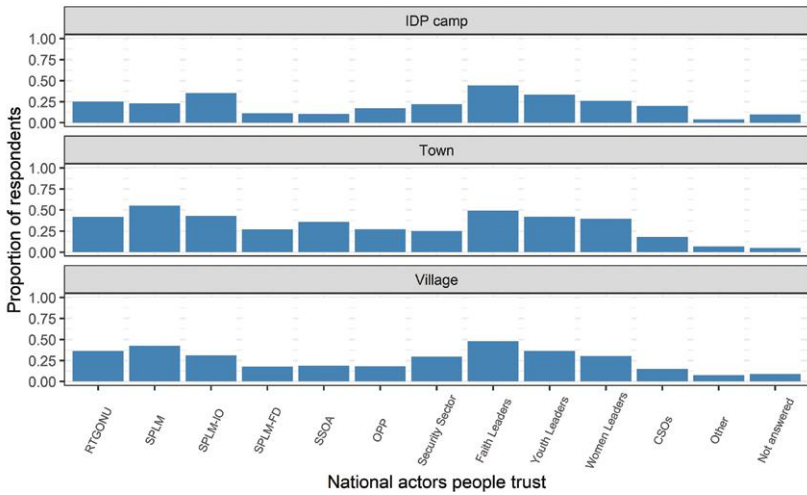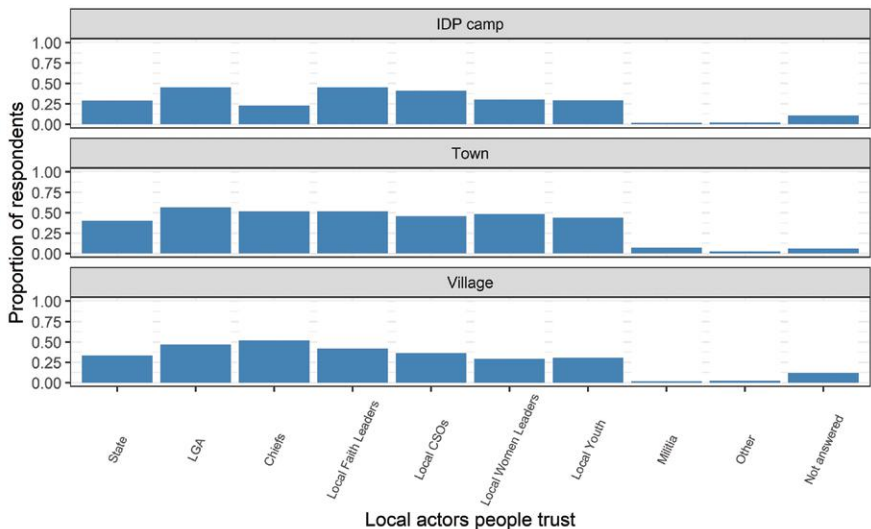
Figure 46: Which local actors do you trust to build peace? (By overall perceptions of everyday peace)
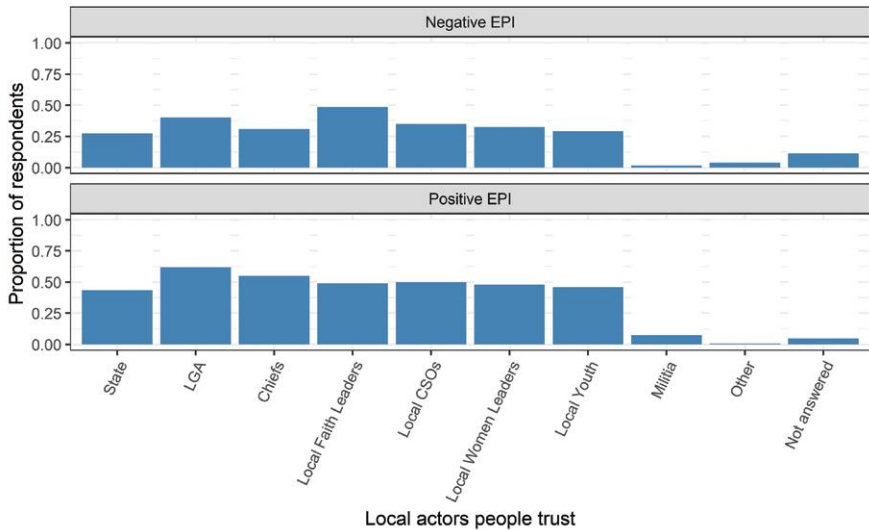
At the international level, respondents expressed the most trust with intergovernmental actors, including the UN (53%), IGAD (48%) and the AU (40%) and less with neighboring states, such as Sudan (37%), Ethiopia (29%), Kenya (20%) and Uganda (15%) (see Figure 47). The US (53%) figured as the most trusted international actor, which was confirmed in discussions that the research team had with public authorities, including local government and camp management committees, where US support for South Sudan's independence was regularly highlighted.

The fact that respondents were more likely to say that they trust Sudan than other countries in the region may reflect the role that Sudan played in getting the parties to sign on to the R-ARCSS in 2018. To the extent that this analysis holds, it is interesting to note that Uganda did not receive similarly high levels of trust, despite the role it played alongside Sudan in the latter stages of the HLRF. A regional comparison (see Figure 48) confirms that sympathies for Sudan very much depend on location, in that locations closer to, and thus more culturally influenced by Sudan, such as Bentiu, Malakal, Aweil, and Wau were more sympathetic to the northern neighbor compared to locations in Jonglei or the Equatorias. Similar to the trend apparent at the national and local levels, respondents with a negative perception of everyday peace are less likely to trust the ability of international actors to build peace relative to those with a positive perception of everyday peace (see Figure 49).

Figure 47: Which international actors do you trust to build peace? (By environment)
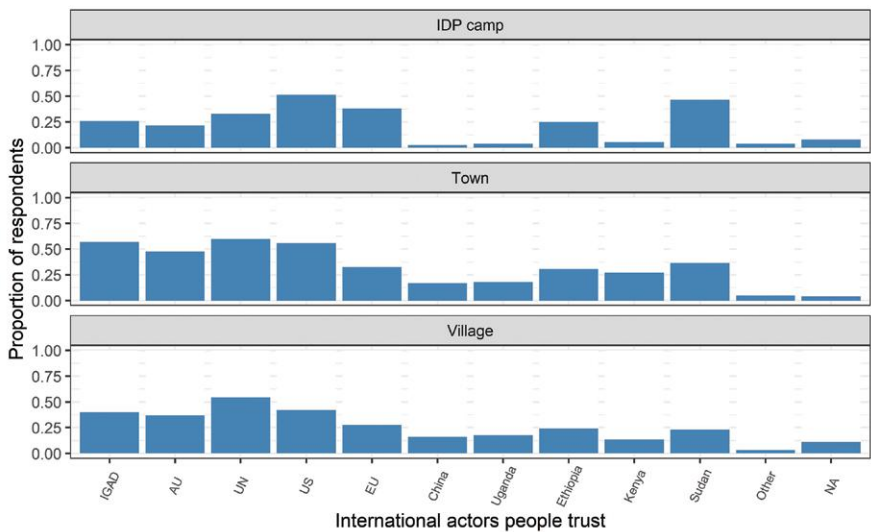
Figure 48: Which international actors do you trust to build peace? (By location)
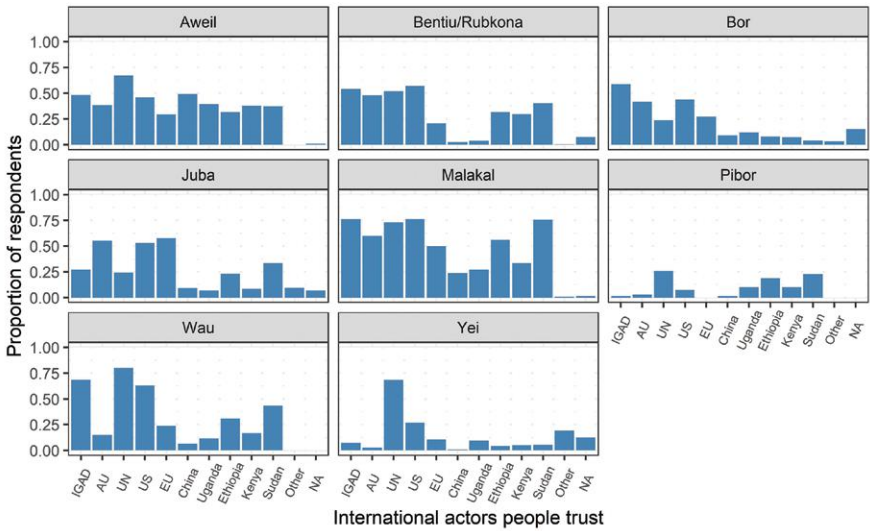
Figure 49: Which international actors do you trust to build peace? (By overall perceptions of everyday peace)
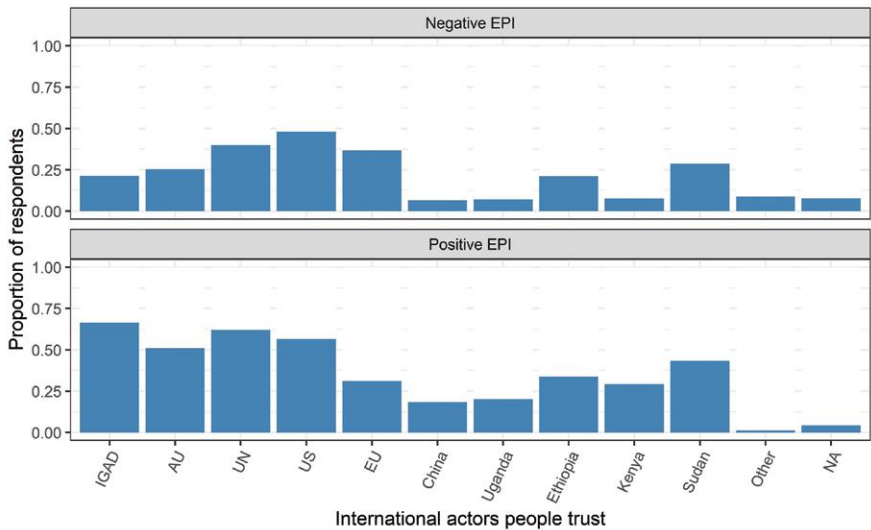
Several strategic considerations flow from the close correlation between views on everyday peace and respondent trust in actors at the national, local, and international levels. To a certain extent, it is not surprising that people who feel unsafe lose trust in the institutions that are meant to protect them. But if restoring trust between citizens and public authorities is among the central objectives of stabilization and recovery efforts, recognizing the linkages between people's sense of security and their trust in these actors is necessary to develop appropriate interventions. Rather than focusing exclusively on humanitarian assistance in the places where people feel most unsafe, policymakers could make more of an effort to pair humanitarian support with peacebuilding, stabilization, and resilience initiatives that make more of an effort to restore relationships between citizens and public authorities. This is admittedly a tall order in the context of a humanitarian emergency that itself struggles to find adequate levels of funding, but it is necessary to foster longer-term changes in the direction of peace.

Elections

The R-ARCSS calls for elections to be held 60 days before the end of the three-year transitional period in February 2023. [24] Several initiatives are meant to happen before the elections, including the amendment of electoral legislation, the reconstitution of the National Elections Commission, and the adoption of a permanent constitution.[25] Senior R-TGONU officials have been sending mixed signals about whether elections will be held on time. Addressing a governor's forum in November 2021, First Vice-President Riek Machar raised doubts that elections would be held on time since key provisions of the R-ARCSS, most notably security arrangements that require the formation of unified army, have not yet been implemented.[26] This view has been supported by some international partners, most notably the European Union.[27] Meanwhile, President Kiir continues to call for them to be held on time as provided for in the R-ARCSS.[28]

The survey data shows significant division among respondents on the preferred timing of elections. A slim majority of respondents (50%) thought that elections should be delayed, but more than a third maintained that they should happen on time, and 1 in 10 said that elections should be called off entirely. IDPs (59%) were most likely to say that elections should be delayed whereas people who were not displaced were most likely to say that they should be held on time (58%). This may point to an awareness among displaced respondents about the risk of them being disenfranchised if elections were to be held while they are still displaced. Unsurprisingly, respondents who said they heard gunshots every night over the past month were also the most likely (69%) to say that elections should be delayed, though the trend did not hold among those who heard gunshots 'many times' or 'a few times' (see Figure 51). These findings raise the question as to whether the necessary security conditions are in place in much of the country to hold elections, and whether residents in these areas would participate were the elections to be held on time.

Figure 50: Do you think elections should be held on time, that they should be delayed, or that they should never happen? (By displacement status)
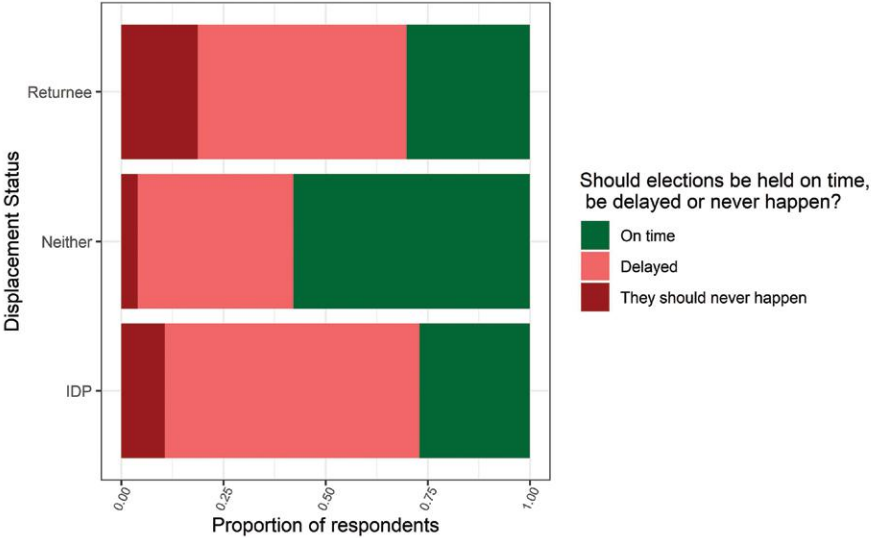
Figure 51: View on election timing, according to current frequency of hearing gunshots at night
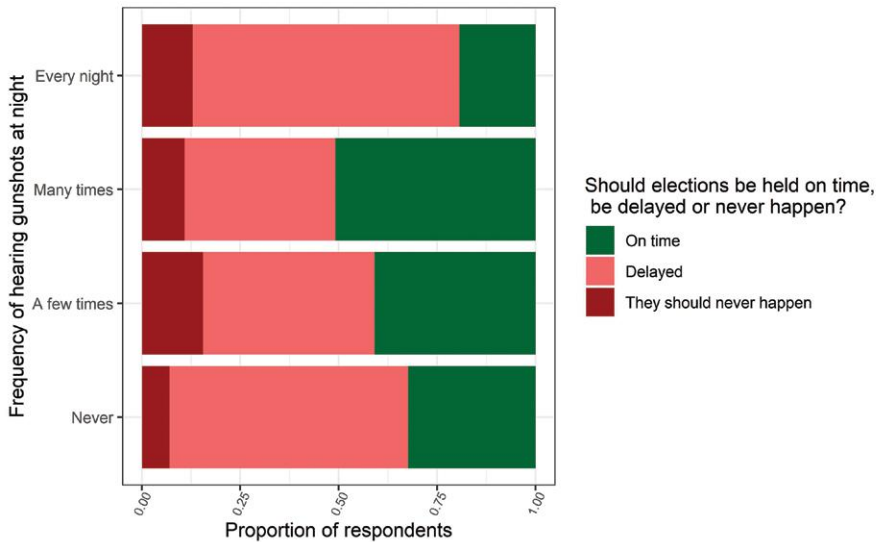
Responses also varied widely across locations with respondents in Juba town (70%) and Yei (69%) most likely to say that elections should be held on time. Respondents living in rural areas (45%) were also twice as likely as those residing in IDP camps (22%) to say that elections should be held on time. This may suggest a certain regional preference for holding elections on time in Greater Equatoria, and perhaps a degree of confidence in the ability of democratic process to bring about change despite the ongoing conflict. This, in turn, could be linked to reservations about the SPLM, or a result of proximity to places such as Kenya where there is a tradition of democratic elections.

Figure 52: Views on election timing by location
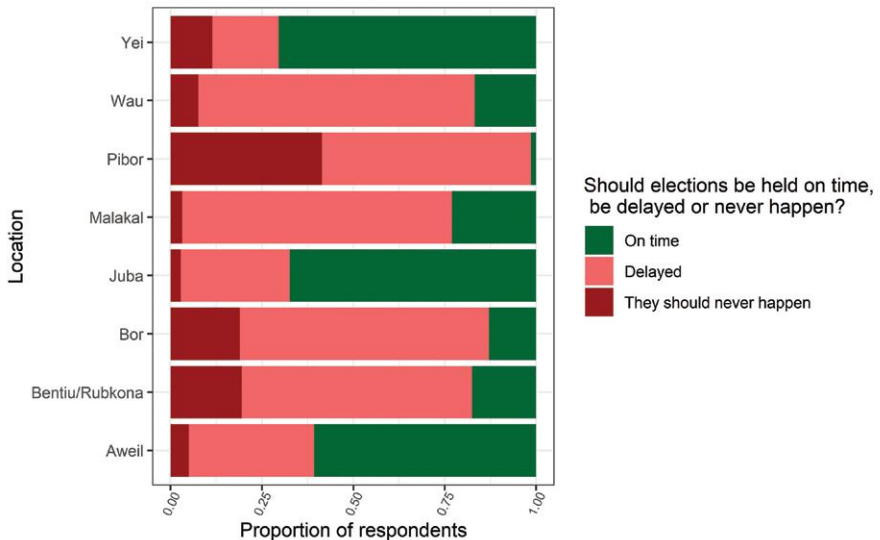
While elections are not a source of violence per se, they can exacerbate underlying tensions and spill over into violence, especially if they are not conducted within an appropriate institutional framework. During the last national elections held in 2010, when Sudan and South Sudan were still one country, several independent candidates contested vigorously against SPLM candidates in the gubernatorial elections, sparking violence and even armed rebellions in parts of the country. Elections that are conducted as part of peace agreements, where the parties have not fully reconciled, are particularly susceptible to violence.[29] Special attention must therefore be paid to the structure and organization of elections in relation to other elements of the R-ARCSS.

Two-thirds of respondents viewed the risk of violence in relation to elections as 'very high' (38%) or 'somehow high' (28%). Respondents in towns (69%) and IDP camps (63%) were more likely to assess the risk as high as compared to those residing in villages (55%) (see Figure 53). Wide disparities were also apparent by gender and location, with women in Bentiu/Rubkona and Bor and men in the other locations being the most likely to see a high risk of violence (see Figure 54).

Figure 53: Views on the risk of election violence by survey environment
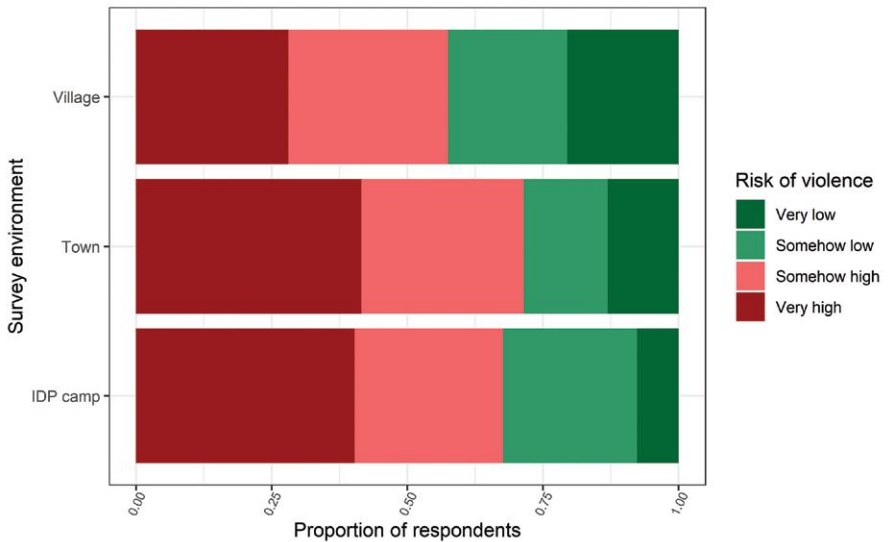
Figure 54: Views on the risk of election violence by location and gender
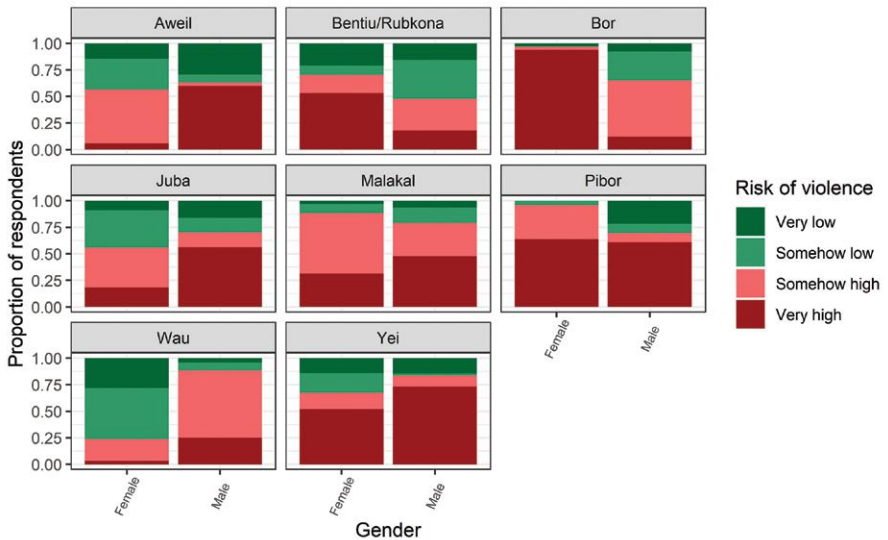
People's perceptions of everyday peace correlated with their views on the potential for election violence, but there was a less clear-cut association with preferences about the timing of elections. Survey data suggests that respondents find it compatible to both wish for elections to happen on time and believe in high chances of election violence. Figure 59 shows that, across locations, most respondents believe that election violence is more likely than not, while Figure 57 shows that this view holds for people who want elections to happen on time, regardless of their perceptions of everyday peace.

Overall, respondents with negative perceptions of everyday peace more frequently believed that elections should never happen or be delayed, and that the risk of violence was 'somehow high' or 'very high' – but this did not hold consistently across locations (see Figure 55, Figure 56 and Figure 57). In some places, pessimism about election violence remained high regardless of overall perceptions of everyday peace. For example, in Aweil, Bor, Malakal and Pibor, levels of everyday peace did not seem to correlate strongly with perceptions about the risk of violence (see Figure 58). These locations are vastly different in political and demographic characteristics, with Aweil experiencing stability compared to Malakal, one of the most contested areas in the civil war and thereafter. This suggests that different explanations for people's expectations about election violence are necessary for different locations.

Figure 55: Views on the risk of violence according to people's overall perceptions of everyday peace

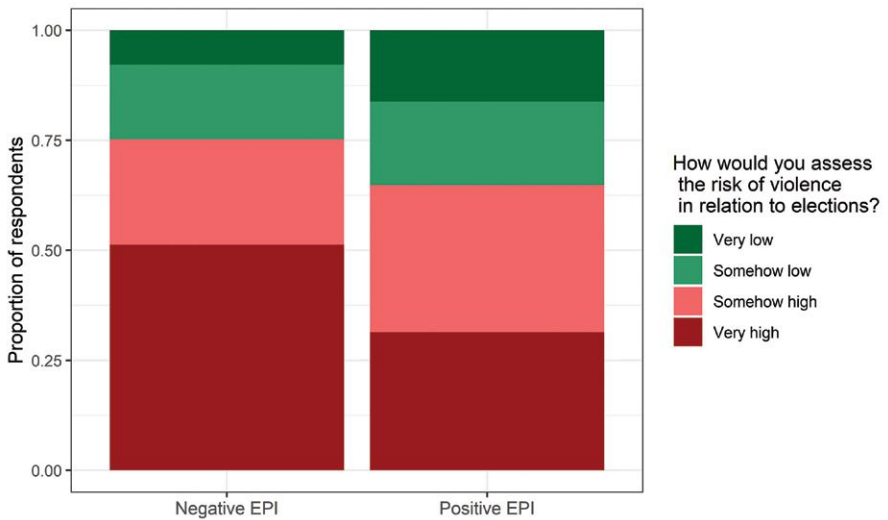**Figure 56: Views on timing of elections according to people's overall perceptions of everyday peace**
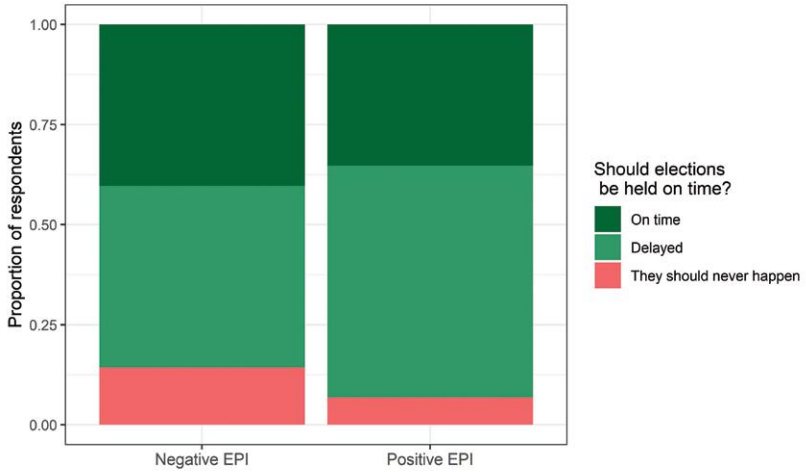

Figure 57: Views on the risk of electoral violence by preference for timing and perceptions of everyday peace
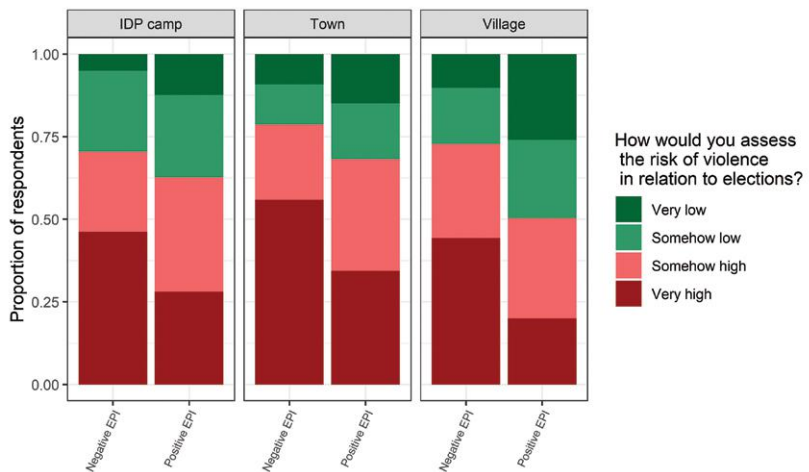
Figure 58: Expectations about electoral violence by location and perceptions of everyday peace
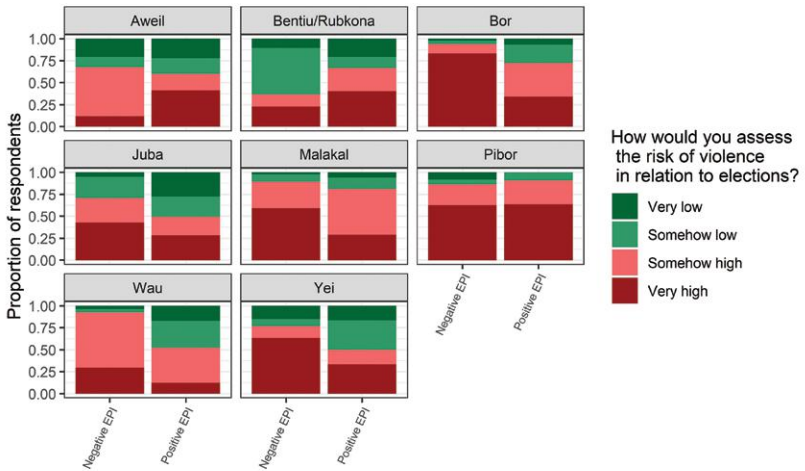
Figure 59: Distribution of views on electoral violence by location and perceptions of everyday peace
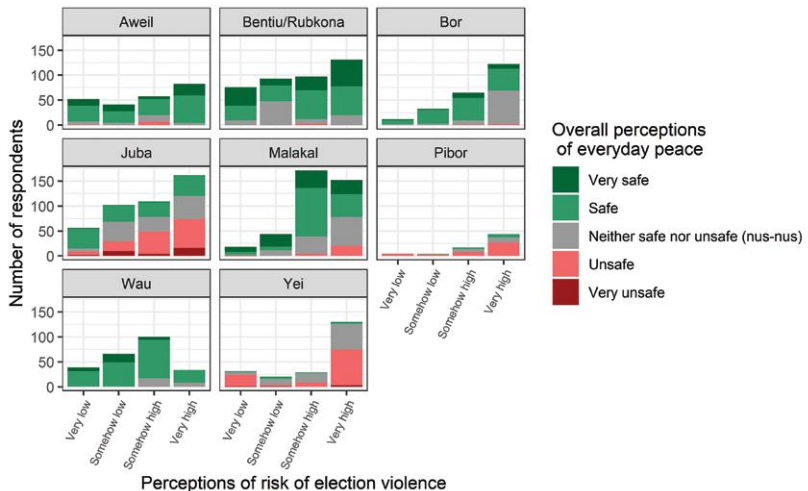
Basic regression analysis suggests that the safer people feel in the context of the everyday peace indicators, the more they feel that the chances of election violence are low. However, the association between perceptions of everyday peace on preferences about timing seem counterintuitive: regression analysis suggests that the safer people feel, the less likely they are to wish that elections occur on time. This finding requires further research to identify a credible explanation.

An Ordinary Leased Squares (OLS) regression shed light on the association between everyday peace and expectations about election violence:

$$\text{Election\_Violence}_{i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, EPI1_{i} + \beta_2\, Gender1 + \beta_3 IDP\_Camp + \beta_4\, Urban + \varepsilon$$

Election_Violence represents views on the chances of election violence, ranging from 1 ('very high) to 4 (very low). EPI1 represents an average of the everyday peace indicators for each respondent in reference to how that felt at the time of the survey 2021 (lower values are associated with feeling less safe and higher values with feeling more safe). The remaining variables are binary controls for gender, whether a respondent is resident in an IDP camp, and whether a respondent is in an urban area (in this context, 'urban' includes IDP camp residents).

The results of the regression appear in Figure 60. This graph shows the coefficient estimates for each variable with 97.5% confidence intervals. Intervals (the red horizontal lines) that do not cross the vertical line at zero indicate variables that correlate with changes in respondents' views on election violence positively or negatively in a way that is unlikely to be a result of chance. The narrow confidence interval around the positive coefficient estimate for EPI1 suggests a strong association between greater feelings of safety and an expectation that the chances of election violence are low.

Figure 60: OLS regression estimates for predictors of perceptions of the risk of election violence

Estimates for the average effects of perceptions of everyday peace on predicting perceptions of the risk of election violence
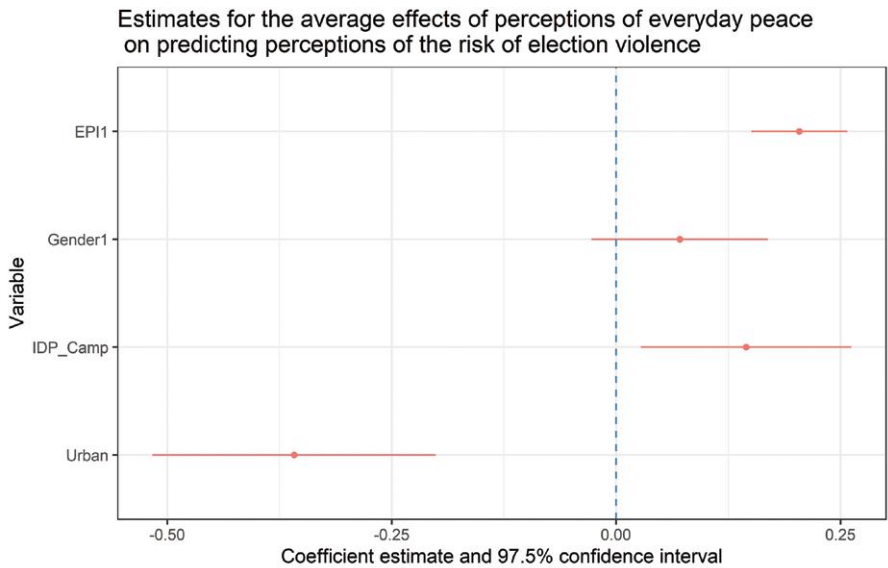
A Probit regression sheds light on the association between everyday peace and whether respondents want elections to happen on time.[31]

$$\text{Election\_Violence}_{\square} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \, EPI_{t=2022} + \beta_2 \, Gender + \beta_3 IDP\_Camp + \beta_4 \, Urban + \varepsilon$$

Election_On_Time is a binary indicator which takes the value of 1 if respondents want elections to happen on time, and 0 if respondents want elections to be delayed or to never happen.

Figure 61 suggests that an increase in feeling of safety in the context of the everyday peace indicators moderately reduces respondents' wishes for elections to happen on time. This is shown by the negative coefficient estimate for EPI1 and narrow confidence interval that stays clear of the zero line. This requires further probing.

Figure 61: Probit regression estimates for predictors of whether people want elections to happen on time

Estimates for the average effects of perceptions of everyday peace on whether people want elections to happen on time
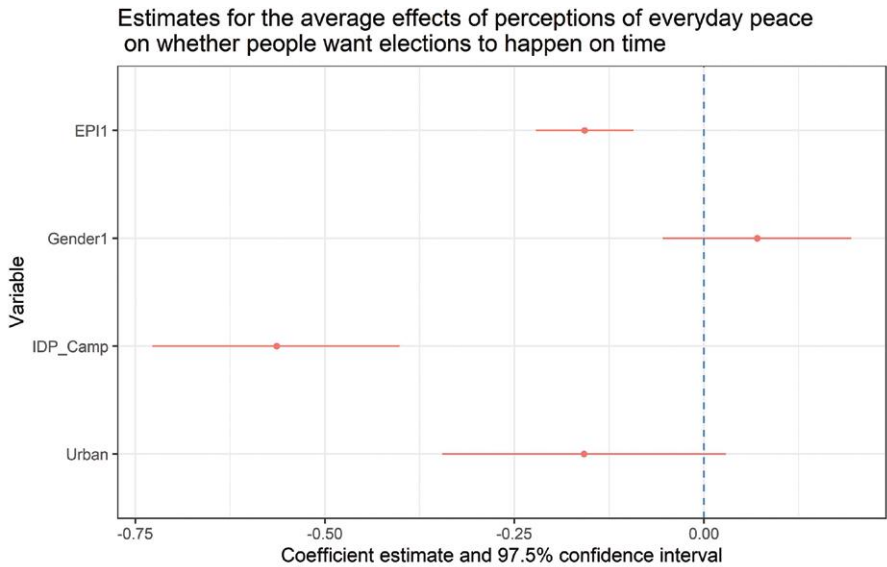
Elections are technically complex processes that should ideally be nationally owned. Survey data suggests considerable hesitancy among citizens about the proposed elections. Ultimately, the issue might not be so much the holding of the election itself, but what the implications would be in the current political environment, where much of the agreement remains unimplemented. Beyond the potential of conducting elections to help bolster democracy, more emphasis could be placed on 'transformations, not transitions', and putting in place longer-term strategies to foster positive changes irrespective of what happens with elections.

National Dialogue

President Salva Kiir announced plans to launch a National Dialogue in December 2016 to "save the country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity." [32] Between May 2017 and August 2019, the National Dialogue reportedly engaged some 20,000 South Sudanese across the country and in the diaspora in a series of grassroots consultations, regional conferences and a national conference held in November 2020.[33] Among the National Dialogue's resolutions were the adoption of "a mixed federal system with full political, administrative, and financial powers to the states and restricts federal interference in state affairs," and that land shall be "owned by the communities and ...managed by various levels of government in accordance with the law." [34] Perhaps most controversially, in their cover note to the National Dialogue reports, the co-chairs place the blame for the country's problems squarely on the shoulders of the political leadership, calling upon the President, First Vice-President, and four Vice-Presidents to stand aside in elections at the end of the transitional period.[35] However, a significant portion of the National Dialogue steering committee disavowed the recommendation and it was thus not included in the final report itself.

Since its establishment, public opinion has been divided on the National Dialogue. To its proponents, the National Dialogue was an attempt to save a nation that was rapidly devolving into chaos. But many South Sudanese were skeptical. They viewed the National Dialogue as an attempt by the President and his inner circle to undermine the peace process, divide the political opposition, and mislead the public about their commitment to peace. The National Dialogue's critics described it as a 'monologue' since key opposition parties, including the SPLM-IO, refused to participate. Many people who supported the notion of dialogue in principle argued that it should be pursued when stability had returned to the country and that to try to address such politically contentious issues at the height of a civil war was untenable.

These differing viewpoints were apparent in the survey data. Overall, respondents expressed a high level of awareness in the National Dialogue. Sixty-two percent of respondents said they were aware of the National Dialogue, which is comparable to the 65 percent of respondents who said they were aware (46%) or very aware (19%) of the IGAD peace process. The high levels of awareness reflect efforts to publicize the National Dialogue in South Sudan, including coverage in local newspapers, on radio stations, and on South Sudan Television, particularly in the early stages of the process. Women (57%) were less aware of the National Dialogue than men (67%), but the gap was not as pronounced as that found in other surveys.[36] Awareness was also more pronounced in towns (67%) as compared to IDP camps (54%) or villages (53%), perhaps a sign of the difficulties that the National Dialogue faced in reaching populations in rural areas.

Figure 62: Have you heard of the National Dialogue initiative that was launched in 2017? (By survey environment)
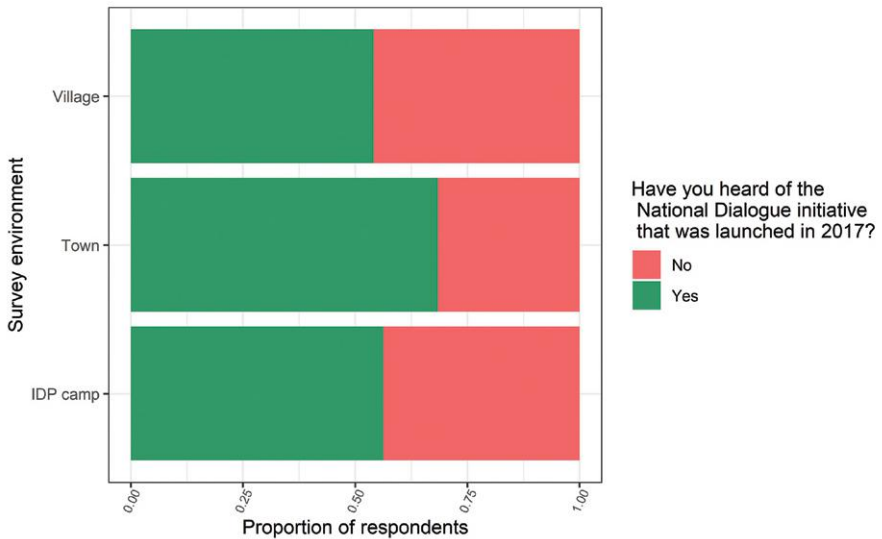
Survey respondents were divided over the National Dialogue's recommendation that the existing leadership not contest in elections at the end of the transitional period. While a majority of respondents (58%) supported the recommendation, it did not receive the overwhelming support that the National Dialogue co-chairs claimed to justify its inclusion in the cover letter. Responses also varied widely across survey locations. Support for the recommendation was most pronounced in Wau POC (100%), Bor (92%), Malakal (82%), and Wau (79%), while opposition to the recommendation was most pronounced in Yei (67%), Pibor (57%), and Bentiu POC (57%). Gender differences were also pronounced in several locations, with women more likely to oppose the recommendation than men in Yei, Malakal POC, and Aweil (see Figure 63) The wide variations in responses to this question may reflect the different ways in which individuals and groups assess the advantages and disadvantages that specific leadership configurations at the national level have for populations at the local level.

Figure 63: Views on National Dialogue election candidate proposal, by gender and location
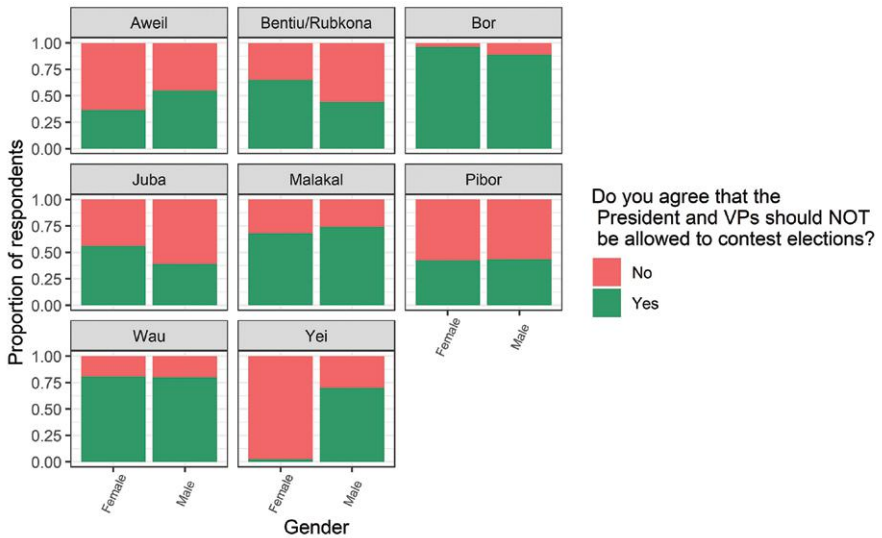
Interestingly, people's perceptions of safety were also strongly correlated with their views on the National Dialogue's recommendation. Respondents that heard gunshots every night in the past month (38%) were far less likely to support the National Dialogue's recommendation than those that did not hear any gunshots (65%) (see Figure 64). This discrepancy demonstrates how people's priorities tend to shift with levels of security, and their willingness to support proposals that may be more politically risky in the short-term but offer longer-term opportunities in terms of political accountability so long as their immediate security needs as met.

Figure 64: Views on National Dialogue election candidate proposal, according to frequency of hearing gunshots at night
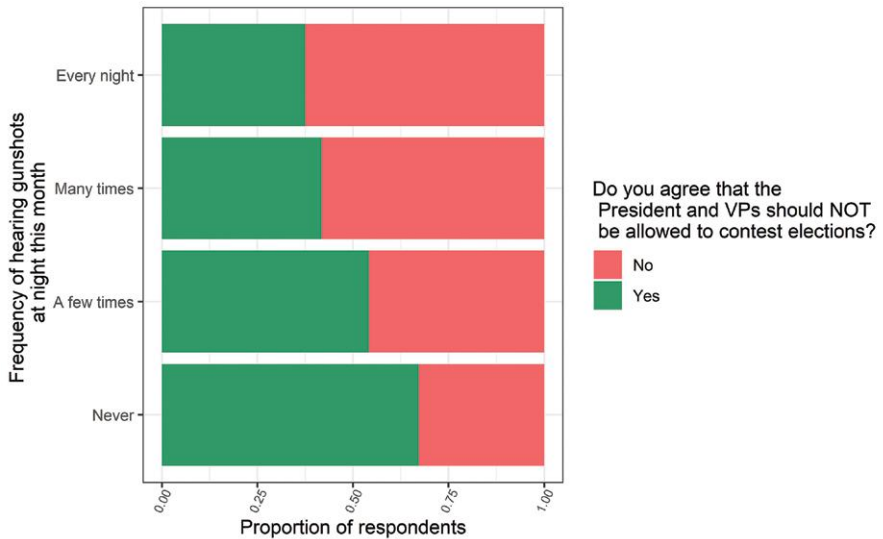
These findings favor an approach that seeks to engage populations in less stable parts of the country in stabilization, resilience, and peacebuilding programming that goes beyond their immediate humanitarian needs to help them become more actively involved in peace efforts. In this regard, a recent shift in international assistance to consider these types of interventions in less stable parts of the country may offer advantages.[37]

Federalism and Number of States

Among the contentious issues in the IGAD peace process was the question of federalism, or how power would be allocated between the national, state, and local governments over the course of the transition and in any elected government that follows thereafter. The question is further complicated by South Sudan's colonial history and how South Sudanese positioned themselves relative to the central government in Khartoum, in addition to ethnopolitical overtones associated with differences among groups in the three greater regions. As Douglas Johnson notes:

> "[I]f we are to learn anything from the past history of southern Sudanese political thought, it is that federalism means many things. As the SPLM/SPLA warned at Abuja in 1992, 'no system is federal merely because it claims to be federal'; the same term has been used to describe what are, in practice, highly centralized systems of government, as well as more radical projects of devolution that remain untried. Until there is a full and open discussion of the issue there will be no common understanding of what federalism might mean for South Sudan, and once understood, whether the majority of South Sudanese will want to adopt it." [38]

The R-ARCSS makes several mostly symbolic references to the establishment of a federal system in South Sudan, but the details of what that would entail in terms of the distribution of power among the levels of government has been mostly deferred to the constitution-making process. As the preamble notes, the parties are:

> "Cognizant that a federal system of government is a popular demand of the people of the Republic of South Sudan and the need for the RTGoNU to reflect this demand by way of devolution of more powers and resources to lower levels of government." [39]

In Chapter I, the parties "reaffirm their commitment to... a federal and democratic system of governance that reflects the character of the Republic of South Sudan and ensures unity in diversity be enacted during the permanent constitution making process." [40]

Survey data suggests some divided opinion on a core question of federalism, namely whether the national or state governments should carry primary responsibility for the delivery of public goods and services, such as health, education, infrastructure, and justice. Most respondents (54%) thought that the national and state governments should be equally responsible for providing these services and the remainder were divided over those who thought the national government should carry primary responsibility (20%) and those who thought state governments should carry primary responsibility (23%) (see Figure 65). Responses varied widely by location, with Pibor (67%) and Yei (63%), both locations with considerable populations of minority groups, showing a strong preference for state governments to be the primary service providers.

Figure 65: Which level of government should be the primary provider of services such as health, education, infrastructure, and justice?
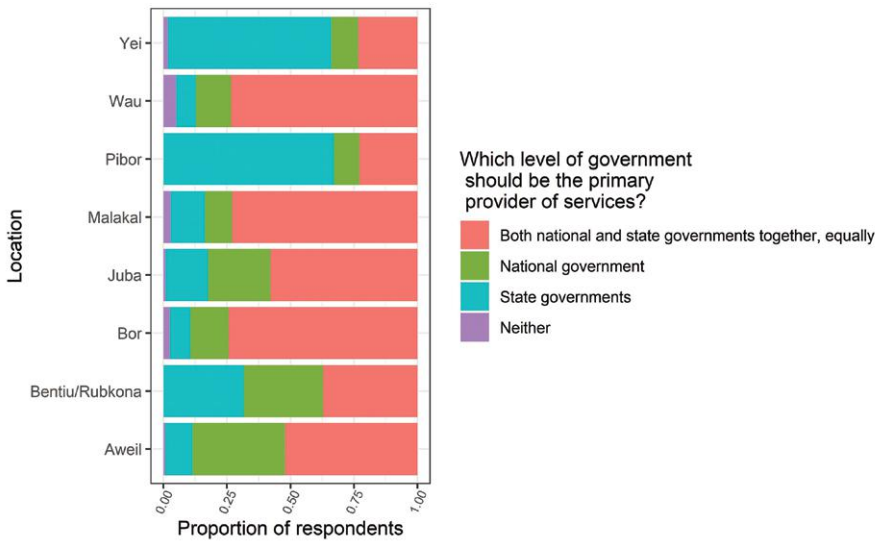
Another issue closely aligned with the question of federalism is the number of states in South Sudan. The issue gained prominence in October 2015, just a few months after signing the ARCSS, when President Kiir issued an executive order increasing the number of states from 10 to 28. This was followed by another decree in 2017 further increasing the number of states to 32.[41] Among the government's rationales for the increase in the number of states was to bring services closer to the people, while other observers saw it as an effort to reallocate oil resources along ethnopolitical lines and to create opportunities for patronage in the form of new state and local government positions. Whatever its motivation, the 32 states threw the ARCSS's power sharing provisions, which were based on a 10-state framework, into disarray. The issue was a central source of contention until February 2020, when the parties were finally able to agree to revert to the 10-state framework with an additional three administrative areas in Abyei, Pibor, and Ruweng.

When asked how many states South Sudan should have, respondents (70%) overwhelmingly favored the 10-state framework, with just 10 percent of respondents opting for 32 states (see Figure 66).
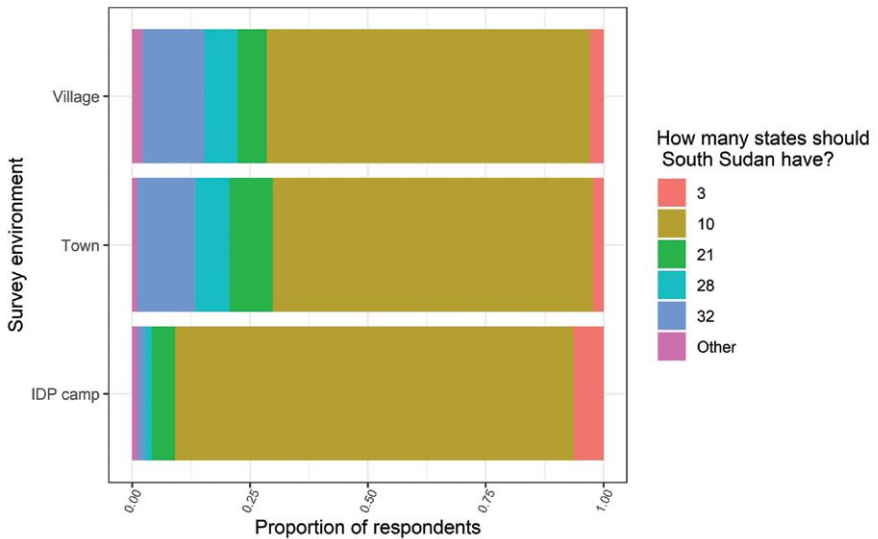
Figure 65: Which level of government should be the primary provider of services such as health, education, infrastructure, and justice?

While the parties were able to resolve the issue of the number of states in the context of the peace process, the changes have had many other destabilizing impacts, including the exacerbation of disputes over land and the placement of subnational boundaries. These issues are likely to persist and should be among the priority areas for peace processes to address moving forward.

Confidence in the Peace Process and Government Priorities

Most (43%) survey respondents thought the implementation of the R-ARCSS should be the top priority for the transitional government (Figure 67). Where people differed was on their confidence in the government to do so. 79 percent of respondents had little (50%) or no (29%) confidence in the ability of the R-TGONU to implement the agreement. Again, the EPIs were the strongest factor influencing respondent perceptions of peace implementation. More than one third (35%) of respondents with a negative experience of everyday peace had no confidence in the R-TGONU's ability to implement the peace agreement (see Figure 68). This finding strongly suggests that the perceived inability of the R-TGONU to establish peace at the everyday level reflects on their ability to implement peace at the national level.

Figure 67: What should be the top priority for the Transitional Government?

Interestingly, respondent trust overall in the SPLM mainstream to build peace is almost equal to that of the SPLM-IO (see Figure 68). Respondents who trust the ruling parties to implement peace, therefore, have a higher confidence in the R-TGONU's ability to achieve this task. The somewhat surprising aspect of this finding is that people who trust the SPLM-IO also trust the R-TGONU, which suggests that public perception of the transitional government cannot be reduced to its most dominant party, the SPLM. The finding also suggests that people view the SPLM-IO to be an equally responsible actor as the SPLM mainstream when it comes to implementation of the peace agreement. Indeed, more than half (58%) of the respondents who trust either the SPLM mainstream or SPLM-IO said that they trusted the abilities of both parties to build peace.

Figure 68: Trust in the R-TGONU according to various types of perception
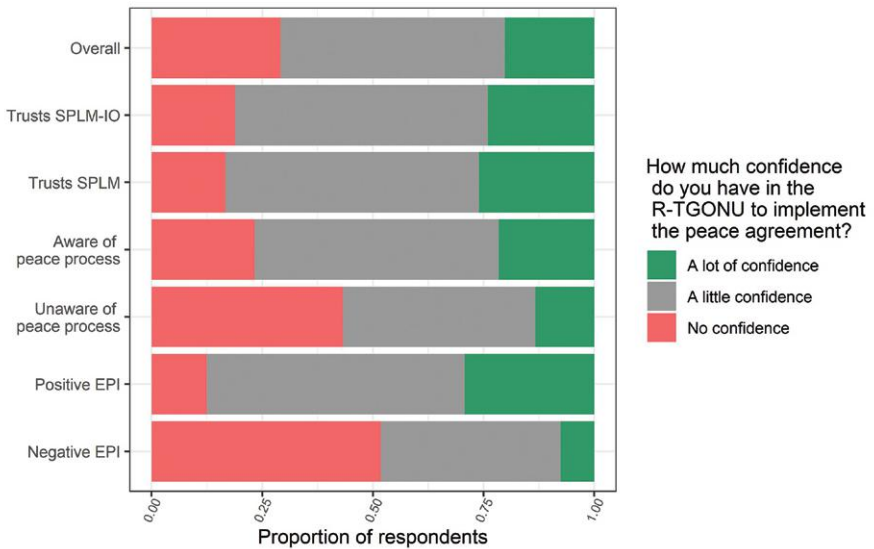
Next to peace implementation, respondents (26%) viewed the security to be the next most important priority for the R-TGONU (see Figure 67). When the responses are further disaggregated, some interesting details come to the fore. Male respondents viewed security as almost equally important as peace implementation, while female respondents were less likely to emphasize security and more likely to emphasize peace implementation alongside longer-term concerns, such as food aid, health services and education (see Figure 69). This result could be interpreted in several different ways. On the one hand, the fact that men prioritize security more than women could reflect a more general perception that security is traditionally a male-dominated spere. On the other hand, the differences between the genders may reflect specific male insecurities, such as forced recruitment, often via social pressure, and being deliberately targeted.

Figure 69: What should be the top priority for the R-TGONU, according to gender
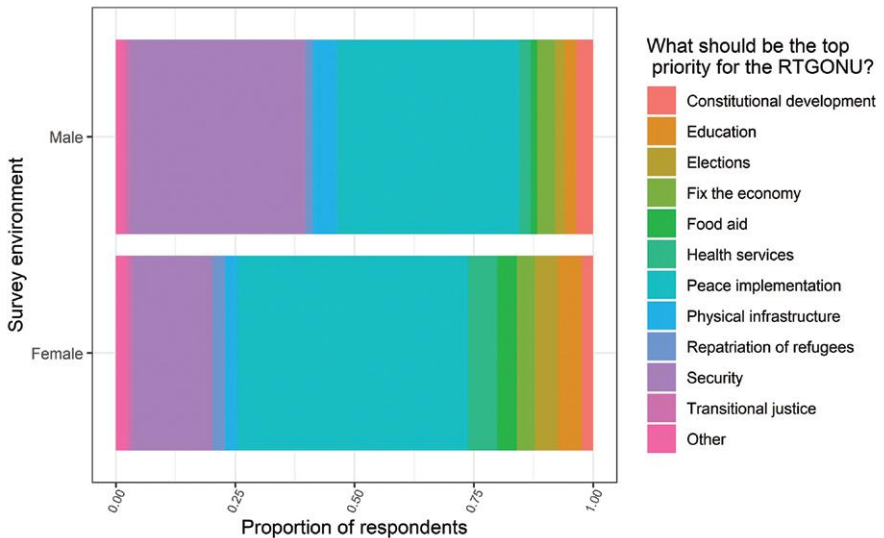
All other issues rank far below peace implementation and security so far as respondent priorities are concerned. Nonetheless, public goods and services in the form of physical infrastructure (4%), health (4%) and education (4%) emerged as second tier priorities, alongside government efforts to fix the economy. Surprisingly, respondents were far less likely to prioritize the return of refugees (2%) and food aid (3%), perhaps reflecting a view of these areas as the domain of international actors and not commonly associated with visible government action. In addition, the relatively few respondents who said transitional justice (1%) or constitutional development (3%) should be the top priority for the R-TGONU is also noteworthy given the amount of attention devoted to these issues in the R-ARCSS.

Figure 68: Trust in the R-TGONU according to various types of perception
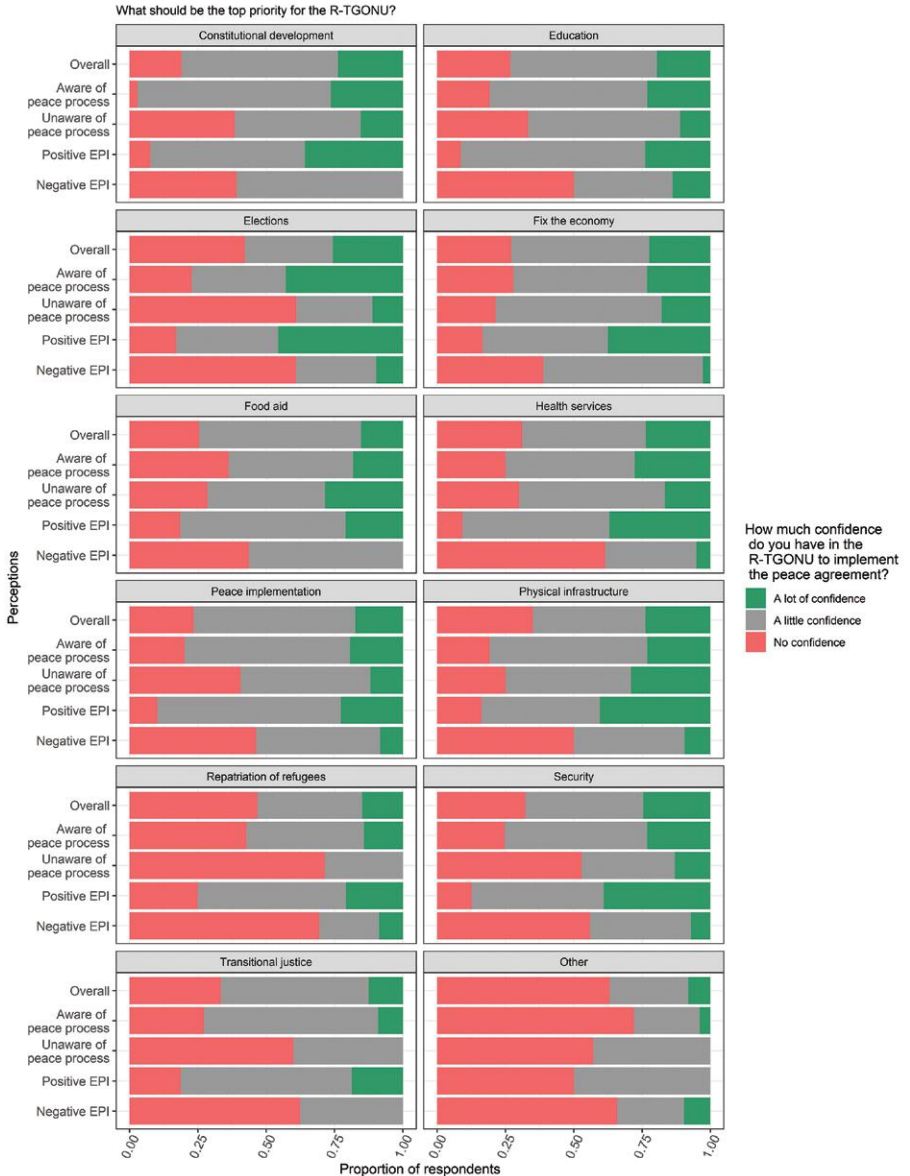
Conclusion and Recommendations

Public perceptions of the peace process and people's experience of everyday peace both contribute to the trajectory of a transitional process. The recent breakdown of the transitional order in Afghanistan, which was, in essence, the result of a rapid loss of trust based on a shift in the momentum of the transition, has demonstrated the importance of public perception. While the South Sudanese political transition, by and large, remains a mostly elitist process, public buy-in is still a decisive factor for any progress.

However, this process is not linear, and the variety of answers this survey has generated demonstrates some of the inherent contradictions. In this respect, the elections, foreseen at the end of the transitional period, may serve as a culminating point. That more than half of the respondents would accept a delay (and another 10% an outright cancellation) is clearly not an endorsement of the political status quo, but rather a result of people's fear that elections will spur more violence and a further decrease in everyday security. On the other hand, any improvement of the current situation naturally plays into the hands of the ruling powers in the transitional government in that it justifies a delay in elections so as not to undermine the progress that has been made.

This survey shows that one of the decisive levers for increasing public trust in peace and the peace process is how people experience everyday peace. This, in turn, is closely related to issues of everyday security, such as being able to move on the roads, in the countryside, attending to a neighbor at night, or accessing markets. What the data further shows is how contextualized these perceptions are. People's perception of peace is generally better in places like Aweil and Wau, which, at present, are not experiencing high levels of localized violence, and, somewhat surprisingly, also in the highly fragile settings of Bentiu and Malakal town, where 'peace' is perceived in contrast to recent experiences with armed violence.

People who feel less safe, who have negative perceptions of everyday peace, tend to be more pessimistic about the peace process. This is troubling on several levels. First, it provides further evidence of the psychological impact that insecurity has at both the individual and societal levels. This demands action at the very least from a social justice perspective, not to mention the implications for political stability and economic recovery. People trapped in such situations may also find themselves in a vicious loop of conflict and exploitation, in which insecurity causes a loss of voice and agency, leading to institutional mistrust and poor development outcomes that make them more susceptible to manipulation by political and military actors.

First, any support to the peace process should include initiatives designed to support communities to improve everyday security at the local level, and not just focus on the national level, to sustain public trust in the process. This factor appears more important than the timely achievement of concrete results along the transitional timeline or the availability of public information about the peace process. Enhancing road security and the ability of people to move freely, both in urban and rural areas, provides an important entry point. In addition, the gendered aspects of security, including issues of everyday peace, need to be accounted for in programming. For example, male respondents consider the movement elements (EPI1 and EPI2) as more risky than female respondents, while female respondents perceive more insecurity in household related tasks (such as leaving the house at night and buying goods at the market, EPI3/EPI4). Men and women also face different types of risk in the context of armed violence. Lastly, there may be scope for humanitarian actors to more actively contribute to efforts to promote peace and security at the local level. Through their programming on protection, resilience, and negotiations to access conflict-affected populations, humanitarians are well-positioned to contribute to everyday peace.

Second, interventions of peace support should target the critical hotspots of violence. Improving the conditions in areas with very low levels of perceived everyday security promise considerable results towards the public buy-in into the peace process. The high level of differentiation between contexts advises against broad geographical approaches and support an area-based approach to programming that focuses on challenging areas in a contextually specific manner. This could be complemented by cross-area or regional programming that targets areas with shared security threats. For example, conflict mitigation efforts could adopt common strategies to address cattle-raiding in the tri-state corridor between Warrap, Lakes, and Unity States, child abduction among communities in the GPAA and Jonglei, the impact of cattle migrations from Jonglei and Lakes States into the Equatorias, or contestation over state administrations among ethnolinguistic communities in Wau and Malakal. Aid programming in these situations must also be carefully sequenced. While interventions at the humanitarian, peacebuilding and development nexus can provide important space for people in less secure settings to begin engaging with issues beyond their immediate needs, they must also be carefully designed to avoid being instrumentalized by more powerful actors.

Third, policymakers should focus their efforts on sustaining the transitional process rather than achieving check lists within rigid timeframes. Even though not directly asked as such, findings point towards the public measuring the success of the peace process less in achievements along the defined transitional program and more in the concrete improvement of security in their immediate surroundings. While this finding gives rise to huge challenges given the difficult and highly violent situation in various parts of the country, it may also help to relieve growing pressure caused by timelines for R-ARCSS implementation. Investments in everyday security appear as a more promising entry point for peace support in South Sudan compared with deadline diplomacy, an approach that has already failed to deliver meaningful results. Any such engagement should be firmly grounded in a conflict sensitive approach that takes into account the potential for unintended consequences, understands how people experience peace and safety, and supports the local institutions that are able to service those needs.

References

1   See Jan Pospisil, Oringa Christopher, Sophia Dawkins and David Deng, South Sudan's Transition: Citizens' Perception of Peace, United States Institute of Peace (USIP) (19 Mar. 2020), available at: https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/03/south-sudans-transition-citizens-perception-peace.

2   This includes 2.3 million refugees and 1.7 million IDPs. See UNHCR, Operational Data Portal: South Sudan, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/southsudan; Id., https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/ssd.

3   IGAD is a regional economic community in northeastern Africa. It has eight members: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

4   In addition to pressure from neighboring heads of state, the government was also threatened by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2206, which had put in place a regime for targeted sanctions on individuals that engaged in "[a]ctions or policies that have the purpose or effect of expanding or extending the conflict in South Sudan or obstructing reconciliation or peace talks or processes, including breaches of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement." UNSC Resolution 2206, U.N. Doc S/RES/2206 (3 Mar. 2015), available at: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/2206. See also The Reservations of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan on the "Compromise Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan" (26 Aug. 2015), available at: https://www.usip.org/south-sudan-peace-process-digital-library/grss-reservations-august-2015-peace-agreement.

5   Text: Kiir's speech on peace implementation, Radio Tamazuj (15 Sep. 2015), available at: https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/text-kiir-s-speech-on-peace-implementation.

6   Top diplomat backs new South Sudan vice president, Fox News (28 Aug. 2016), available at: https://www.foxnews.com/world/top-diplomat-backs-new-south-sudan-vice-president.

7   See Tom Miles and Ed Cropley, Ethnic cleansing going on in South Sudan: U.N. Commission, Reuters (1 Dec. 2016), available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-un-idUSKBN13Q4SU; Media briefing by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on his visit to South Sudan (11 Nov. 2016), available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/media-briefing-adama-dieng-united-nations-special-adviser-prevention-genocide-his.

8   Communiqué of the 31st Extra-Ordinary Summit of IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan (12 Jun. 2017), available at: https://igad.int/attachments/article/1575/120617_Communique%20of%20the%2031st%20Extra-Ordinary%20IGAD%20Summit%20on%20South%20Sudan.pdf.

9   UNMISS HRD, "Quarterly Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians (January – March 2020)" (2020), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-quarterly-brief-violence-affecting-civilians-january-march-2020; UNMISS HRD, "Quarterly Brief on Violence Affecting Civilians (April – June 2020)" (2020), https://unmiss.unmissions.org/quarterly-brief-violence-affecting-civilians-april-june-2020.

10 See South Sudan's Machar hints at postponement of 2023 election, CGTN Africa (2 Dec. 2021), available at: https://africa.cgtn.com/2021/12/02/south-sudans-machar-hints-at-postponement-of-2023-election/; S. Sudan's Kiir downplays fears of delays in general elections, Sudan Trib. (25 Nov. 2021), available at: https://sudantribune.com/article226388/.

11   Pamina Firchow, Reclaiming Everyday Peace: Local Voices in Measurement and Evaluation After War (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

12   Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University and Novel-T. 2021. GRID3 South Sudan Settlement Extents, Version 01. Palisades, NY: Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development (GRID3). https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-30rg-nd63. Accessed 1 September 2021.

13   The team defined a household as a group of people who eat together in the same housing compound and dependently make economic decisions. This definition does not include employees and temporary residents on the compound.

14   For example, if there were four women at home, the enumerator would use an app to pick a number from one to four. If the random number was two, the enumerator would ask to speak to the second oldest woman. This is imperfect bloc randomization, because the probability of selecting women or men across the spread of ages varied from house to house. However, this method allowed the team to sample across the distribution of respondent ages in an approach that was feasible for enumerators on the ground.

15   Interestingly, 65 percent of respondents said that they were currently displaced at the time of the survey, while only 50 percent self-identified as IDPs. This discrepancy may be accounted for, at least in part, by returnees who have returned to their home area after a period of displacement but were unable to occupy the home they left behind for some reason (e.g., property had been destroyed, home was occupied by someone else, insecurity) and so they self-identified as returnee and currently displaced.

16   Thirty-one percent had been displaced only once and 24 percent had been displaced twice.

17   Roger Mac Ginty, Indicators+: A Proposal for everyday peace indicators, Evaluation and Program Planning (2013); Pamina Firchow and Roger Mac Ginty, Measuring peace: Comparability, commensurability, and complementarity using bottom-up indicators, International Studies Review (2017). For a comprehensive conceptual background, see Roger Mac Ginty, Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies, Security Dialogue (2014); Roger Mac Ginty, Everyday Peace: Ho So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict (2021), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

18   On the methodological approach, see the EPI website, https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org.

19   Several EPI-based survey projects are currently ongoing in South Sudan, including projects initiated by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF).

20   In total, 120 research participants were included in this first stage. Findings from the qualitative stage have been published in Jan Pospisil, Christopher Oringa, Sophia Dawkins and David Deng, "Don't Take This Away From Us Again": Citizen Perceptions of Peace in South Sudan, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) Policy Brief 1/2020, available at: https://www.aspr.ac.at/fileadmin/Downloads/Publikationen/Policy_Briefs/ASPR_Policy_Brief_1_2020.pdf. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the initial research plan, hence the significant gap of over a year between the qualitative and the quantitative stages.

21   For more on the complexity of conflict dynamics in South Sudan, see Adjusting Terminology for Organised Violence in South Sudan, CSRF and WFP (Sep. 2020), available at: https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/repository/adjusting-terminology-for-organised-violence-in-south-sudan/.

22   David K. Deng, Land Conflict and Displacement in South Sudan: A Conflict-Sensitive Approach to Land Governance, Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) (22 Mov. 2021), available at: https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/repository/land-conflict-and-displacement-in-south-sudan-a-conflict-sensitive-approach-to-land-governance/.

23   Joshua Craze and Ferenc Marko, Death by Peace: How South Sudan's Peace Agreement Ate the Grassroots, African Arguments (6 Jan. 2022), available at: https://africanarguments.org/2022/01/death-by-peace-how-south-sudans-peace-agreement-ate-the-grassroots/.

24   R-ARCSS, Ch. I, Art. 1.20.5 (2018), available at: https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2112.

25   The agreement also requires the R-TGONU to conduct a national census before the end of the transitional period. Though it is not specifically tied to elections, many South Sudanese view the conduct of the census as a prerequisite to elections since the last census was held in 2008 and demographics have undergone major changes since then due to conflict and natural disasters.

26   South Sudan's Machar directs preparation for snap elections, Sudan Trib. (4 Dec. 2021), available at: https://sudantribune.com/article226536/.

27   EU Ambassador doubts viability of 2023 elections, Eye Radio (15 Feb. 2022), available at: https://eyeradio.org/eu-ambassador-doubts-viability-of-2023-elections/.

28   S. Sudan's Kiir downplays fears of delays in general elections, Sudan Trib. (25 Nov. 2021), available at: https://sudantribune.com/article226388/.

29   African Union Panel of the Wise, Election-Related Disputes and Political Violence; Strengthening the Role of the African Union in Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict, The African Union Series, New York: International Peace Institute, July 2010.

30   These show that if the same random sampling and statistical estimation procedure was performed 100 times, the true value for each variable would lie long the red horizontal lines on the graph 97.5 times.

31   Probit models are more suitable than OLS for regressions with a binary dependent variable.

32   Government of South Sudan, National Dialogue Concept Note (2016) (on file with the authors).

33   For more on the National Dialogue, see David K. Deng and Rajab Mohandis, Citizen Perspectives on the National Dialogue in South Sudan, South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) and Detcro (May 2021), available at: http://csoforumsouthsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Citizen-Perspectives-on-the-National-Dialogue-in-S-Sudan-FINAL.pdf.

34   Communiqué, The South Sudan National Dialogue, National Conference, Juba, South Sudan, 3rd – 17th Nov. 2020 (on file with the authors).

35   According to the National Dialogue co-chairs: "We …believe that the success of any elections in South Sudan will hinge on the non-participation of President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar. No transition or arrangement in which President Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar take part together will succeed. We believe that the most patriotic thing for them to do is to prepare for their exit from politics with the honor, dignity and legacy of having been the founding fathers of the independent nation of South Sudan." Office of the Co-Chairs of the National Dialogue Steering Committee, Covering Note to the National Dialogue Reports (n.d.) (on file with the authors). See also National Dialogue Co-Chair says SPLM failed South Sudan, Radio Tamazuj (4 Nov. 2020), available at: https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/national-dialogue-co-chair-says-splm-failed-south-sudan.

36   A survey by the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF), for example, found that 66 percent of men had heard of the National Dialogue compared to just 44 percent of women. See David K. Deng, Revitalizing Peace in South Sudan: Citizen Perceptions of the Peace Process, SSCSF (Nov. 2018), p. 29, available at: http://csoforumsouth sudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Revitalizing-Peace-In-South-Sudan-Citizen-Perceptions-of-the-Peace-Process-Civil-Society-Forum-November-2018.pdf.

37   Relevant initiatives that incorporate area-based approaches include the South Sudan Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience (RSRTF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) new country strategy for South Sudan, and the World Bank's Enhancing Community Resilience and Local Governance Project (ECRP).

38   Douglas Johnson, Federalism in the History of South Sudanese Thought, Rift Valley Institute (RVI) (2014), available at: https://riftvalley.net/publication/federalism-history-south-sudanese-political-thought.

39   R-ARCSS, Preamble.

40   Id., Ch. I, Art. 1.4.11.

41   Matthew Pritchard and Aly Verjee, South Sudan: From 10 States to 32 States and Back Again, USIP (1 Mar. 2021), available at: https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/03/south-sudan-10-states-32-states-and-back-again.

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