Research Paper

Civil Society Organizations in South Sudan Journey to State Building and Sustainable Peace

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Abstract

The study examined the political role of Civil Society Organization (CSOs) in peacebuilding in South Sudan. Specifically, the study investigated the political and socio-economic contribution of CSOs in the peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. Descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study, while three cities - Juba, Aweil and Malakal were selected as study areas and representatives of the three regions of South Sudan. The study population was 620,510, from which a sample size of 399 respondents were determined through Slovene's formula. Data was collected through simple random sampling using questionnaire. Result of data analyses shows that CSOs have made significant positive political and socio-economic contribution towards peacebuilding in South Sudan. On political contribution, they have been involved in lobbying for electoral process reforms, sensitizing the population on conflict de-escalation, organizing dialogue sessions focusing on social cohesion for community members (particularly the youths) and pushing for constitutional review among others. On the socio-economic contribution, the study reveals that CSOs have made significant contribution to both physical and economic reconstruction of South Sudan by reconstructing schools and hospitals and creating jobs. Also, they have been at the forefront of reintegration and resettlement of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), lobbying for reforms in land acquisition process with the goal of improving agricultural production and ensuring food security.

Keywords: Civil Society Organization, Armed Conflict, Peacebuilding, Conflict Transformation, Sustainable Peace, South Sudan.

1. Introduction

Since December 2013, South Sudan has been overwhelmed by a violent conflict that has led to the death of about more than 50,000 people and displacement of more than 4,000,000 million South Sudanese either internally (IDPs) or across the border as refugees in neighboring countries (Williams, 2018). Consequently, international and local efforts have been directed towards resolving the conflict. The cumulative peacebuilding efforts championed by IGAD resulted in the drafting and signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement (RPA) in 2018. Besides, peace agreement, an international peace mission operation coordinated by the UN and AU under the umbrella name the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has been operating in the country since July 2011, yet the conflict remain unabated, instead human and capital losses are recorded regularly in different parts of the country (Human Rights Watch, 2018). The latest effort at brokering peace in South Sudan was the formation of a Unity Government in

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February 2020. Riek Machar will serve as the foremost Vice President in a unity government alongside his chief rival, President Salva Kiir, and three lower-ranking vice presidents. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the inauguration of the unity government marks South Sudan's most concrete progress toward peace since the beginning of the conflict. The formation of the unity government has brought relative peace in the country, even though gun battles are experienced at intervals in different parts of the country. Worrisomely, the peacebuilding process focuses mainly on international actors and interventions, with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) not formally and significantly involved, thereby undermining their contributions and potentials in the peace-building process. The study, therefore, examined the political and socio-economic contribution of CSOs towards peacebuilding in South Sudan, as well as their potentials in playing a key role towards resolving the ongoing protracted conflict.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Conflict Transformation Theory propounded by John Paul Lederach (2003). The theory argues that conflict transformation involves three interrelated variables, which Lederach referred to as "inquiries". The first inquiry is "Presenting Situation," the second is "the Horizon of the Future," and the third is "Change Processes" (Lederach, 2003). On the first inquiry, the theory emphasizes that any viable conflict transformation approach must start with presenting the situation and working towards the process, which include dealing with the casual factors that prompted the conflict, while solution will be the outcome of the transformation process, which focuses on reversing anomalous relationships. The theory contends that one of the major challenges of conflict resolution is that people often think of the solution first instead of the process. The second inquiry, "horizon of the future" has three elements that include: i). obvious solution, ii). relationships and iii). systems (Lederach, 2003). The theory argues that in order to transform a conflict, there is need to understand how people are going to relate with each other, particularly how the dynamics of the system are going to be different from what was going on in the presenting situation that will enable the new situation to be more constructive than the current one.

The third inquiry, "development of change processes", focuses on four different kinds of change: i). personal change of individuals, ii). relational change, iii). structural change and iv). cultural changes. Personal change of individuals deals with a change in the way, which individuals perceive and respond to issues. Relational change, emphasizes changes in the way people relate to each other and groups relate to one another. Structural change focuses on changes in government structure and social structures such as education and health structures and all sorts of structural issues that might be impeding more constructive ways of interacting and relating with others, while cultural changes highlights a change in ways in which current cultural norms are inhibiting conflict resolution. It therefore recommends a shift from unprogressive cultural norms or behaviors to that which is more constructive and futuristic.

The theory considers conflicts as an ineradicable consequence of differences of values and interests within and between communities. It assumes that the proclivity to violence arises from existing institutions and historical relationships, as well as from the allocation and distribution of power among constituents within a society (Miall, 2004). Accordingly, eliminating this type of conflicts is unrealistic, the best that can be done is to manage and contain them, and ensure a framework to reach a compromise. The referred framework, implies a strategy with the capacity to undermine the propensity of violence, while enhance democratic engagement. The theory emphasizes appropriate engagement and intervention mechanisms to achieve political settlements, particularly by those elite actors having the power and resources to persuade the conflicting parties into a realistic compromise (Miall, 2004).

The theory upholds that contemporary conflicts require more than reframing of positions and identification of the root causes and the facilitation of win-win outcomes. Rather a deeper understanding of a conflict dynamics and developing an effective framework for dealing with a conflict is crucial, considering the fact that the structure of the conflict actors and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the visible realities of the conflict. Conflict transformation is therefore, a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very structure of society that reinforces the protraction of violent conflict (Miall, 2004: 4). Thus, the theory perceives constructive relations as a vital catalyst for positive change and peacebuilding.

It argues that various actors that include people within the conflict parties, those within a conflict affected society or region, and outsiders with relevant human and material resources have interrelated contributions to make in the long-term process of peacebuilding (Miall, 2004: 5). This suggests a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach, emphasizing support for groups within the society in conflict such as CSOs to take foremost

steps in facilitating peacebuilding, rather than to encourage external intervention and mediation. It also recognizes that conflicts are transformed gradually, through a series of smaller or larger changes, as well as specific steps by means of which a variety of actors may play key roles.

Conflict transformation theory draws on a variety of conceptual building blocks that fits well into the present situation of South Sudan. The theory's argument that part of the main causes of conflict is the nature of the existing relationships and historical relations fits well into the South Sudan narrative. There is a glaring asymmetry power relationships between different ethnic nationalities within the country. This situation has been exacerbated by negligence on the part of the government, whereby majority of the population were unable to cater for themselves and therefore, making them a willful tool for violent engagements. The situation therefore, can be transformed through a shift from unbalanced to balanced relationships, which can be achieved through a process of conscientization, confrontation, negotiation, reorientation and development. Based on the recommendations of the theory, various actors have a role to play, however groups within the society in conflict should take fundamental steps at dealing with the conflict rather than relying on external engagement. This therefore, presents CSOs as an engine of peacebuilding in a conflict context. In the words of Lederach:

> Conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily see the setting and the people in it as the problem and the outsider as the answer. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting (Lederach 1995).

Civil society organizations in South Sudan holds the eclectic approach to peacebuilding in the country by embracing multi-track mechanisms and intervention methods. This will involve building peace constituencies at the grassroots level and building alliances with any groups able to bring about change, such as business groups, the media and the military.

3. The Peacebuilding Praxis

The term peacebuilding is broad and complex to conceptualize as it encompasses many factors and variables. It can be viewed from various perspectives such as international relations, reconstruction, development and so on (Makwerere, 2017). It is a long term process and occurs in different spheres. The concept of peacebuilding is associated with Johan Galtung in his pioneering work in peace studies: Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding (Galtung, 1976). Galtung emphasized the creation of peacebuilding structures, a sustainable mechanism to promote durable peace by addressing the "root causes" of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capabilities for peace management and conflict resolution.

Peacebuilding is often referred to as the broader term that includes all the other strategies like conflict management, resolution and transformation (Lederach, 1997). It involves four key areas of activities: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building (Lederach, 1997). The term became mainstream after it was emphasized by the then United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 book titled "An Agenda for Peace". Boutros-Ghali conceptualized peacebuilding as a range of initiatives and activities that identify and support structures, which tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a reoccurrence of conflict (Francis, 2008:37). Ghali's framework implies that at different times in diverse contexts, a variety of sequential response mechanisms and functions are needed to promote the resolution and transformation of conflict and ensure sustainable peace. Ghali's definition assumes a largely reactionary approach to peacebuilding, as it did not capture pre-conflict situation, which is a pertinent component of peacebuilding. It is our assumption that the conceptualization of peacebuilding during the 1990s was largely influenced by the events of the cold war era, when State security appeared to take precedence over human security.

However, the UN perspective on peacebuilding has evolved since the time of "An Agenda for Peace". For example, the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations popularly known as "the Brahimi Report published in August 2000, and Annan's 2014 publication titled "In Larger Freedom" shows that the UN views of peacebuilding has clearly shifted from focusing only on state sovereignty to human security and development through transformed relationships. There is a grand emphasis on humans as the object of protection rather than state sovereignty. This shift in approach aligns with the author position that peacebuilding involves a comprehensive, but interrelated activities and array of processes that ensure the transformation of conflict toward more sustainable peaceful relationship. Thus, peacebuilding mainly has to do with transforming relationships between people by eliminating structural impediments to

mutual collaboration (Lederach, 2000). Mani (2002), suggested that peacebuilding is both a political process as well as a social process aimed at rebuilding relationships. This position was further developed by Fukuda-Parr and McCandless (2009:216-217) who argues that peacebuilding should be anchored on holistic conceptual strategies and approaches in order for them to be effective.

Initially, peacebuilding was considered a necessary step once peacekeeping had ensured that warring functions would not re-engage in armed conflict and peacemaking had established the framework for a negotiated settlement (Wennmann, 2012). This conceptualization has serious shortfalls, as peacebuilding includes other elements - conflict prevention, conflict management, post-conflict settings and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Peacebuilding is not limited to functions such as the signing of peace agreements or ceasefire agreements, rather it includes functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords. It involves the transformation of relationships that includes processes of change within a more expansive view of context and time. Moreover, it is an ongoing multifaceted and holistic process that must be embedded into the society's social, cultural, political, spiritual, economic and development fabrics. Peacebuilding is not an event, but a network of activities and processes that addresses both pre and post conflict concerns of the conflicting parties.

4. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive cross-sectional research design. Three cities, Juba, Aweil and Malakal were selected as the study areas, which represents the three regions of South Sudan: Equatoria Region, Bahr El-Ghazal Region and Upper Nile Region. The study population was 620,510 comprising of Juba - 421,000, Aweil - 38,745 and Malakal - 160,765. Based on the study population, the sample size was 399 respondents determined using Slovene's formula as shown below. However, the data analysis, presentation of findings and conclusions were based on 385 properly filled questionnaires.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where;   n = the required sample size.
                N = the known population size
                α = the level of significance, which
        is fixed at = 0.05

$$n = \frac{620,510}{1 + 620,510 \ (0{,}05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{620,510}{1 + 620,510 \ (0{,}0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{620,510}{1\,552{,}275}$$
$$n = 400$$

5. Presentation and Analysis of Results

The Pearson correlation was used to establish the relationship between the study variables, which is CSOs and peacebuilding in South Sudan. The result of the test shows whether there is a significant/minor positive or negative relationship and whether there is no relationship at all between the study variables. The results of the data gathered in the field are presented in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on the relationship between political contributions of CSOs and peacebuilding in South Sudan

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CompletePC	1.68	1.082	377
CompleteCFC	2.02	1.278	377

Table 2. Pearson's correlation for the relationship between political contributions of civil society organizations and peace-building in South Sudan

Correlations		
	CompletePC	CompleteCFC

CompletePC	Pearson Correlation	1	.374**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	377	377
CompleteCFC	Pearson Correlation	.374**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	385	385
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The value of Pearson's r or the correlation coefficient is .374. The closer the value is to one, the stronger the relationship. Since the result is at .374, it shows that the relationship between the two variables, while significant, is moderately related. A correlation is significant if the sig. (2-tailed) is < 0.05. based on the results of the correlation test above, there is a significant relationship between the political contributions of civil society organizations and the peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. Summarily, there is a moderate, positive correlation between political contributions of CSOs and peacebuilding efforts, which was statistically significant (r=.374, n=377, p=.000). Furthermore, field data shows that CSOs employed multifaceted approaches in their political contribution to peacebuilding in South Sudan. The approaches include lobbying for democratic change in the election process by pushing for constitutional review, as well as carrying out mass mobilization campaign to deescalate the conflict and build social cohesion. In addition, they provided warning signals about the conflict to the citizens prior to breakout of violence, which contributed in saving the lives of people. CSOs ran grassroots campaign focusing on social reorientation and attitude change among different tribes and members of the community in South Sudan. The outcome was a reduction in violent confrontation and preference for dialogue in settling disagreements. Summarily, CSOs made significant political contributions to peacebuilding in South Sudan through lobbying for electoral process reforms, sensitizing the population on conflict de-escalation, organizing dialogue sessions focusing on social cohesion for community members (particularly the youths) and pushing for constitutional review among others.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on the relationship between the socio-economic contribution of civil society organizations and peace-building in South Sudan

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CompleteSEC	2.61	.860	377
CompleteCFC	2.02	1.278	377

Table 4. Pearson's correlation for the relationship between the socio-economic contribution of civil society organizations and peace-building in South Sudan

Correlations			
		CompleteSEC	CompleteCFC
CompleteSEC	Pearson Correlation	1	.259**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	377	377
CompleteCFC	Pearson Correlation	.259**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

	N	377	377
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The value of Pearson's r or the correlation coefficient is .259. The closer the value is to one, the stronger the relationship. Since the correlation coefficient is at .259, it then suggests that the relationship between the two variables, while significant, is moderately related. A correlation is significant if the sig. (2-tailed) is < 0.05. based on the results of the correlation test on table 4 above, there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic contribution of civil society organizations and peacebuilding in South Sudan. The Pearson correlation test shows that there is a moderate, positive correlation between socio-economic contribution of CSOs and peacebuilding in South Sudan, which was statistically significant at (r=.257, n=377, p=.000).

It was found that CSOs have made significant contribution to both physical and economic reconstruction of South Sudan. For example, CSOs reconstructed some schools in Aweil, hospitals in Juba and also offered employment to citizens. The survival of most IDPs in Juba, Aweil and Malakal has been a fundamental task of CSOs, they provide basic services such as healthcare, food, shelter, clothing to them. Reintegration and resettlement of refugees and IDPs have been another paramount contribution of CSOs, not only that they provide shelter for IDPs, they facilitate their relocation and reintegration into the society, usually training them on peaceful coexistence with other members of the society. The training focusses on diffusing the tendency of using violence as a response to disagreements and conflicts. Another contribution of CSOs is their engagement in lobbying for reforms in land acquisition process. CSOs want the government of South Sudan to simplify land acquisition process, so as to ensure that more people have access to agricultural lands, which will enhance agricultural productivity and food security in the country.

4. Conclusions
The concept of civil society is shaped within the framework of protecting and implementing political rights. Basically, civil society organizations strengthen the growth of civil participation and in this way they influence the decision making process with inputs from the grassroots. Thus, efficient civil society acts as a provider of interests in the relationship between the state and public. The study concludes that despite political repression, a deteriorating economy and active war in some parts of South Sudan, civil society organizations plays a positive role in peacebuilding in the country.

Empirically, there are many challenges that obstruct CSOs capabilities and functionality in the country. Part of the challenges stem from the very nature of civil society in the Africa, where ethnicity, politics and clientelistic relationships are part of their daily functioning and thus create distrust between them and the wider society, providing an indirect justification for government high-handedness on them before the public. Given that the goal of CSOs in South Sudan is to transform the present war system into a peace system, and to establish the values of peace and justice, truth and mercy, their activities must emphasize a process of change in the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict. This would be facilitated over different time-periods and should be able to influence different system levels that undermine the peacebuilding process. An appropriate strategy therefore, should be to embrace networking between mid-level leaders and grassroots mobilizers with links to parties across the conflict, and to facilitate comprehensive peace process that will address harmonious changes and reverse anomalous relationship at all levels in South Sudan societies.

5. Recommendations
CSOs are part of the democratization process as they provide the link between state and citizens by producing information, generating ideas, promoting democratic values and building social capital. In South Sudan, they are perceived by the population as the paramount hope for a genuine democratic counterweight to the government, political jobbers and warlords who tend to exploit the conflict-ridden state, particularly the peacebuilding processes. It is therefore imperative that CSOs without compromising their independence should endeavor to develop strategic alliances and partnerships with the government to impact public policy and decision-making. Relations between the government of South Sudan and CSOs have historically been antagonistic, with civil society groups pressing government for political reforms and demanding a sustainable and liberal democracy. The confrontational approach of CSOs and the belligerent response of the government often hampers the ability to influence policy decisions. Therefore, establishing a dynamic relationship with the government without compromising their institutional independence will help CSOs in delivering more on their political and socio-economic contributions to peacebuilding and

other salient issues relating to nation building in South Sudan.

Also, there is need for a more inclusive role for women and youths in conflict prevention, management, and peacebuilding activities in South Sudan. Observably, women and children are the main victims of the armed conflict, while youths are the active combatants. However, both the former and the later have been generally sidelined during the peacebuilding processes, particularly during negotiations, drafting and signing of peace agreements. Therefore, CSOs should focus their political contribution partly on advocating for full involvement of women and youths in the peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. It is believed that this will ensure grassroots participation in the peace process, and will enhance sustainable peace in the country.

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