Building Peace in post-conflict Societies:
An Exploration of the Role of Youth in South Sudan's Peacebuilding Architecture

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DECLARATION

I, MANDE Daniel Yetero declare that:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mrs. Grace Philip Kefa and Mr. Yetero Mande Bambara (RIP), and my stepfather, Mr. Oliver K. Bambu (RIP). I call your names in silence, but only faint echoes return. The voice that once stood strong and proud is now lost in Earth's eternal shroud. You were the truth, fire, and light, guiding me through my nights. Your words are etched in stone, but here I stand, so lost and alone. But in every tear, I feel your presence; I know you are near. Without your relentless and unwavering love and encouragement, I would never have been able to complete my graduate studies. I love you all and appreciate everything you have done for me. Sleep sweetly in the Lord.

ABSTRACT

The post-conflict period raises questions about how peacebuilding can contribute to sustainable peace, reconstruction, and development, particularly through inclusive and youth-responsive processes. A key aspect of this is the involvement of young people, whose participation and representation in decision-making processes are crucial for post-conflict agendas. However, overcoming the challenges and ensuring their participation remains complex due to institutional and socio-economic barriers, even at the grassroots levels. This study focuses on the South Sudan experience to understand the role of youth in post-conflict peacebuilding. It uses qualitative research methods, such as reviewing relevant secondary information and conducting focus group discussions and interviews with youth organizations and individuals in South Sudan. The study reveals a lack of comprehensive scholarship examining youth's roles in post-conflict transition processes and emphasizes the importance of considering their diverse experiences and approaches. It highlights the need for transformative approaches to peacebuilding that recognize and support youth's crucial contributions. The study concludes with recommendations, emphasizing that supporting youth's initiatives for peace can advance gender interests, increase participation, and contribute to the sustainability of peacebuilding and development in South Sudan. Key Words: Post-conflict Societies; Youth and Youth's Organizations; South Sudan; Policy Instruments; Post-conflict Peacebuilding, Reconstruction, and Development Framework; and Maxine Molyneux's Organizational Theory.

Post-conflict situations raise questions about how the notion and practice of peacebuilding can contribute to sustainable peace, reconstruction, and development through transformative gender-responsive, and inclusive processes. Embedded in these inquiries are the different standpoints and accentuation that the role and contributions of youth in peacebuilding are an important contextual component for (post-)conflict agendas and are very much interlinked to their human

and civil rights to participation and representation in public and official decision-making processes. This notwithstanding, the question regarding youth participation, representation, and the consideration of their interests in the array of post-conflict approaches and processes remains subject to the complexity of institutional, structural, and socio-economic injustices and challenges, even at the grassroots levels. This study recognizes the manner and extent to which demystifying misconceptions about youth and integrating their lived experiences into peacebuilding is imperative for the effectiveness and sustainability of post-conflict drives and their environment.

Therefore, to understand the processes of peacebuilding in post-conflict transitions and address the question regarding the role of women therein, this study capitalizes on the South Sudan experience as a macrocosm that embodies these themes. It provides a nuanced perspective and context of the role of women and women organizations in South Sudan's peacebuilding architecture using a qualitative research methodology that comprises the review of relevant secondary info and primary data generated from focus group discussions.

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with various women's organizations, institutions, and individuals in South Sudan. It found a lack of comprehensive scholarship examining youth's roles in each aspect of post-conflict transition processes. Additionally, there is a shortage of literature on policy implementation and domestication, and a tendency to oversimplify women's organizational roles and significance. The study utilized a theoretical framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory to address these gaps. Through these lenses, the study highlighted women's peacebuilding agencies' diverse and strategic nature, emphasizing the importance of considering their varied experiences and approaches to post-conflict processes. The study also shed light on the challenges and opportunities women face in engaging in peacebuilding initiatives, advocating for the use of transformative approaches in peacebuilding programs. It found that South Sudanese youth offer a gendered and transformative perspective to peace and security agendas at both structural and practical levels, based on their unique and shared experiences of conflict. Furthermore, the study revealed that diverse women's initiatives

have been crucial in women's peace and decision-making processes during and after the conflict in South Sudan, but they have also faced numerous barriers. The study concluded with several recommendations, emphasizing the need to genuinely support women's initiatives and agency for peace as a means to advance gender interests, participation, and representation in decision-making. It also highlighted the potential for supporting youth's efforts to enhance the effective implementation and sustainability of peacebuilding and development processes in South Sudan.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

RIP- Rest in Peace

Dr- Doctor

PhD- Doctor of Philosophy

St- Saint

USA- United States of America

ARCSS- Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

R-ARCSS- Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

GOS- Government of Sudan

SPLM/A- Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

INGOs- International Non-Governmental Organizations

SSPDF- South Sudan People's Defence Forces

UNSCR- United Nations Security Council Resolution

HLRF- High-Level Revitalized Forum

SSYI- South Sudan Youth Initiative

YIPNET- Youth in Peacebuilding Network

UN- United Nations

US- United States

FCDO- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

SOYDAVO- Somaliland Youth Development & Voluntary Organization

NAR- Never Again Rwanda

NGOs- Non-Governmental Orgaizations

HURIA- Human Rights Agenda

IDPs- Internally Displaced Persons

WES- Western Equatoria State

CES- Central Equatoria State

EES- Eastern Equatora State

SSCSF- South Sudan Civil Society Foundation

NYU- National Youth Union

YOC- Youth organization Coalition

SFCG- Search for Common Good

NPA- Norwegean People's Aid

AU- African Union

IGAD- Inter-Governmental Authority in Development

PBC- Peacebuilding Commission

COVID-19- Corona Virus Disease- 2019

MPs- Members of Parliament

IPU- Inter-Parliamentary Union

SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund

YPS- Youth, Peace & Security

UNDPPA- United Nations Department of Political & Peacebuilding Affairs

PCRD- Post Conflict Reconstruction & Development

CSCPF- Continental Structure Conflict Prevention Framework

REC- Recreation Education & Community

COMESA- Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa

EAC- East African Community

AMU- Arab Maghreb Union

ECCAS- Economic Community of Central African States

ECOWAS- Economic Community of West African States

CSO- Civil Society Organization

LGBTI- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex

HIV/AIDS- Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrone

DDR- Disarmment, Demobilization & Reintegration

PUSS- Press Union of South Sudan

UNMISS- United Mission in South Sudan

OYA- Office of Youth Advisor

SSYLEA- South Sudan Youth Law Enforcement Association

MARWOPNET- Mano River Women's Peace Network

WANEP- West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Network

YIPNET- Youth in Peacebuilding Network

SGBV- Sexual and Gender Based Violence

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization

TRC- Truth & Reconciliation Commission

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH & PEACEBUILDING DISCOURSE

"*Unless we teach children peace, someone else will teach them violence.***"**—**Colman McCarthy, USA, born 1938**

South Sudan and its neighboring countries have experienced a fluctuating pattern of conflict. The proliferation of violent extremism and small arms in these often volatile and neglected regions, such as the Lake Chad basin, Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes, has drastically expanded the conflict, making it arguably the top threat to national and regional security.

Although there is a growing literature on the radicalization, trends, and radical ideologies in South Sudan that have fueled violent extremism, young people's role and contributions in building resilience in at-risk communities and cultivating a culture of peace and coexistence have received little attention, and focus. A lot of work and support are still needed.

Youth should be supported to foster public discussions about underlying political, social, and economic issues, which are often the root causes of violent extremism. They should be encouraged to take bold, transformative steps that are urgently needed to advance ideas that further recognize and enhance youth's participation and leadership roles in contributing solutions that promote peace and stability. This way, they can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment.

1.1 Background of the Problem

On July 9, 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan through a vote where southerners overwhelmingly voted in favor of an independent state. This ended many years of protracted armed struggle that began as early as 1955 when the first resistance against the establishment in Khartoum was launched to liberate southern Sudanese from racism, oppression, marginalization, and exploitation of the rich natural resources in the region. The struggle for autonomy and

recognition of the aspirations of southerners in Sudan was finally resolved with the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement under the auspices of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. This agreement devolved power from the central government, empowering the regional government in the south to undertake development and address existing imbalances. However, disagreements in South Sudan's ruling party led to a return to armed conflict in December 2013, only two years after South Sudan gained independence. The 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed, but it failed to bring lasting peace, and the country fell back into war after soldiers loyal to the President and First Vice President clashed in Juba in July 2016. The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in September 2018, renewing hopes for peace in the country. However, its implementation has been slow, with only about 23% of the agreement being implemented five years later. A new roadmap was signed in August 2022, extending the agreement by a further 24 months.

In South Sudan, there is still no legal framework defining who is a youth and establishing a policy for their development. The African Youth Charter, which describes youth as any person between the ages of 18-35, is often referred to, as well as regional practices and the draft South Sudan National Development Policy.

The literature emphasizes the important and complex role that youth play in peacebuilding. They can be seen as both a threat to peace and as a force for peace. There is a growing international consensus that young people are crucial in shaping conflict situations constructively and laying the groundwork for peaceful societies. In post-conflict South Sudan, young people are particularly vulnerable to various forms of marginalization and human rights violations. Therefore, it is considered a societal obligation to enable youth in post-conflict settings to participate in all aspects of development. The strategic role of youth is highlighted in the National Youth Policy and the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plans for South Sudan, which aim to address youth unemployment, reintegrate vulnerable individuals, and mitigate conflict drivers. However, recent reports indicate that South Sudanese youth still face marginalization within society.

The unique socialization processes and conflict-affected backgrounds of young people have led to new power struggles within some communities. These young individuals have not experienced

peaceful co-existence or traditional community structures. Coupled with the demographic pressure of being part of the youngest populations globally, and facing social, economic, and political marginalization in post-war society, South Sudanese youth are seen as a potential source of new insurgencies. This study is important as it provides an opportunity to understand the youth's nature, dynamics, and involvement in strategic peacebuilding processes. It aims to shed light on youth engagement in peacebuilding practices and analyze power relations to highlight factors that can mitigate conflict drivers and offer new perspectives for social development in this context. Understanding young people's ideas of social cohesion and their potential for social change in post-war environments is a key focus of this study.

1.2 Historical Perspective

Throughout history, societies have established various mechanisms and institutions to promote peace, including councils of elders, religious leaders, and other organized forums. The formalization of peacebuilding in international law began in the late 19th century, starting with The Hague Peace Conference in 1898, followed by the establishment of the League of Nations, and culminating in the formation of the United Nations at the end of World War II. The primary objective of the United Nations is to monitor and support world peace through mediation, facilitation, good offices, and arbitration between states. The term "peacebuilding" was coined by Johan Galtung in 1969, who defined it as one of three approaches to peace: peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. Galtung's understanding of peacebuilding is rooted in his conceptual differentiation between negative peace (cessation of violence) and positive peace (a peaceful society at all levels). While negative peace achieves the absence of physical violence through peacekeeping, only positive peace can achieve the absence of structural violence through peacemaking and peacebuilding. Peacemaking in conflict resolution aims to alleviate tensions between conflicting parties by addressing the root causes of violence. Peacebuilding contributes to positive peace by establishing structures and institutions of peace founded on justice, equity, and cooperation, thus proactively addressing underlying causes of conflict and preventing their escalation into violence. The majority of current definitions and understandings of peacebuilding reflect these two aspects of positive and negative peace, as introduced by Johan Galtung.

When combatants in civil wars sign a peace agreement, there is potential for progress. Long-standing wars with staggering costs could be brought to an end, and people would gain the opportunity to rebuild shattered lives and societies. The peace agreement between the Government of the Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) represented an opportunity for major change and sustainable peace. However, the potential for harm was also great. In general terms, this literature shows that the direction of developments in the post-war phase is shaped not only by the conflict itself but also by the nature of the peace agreement and the international commitment to the agreement and its implementation.

The term "peacebuilding" came into use in the 1990s and typically refers to transitional activities to implement peace agreements after civil wars. These activities normally include managing the transition from relief to economic recovery and longer-term development, the return of refugees and displaced persons, security sector reform (demobilization, reintegration and reform of the militaries, demining, reform of the police and the legal sector), reconstructing social and economic infrastructure, rebuilding political institutions for democratic rule, and promoting human rights and accountability for past violations in a system of transitional justice.

The main objective is to encourage the development of the conditions, attitudes, and behaviors that foster and sustain social and economic growth that is peaceful, stable, and prosperous (Smith 2004:5)

1.3 Conceptual Perspective

Peacebuilding is the process of achieving peace. Depending on one's understanding of peace, peacebuilding differs considerably in terms of approaches, the scope of activities, and time frame. According to Kofi Annan, peacebuilding is "the various concurrent and integrated actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation". Lederach characterizes peacebuilding as the attempt to address the underlying structural, relational, and cultural root causes of conflict. These two definitions have a common meaning and understanding of peacebuilding as a process. Annan further includes processes of changing attitudes which is reconciliatory and addressing the root causes of the conflict. Annan's thinking is limited to the process starting only at the end of the conflict; the question therefore is what if the conflict does not end. Lederach encompasses the full array of stages and approaches

needed to transform conflict towards sustainable peaceful relations and outcomes. Therefore, peacebuilding is a holistic and comprehensive process that should include: post-conflict reconstruction, improving and building on social relations, provision of aid assistance, reconciliation, and entire social and structural changes.

Peacebuilding programs are designed to address the root causes of conflicts, and past grievances, and promote long-term stability and justice. It is often seen as the phase of the peace process that occurs after peacemaking and peacekeeping. However, peacebuilding is a broader concept that includes not only long-term transformative efforts but also peacemaking and peacekeeping. In this view, peacebuilding includes early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements, and the establishment of peace zones. The end of overt violence through a peace agreement or military victory does not mean the achievement of peace (Licklider, 1995). Rather, the end of violence or a so-called 'post-conflict' situation provides "a new set of opportunities that can be grasped or thrown away" (Robert L. Rothstein, 1999).

The international community can play a significant role in either nurturing or undermining this fragile peacebuilding process. The United Nations, individual states, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have become increasingly involved in trying to rebuild peaceful societies after violent conflicts. The dilemmas currently being faced in Iraq and Sri Lanka are only the latest in a line of learning experiences in this complex task of post-conflict peacebuilding.

1.4 Theoretical Perspective

The post-structuralist theory of peacebuilding in international relations focuses on incorporating diverse perspectives, including marginalized actors and everyday peace discourses of ordinary people. This approach emphasizes understanding differences and does not rely on a common meta-narrative.

There is a distinct school of thought within peace research that has different terminology, conceptual understandings, approaches, and actors. This school has evolved and has different approaches to mediating conflicts, whether between or within states. While mediation has

historically been the dominant approach to peacebuilding, it became clear in the mid-1990s that additional approaches were needed. It's important to note that this theoretical school is not directly tied to the conceptual debate on the nexus between peace/conflict and development.

The Conflict Resolution School aims to address the root causes of conflicts and rebuild relationships between the parties involved. It utilizes legal mechanisms and negotiation to find compromise solutions. The focus is on rebuilding not only the relationships between the top representatives of the conflicting parties but also within society as a whole.

Established in the 1970s, this school draws on socio-psychological conflict resolution strategies at the interpersonal level. Its main goal is to achieve long-term resolution by addressing the underlying causes of conflict and building relationships. One of its key contributions is its perspective on peacebuilding, which focuses on identifying human needs and listening to the voices of ordinary people. However, it has been criticized by supporters of the Conflict Management School for being too lengthy to effectively stop wars. While it can improve communication and relationships between conflicting parties, it does not always lead to an agreement to end the war. Research has shown that even when relationships between groups are rebuilt, this may not extend to other groups or the leadership of the conflicting parties. For example, following the Oslo peace agreement between Israel and Palestine in 1994, the Norwegian-funded People to People Peace Program supported dialogue projects between various Israeli and Palestinian groups. While these projects improved relations between participants, they had no impact on the peace process as a whole.

1.5 Contextual Perspective

South Sudan has endured a devastating conflict that led to the deaths of thousands and the displacement of millions since the civil war began in 2013, just two years after the country gained independence. In 2018, after the collapse of the 2015 agreement, various political and armed groups signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) following months of negotiations.

Despite their large numbers, young people in South Sudan, aged 15-35, face significant

challenges that threaten their generation. These challenges include forced conscription into military activities, lack of participation in political and civic decision-making, high unemployment, limited business opportunities, inadequate skills and access to education, and insufficient access to health-related information and services, including sexual and reproductive health. The situation is particularly dire among young people in rural areas who are vulnerable to communal conflicts.

Despite the potential contributions they could make to peacebuilding, young people are marginalized and not effectively included in the peace process. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the progress made in youth inclusion and participation in the South Sudan peace process and to identify opportunities for youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts. The research paper examined the socially and politically constructed attitudes, behaviors, and policies among different stakeholders that either support or hinder the genuine inclusion and participation of youth in the peace process. The study utilized the "We are Here" model ("in the room," "around the room," and "outside the room") to analyze and identify youth engagement in the negotiation process.

Western Equatoria is one of the ten states of South Sudan and comprises ten counties. Tambura County of WES of recent has experienced some tribal insecurity between its indigenous Azande and Balanda tribes. The tribal conflict is believed to be perpetrated by armed youth of both tribes. This has resulted in the displacement of thousands of innocent women and children, and many have been murdered in cold blood.

In a bid to curb the situation and return the County to normal life, the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) have been deployed to the Greater Tambura area (Ezo, Nagero & Tambura) to disarm the youth. Over 800 arms have been collected so far from the wrong hands. Hence, the disarmed youth are now becoming productive agents of peace and not agents of destruction.

Figure 1:Civilian youth armed groups disarmed in Tambura County, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

1.6 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to enhance understanding of the role of youth in peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. It is significant for its focused analysis of the connection between youth and peacebuilding, particularly about their human and civil rights, participation, and the promotion of sustainable peace and development in the post-conflict context.

The study's geographical focus is on the South Sudanese context, providing a comprehensive account of the historical changes in the involvement of youth in political, economic, social, and security developments. It highlights how youth have transitioned from being passive participants to active contributors and architects of these processes. The study also examines the various ways in which youth influence decision-making, mobilize support, and engage in post-conflict recovery activities, while also addressing the challenges and limitations they face.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the inequalities in security and political arrangements that affect youth, as well as their representation in (post-) conflict processes.

The concept of inequality, as demonstrated in the following chapters, is relevant to policy formulation and implementation. It is a crucial issue for both theory and practice, particularly

within the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development. This study is theoretically significant as it provides an opportunity to redefine the roles of youth and the rule of law, and creates a platform for youth to assume leadership positions at various levels of society.

However, the actualization of these opportunities depends on the ability of governments and institutions to establish and implement processes that are people-centered and equally inclusive of all (Khadiagala and Lyon, 2006).

The research holds significant importance as it provides the theoretical basis for understanding the role of youth organizing for peace as central to their diverse practical and strategic interests (Molyneux 1985, 1998, 2001). The study explores:

i.   How South Sudanese youth, amidst wartime, mobilized to influence change in the civil wars by organizing around their practical interests of survival and pressing social and economic demands.

ii.   How the pursuit of their primary interests led to the formation of strategic interests aimed at challenging youth marginalization, advocating for youth's inclusion in public decision-making processes, and encouraging their participation in the reconstruction efforts.

iii. How the transformation of practical interests into strategic ones has facilitated youth involvement and impact in the current environment of South Sudan. The study aims to lay the foundation for peaceful opportunities for youth and youth organizations to contribute to societal development. Additionally, it seeks to enhance understanding of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies and the interconnectedness of processes, emphasizing the central role of youth in enabling peace and decision-making.

The text you provided seems to be discussing the importance of women's perspectives in peacebuilding. It mentions that some believe women's unique experiences of conflict can provide a specific and transformative viewpoint on peacebuilding, while others argue that sustainable peace depends on the active involvement of both men and women in post-conflict development. When discussing youth participation, it is important to consider both the challenges faced by young people and the positive contributions they have made to society, as well as opportunities for effective youth participation. Long-term ways to enhance youth participation include providing platforms for engagement to develop their skills, quality education, and mentorship. Young people are future leaders, and their participation is crucial in creating a more sustainable,

resilient, diverse, and inclusive society. Creating opportunities for young people to contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 16, is crucial. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 is built on five key pillars: prevention, participation, protection, partnerships, disengagement, demobilization, and reintegration. Meaningful involvement of youth is required across all these pillars to fully achieve the UNSCR's goals. It is essential to support, acknowledge, and amplify young people's actions, as their participation is necessary to obtain satisfactory results and innovative solutions to promote peace and solidarity in societies.

A qualitative assessment was conducted to understand the roles and contributions of youth in the 2018 R-ARCSS. The assessment focused on youth in civil society who were engaged in the peace process in Addis Ababa, both inside and outside the negotiation room. The research involved reviewing existing literature and reference material, such as news articles, and conducting key informant interviews with people who were involved in the peace process at different levels. A total of 10 interviews were conducted online via WhatsApp or through direct phone calls.

1.7 Research Questions

1.7.1 Main Research Question:
What is the role of the youth in peace-building in post-conflict South Sudan?

1.7.2 Specific Research Questions:
1. What is the role of youth in peace and conflict resolution in South Sudan?
2. What are the challenges of post-conflict development in South Sudan?
3. Discuss some of the South Sudan peace architectures and their effectiveness in restoring peace to the country.
4. What effects does conflict have on the youth of South Sudan?
5. How did young people participate in the peace process, and what impact did they have??

1.8 Significance of the Study

Our results emphasize the significance of involving young people in peace and conflict resolution and their positive impact on society. We also address the challenges of post-conflict development in South Sudan, as well as the effectiveness of the South Sudan peace architecture.

The participants were allowed to share their personal experiences and provide feedback on how other young people participated in the peace process. The research included interviews with 10 youths, which were conducted over the phone and online via WhatsApp. The data collected was transcribed, and the views expressed were cleaned, forming the backbone of this report. In South Sudan, young people play a crucial role in building peace and social cohesion in their communities, despite facing challenges such as poverty, lack of education, insecurity, shrinking civic space, and a crippled economy due to conflicts. It is essential to promote and support their efforts across the country.

During the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) and peace talks, young people brought new ideas, experiences, and high energy to the negotiations. For instance, a painting depicting a rolling carpet was hung, symbolizing the closure of the old and dark chapter in South Sudan's history and the beginning of a brighter future. Many people at the peace negotiations remarked on the image's power and influence in moving the process forward.

South Sudanese youth have played a significant role in the peace process by actively participating in formal peace negotiations and political dialogues. Although youth inclusion was limited in the past, the adoption of UNSCR 2250 in 2015 provided a legal and moral basis for South Sudanese youth to demand their presence in the peace process. The High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) provided an opportunity for youth participation, and youth-led organizations advocated for an end to the South Sudan war after the 2016 conflict.

Youth delegates at the HLRF brought together young people from different parties to develop a common agenda and commit to youth-friendly provisions within the framework for peace in South Sudan. This led to the establishment of youth-friendly provisions such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Women Enterprise Development Fund, Students Fund, and youth-sensitive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs.

The youth in South Sudan played a crucial role in building peace and social cohesion in their communities. Effective advocacy by young people resulted in their inclusion in the peace agreement's implementation mechanisms and the participation of refugees in the negotiations.

This allowed a diversity of opinions to be heard, especially from those who were victims of the conflict. The views of refugees were essential in designing a dignified return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin.

Furthermore, young people who were not in the room but were connected to the peace agreement through formal or informal mechanisms built a working relationship with those inside and outside the room. This provided an information resource center to the public on the progress of the talks and generated pressure to see traction in the process where necessary.

The influential voices of young South Sudanese have compelled political actors and negotiators to take the concerns of young people seriously and commit to addressing them within the peace framework. Youth demands, such as participation in the peace implementation phase, have been met. One young person even signed the agreement, and there was 35% affirmative action for women.

Furthermore, the youth have made themselves and their issues relevant by lobbying regional countries with significant influence on the peace talks, the international community, religious leaders, and political parties. It is vital to promote and support the efforts of youth in South Sudan and create the necessary environment for their success.

During the peace process, many young people participated in alternative ways and took on the role of observers. They even created their roles. The South Sudan Civil Society Forum launched a social media campaign called #SouthSudanIsWatching, where people were asked to take photos wearing sunglasses painted with the South Sudanese flag and post them on social media along with a message. This campaign was launched to coincide with the opening of the HLRF.

It is important to note that during the civil wars in South Sudan, youth organizations were formed to ensure a return to peace, normalcy, and security. The South Sudan Youth Initiative (SSYI) was established in 1994, the Youth in Peacebuilding Network (YIPNET) in 2001, and the Youth of South Sudan Mass Action for Peace in 2003. Unfortunately, like any other armed conflict in the world, the youth bore a disproportionate amount of the brunt of the civil wars. Despite this, the youth groups and organizations demonstrated enduring resilience and a determined resolve to cope with the challenges of war and exclusion during the conflicts. They actively engaged in peace processes and set the necessary platform for rebuilding new lives for their families, communities, and society.

The involvement of young people in observing the peace process played a significant role in generating focus on progress and putting pressure on the warring parties. This was especially important considering the parties at times exhibited no will to negotiate and reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict in South Sudan. The unity showcased by citizens through the campaign was crucial in holding the warring parties accountable for making peace.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature review focuses on youth participation in peacebuilding within the context of power relations and dimensions. It is divided into various sections, including clarification of key terms and concepts, recognition of youth diversity, exploration of youth involvement in peacebuilding, power and participation in social work, peacebuilding in South Sudan, and power relations in Western Equatoria State.

The researcher used a snowballing approach to search for relevant literature, mainly utilizing the SuperSearch and ProQuest databases. Single search terms and combinations such as youth, participation, peacebuilding, peace, South Sudan, and post-conflict were employed. Additionally, literature reviews on the chosen topic provided further insight into youth participation in post-conflict environments.

2.1 Post-conflict peacebuilding

"Post-conflict peacebuilding is a complex process that involves addressing significant limitations and complications, such as political and resource constraints. The process of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies is multi-component, with finding lasting political solutions within the framework of nation-states being the most important.

While the term "peacebuilding" is relatively new, external assistance for post-war rebuilding dates back to the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe and Japan. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's formulation was new and caught the world's attention because it realized that the end of the Cold War opened new possibilities for international action. The United Nations, individual states, and international non-government organizations (INGOs) have increasingly become involved in rebuilding peaceful societies in the aftermath of violent conflict. Post-conflict peacebuilding encompasses the full range of non-military commitments undertaken by the international community to assist countries in achieving self-sustaining peace and socio-economic development."—*Abstract- S.M. Aliff: Journal of Social Review Volume 2; June 2014.*

In Namibia and Cambodia, for the first time, the UN launched expanded peacekeeping operations that included not only military security but also the coordination of elections. In East Timor, the

UN's mandate broadened even further to include the establishment of a functioning government and society through comprehensive development, law and order, security, and governance objectives. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, extensive reconstruction activities have also been pursued, including an emphasis on establishing security, democracy, and good governance. Furthermore, the UN plays an essential role in different aspects of crisis intervention and political tensions. The UN's authority is critical in addressing and resolving conflicts and managing the consequences of those conflicts. Over the last decades, especially after the end of the Cold War, the role of the UN has expanded towards the 3.

Figure 2: Map of Sudan from which South Sudan seceded in 2011
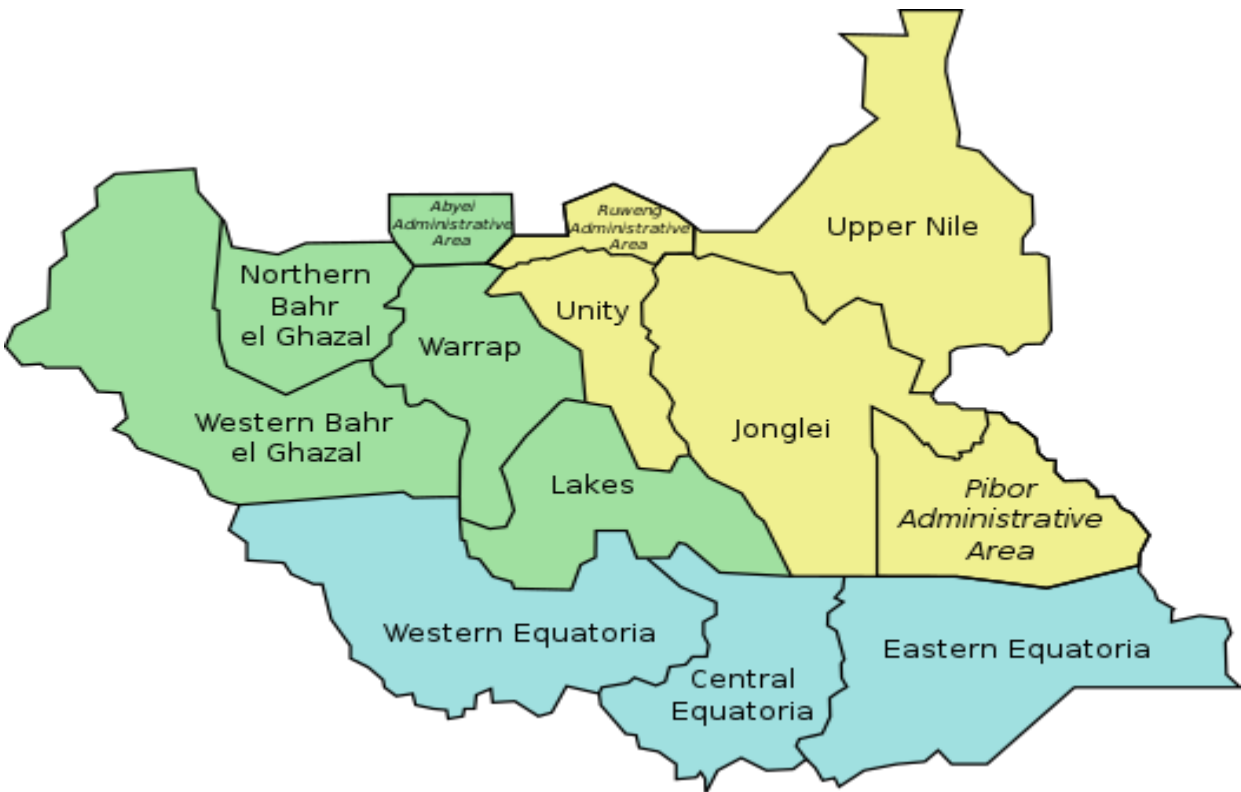
Figure 3: Map of South Sudan

2.2 Defining Peacebuilding

The concept of peacebuilding, which refers to external aid provided for post-war reconstruction, dates back to the reconstruction of Europe and Japan after World War II. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's formulation highlighted a new possibility for international action, which was made possible by the end of the Cold War. This idea of peacebuilding is difficult to define and even more challenging to achieve. Elizabeth M. Cousens defined post-conflict peacebuilding as strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met, and violent conflicts do not recur. This definition takes a long-term approach and incorporates the goals of both negative peace (absence of physical violence) and positive peace (absence of structural violence). Johan Galtung first outlined this distinction. Additionally, Spence provided a more comprehensive and normative definition of peacebuilding, which includes activities and processes that focus on the root causes of conflict, support the rebuilding and rehabilitation of all sectors of the war-torn society, encourage and support interaction between all sectors of society to repair damaged relations and start the process of restoring dignity

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and trust, recognize the specifics of each post-conflict situation, encourage and support the participation of indigenous resources in the design, implementation and sustainment of activities and processes, and promote processes that will endure after the initial emergency recovery phase has passed.

Post-conflict peacebuilding is a complex process that involves addressing significant challenges and complications, including political and resource constraints, lack of political will, and lack of capacity to implement the terms of the peace agreement. The international community's efforts to promote peace in societies recovering from violent conflicts become even more complicated when there has not been a negotiated end to the violence involving the international community. In Rwanda, after the genocide in 1994, the situation was particularly challenging. Boutros-Ghali made a distinction between post-conflict peacebuilding in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement and peace-building activities where the UN does not already have a peacemaking or peacekeeping mandate. In the latter situation, it is unclear who has the responsibility for implementing, monitoring, and coordinating peace-building activities, and the parties to the conflict are not bound by any agreement as to their part in the peace-building process.

If the violence has ceased because of a military victory, as in Rwanda, then there is the problem of an imbalance of power between the victors and losers to deal with in the reconstruction of society and the implementation of justice mechanisms. If the victor in the military conflict is an outside intervener, such as the US in Iraq and Afghanistan, the situation becomes even more challenging. The US and coalition have the moral and legal responsibility to assist in the rebuilding effort, but they may lack the moral credibility or practical experience to manage the process. The UN has the expertise but lacks credibility in Iraq and has limited resources to tackle such an enormous and complicated task.

It is essential to evaluate post-conflict peacebuilding as part of implementing peace agreements. However, this is a limited approach as many conflicts 'end' as the result of military victory, which has significant implications for considering transitional justice issues. Therefore, it is necessary to find effective ways for both the US and the UN to implement justice and reconciliation processes in such situations.

2.3 Youth-led Peace

More than 600 million young people live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (Wilton Park, 2017). Despite being deeply affected by violence in a myriad of ways, young people's voices are not heard, nor are they included in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The 'youth bulge' is seen as a driver of instability, and young people are typically portrayed as perpetrators of violence or potential 'spoilers' who should be protected from radicalization and extremism. The active role young people play as peacemakers, mediators, and peacebuilders at grassroots and local levels is under-acknowledged, and they are often not included in official peace processes. Beyond peacebuilding, young people display ownership, agency, and leadership in diverse areas that are of significance to local, regional, national, and international peace and security, ranging from climate change to tackling inequalities. Yet, the achievements of young people are hindered due to the absence of adequate recognition, protection, funding, and meaningful partnerships.

2.4 The project consisted of two main tasks:

1. Consultations with youth-led peacebuilding organizations, which took place in August and September 2024. The consultation process involved a questionnaire and focus group meeting with participants from eight youth-led organizations in South Sudan.

2. A knowledge exchange workshop held at the Catholic University of South Sudan—St. John's Campus in Yambio on the 29th and 30 of August 2024. The workshop discussed the role of youth in peace processes and brought together representatives from various organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), conflict-resolution organizations, and youth-led peacebuilding organizations.

After analyzing the findings and insights gathered from consultations and the workshop, this report offers an overview of the various ways in which young people contribute to peace processes.

(Part I). It also addresses the challenges and obstacles encountered by young peacebuilders in their efforts to promote peace.

(Part II). Furthermore, the report examines the different aspects of inclusion in peace processes.

(Part III) and identifies potential areas for future research, policy development, and practical application based on the lessons learned from youth-led peace initiatives.

(Part IV). An inclusive approach to peace-making requires an inclusive understanding of what constitutes a 'peace process'.

The term 'peace process' is often narrowly understood as an official, national process of conflict resolution between the main parties to an armed conflict. This could be either two or more states or a state and one or more non-state armed groups, where formal peace negotiations and resultant peace agreements are central to the concept of a peace process. However, broader definitions consider a peace process as 'a mixture of politics, diplomacy, changing relationships, negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in both official and unofficial arenas'. This involves multiple tracks of diplomacy at local, national, and international levels, characterized by non-linearity between the various phases and tracks of a peace process.

Adopting a broad definition is crucial for understanding the diversity and complexity of interactions between actors, phases, structures, and layers of peace-making and peacebuilding activities. Local peace processes that involve locally based actors and address local conflict dynamics within a part of the wider conflict-affected area are gaining significance. This is especially true in protracted conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Syria, and Yemen, which have proven resistant to traditional conflict-resolution methods centered around main conflict protagonists.

The experiences of the young peacebuilders we consulted demonstrate the diversity of youth engagement in peace processes. These young peacebuilders are involved in various activities to heal their communities from the consequences of violent conflict, address the root causes of conflict to prevent its relapse, and build a lasting culture of peace in their societies. Their contributions to peace processes in their countries include a wide range of activities. The following are some examples that showcase their work:

1. Initiatives for conflict resolution, peace-making, mediation, and dialogue activities, broadly understood as:

• working towards building social cohesion for peaceful coexistence between groups that historically have found themselves in conflict

• acting as mediators and peacebuilders at grassroots and community levels

• setting up spaces where shared visions and understandings are co-constructed

• designing initiatives to challenge misconceptions, reduce prejudices, mitigate hate speech, and develop respect for others

• opening channels of communication and building networks with other youth, including the most marginalized

 • advocating for human rights and dignity and against violence in any form.

2.5 Acknowledging Youth Diversity

This section elaborates on the need to include youth voices in the analysis and development of communities, policies, and programs in the context of peacebuilding. There is not a singular conception of youth; youth has to be understood in all the variety of young people's experiences and identities contextualized across their social, economic, and political environments. On the contrary, youth are often sketched in a binary understanding, as violent perpetrators or victims of conflicts (McEvoy-Levy 2006; Sommers 2006; Del Felice & Wisler 2007; Drummond-Mundal & Cave 2007; International Youth Foundation 2011). Such a reduction overshadows the diversified positions of youth in wartime and post-war scenarios, the altering situations with context-specific reasons, and lastly their contributions to peacebuilding (McEvoy Levy 2006; Del Felice & Wisler 2007). "Perhaps the most important requirement of peacebuilding programs is that they are grounded in young people's realities" (Drummond-Mundal & Cave 2007, p.72). Based on this, McEvoy-Levy (2006) emphasizes the significance of elaborately examining how youth sense and around issues of conflict, post-conflict, and the peaceful future. Hence, youth voices should be included in peace-related issues, and in particular in programs and policies focussing on youth peacebuilding actions. Numerous recently published studies seek to amplify those youth perspectives through qualitative research (Denov & Maclure 2006; Uvin 2007; MacKenzie 2009; Pruitt 2013). These studies provide insight into youth realities, give them opportunities to be heard by letting them speak, and lay the basis for further youth involvement in programming.

Peacebuilding programs have to ensure that especially vulnerable groups are included and enabled to voice themselves in shaping community development (Gervais et al. 2009). This is specifically the case in Dinka and Nuer societies, historically rooted in patriarchal structures and

leadership by the eldest, neglecting youth and women (Vorhölter 2014; Baines & Gauvin 2014). However, Becker (2012) 11 specifies that giving space to young people is needed but not enough, programmes stressing youth participation have to go beyond offering framed opportunities; they have to enable youth to shape them. Moreover, it should be ensured that programs embrace the variety of youth and cope with the diversity of youth identities within the post-conflict society; in particular, it should "not assume that elite youth leaders from civil society represent them" (UN-IANYD, art.2.4). For this reason, the UN Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding (UN-IANYD 2014, art.2.3) recommend that tactics and programs should "involve hard-to-reach young people and those who belong to groups often disproportionately affected by conflicts, such as disabled young people and young people from minority or Indigenous groups". Otherwise as illustrated by Palestinian youth, marginalized youth may perceive themselves as separated from society and evolve deviant norms and values, thus including various youth realities in measures and programs to support peacebuilding should be imperative to construct peaceful societies (Stewart 2011). Hilker and Fraser view especially the danger of the reproduction of gender inequalities, in case youth are interpreted solely as young males who retrieve a source for violence (Hilker & Fraser 2009). In addition, Hilker and Fraser (2009), and Sommers (2006) point out that the social status and social rights of female youth within their communities are often strongly connected to motherhood; in contrast, the fatherhood of male youth does not necessarily alter the social status. This is for example illustrated by young mothers in Northern Uganda. After returning from the displacement camps they are culturally pressured to fulfill the role of a 'good' mother, "by performing Dinaka and Nuer women's work, holding paternal lineages of their children accountable for their welfare, and seeking to re-establish these kin relationships, the women contest their exclusion, and renegotiate a new sociality" (Baines & Gauvin 2014, p.298). Furthermore, international significance was given to youth and in particular youth participation in issues of peace and security at the Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security in August 2015, culminating in the adoption of the Amman Youth 12 Declaration on Youth, Peace, and Security (2015). The first article of the declaration sketches most of the previous discussion:

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2.6 The "Anataban" Campaign in South Sudan

"Anataban" is an Arabic expression that means "I am tired." The "Anataban" Campaign in South Sudan signifies the "I am Tired" Campaign—a movement led by the youth of South Sudan who have had enough of the ongoing wars in the country. They are tired of being born into war, growing up in war, and dying in war.

With South Sudanese civil society raising the consciousness of an active citizenry through workshops and information sessions, including in refugee settlements in Uganda, the youth and next generation of South Sudanese are leveraging their collective power to hold leaders to account. This is exemplified by the Anataban Campaign, which has been more politically vocal than other South Sudanese peace organizations. Anataban is an artist collective that utilizes the power of arts to raise awareness and foster public discussions on key issues for local peacebuilding such as government accountability and redressing social injustices.

The collective has imagined a shared vision of a peaceful South Sudan that the society should work towards together. To put pressure on leaders to implement the 2018 peace agreement, the group launched the online campaign #SouthSudanIsWatching, which has been used worldwide. Young peacebuilders also organize various artistic events such as concerts, street theaters, graffiti, poetry readings, etc., where South Sudanese youth can express their grievances and shape the future of South Sudan by reclaiming a public platform.

The text cites the role of youth in the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) in South Sudan as an example of how young people facilitated the inclusion of young refugees in the negotiations and increased youth participation in governance structures. They also monitored the peace talks and put pressure on the conflict parties. Overall, the text emphasizes the importance of youth engagement and leadership in promoting youth-inclusive peace processes.

2.6.1 Somaliland

The Somaliland Youth Development and Voluntary Organization (SOYDAVO) shared their experience of bringing together a group of young men and women from warring clans. They organized a seven-day-long discussion on the prevention of violence and de-escalation of conflicts, with 30 of these young individuals who had participated in the latest violent conflict in

the district. These young people had never received any formal education and were often praised by their fellow clansmen and women for their role in the conflicts.

Changing their mindset towards violence requires time and a proper way to present arguments to them. This was made possible by using life examples, including the destruction of properties, productive communal assets, loss of lives, and animals. The attendees are now peace ambassadors in their villages and have moved to urban cities in Somaliland to avoid getting involved in conflicts again.

2.6.2 Rwanda

The case of a youth peacebuilding organization in Rwanda showcases such work. Dealing with the past, paving the way for the future Never Again Rwanda (NAR) was founded by students who identified the challenges for youth in post-genocide Rwanda. They saw the merits of establishing platforms to engage youth to promote peace and to work on important issues for youth relating to post-genocide life. NAR focuses on youth engagement within the community, to create spaces for peace, working specifically with youth from survival, ex-perpetrator, and returnee backgrounds.

For instance, NAR has created safe spaces for youth through closed groups of 20 to 30 individuals who have shared their traumatic experiences and have received necessary support in return, such as psychotherapy. The absence of a platform before this to share views on barriers to safety, inclusion, and participation had previously limited youth participation in decision-making. NAR also works to empower young people in Rwanda to become active, critical-thinking citizens.

One of the project participants explained that their youth-led peacebuilding organization trained many 'young peacebuilders who now act as peace mediators amongst their peers in schools and communities'. Projects of the Young Peacebuilders of Turkey is another powerful example of the leadership young peacebuilders showcase in developing initiatives to strengthen their peers' capacities, networking, and skills. The work of another organization in Kenya also demonstrates the role of skills training at the intersection of peace education and the prevention of radicalization and conflict.

2.7 The Youth, Peace, and Security School in Turkey

Young Peacebuilders of Turkey, the first youth-led peace organization in the country, held a 'Youth, Peace and Security School' in January 2021. This first-of-its-kind project brought 35 youth participants aged between 18-29 with experts from academia and NGOs to address the issues of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda, digital peacebuilding, and the role of youth in peace processes. The objectives of the School were to enhance the knowledge and skills of youth participants, as well as facilitate networking and advance Youth, Peace, and Security as an academic field. In addition to holding the Youth, Peace, and Security School, Young Peacebuilders of Turkey aim to raise awareness about the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda in Turkey by organizing workshops and seminars for youth participants, translating the key UN resolutions into Turkish, and leading projects aiming to increase social cohesion.

2.8 Working with Secondary School Peace Clubs in Kenya

Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), a leading youth-serving non-governmental organization (NGO) in Kenya, implemented a youth-led project of peace education in secondary schools in the country. The project aimed to create awareness and impart skills amongst students and teachers in identifying and responding to early signs of radicalization. Through the project, HURIA reached out to 1,803 students and strengthened existing peace clubs in 21 secondary schools.

2.9 Initiatives centered around official peace processes

Young people have been taking action to advocate for inclusive peace negotiations and processes in official peace processes. An excellent example of this is the National Youth Jirga (Forum) in Afghanistan. This forum brings together young people from all over the country, allowing them to create a shared vision of peace, define their role in building peace, and outline the steps they need to take to work together, as well as the support they require to achieve this.

2.10 The National Youth Jirga (Forum) of Afghanistan

The National Youth Jirga (Forum) in Afghanistan is a three-day conference organized by the National Peace Jirga. It brings together 100 youth representatives from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan to discuss the Afghan peace process and the role of youth. At the Forum, young Afghan men and women, who often feel disenfranchised by the country's legislature, gather to discuss ways to bring about peace, improve education, and address unemployment.

The Forum culminates in the adoption of a resolution that focuses on the role of young people in shaping the future of the country. This resolution has been shared with the Afghan government and the international community.

The perseverance and hard work of young peacebuilders are truly inspiring and create positive change. They reach out to young people who might otherwise be excluded, creating a supportive community where they can connect with like-minded peers. This is especially important in places where there is distrust and suffering, and where hope is desperately needed. However, young peacebuilders face many challenges and obstacles along the way, as we will explore later.

It's important to note that the contributions of young people to the prevention of violence and the building and sustaining of peace go beyond simply being included in policy discussions or formal peace processes. Many young people take independent initiatives to define their platforms for political expression, creating arenas where they can make a direct impact. These are not spaces where young people are simply being "invited in" - they are spaces that they have created for themselves.

2.11 Challenges and barriers to youth inclusive peace processes

The findings from our consultations point to six main categories of challenges and barriers that hinder youth leadership in peacebuilding and thus diminish the prospects for youth-inclusive peace processes. These challenges are not independent of each other; they are interconnected and have a cumulative effect in many contexts. Deficit labels and insufficient capacity-building opportunities The accounts from our consultation participants were replete with deficit labels used by others for young peacebuilders – that young people are perceived to be 'inexperienced' and 'inadequate', and therefore unable to take on an active role in the determination of the future of their societies. In their experience, an overwhelming focus is placed on credentials that neglect the practical and lived experience of youth. For example, as one young peacebuilder pointed out,

they face '[e]xclusion from decision-making circles at all levels, citing my lack of experiences and educational background. This [approach often overlooks] my practical field experiences.' At the same time, another participant explained: it's very clear that young grassroots peacebuilders lack critical peacebuilding skills and tools … but it's indisputable that they also possess rich local knowledge and understanding of the conflicts …. International organizations should not overlook young peacebuilders for their lack of formal skills and instead should forge 'genuine partnerships' where they can feel their knowledge, efforts, and initiatives are valued and supported.

The deficit labeling is at times coupled with an expectation that youth should adopt 'adult' or 'formal' categories, language, and objectives, or that they should be represented by more 'capable' others/adults. A young peacebuilder referred to 'the business of doing things on behalf of the young peacebuilders" and pointed out that they 'should be given the platforms to tell their own stories to the world ... by themselves'. Nevertheless, there was widespread acceptance among the respondents that there is a need for greater and more accessible capacity-building opportunities for youth. The lack of opportunities to develop the skills and acquire the knowledge that youth need to lead, engage, and partner with peers and other stakeholders and to communicate with international audiences, including high-level officials, was emphasized as a key challenge. This includes limited or no opportunities to develop capacities such as project design and implementation, engagement/communication with diverse

The text below highlights the important role of youth in peace processes. It emphasizes the challenges faced by young peacebuilders in accessing international and national platforms and funds that could support their capacity development and collaborative learning. Additionally, it discusses the doubts some young peacebuilders have about the genuine partnerships and cooperation between youth and international organizations, national/local governments, and other actors. The resistance to youth leadership and international involvement, as well as the negative stereotypes about youth, are also highlighted as significant challenges for young peacebuilders.

In addition to entrenched prejudices against youth, the generational gap and dominance of elders and hierarchies across many contexts emerge as challenging factors. Youth are expected to obey and not question the wisdom and decisions of particular figures. One peacebuilder pointed out

that a challenge is the 'hierarchy gap between old and young people, where youth are culturally perceived as not being able to hold decision-making responsibilities'. They further explained that the issue is not only with youth not being accepted as active participants in decision-making activities, but that 'decision-makers do not listen to young people', which maintains a structure that does not take into account the expectations, goals, dreams, and work of young people'. Similarly, in another context, a youth peacebuilder explained that a cultural mindset exists toward youth in government and outside the government that needs to change – a change that would question the myth that only age brings wisdom. While age does bring wisdom, it does not mean young people cannot lead. 'Wisdom of the aged and education of the youth must be utilized in our country. Both are needed. I believe our people need to understand that youth can lead – we are leading already. Similarly, youth must understand that people of age and life experience are valuable. One without the other is not sufficient.' Having more elected young officials do not always help, as one peacebuilder shared. They explained that they 'do not voice out challenges youth face. Rather, they go with what their party leaders say.'

Another driver of local resistance is that peacebuilding/peace-making work may not be seen as important compared to other local priorities. One youth peacebuilder explained, 'Carrying out peacebuilding activities is not an easy job. The problem is that people will view your activities as something that is less important and often you will become a victim of social and economic challenges.' Local resistance to the role of youth in peace processes may be combined with resistance to international intervention and top-down peacebuilding, as the discourse that young people bring to their local contexts may be viewed as a 'western', 'foreign', and 'liberal' intervention.

One peacebuilder explained that local people do not actively participate in peacebuilding initiatives and often see them as imposed by others. This person stressed the need for local involvement in proposing solutions and contributing to the design of peacebuilding activities.

Another participant emphasized that local ownership and relevance become concerns when working with international actors. They suggested that international partners should allow young peacebuilders to develop their initiatives and support those projects, rather than imposing externally designed projects.

Furthermore, it was noted that many peacebuilding organizations are unable to make a significant

impact because their programs are donor-designed and do not address current challenges or root causes of problems. Additionally, international programs are often time-bound and focused on deliverables, while peacebuilding is viewed as a continuous process.

cannot

The text also highlights the challenges young peacebuilders face, such as difficulty in training young and former militia members, limited financial resources, and the struggle to receive sustainable funding for local initiatives. Many youth organizations are unable to achieve their full potential due to financial constraints and limited resources.

Youth also struggle to navigate the bureaucracy of funding bodies and donors. For example, one peacebuilder shared that: … there is a very lazy bureaucratic structure. This causes young people to reach the necessary resources late. For example, when a young person applies to an official institution for a project, he deals with dozens of application papers and procedures. At the same time, it goes back and forth between dozens of institutions for bureaucratic reasons. This slow system needs to be changed and accelerated.

"Many young peacebuilders struggle to compete with well-established international NGOs that have experienced human resources when it comes to accessing peacebuilding funds. This is especially challenging for new youth initiatives and organizations, as they not only compete with more established and connected groups but also have to demonstrate that they are not a threat to the government. Financial support is crucial for young peacebuilders who face structural socioeconomic barriers.

Contrary to the common assumption that young people involved in peace processes come from elite backgrounds, our consultations suggest that this is not always the case. Many young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, young minorities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees, as well as young (relatives of) victims of conflict, play significant roles in peacebuilding at local, national, and international levels.

While there is limited financial support and other resources for youth to initiate peacebuilding activities, the broader circumstances young people face are often not adequately addressed. Young people find it challenging to participate fully and effectively in peacebuilding if they live in poverty and struggle on a day-to-day basis. Simply providing platforms for youth engagement may not work if youth lack access to food and decent shelter. In some cases, hunger can lead

young people to become dependent on politicians, influencing their words and actions.".

2.12 Exclusionary political structures and tokenistic inclusion

Young people are often not given a voice in political decision-making at local, national, and international levels. This exclusion is especially concerning for young peacebuilders, as it hinders their involvement in peace processes. They believe that young people should hold important positions in governments and international organizations and that quotas should be set to ensure their representation. They also face barriers when trying to engage in official peace processes.

Young peacebuilders feel that the voices of young men and women who are actively involved in everyday peace efforts are missing from official peace processes. They emphasize the need for youth to take the lead in peace initiatives and the prevention of violence, as they are the ones most affected by conflicts.

These peacebuilders believe that international organizations and actors should play a significant role in supporting youth participation in peace processes. They expect these organizations to assist local and national governments in creating policies, laws, mechanisms, and initiatives that can effectively include young people and their voices. They also suggest that international organizations should work with local and national government actors and peace committees to raise awareness of the positive contributions of youth and create necessary policies and laws for youth engagement.

One peacebuilder shared that such international engagement has helped in their country, where youth are now recognized and cannot be ignored by the government and elders in society. This recognition has led to youth being seen as agents of change who can lead society toward prosperity.

The peacebuilders also stress the importance of continually including youth in peace processes, from the initial peace-making phase to post-agreement implementation, including constitutional, transitional justice, and development reforms.

The role of young peacebuilders in the South Sudanese peace process is worth noting. While youth representatives participated in the official peace talks that resulted in a significant peace agreement in 2015, the subsequent peace-building efforts did not involve the youth. This led to a feeling among young people that their voices were not being heard.

The young peacebuilders we spoke with are worried about the lack of representation of certain youth groups in peace processes. They feel that it's common for youth from remote areas, young women, and those belonging to specific ethnic groups or with certain political beliefs to be excluded from important discussions, even though they are particularly vulnerable and have valuable experiences to share. For example, youth living in states like WES, CES, EES, Jonglei, Unity, Western Bahr el Ghazal, etc. often don't have the same opportunities as those in the capital Juba to express their opinions, attend events, or receive funding. They believe that young people from all parts of the country must have a chance to speak for their region, not just for the entire country. Similar concerns were raised about young refugees and internally displaced people, as well as young women.

Another young peacebuilder mentioned that youth working on certain issues, such as environmental advocacy, IDP rights, and local peacebuilding, often don't receive adequate support despite the changing nature of modern armed conflicts and the prevalence of resource-based conflicts.

The politicization of inclusion and the preferential treatment of youth groups that align with the political views of those in power pose challenges to young peacebuilders. In many cases, the inclusion of young people in peace processes and projects is selective and politicized, as powerful actors choose who should represent youth. A peacebuilder explained that such dynamics also exist at the local level, say in the counties, Payams, and or bomas, where communities have existing gatekeepers who may not share information with national and local institutions about local peacebuilders doing the work.

Young peacebuilders need protection and psychosocial support as they live and work in unsafe environments where space for civil society organizations and freedom of expression is limited by state and non-state actors. One peacebuilder described non-democratic and oppressive government policies as causing youth to be afraid and not contribute enough.

There continue to be challenges such as insecurity, limited freedom of expression, and safety concerns, as well as the lack of support from both governmental and non-governmental actors. Additionally, the report emphasizes the negative impact of conflict on young people's mental health and their ability to participate in peacebuilding efforts. It also underscores the need for continuous support, including psychosocial, economic, and life-skills support, as well as

counseling for youth disengaging from violent groups. The overall message is that young peacebuilders face significant obstacles in their efforts to contribute to peace and mediation processes.

2.13 Youth inclusion and participation in South Sudan peace process

The adopted framework consists of three layers: In the room, Around the room, and Outside the room. These layers are used to guide the reflections on the findings.

2.13.1 In the Room

In 2018, with support from regional bodies and civil society organizations, there was a significant increase in youth participation in the peace process as compared to 2015. Other stakeholders, like political parties, were also able to participate and leverage the feedback sessions to articulate their concerns. The direct participation of the youth was crucial in shaping the conversation in the peace process. It influenced desired outcomes and benefits for the majority of the citizens. Issues like governance, security, and social cohesion were brought to the negotiation table.

2.13.2 Around the Room

The young people were not directly in the room but were close to the peace agreement and connected to the process through formal or informal mechanisms. Non-political networks like the National Youth Union (NYU), South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF), Youth Organizations Coalition (YOC), universities, and church institutions provided necessary avenues for the youth to advance their voices. These networks also offered technical support for the youth to gain access to the peace process. Working through coalitions, the youth participated in advocacy for affirmative action for women and youth and were successful in attracting the attention of government bureaucracies and political elites to respond to the voices of all the affected parties.

2.13.3 Outside the Room

The media was used to bring the voices of the youth to the negotiation table during the negotiation and implementation of the peace process. Media campaigns that increased access to information were launched, while peace festivals and camps were used as an important avenue in preaching

messages of peace. International NGOs such as Search for Common Grounds (SFCG), Oxfam, and Norwegian People Aid (NPA) created spaces for youth participation in the peace process. They provided training and access to information and also funded youth groups to build capacity for effective engagement in the peace processes. Regional and international platforms like the UN, AU, and IGAD also advocated for an increased space for youth participation in the peace process.

2.14 Avenues for building synergies and linkages

Various actors, including government institutions, international and regional bodies, political parties, civil society organizations, and church institutions, play an important role in building synergies and supporting the youth in developing strategies to increase their participation in the peace process. Media platforms, especially social media, offer a useful space for sharing information and strategies, press statements, and key policy documents. Urban youth tend to participate more in the peace process than rural youth, which can be addressed by improving access to information. It is also important to build the capacity of adult community members and institutions so that they can better engage with youth. Collaboration with civic actors and line governmental institutions is key, including rule of law institutions, national and state ministries of gender, child and social welfare, and legislative committees.

However, there are challenges to effective youth engagement in the peace process. Youth empowerment opportunities are limited, and there is a lack of leadership capacity among the youth for grassroots mobilization and engagement in peacebuilding. Negative energies among youth can easily be mobilized for negative outcomes. Insecurity at national and subnational levels continues to affect youth participation in peacebuilding. Violent incidents at the subnational level and persistent security threats, such as road ambushes, cattle raiding, inter-communal violence, revenge killings, and lawlessness, impede youth participation in peacebuilding. Peace interlocutors are difficult to mobilize, and political leaders are often not readily available to dialogue with youth. Media houses face difficulties in coordinating high-profile persons from the government to participate in youth empowerment programs.

2.15 Youth-led digital creativity

Figure 4: keep South Sudan Clean by "ana taban" group of youth

During the peace process in South Sudan, the youth-led movement #Anataban created an e-delegate participation platform. This platform served as a resource center, providing vital information about the peace process to civil society groups, youth, and citizens. The e-delegates forum included a 30-minute Facebook live session with a delegate involved in the peace process who provided updates. These videos were shared in civic engagement forums, such as workshops and conferences. This initiative played a crucial role in sparking offline conversations in South Sudanese households, schools, and public spaces, increasing access to information about the peace process and discussions between the warring parties. It also countered the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda by providing accurate information to citizens both inside and outside the country. A young woman from South Sudan highlighted the importance of accurate information, stating, "If the diaspora receives accurate information, they can promote positive messages.

The youth in South Sudan are actively participating in society to challenge the cycle of conflict, exclusion, marginalization, and poor service delivery. They have realized that their role does not

end with advocating for an agreement, but they also need to advocate for its implementation. They have created alternative means of being heard by initiating the #NADAFALEBELEDNA (Let us clean our country) movement, which promotes youth voices and action. Every month, hundreds of youth gather to clean a neighborhood or streets in Juba while promoting messages to clean their country.

The movement mobilizes youth under the slogan, "Do not just be youthful, be useful". This is a direct call for youth, who constitute the majority population of the country (72%), to claim their rights. For the organizers of this campaign: "This is not a cleaning project, it should not be misunderstood, we are protesting. Cleaning is a protest because we are tired of wars. If we clean the streets, we can also clean the bushes. We can clean this country out of corruption, nepotism, and tribalism."

The above examples show how the youth in South Sudan are carving out a role for themselves in society. They aspire to build inclusive, safe, just, and peaceful societies by challenging the status quo.

2.16 South Sudan Peace-Building Architecture

On October 26th, 2022, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held a meeting to discuss the situation in South Sudan. Ambassadors attended the meeting, which focused on developing sustainable approaches to fully implement the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement. The meeting's theme was "Building Peace through Institutions and Governance" and aimed to assist South Sudan in strengthening national and local institutions to better serve the population. During the meeting, the government provided updates on accountable governance, public finance management, and the delivery of public services at the local level. The meeting emphasized the importance of continued engagement from the international community, including the United Nations system and regional and sub-regional organizations, to support South Sudan's peacebuilding priorities.

While South Sudan has made progress in the peace process over the past four years, challenges such as subnational violence, lack of basic public services, mass flooding, conflict-related displacement, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to hinder peacebuilding

efforts. The meeting addressed these challenges and formulated ways to collaborate with the Government of South Sudan based on the 2022 thematic review on "Supporting financial independence and institutional strengthening of local peacebuilding partners for the sustainability of project results".

The meeting also highlighted critical areas in South Sudan that need support, including the increasing humanitarian needs of women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Almost half of the population is facing a food security crisis, and the impact of climate change has led to nearly 1.7 million people being displaced, with more than 2.3 million seeking refuge in neighboring countries due to a second consecutive year of flooding and failing harvests.

Figure 5: Peace Building Fund Officials meeting

2.17 The Peacebuilding Fund in South Sudan

The United Nations system in South Sudan utilized the Fund to provide technical, logistical, and financial support to both national and local peace processes. One example of this support was the national dialogue, which aimed to create a platform for political leaders and the public to interact,

voice their concerns, and establish a solid foundation for peace. The Fund was flexible in its programming approach, considering the ground realities. It approved an initiative to address gender-based violence and women's participation in peace processes, strengthen justice and accountability mechanisms at sub-national and national levels, increase youth access to justice, and enhance women's access to land.

2.18 Recognizing the varying roles of girls and young women

Although the shift towards recognizing women's various roles in peace and security began with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, there is still a lack of specific attention given to young women. Several reasons have been put forward for this, including the simplistic depiction of girls as victims, the overlooking of structural inequalities that restrict young women's participation, the undervaluing of young women's ability to contribute to peacebuilding, and the perception that they are not a threat. For instance, when the impact of the lack of employment and economic opportunities for young people is only seen as a precursor to violence rather than a social injustice, the focus is mostly on ensuring the economic involvement of young men. Consequently, unemployment among young women is disregarded because they are not seen as direct threats to peace. Therefore, it is important to prioritize promoting positive peace that can be equally enjoyed by all members of society. Without addressing their specific circumstances, including issues of access, relevance, and articulated demands, girls and young women risk being just as excluded from participating in social institutions as they were before the conflict. As will be further illustrated, the different motivations for engaging in violence and the strategies to avoid or limit such involvement should not be simplified based on assumptions of gender-specific behavior. Similarly, it is important to recognize the agency that young women and men may demonstrate in such actions while also considering the structural conditions that restrict and shape their ability to act. First and foremost, efforts are being made to move away from the portrayal of girls as passive victims of war and to acknowledge that girls and young women may be both willing and compelled participants in conflict. We recognize that young women may strategically seek opportunities in conflict and that many exercise resistance, subversion, and hidden autonomy in challenging circumstances.

In Sierra Leone, for instance, women played active roles in the conflict, challenging the stereotype that women are inherently peaceful. For example, a study found that female participants in an Israeli high school peacebuilding program exhibited more positive responses, not because they were naturally more peaceful, but possibly due to cultural and social factors. However, girls often face stereotyping and limited options in peacebuilding programs. In Sierra Leone, training courses for female ex-combatants were limited to traditionally female activities like tie-dying and soap-making, which did not offer significant financial rewards. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, urban music and dance programs reinforced girls' exclusion, as their preferred activities were seen as male practices. These examples highlight a tendency to blame girls for their absence or disadvantage in programs, instead of acknowledging program failures to be inclusive. This reluctance to consider gender dynamics can privilege boys' participation over girls'. The UN Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding underline the importance of avoiding stereotypical assumptions about the roles and aspirations of different genders.

2.19 Youth Representation in Parliaments

Our world is grappling with unprecedented challenges and the ripples of today's decisions will undeniably shape the contours of tomorrow. Climate change, new technologies, and geopolitical shifts are not mere buzzwords, but realities that promise to redefine our futures. It is the young, and the generations yet to come, who will have to navigate the consequences of today's choices. It is essential, therefore, that they are not just spectators but active participants in these decisions. Harnessing their lived experiences, innovative perspectives and boundless energy is vital if we are to surmount the complexities ahead. Recognizing this imperative, the IPU has been a steadfast advocate for greater youth participation in parliaments. This youth movement began in 2010, with the adoption of a Resolution entitled Youth Participation in the Democratic Process. Through the years, this Resolution has led to milestones such as the establishment of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the annual Global Conferences of Young Parliamentarians, and continuous work to empower young MPs at global, regional, and national levels. Another flagship of the IPU youth movement is our biennial report on Youth participation in national

parliaments. Since its debut in 2014, the report's data and information have become an authoritative reference point for young people in parliament. It is used as an official source for tracking the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and by parliaments, academics, and practitioners around the world. This report is the first since the setting of another IPU milestone in 2021 when the IPU launched the I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! campaign. The campaign is mobilizing parliamentarians, political leaders, and civil society advocates of all ages to take transformative action for youth through the implementation of key pledges. I am pleased that the campaign has already begun contributing to change, including through the creation of new youth caucuses in parliaments, the lowering of ages of eligibility to run for public office, and more. I am grateful to the over 600 members of parliament from over 130 countries that have signed up, including almost 60 Speakers of parliament and three heads of state. But as this report's data tells us, we cannot rest on our laurels: there is much more to do to bring more youth into parliament and to empower them therein. In the spirit of the I Say Yes campaign's call to action, for this 2023 report we intend to offer more than an informative document. It is also a pressing invitation to act to implement the key pledges of the campaign. For example, in the section on "Advancing youth participation", you will find "key takeaways" on campaign pledges, such as instituting youth quotas, empowering young parliamentarians, mentoring young aspirants, and more. I hope that these will serve as a valuable resource to current and future Changemakers to help them mobilize the transformative actions we are seeking and to herald a new era of youth participation in parliaments.

To echo our young MPs, the discourse on youth participation has evolved: it is time to transition from dialogue to deeds. May this edition of the report serve as both an inspiration and a blueprint for fostering more inclusive and more youthful parliaments.

The global proportion of MPs aged under 30 has edged up to 2.6 percent, according to the latest IPU report on **Youth Participation in National Parliaments**. This represents an increase of 0.4 percentage points compared with two years ago. However, with 50 percent of the world's population under 30, the report highlights a sizeable deficit in the political representation of young people worldwide.

Just over ten years ago, the IPU's Member Parliaments adopted the 2010 resolution on youth participation in the democratic process. The resolution led to the creation of the Forum of Young

Parliamentarians, the premier global body for the world's youngest MPs. It also led the IPU to collect data and information on youth participation in parliaments. This latest report is the fourth in the series and is based on data from 2020.

IPU President Duarte Pacheco said: "To deliver for the people, democracy must represent all the people. We need more young women and men parliamentarians to make parliaments more effective, innovative, and inclusive. Increasing the number of young MPs is a priority of the IPU and is at the forefront of my three-year mandate."

President of the Board of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians, Melvin Bouva, said: "Although youth all over the world need to play a more fundamental role in the development of our nations, progress in their participation in parliament needs to be improved. It is essential to raise awareness among especially youth and politicians. This IPU report provides a wealth of strategies to lead to much-needed change. I firmly hope that this report also contributes to the next steps we need to take for more inclusive and stronger parliaments for the development of our people and nations. We urge all parliamentarians, political leaders, and in particular young leaders all over, to step up political will and take transformative actions to get more young people into office."

2.20 Country rankings

The report ranks countries according to how many parliamentarians are under 30, under 40, and 45. Countries with the youngest parliamentarians tend to have made concerted efforts to engage young people in politics (for example, Norway and Djibouti). They also tend to have low ages of eligibility to run for office (for example, in Denmark and Sweden).

The IPU report also shows progress in other age categories. Some 30.2 percent of the world's MPs are under the age of 45, up 2.1 percentage points from 28.1 percent in 2018.

Around 25 percent of the world's single and lower chambers of parliament have no MPs under the age of 30. However, this is an improvement compared to 30 percent in 2018.

The top ten youngest parliaments in the world (parliamentarians under 30 in single or lower chambers)

Rank	Country	%

1.	Norway	13.61
2.	Armenia	12.12
3.	San Marino	11.67
4.	Gambia	10.34
5.	Venezuela*	9.82
6.	Suriname	9.80
7.	Denmark	9.50
8.	Sweden	9.42
9.	Djibouti	9.23
10.	Chile	8.39

Table 1: The top ten youngest parliaments in the world

*Data from the 2015 Parliament.

Upper chambers of parliament have made slower progress: 73 percent have no MPs under age 30, down from 75 percent in 2018; 16 percent have no MPs under age 40.

2.21 More women parliamentarians in younger age groups

While male MPs outnumber their female counterparts in every age group, data shows the proportion of women is higher in younger age groups.

The older the members of parliament, the fewer women MPs in the chambers. For example, within the 21-30 age group, the male-to-female ratio among MPs is approximately 60:40. For the 31-40 age group, the ratio decreases to approximately 2:1.

2.22 Lowering the eligibility threshold leads to more young parliamentarians

The data shows that lower eligibility ages to run for office lead to a younger average age within the parliamentary chambers.

In 69 percent of countries, the voting age is lower than the minimum legal age to hold parliamentary office. For lower chambers and unicameral parliaments, the average waiting time

for an eligible voter to become eligible for office was 3.5 years. For upper chambers, the difference was 10.4 years on average.

2.23 Youth quotas work

Evidence gathered for the IPU report confirms that well-designed youth quotas help increase youth representation, similar to what the IPU advocates for gender parity. Quotas can take different forms, including reserved seats, legislated quotas, and party quotas for younger parliamentarians.

Only four countries, Rwanda, Morocco, Kenya, and Uganda, have specially reserved seats for youth representatives. All countries that have adopted youth quotas have often done so after introducing gender quotas. That suggests that the many countries with quotas for women may be fertile ground for youth quotas.

The findings and good practice in the report will be featured at the annual IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians on 28 April.

The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. It was founded more than 130 years ago as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 179 national Member Parliaments and 13 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes democracy and helps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced, and more diverse. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world. Twice a year, the IPU convenes over 1,500 parliamentary delegates and partners in a world assembly, bringing a parliamentary dimension to global governance, including the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.24 Key figures

• Youth participation in national parliaments has grown across all three age categories (30 and under, 40 and under, and 45 and under).

3 • Only 2.8% of the world's parliamentarians are aged 30 and under, but this is an increase of 0.2 percentage points since the 2021 report.

• Some 18.8% of the world's MPs are aged 40 and under, up 1.3 percentage points since 2021.

• The share of MPs aged 45 and under is now 32.1%, up 1.9 points since 2021.

• Similar to 2021, approximately 25% of the world's single and lower chambers of parliament have no MPs aged 30 and under. Just over 1% have no MPs aged 40 and under. • About 74% of upper chambers have no MPs aged 30 and under, a slight increase from 73% in 2021. The share without any MPs aged 40 and under has grown dramatically to 24.6%, nearly 10 points higher than in 2021.

• MPs aged 45 and under have been elected or appointed to all chambers of parliament for which data was available. In 2021, the upper chamber in the Republic of Congo had no MPs under the age of 45.5

• Similar to 2021, Europe and the Americas, in that order, have higher shares of young MPs in single and lower chambers across all three age categories (30 and under, 40 and under, and 45 and under) than any other region. Trends by gender and youth population

• Male MPs continue to outnumber their female counterparts across all age groups.

 • The gender imbalance is greater among older cohorts and smaller among the youngest. In the 21–30 age group, the ratio of male to female MPs is about 60:40.

• No parliaments have achieved the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians' 15% target for parliamentarians aged 30 and under, but 9.3% of chambers have reached the 35% target for MPs aged 40 and under, and 21.6% have attained the 45% target for MPs aged 45 and under.

• About one-quarter of chambers have met gender parity targets for parliamentarians aged 30 and under (28.4%) and 40 and under (23.5%), but fewer than 15% have achieved gender parity among parliamentarians aged 45 and under.

• According to the youth representation score, comparing the share of MPs in each age group to the share of the voting age population in the same age bracket (with a score of 100 reflecting full proportionality), no single or lower chambers have attained proportionality for parliamentarians aged 30 and under. However, five have reached or exceeded proportionality for MPs aged 40 and under (Ukraine, Armenia, the Netherlands, Andorra, and Latvia), and 20 have done so for MPs aged 45 and under.

 The 2021 report presented data as of 14 September 2020. 2 The terms "chamber" and "house" are used interchangeably in the text to refer to an assembly within a parliament. 3 To be sensitive

to national variations in the meaning of "young", as well as variations in eligibility ages to hold parliamentary office, the IPU reports on youth representation explore trends with three age categories: 30 and under, 40 and under, and 45 and under. 4 The terms "single chamber" and "unicameral" are also used interchangeably in the text. 5 Data was not available for the upper chamber of the Republic of Congo for this report. However, the minimum age of eligibility for the chamber is 45 years.

• In upper chambers, youth representation scores decline dramatically. No chambers reach proportionality in terms of MPs aged 30 and under. One achieves proportionality for MPs aged 40 and under (Belgium) and only two do so for MPs aged 45 and under (Belgium and Bhutan). The best performers are MPs aged 30 and under

• In single and lower chambers, Norway (13.6%), Armenia (13.1%), and San Marino (11.7%) have the highest 30-and-under representation.

 • San Marino has achieved the greatest degree of proportionality concerning the size of the voting age population aged 18–30 (youth representation score of 76.4), followed by Norway (64.6), Armenia (55.4), and Germany (50.6).

• In upper chambers, Bhutan (12.5%) and Belgium (10.0%) have the highest share of MPs aged 30 and under. Belgium leads Bhutan, however, when proportionality concerning the size of the youth population is taken into account. MPs aged 40 and under

• The single and lower chambers with the highest share of parliamentarians aged 40 and under are Armenia (52.3%), Ethiopia (51.2%) and Ukraine (46.3%).

• Ukraine, with a score of 120.2, leads all countries in terms of proportionality with the size of the population aged 18–40 (a score of 100 reflecting full proportionality), followed by Armenia (115.0) and the Netherlands (109.9).

• In upper chambers, Bhutan (54.2%) and Belgium (41.7%) have the highest percentage of MPs aged 40 and under, although only Belgium surpasses proportionality with the youth population. MPs aged 45 and under

• Ethiopia (71.1%), Armenia (70.1%), and Colombia (63.5%) have the highest 45-and-under representation in single and lower chambers.

• The leading countries in terms of proportionality with the population aged 18–45 are the Netherlands (144.1), Ukraine (133.6), and Romania (133.0).

• Bhutan (70.8%) and Belgium (48.3%) continue to top the list of upper chambers, and both approximate full proportionality with the size of the population aged 18–45. I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! pledges

• As part of the IPU I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament! campaign, young MPs formulated six pledges for promoting youth participation in parliament: promoting youth quotas; aligning the age of eligibility with that of voting; supporting youth channels in parliament; empowering young parliamentarians; mentoring young aspirants; and advocating for youth participation.

 • Several countries, including Kazakhstan and Algeria, recently introduced youth quotas, whereas a new electoral law in Tunisia eliminated youth quotas that had been put in place in 2014.

• In Mexico and Gabon, the voting age and age at which one can stand as an MP were aligned at age 18. Parliaments in Jordan and Lithuania lowered candidate age requirements by several years.

• Parliaments in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Zambia established youth caucuses, while New Zealand set up a youth reference group to facilitate the integration of youth perspectives into its work.

 • Leadership training was offered to young parliamentarians in Eswatini, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Morocco.

 • Parliaments in Bhutan and Latvia developed internship and shadowing programs to nurture young political talent.

• Thirty parliaments launched the I Say Yes campaign, including those in Paraguay and Uruguay, which created a Spanish language version (Yo digo sí a la juventud en el Parlamento)

Young people form a large share of the global population, but they make up only a small proportion of members of parliament around the world. This disparity is greatest among younger cohorts: while half of people worldwide are under age 30, and 18% of people are between the ages of 20 and 29, this report finds that only 2.8% of parliamentarians are aged 30 or under. The exclusion of youth from these spaces is not only unjust but also has important policy implications. By their age, younger generations will live the longest with the consequences of legislation passed today.

If young people's voices are not heard, these laws are not likely to reflect their political priorities and perspectives, making it less likely that attention will be paid to issues like education,

unemployment, and climate change. For more than 10 years, the IPU has been actively engaged in seeking to rectify this disparity.

In 2010, Member Parliaments passed a Resolution on Youth Participation in the Democratic Process, calling for efforts to increase the participation of young people in parliament and other representative bodies.6 The Resolution aims not only to ensure that young people are consulted in politics, but that their engagement is enhanced both in terms of political representation by including more of them in the decision-making process as MPs, and by ensuring that they participate more broadly in the political arena through a full and meaningful contribution to parliamentary process and work.7 To advance this agenda, the IPU established a Forum of Young Parliamentarians, which is led by a 12-person board composed of one woman and one man from each of the IPU's six geopolitical groups.

The Forum seeks to empower young leaders, as well as to promote ways of drawing more young people into the formal democratic process. To this end, it has organized nine Global Conferences of Young Parliamentarians since 2014, the latest being held in Viet Nam in September 2023. Since 2014, the IPU has collected information on youth participation in parliaments, focusing both on the publication of statistics and the sharing of good practices to advance youth participation. The current report updates the global picture of MPs aged 30 and under, 40 and under, and 45 and under. It finds that, despite these many efforts, the share of young people in parliaments around the world has only slowly increased since the IPU began tracking this data. Since the IPU report published in 2021, the proportion of MPs aged 30 and under advanced by a mere 0.2 percentage points to 2.8%. Those aged 40 and under increased by 1.3 points to 18.8%, and those aged 45 and under increased by 1.9 points to 32.1%. Acting for change Concerned about low numbers and slow rates of change, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians tasked the IPU secretariat and young MPs in 2017 with establishing an international target for the proportion of young people represented in parliaments. The aim was (i) to provide a benchmark for self-assessment by parliaments, and (ii) to unify the efforts of the international community towards a common goal. This report evaluates progress towards three sets of targets: numerical targets for each age threshold, gender parity targets within each age cohort, and targets for proportionality with the share of the youth population. The analysis finds that, despite some notable achievements, much more progress is needed to ensure that young people can participate fully

and actively in parliaments worldwide. In 2021, the IPU launched the "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament" campaign to accelerate these efforts by highlighting the need for concrete action. 9 Young MPs came up with six pledges to generate transformative change in youth participation:

(i)   implementing youth quotas;

(ii)   aligning voting and eligibility ages;

(iii)   supporting youth channels;

(iv)   empowering young parliamentarians;

(v)   mentoring young aspirants; and

(vi)   advocating for I Say Yes in parliaments.

The report finds significant advances in all six areas during the first two years of the campaign, as parliaments have taken steps to open up spaces for young people to engage with and enter parliaments. In this report, the term "youth representation" refers specifically to young men and women serving as parliamentarians. The term "youth participation" refers more broadly to the engagement of young people (parliamentarians and otherwise) in parliamentary processes, including in between elections or renewals. For example, the Algerian parliament passed a new electoral law mandating that half of all candidates on electoral lists be under the age of 40. In Mexico, MPs lowered the age of eligibility to stand for the lower chamber of parliament from 21 to 18, aligning it with the voting age. Parliaments in several countries, including Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Zambia, established youth caucuses, while New Zealand set up a youth reference group to facilitate the integration of youth perspectives into its work. In Pakistan, parliament offered capacity-building programs to young and first-time MPs. Parliaments in Bhutan and Latvia developed internship and shadowing programs to nurture young political talent. And MPs in Paraguay and Uruguay launched a Spanish language version of the IPU campaign, Yo digo sí a la juventud en el parlamento. In Paraguay, this launch was followed by the adoption of a new law to lower the age of eligibility to stand for elections at the municipal level. Growing engagement with the I Say Yes campaign reveals significant interest among young people and parliaments in bridging gaps in youth participation. However, slow advances in the share of young MPs across all three age thresholds also indicate that progress is not inevitable – and, indeed, reversals are possible. To push forward, parliaments and political parties must assume a

more active role, both in recruiting and empowering young MPs and in amplifying the political voice of the younger generation

The United Nations Development Programme, Horn of Africa,

the Great Lakes and the Sahel

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been heavily engaged in facilitating youth-led peacebuilding by supporting national governments and sub-regional structures in translating the frameworks into actual programmatic and policy engagements. The first-ever Youth Strategy 2014–2017 provided a paradigm shift for UNDP's development work. The Strategy recognized youth as development partners, initiators, and catalysts of change, with particular attention devoted to the importance of working with young women and youth from marginalized groups. June 2022 – Mombasa, Kenya.

Interfaith Youth Planting Trees with the Area Chief and the Sub County Health Programme Co-ordinator; Our Lady of Fatma Kongowea Parish, Photo Credit: Hamad Tenguri 15 July 2024 – Mtwara District, Mtwara region, Tanzania. A participant shared her views on how young people in their local community can engage in peacebuilding processes, during the Peace Building Awareness Workshop with community youth groups. Photo credit: Global Peace Foundation Tanzania 13 2016–2020 Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace. 14 Ibid. Thematically, the Strategy sets out a strong vision for engaging youth and supporting their empowerment in governance, jobs, and livelihoods, and strengthening community resilience.13 It focuses on supporting conducive legislative and policy reforms for youth; facilitating access to services; promoting rights; and creating new opportunities for participation in politics and public life, economic life, resilience, and peacebuilding at all levels, as well as youth capacity development, networking, and advocacy. Similarly, UNDP supported the development of the Youth, Peace, and Security Programming Handbook in coordination with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-DPPA, and the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development. The Handbook contributes to the operational readiness and capacity of United Nations practitioners in implementing the YPS agenda. Beyond the United Nations, it also provides insights and guidance to partners and practitioners, such as international and regional organizations, national counterparts, movements and networks, youth-led and focused organizations, and more. UNDP Global Youth Program was developed as a lead program to

"empower young women and men to take advantage of opportunities for their development and act effectively as citizens, leaders, innovators and agents of change in their communities, thereby contributing to the overall sustainable development and peace".15 15 Ibid. Youth in Africa: A Demographic Imperative for Peace and Security. The African Union The AU adopted several normative instruments related to peacebuilding and the prevention of conflict. These instruments relate to human rights, governance and corruption, democratization processes, disarmament, terrorism, and the prevention and reduction of interstate conflicts. The AU Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) is one of the key normative measures put in place to address the needs of countries emerging from conflict and/or difficult transitions. The scope of the activities encompasses six indicative elements: security; humanitarian/emergency assistance; political governance and transition; socio-economic reconstruction and development; human rights; justice and reconciliation; and women and gender.

Another key normative framework is the AU Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF), which aims to provide a Commission-wide coordinated approach to structural conflict prevention. This Framework seeks to identify and address structural weaknesses, which often evolve with the potential to cause violent conflict if unaddressed. While emphasizing the central role of member states in addressing prevention dimensions of violent conflict, the CSCPF underscores the need to constantly develop and deploy mechanisms, processes, and structures to address underlying structural weaknesses for the prevention of violent conflict.

The AU Constitutive Act identified youth as important partners in strengthening solidarity and social cohesion. Furthermore, the AU adopted the African Youth Charter in 2006 as a framework to guide continental and national-level responses to unlock the full potential of youth. The Charter notes that the "challenges of youth are interrelated and cross-sectoral in nature, hence the need for a comprehensive approach to developmental solutions focused on youth". Article 17 of the Charter underscores the important role of youth in promoting peace and security in Africa. The Silencing Guns by 2020 initiative, as part of the AU flagship project under Agenda 2063, recognizes 16 African Union. Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes, and the Sahel the role of youth as one of the critical areas to end all wars

in Africa. The Youth for Peace Africa Programme, the African Union Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020, and the 1 Million By 2021 Initiative are some of the other key frameworks that guide action in peacebuilding and youth engagement.

The RECs play an important role in driving the peacebuilding agenda forward. This report notes that all RECs except for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) lacked an explicit mandate for peace and security when the original treaties establishing the regional bodies were signed.

However, recognizing that the agenda for economic transformation and regional integration cannot be achieved without sustainable peace, currently, all the RECs except the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) have a clear mandate to target conflict prevention. All the RECs except AMU and the Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD) have a functional early warning mechanism in place, and three RECs – East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have established Peace Funds to support the implementation of conflict prevention initiatives.

2.25 The Youth, Peace & Security Agenda of the United Nations

Since 2015, young people's essential role in peace and security has been increasingly recognized and documented. Following several years of advocacy by over 11,000 young people from over 110 countries, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a historic resolution, UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, The Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda Peace and Security (2015), recognizing young peoples' positive role in international peace and security. This landmark resolution identifies five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration. It urges Member States to give young people a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional, and international levels and to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes.

2.26 First Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security

The first report by the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security since the Security Council adopted resolution 2250 (2015) was released in March 2020. Resolution 2250

recognized the essential role of young people in preventing and resolving conflicts and in sustaining peace, which was reaffirmed in the Security Council Resolution and in a statement by the President of the Security Council in December 2019 on silencing the guns in Africa. The Secretary-General's report has two key findings:

- There is a growing recognition of young people's essential role in peace and security. It is encouraging to see many instances in which Governments, United Nations entities, civil society actors, and others are stepping up to implement Resolution 2250 (2015);

- Core challenges remain, including structural barriers limiting the participation of young people and their capacity to influence decision-making; violations of their human rights; and insufficient investment in facilitating their inclusion and empowerment.

The report provides an analysis of the five pillars of resolution 2250: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, disengagement, and reintegration as well as the institutionalization of the youth, peace, and security agenda and recommendations for how member states, the Security Council, the UN and regional organizations must invest in the youth, peace, and security.

The release of the Report coincides with significant milestones: the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, the 20th anniversary of Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, the launch of a decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the 25th anniversary of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

2.27 African Union

Regional Economic Communities-- different RECs have adopted different strategies to focus on youth empowerment as part of their engagements. ECOWAS has a Youth Plan and Strategic Action Plan 2010, which includes: the ECOWAS Volunteer Programme; the ECOWAS Humanitarian Programme; and the ECOWAS Programme for capacity building for displaced youth. The EAC has a CSO Action Plan organized around six goals, one of which focuses on youth: "enhance participation in the conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanism with civil society, youth, women and media". One of the pillars of the Regional Strategy of the IGA Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) focuses on peace and security, where

youth unemployment, the population bulge, and mismatch in service delivery are identified as 'demographic stressors'. In 2021, IGAD launched the IGAD Youth Forum to establish a regional platform led by youth for the enhancement of peace, security, and stability in the IGAD Region. This is perhaps one of the most unique initiatives aimed at youth.

2.28 Responding to Specific Youth Constituencies

As emphasized earlier, young people from diverse backgrounds come with various experiences of conflict, affecting their motivation to work for peace differently. When planning program interventions, it is important to consider each individual's circumstances. Among these diverse groups are orphans and parents, married and single individuals, youth with disabilities and caring responsibilities, those with varying education and learning experiences, employed and unemployed youth, homeless youth, elite youth, LGBTI youth, former child soldiers, youth living with HIV/AIDS, young sex workers, and many other variations. Other factors affecting youth include race (e.g. in South Africa), religion (e.g. in Pakistan), sexual identity, ethnicity, class, geographical situation, and age.

In the context of Palestine, social networks comprising friends and families, outside the internet, have always been crucial supportive structures for youth. This collective support can be overlooked in Western understandings of resilience and individualistic psychosocial approaches. The Palestinian concept of "sumud" extends beyond an individualistic interpretation and reflects resilience as a wider collective and social representation of endurance. However, it's important to note that there can also be an underlying climate of suspicion and tension, leading to erosion of trust and security due to stories about collaborators.

Acknowledging the diversity of youth groups and their contexts, the following specific examples will be addressed below in more detail: child soldiers, the disabled, orphans, and refugee/displaced youth. These examples are illustrative of the varied issues affecting young people differently. The discussion aims to highlight the particular needs of these groups, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and addressing their specific, contextualized, and highly diverse needs and aspirations.

It is important to recognize that many constituents of youth may overlap and intersect to reinforce disadvantage. Some programs may unwittingly exclude these groups or privilege elite youth due to choices such as intervention location and language of instruction. Additionally, it is important to understand if and how these discussed constituencies might overlap with other variables impacting youth identity and agency, including race, ethnicity, class, geographical situation, and age.

Within conflict-affected contexts, disabled youth are frequently excluded from participation in multiple social contexts, partly due to a lack of consideration for their specific needs in terms of access and support, and partly due to the persistent devaluing of their agency. Literature suggests that there is much greater attention devoted to disabled war veterans than to young people with disabilities, reinforcing "hierarchies of disability." Simultaneously, while conflict contributes to greater cohorts of young people disabled through injuries, disabled youth are already operating from a position of marginalization and are particularly vulnerable to abandonment and abuse during and after conflict. In peacebuilding practices, it is vital to place value on the contributions of disabled young people and to make efforts to ensure their inclusion. Researching an inclusive education project for disabled children in Iraq, there is an opportunity for post-conflict education systems to provide better integration of disability services by exposing discriminatory practices and promoting more inclusive forms of education. This serves to raise the profile of young people with disabilities in conflict..

2.29 Orphans

Many young people are left without parents or surviving relatives following violent conflicts. Kline and Mone (2003) emphasize the isolation experienced by these young individuals and the need for psychosocial interventions to address their trauma in the absence of support networks. They also highlight the value of building bonds with peers. On the other hand, Gervais et al. (2009) and Baines and Gauvin (2014) illustrate the independence, resourcefulness, and agency of young people who act as heads of households. They demonstrate how orphaned youth can be disadvantaged by the denial of inheritance, but also how they can creatively seek ways to overcome this. Similarly, Nordstrom (2006) observes orphaned and abandoned street children

and youths in Luanda, Angola, creating alternative, peaceful communities and proxy-familial support systems as a counterpoint to adult violence.

2.30 Child soldiers

Significant attention in South Sudan was given to the challenges of rehabilitating former child soldiers, with criticism directed toward disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs for their narrow focus. These programs have been accused of overwhelmingly focusing on male children and rebel soldiers while neglecting female fighters. For instance, in Sierra Leone, even though 30% of child combatants were female, girls were significantly underrepresented in DDR programs, which further marginalized and denied them access to rehabilitation and skills training. Young people, both male and female, may be forcibly recruited into fighting forces or join voluntarily for various reasons such as disillusionment, retribution, or a desire to act. Their experiences of dehumanizing violence and the varied motives for joining fighting forces underline the need for sensitive attention in DDR programs, taking into account their fractured subject positions. Furthermore, it is vital to consider the specific educational and employment needs of former combatants. Many former child soldiers have missed out on formal education and may be unwilling to return due to a perceived loss of status. Vocational training programs need to consider these factors and also evaluate the job market and sustainability of job opportunities in communities where a large number of young people may be newly trained in the same skills.

Equally, many young soldiers have exercised authority, developed certain skills,   and applied agency in both.

The involvement of young combatants in violence and their resistance or subversion of participation is a complex issue. Some young combatants may have willingly joined fighting forces to exercise control and make decisions. After the conflict, their agency can be channeled towards positive purposes, such as increased political engagement. However, reintegrating these young combatants into communities where they feel powerless and without a voice can lead to feelings of resentment. To address this, programs should aim to foster a sense of positive purpose

among former young combatants, potentially through skills training programs that can be seen as contributing to reconciliation.

Displacement and refugee status also have significant implications for peacebuilding education. The confined conditions of refugee and displacement camps limit the practice of peace-making, as many youth are unable to escape reminders of conflict and trauma. Camp structures may reinforce traditional practices that exclude youth from decision-making, with youth representative positions, where they exist, being occupied by elite, older, male youth. Despite these challenges, some displaced youth actively challenge their nonsubject status and seek to overcome restrictive policies and obstacles to assert their agency. In many cases, the onus falls on young men to seek economic opportunities outside the camps and host communities due to limitations within these confines.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.0. Introduction

Research generally entails the pursuit of knowledge through data gathering. Conducting research embodies the acquisition and expansion of scientific knowledge through a variety of methods and techniques (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell 2005:2). Taking from this meaning, research is systemically more or less guided by fundamental philosophical premises that probes and explores the topic under study. The 'how and what' lenses used when conducting a research study provides insight into a summary of what the research entails (Rajasekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi 2013:2).

Studying how research is carried out, the design or methods (which can either be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) employed by researchers to acquire knowledge, is known as a research methodology (Rajasekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi 2013:5). In this light, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define methodology as a fundamental set of principles, methods, and techniques that can be used to enable the collection and analysis of data. Therefore, research methodology is an embodiment of steps or processes wherein different measures are undertaken to address the problems delineated in the study, respond to the questions posed, and attain set objectives through the exploration of observed phenomena and the management of data acquired.

This chapter discusses the research methodology and methods espoused for this study. It details the research approach and methods used for data collection, the research sample technique and population, sources and research process, types and methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, research limitations, and the challenges encountered in the course of realizing this study.

The study was underpinned by the qualitative research methodology to address the research questions and achieve the study's stated objectives. Thus, the study necessitated an empirical research method to gain a thorough understanding of the South Sudanese experience of youth's role in peacebuilding architecture under the auspices of youth organizations, and in the context of (post-) conflict developments.

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3.1 Research paradigm

Since this study had as one of its aims to contribute to literature, while also proffering recommendations to address the socio-economic and political inequalities faced by youth in their peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, the methodology adopted was informed by the critical research paradigm. This paradigm builds on practical socio-cultural, economic, political, ethnic, and gender realities, which are constantly influenced by human activities or socially constructed events (Scotland 2012:13). According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012:59-60), the critical paradigm allows for dialogue and reflection or 'reflective dialogic' between the researcher and participants, and sets the scene for existing social, political, cultural, economic and other ideologies and beliefs of society to be challenged in an attempt to promote programs that bring about change. Thus, it seeks to address concerns of social justice and marginalization (Scotland 2012:13). Dick (2000:1) also notes that the paradigm is indicative of action research, which is cyclic, participative, qualitative, critically reflective and responsive to the situation that is either being studied or under examination.

Drawing from field engagement with participants in South Sudan, the processes of focus group discussions and interview sessions were quite reflective and captured the experiences, narratives, and viewpoints of the participants on past and current issues on the subject of consolidating post-conflict development processes and the role of youth therein in South Sudan's peacebuilding architecture.

3.2 Methodological approach

This study specifically adopted the qualitative research methodology. This form of methodology is essentially exploratory and descriptive and does not involve experimental and numeric research designs, which primarily involve the use of quantitative research methodology (Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell 2005: 78 & 188). This in other words means that qualitative research for the most part is used to manage info garnered either through primary or other secondary sources of information that cannot be otherwise accomplished using quantitative research methods. According to Domegan and Fleming (2007), the qualitative research method embroils investigations of particular and intricate social phenomena and access to the experiences of the research subject in a manner that generates rich interpretative and descriptive data that gives

meaning to the phenomena.

The use of the qualitative research method in this study was a descriptive narrative in the form of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. In conformity with Wilmot's (2005: 219) view of the importance of qualitative research, this study found the method to be most suitable, as it furnished me with an insightful tool as it is from the perspectives and experiences of women and women's organizations in South Sudan. Likewise, it provided me with the modus operandi to understand, generate, and explore the research assumptions of this study; logically accomplish and engender qualitative justifications of the study's research questions and objectives; and unearth rich insights through close involvement in the process of data collection (Wilmot 2005:219).

To be specific, this research method was employed to critically examine youth's peacebuilding roles in the framework of (post)-conflict recovery processes in South Sudan. Since the research is geographically delineated to South Sudan, the case study design was also adopted as the unit of analysis for this dissertation. According to Zainal (2007:1), the case study design involves a comprehensive description, explanation, and understanding of social and human behavioral aspects from the research subjects' perspectives. The question of what needed to be analyzed (Baxter and Jack 2008:546), which in this context included 'questions concerning the role of youth in peacebuilding, the mechanisms and strategies engaged to attain peace, the peacebuilding processes undertaken, and the youth's organizations and institutions involved in facilitating the processes, guided the delineation of the South Sudanese case study.

Zainal (2007:1) pinpoints that this design is common, especially in the social science disciplines, and allows for the meticulous examination of context-specific information. For this study, the context-specific information was built on the determination of youth to empower the ends of peace within the South Sudanese context, specifically during and in the matter of post-conflict. Thus, Baxter and Jack (2008:545) emphasize the importance of context in the case study design as a necessary consideration in studying the unit of analysis to better explicate the phenomenon and actual setting within which the event transpired. Drawing from this understanding, the reason for using the case study design was therefore to provide material and conceptual boundaries for the study. Likewise, it was used to originate clear contextual understanding to permit the reliable interpretation of the experiences of the 55 participants as they pertain to the different perspectives

about youth and peacebuilding in South Sudan.

3.3. Sources of data collection

3.3.1 Primary Sources:

Cognizant that this study was delimited to the case study of South Sudan, focus group discussions and open-ended individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. These methods of gathering information constitute an important source of primary data. According to Nagle and Williams (2008:2), using focus group methodology "provides insights into how people reason and a profound understanding of the phenomena being studied." Interviews are quite valuable in terms of acquiring in-depth information needed for research purposes. Focusing on semi-structured interviews, Harrell and Bradley (2009:27) aver that they provide the researcher with the opportunity that is far-reaching in exploring the topics and themes under examination, and obtaining thorough responses to the interview questions. In line with these assertions, conducting the focus group discussions and interviews helped to acquire a broad understanding of the research participants' involvement in peacebuilding while creating a platform for the participants to freely express and exchange their views and experiences. For emphasis, these sources of data collection equally furnished me with a constructive method of exploring the responses provided to generate data and a substantive understanding of the youth and peacebuilding debate in South Sudan. In a bid to relate the utility of the focus groups, it occurred in the study that the focus group discussions proved to be an inexpensive way of gathering data from a potentially large number of respondents. This is because severally well-designed questions were effectively used in this study to gather information from different focus groups engaged with the aim of either validating or falsifying the claims being made in this study.

This method of data collection was also very instrumental in realizing the originality target of the study since information relevant to the study was carefully extracted from the people directly concerned with those specificities as it relates to the research. Furthermore, the focus group proved easy to administer, which was necessary to ensure that participants responded relatively honestly. Therefore, this method of data collection was relevant in this study chiefly because it is an important data collection method that specifically improves the quality of data, especially considering the presentations, analyses, and study findings described in the dissertation.

In this study, the methodological pattern that primes purposive/judgemental sampling (explained in the subsequent section) of a qualitative research undertaking is in synch with the focus group. This is because part of the elementary reasons for focus groups is to provide data that will enhance the credibility of claims and change or create a new direction of thought. These thoughts are based on pronounced evidence, particularly to the target units of youth organizations, government institutions, as well as international and local agencies for corroboration of facts and formulation of policies. Assuredly, the value of the information gathered through focus groups was dependent on defined objectives and the preparations done before conducting the focus group interviews. These conditions were met in the set objectives of this dissertation from when the questions were formulated. This is besides the account that I had to physically travel within South Sudan to meet and speak with the groups directly identified for the study, and whose inputs were prerequisite for the successful completion of this qualitative research. Therefore, through the focus group engagements, valuable information as presented in the chapters that follow, was derived from the discussions.

Similarly, this study made use of semi-structured interviews to explore the views of participants on the subject of youth and peacebuilding in South Sudan. De Vos et al. (2011:342) allude that Semi-structured interviews are the most generic form of interviewing people and widely used method of exploring and collecting data in qualitative research. The use of semi-structured interviews in this study made it possible to compare and interpret the respondents' views because of the formatted nature and standardization of the questions (Barriball and While 1994:330).

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with a select group of sixteen individuals (explained below), whose views and experiences, could not be discussed in isolation from that of the organizations they work with and for. The advantage of the semi-structured interviews as it relates to the methodology of this study is that the respondents were encouraged to talk freely about the subject, but kept to the point on issues of interest which I had outlined as central to the objectives of this study. The respondents were encouraged to reveal most of what they felt about the subject under discussion, and this is the core of the qualitative research and methods. I mingled well and 55 controlled the pace of the interviews, which I conducted in the three Equatoria states of South Sudan, namely: Eastern Equatoria State, Central Equatoria State, and Western Equatoria State. In line with the academic tradition of qualitative research and the choice of interview as a

strategic method in deducing data, the semi-structure interviews I used for this study drew rich insights from the participants' expert opinions and experiences on the research subject as a comprehensive primary data source to work with.

Meeting all participants face to face for focus group discussions and interviews served as the ideal platform for me to gather first-hand and vital information on the research topic recounted as stories and expressed as viewpoints. Knowledge transferred during this data collection process helped assess the proposition of how significant youth's leading roles in peacebuilding are in impacting the attainment of peace, reconstruction, and development objectives at all levels of society. In addition to these sources of data collection, the study also made use of official legal and policy written documents and documentaries. Donald et al. (2006) maintain that the use of written documents to acquire and advance insights into the phenomenon under examination is also one of the data sources researchers may employ. These may comprise a variety of documents, such as written, visual, and physical data. For this study, the data source included documents on the subjects of youth, peace, and security; post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development; and government and organizations' memorandums or guiding documents premised on policies for enhancing youth peacebuilding and development efforts in South Sudan. Some of these included the UNSCR 1325, South Sudan's National Youth Policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, and National Youth Action Plan, just to name but a few. In terms of documentaries, the study used visual sources such as, 'Youth of South Sudan: Fighting for Peace', and 'And Pray the Devil Back to Hell', as well as conference and seminar talks by one of the many South Sudanese peace activists. While these documents did not constitute a focal point of primary data collection, they served as a source where a series of recounts, provisions, and guiding principles were drawn from them to elucidate certain points and contentions presented in the study.

3.3 2 Secondary Sources:

The secondary data for this study included a wide range of published and unpublished works. Secondary data comprises the material that was already produced, another for a study other than that being researched by the researcher (Quinlan 2011). The secondary data for this study was mostly desktop reviews and included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, research papers, newspaper and magazine articles media reports, policy briefs, theses, and reliable and verifiable

information available on the Internet. These sources of information were particularly important as they served to strengthen and complement the quality of the primary data gathered. More so, the sources of information were readily accessible and of relevance for use to achieve some of the study's goals. Likewise, these sources were valuable and robust for the build-up of the theoretical and textual background of this dissertation.

3.4. Sampling method and sample population/size

A sample constitutes a part of a focus population prudently selected as the representative constituent of the study's target population, which must be reflective of the individualities of the set populace (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler 2014). According to (Brynard, Hanekom, and Brynard (2014), a population, is the total of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics. The study made use of purposive or judgment sampling since the research is empirically qualitative. A purposive sample is a category of non-probability sampling method that is used as a tool to purposefully select the sample population or size (Creswell 1994: 148; Tongco 2007: 147). Adopting a purposive sampling method provided me with the choice to decide the target population for the study, which was based on the background information gathered on the said research population. Accordingly, the selection was grounded on the participants' knowledge in the context and content of the discussion, and their experiences and involvement in events, policies, and activities concerned with youth's agency, decision-making positions, and contributions to South Sudan's peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development goals.

In the above given, youth organizations that were active in building peace during and in the aftermath of the South Sudanese civil wars, as well as key government, local, and international stakeholders in South Sudan's peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, and development processes, were purposefully selected as the group of interest for this study. Hence, the research population for the study constituted sixteen (45) individual participants for the semi-structured interviews, and four (10) focus group discussions, consisting of a total of 55 participants. This is to say fifty-five 55 is the total number of people who participated in this study. While the problem of time constraints and limited financial resources were the reasons for the selected sample, the element of the small sample size was necessary for the simplification of the data collection process

and the integration and critical examination of both theory and practice.

More so, this sample was easily accessible to me. For simple comprehension, this sample size of participants constituted four groupings as delineated by the study, and these included: youth organizations: This group comprised youth organizations in Juba the capital of South Sudan, and other state capitals of Torit and Yambio for Eastern Equatoria and Western Equatoria states respectively. These two counties were purposefully chosen because they were the entry points of the rebels during the first war, and major conflict encounters occurred in these counties during the two conflicts, resulting in the death of thousands of civilians, displaced population, the kidnapping and rape of children, women, and girls, as well as the destruction of property. Tambura County of WES in particular, was an active conflict battlefield throughout the fourteen years of conflict. At the level of the capital city, five (5) interviews were conducted with individual youth representatives. The reason for two separate focus groups with the same organization is that most of the youth turned up to participate in the discussion. More so, three (3) semi-structured interviews were conducted with one leader and two members of the same grassroots organization. Also, three (3) semi-structured interviews were conducted with one leader and two members of the same grassroots organization.

3.4.1 Government Entity:

 The government body consulted for this study as of the State Ministry of Youth & Sports. In this Ministry, the interview was conducted with one (1) of the youth directors, and I was also referred to consult several government reports and policy papers as more information on the research subject of focus is contained in these documents. The Media: often, the media has wider coverage and is up to date with events and information, generally playing a major role in the development of societies. This study conducted (1) interview with one leading male representative of the Press Union of South Sudan (PUSS).

3.4.2 International Body:

The international agency consulted for this study was the United Nations Mission in South Sudan(UNMISS) Office of Youth Advisor (OYA). With a mandate that includes the facilitation of gender-sensitive approaches as it relates to UNSC 1325, including the support and inclusion of

youth in all UNMISS-mandated priorities, a (1) interview was also conducted with a leading male representative of this office. The rationale for interviewing the male representatives from PUSS and UNMISS was to gain alternative and across-the-board insight into how men perceive the role of South Sudanese youth in the arena of peacebuilding. Stating this importance and in line with the above grouping, a demographic of the participants in this research is presented below.

In profiling the research subjects, I upheld the ethical requirement of confidentiality and anonymity agreed upon and used pseudonyms for participants who preferred not to be mentioned in the presentation of the data. In this given, the pseudonyms (UI-1 up to 16) July 2024 are used for the sixteen individual interviews conducted. While, these pen names are not used in all the instances some of the participants permitted for use of their actual names, which was also necessary to facilitate the flow of the data being presented and analyzed.

An important point to note given of the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study is that the respondents' responses were guided and linked to the activities and works of the organizations they represent. UI-1 is an influential media personnel in South Sudan and his level of education is a university, with qualifications in Mass Communications among other specific oriented course training and credentials. He has played significant roles in South Sudan's Media Law and Policy Reform Working Group. Among other things, he consults and coordinates various projects, including on subjects of human rights, governance, and community inclusiveness in South Sudan. UI-6 July 2024: UI-6 is in her fifties she is educated to the level of university, and holds other credentials in youth and child welfare protection, peacebuilding, and security sector reform, among others. She is head of planning and training in the South Sudan Youth Law Enforcement Association (SSYLEA) founded in 2000, and has been working with the organization since 2009. Advocating for female youth security officers in all the security agencies (private and Public) in South Sudan, advancing for training for security youth female officers, seeking redress when their rights are trampled upon or when they are discriminated against or harassed within the security sector, are among her many responsibilities. UI-7 July 2024: UI-7 is a gender expert and advisor in his forties, and holds a Master's degree. He works for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Office of Youth Advisor (OYA) as a youth officer and has been involved in post-conflict developments with UNMISS for over eight years. Generally, he provides strategic advice on issues of youth gender mainstreaming and women/youth empowerment, partnering with

the government and NGOs to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women/youth peace and security, as well as other regional and international policy instruments on gender and women rights in South Sudan. UI-8 July 2024: UI-8 is in her thirties, holds a university degree, and works with Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) established in 2000, as one of its project representatives. She is concerned with peacebuilding networking, lobbying, and advocating in collaboration with other NGOs to ensure the implementation of projects that empower both young women and girls, especially UNSCR 1325, as well as establishing peace committees in communities and clubs several clubs in secondary and high schools in and around Juba. 103 UI-9 July 2024: UI-9 is in her fifties and is a degree holder. She coordinates the activities of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding/Women in Peacebuilding Network (WANEP/WIPNET) in South Sudan. She is concerned with the day-to-day running of the activities of the organization and is involved in advocacy where protection and addressing issues of rape and domestic violence are prioritized, as well as training on how to carry on advocacy, engage community leaders, legislature, and national leaders on issues of gender, women empowerment, leadership, reconciliation, and capacity building, among others. UI-10 July 2024: UI-10 is one of the executives of the Development Education Network – South Sudan (DEN-SS). UI-10 is in her forties and has university as well as several professional credentials from both home in South Sudan and abroad. She is charged with the day-to-day running of the activities of the organization, of which major is enhancing the voices and participation of grassroots young women and communities in the areas of peacebuilding, good governance, and sustainable development through literacy training workshops and community awareness among women's groups and local communities. UI-11 July 2024: UI-11 is one of the coordinators of the activities of the Ganta Concern Youth Development Association. UI-11 is in her forties and has been leading personnel of the organization since 2004. She is concerned with the empowerment of young people through education, community outreach, and most specifically agriculture programs. She is also involved with tackling youth, and children's human rights concerns, addressing domestic and gender-based violence through training, counselling, and advocacy projects, with the specific support and assistance of the organization's members. UI-12 July 2024: UI-12 is one of the youth in charge of ensuring the smooth running of the Youth in Peacebuilding Network (YIPNET), together with other grassroots members of the organization. UI-12 is in his

forties with a level of basic secondary education. He organizes meetings (like the focus group discussion conducted with the organization's youth) at the YIPNET Centre where they carry out their activities. Likewise, he works in collaboration with the youth to empower women, young girls and boys, and their community through community outreach programs, advocacy, and awareness raising 104 on issues of rape, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and inheritance, some of which she plays lead role when advocacy is conducted through creative means like theatre act. UI-13 and UI-14 July 2024: UI-13 and UI-14 are both members of WIPNET, Gbargna City in Bong County. UI-13 is in her fifties and UI-14 is in her forties. Apart from their active involvement with the organization, both are farmers and trade part of their farm produce at the local market to sustain their families. UI-15 and UI-16 July 2024: UI-15 and UI-15 are members of Ganta Concern Women, Ganta City in Nimba County. Both women are in their fifties, widowed, and have been with the organization since 2005, especially in the organization's cassava agricultural project. Besides this, they are also small farmers and traders of farm produce for the running of their homes. FGD-A and FGD-B July 2024: FGD-A and FGD-B, July 2024 are focus group discussions conducted with the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Ezo County. As earlier explained, two focus groups were conducted with the same organization because of the turnout of members to participated in the discussion.

FGD-A discussion was made up of eleven (11) members, and FGD-B discussion also constituted eleven (11) members. These youth are in the age groups of the twenties to the thirties, and they are all involved in the realization of the peacebuilding activities of the organization, as profiled in "Appendix II" at the end of this study. FGD-C and FGD-D July 2024: FGD-C and FGD-D, July 2024 are focus group discussions held with Youth Development Association. Two focus group discussions were also held with members of this organization. FGD-C discussion was constituted of twelve (12) members, and FGD-D discussion was held with eleven (11) members. These youth are in the age groups of the twenties to the thirties, the majority of them are widows and are involved in the organization's peace and development activities, also profiled in "Appendix II:" at the end of this study.

The discussions and interviews carried out with the above participants were all audio recorded with their permission, and eventually transcribed. I enlisted the services of a research assistant and colleague, Mr. Omel Stephen. The medium of communication and discussion with the

participants was the English and Arabic languages spoken and used in everyday communication in South Sudan. I am proficient in both languages, given that hail from what used to be southern Sudan when Sudan was not divided yet. At the level of the grassroots field engagements where some participants responded in the vernacular, the research assistant and some members of the group of participants translated the responses into English.

The reason for holding four focus group discussions with just two organizations is the readiness of the youth to share their experiences and the work they do, thus the sizeable turn-up for the discussion. To ensure the participation of all, I divided the discussion questions into two sections and also grouped the participants as such. Apart from Mother Mary Brownell, who was interviewed at her home, all the other discussions and interviews took place in the participants' work environment, that is, offices and organizations' assembly centers from July 01 to 31, 2024.

3.5 Method of data analysis

The use of primary and secondary data sources are generally relevant and credible forms of qualitative research studies. In analyzing data collected, qualitative content analysis and narrative/discourse analysis of the role of youth in building and influencing the outcomes of peace in (post-) conflict South Sudan, was adopted for this study. Content analysis was situated within the specific contexts of the research questions and structured hypothesis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1277), the procedure of content analysis constitutes a very important part of the qualitative research approach and is used to construe meaning from the context of the data text, be it primary or secondary. Thus, this data analysis method was distinctly used to analyze and appraise existing literature and the information gathered from the focus groups and interviews on the role and challenges of youth in South Sudan's peacebuilding architecture. The study also made use of narrative/discourse analysis, otherwise known as storytelling. This form of analysis simply entails the experiences of the participants are understood narratively and presented as stories. This method of analysis is not new in the social sciences disciplines, and it builds on what Perecman and Curran (2006:146) epitomize as 'letting the respondents tell their stories.' According to Trahar (2013), the communication of the participants' experiences through narratives is descriptively rich in the manner that it captures the meanings and brings out the voices and viewpoints of the participants just as it relates to their experiences. Research on Youth's Narratives (2007)

expatiates the power and significance of using narratives as a mechanism for presenting the stories and experiences of women. Through narratives, we recognize the unique nature of human experiences as captured by the 'Youth Peacemakers Program' at Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice in the United States of America, which particularly encapsulates the context of youth's experiences of war and conflict and their approaches to peace through narratives. The study on Youth Narratives (2007) draws attention to the fact that the "actual power of a narrative is its potential to illuminate a social problem and create social change" and the narratives of women's experiences in the pursuit of peace in Liberia capture the essence of this power of social change. Considering that this study aimed to 'explore' and establish the transformative profundities of peacebuilding processes and youth's roles therein in (post)-conflict, taking on the narrative approach, therefore, proved to bring out a true reflection of this. These narratives were grouped under the themes of youth's peacebuilding agency and youth's organizational peacebuilding agency and strategies, which captured the periods spanning the fourteen years of conflict in South Sudan, as well as the post-conflict dispensation.

In this context, the narratives descriptively represented the 'what and how' of the experiences of South Sudanese youth in peacebuilding and the appraisal and analyses of them are the results, conclusion, and recommendations presented in this study to improve and deepen understanding of the transformative perspectives of both peacebuilding and the role of women.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Since all the youth organizations used for this study are members of the umbrella organization, my first point of contact was with the State Ministry of Youth & Sports who provided me with the gatekeeper's letter permitting me to carry out this research with its collaborating organizations and groups. I contacted by phone and email all designated participants for this study to schedule appointments for the interviews and discussions. Following through the process of data collection with the participants, each interview and discussion began with me explaining the objectives of the research and seeking the voluntary and full consent of respondents, which was not a problem because all of them showed a willingness to participate in the study. While, on the issues of anonymity and confidentiality, participants were assured that their names would be substituted with pseudonyms. This ethical concern is a sensitive issue in research, but given that the narrative

of the South Sudanese youth peacebuilding experience has been severally interrogated and documented, the participants were not keen on the ethical consideration of their identity, though they read and signed the consent form. In this given, Mary Apai consented for her name to be mentioned in the presentation of data. Meanwhile, the names of some of the other participants are not overtly mentioned in the presentation of date, but their portfolios or positions they occupy are profiled for easy deciphering of information.

An important point to be noted here is that participants underscored the inevitable link of their responses on the youth and peacebuilding subject in South Sudan to those of their various organizations and institutions. The emphasis on this owes to the fact that most of what was discussed by participants is interlinked with the work they do for the organizations to achieve their objectives, especially in the current context of post-conflict.

3.7 Limitations and challenges of the study

The study set out to interrogate the role of youth in South Sudan's peacebuilding architecture in the context of (post-) conflict developments. Findings generated through field research engagement (as presented in chapters five to seven) proved quite relevant in addressing the research questions, filling the research gaps, substantiating the research hypothesis, and meeting the objectives of the study. This notwithstanding, the study was also limited by certain concerns. The first limitation pertains to the reality that empirical and qualitative data could not be collected from all stakeholders, youth organizations, and individuals who were and are still visibly involved in South Sudan's peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes. This challenge owed to many factors, including the fact that I was constricted by finances and time, as well as the unavailability of some sample population (for reasons which are explained in the last paragraph of this section) originally identified during the preliminary proposal development, presentation, and acceptance of this research study. Because of this challenge, I recognized that the sampling of such a small population is often perceived to have a potential bearing on the findings of the study. The implication here is that the data collected, most often, do not necessarily represent the views of all the stakeholders. However, this challenge was dealt with by ensuring that the sampled population finally used for this study was reliable and representative of the wider perspective.

This is in the sense that I focused on interviewing the projected target population available. Furthermore, I had some concerns about the fact that much attention had already been paid by other researchers to the youth and peacebuilding discourse in South Sudan, thereby over-researching the target groups identified for this study.

The implicit uncertainty given this possible limitation was that the responses of the participants or respondents may be influenced by the many narratives and publications they have heard, read, repeatedly recounted, or conceived as what researchers researching youth and peacebuilding in South Sudan may be interested in. Addressing this, the interview questions were coined to address the gaps in the literature and the target population accessed through the State Ministry of Youth & Sports, an umbrella secretariat organization that works with registered youth organizations in South Sudan and knows their different peacebuilding areas of interests and activities. I also faced the challenge whereby some participants especially in the focus groups almost dominated the discussions. However, I set the pace for the discussion, ensuring that each participant was given room to also express their views. Taking into consideration that the research derives (d) from a large body of secondary data covering more than 20 years, not all the material and information on youth and peacebuilding in South Sudan could be sourced or said to be valid. For this reason, the study employed four of Scott's (1990:6) validity benchmarks, which are authenticity; credibility; representativeness; and meaning, to assess the quality of the data sources, and establish that the data gathered was relevant, clear, and comprehensible. This is in the sense that I carefully analyzed and assessed relevant secondary data and juxtaposed it with some of the responses of participants as presented in the analyses chapters of this study. Moreover, since lessons to be drawn from the South Sudanese experience were envisioned to serve as references for other post-conflict situations, I noted the realism that each post-conflict setting and experience differ from the other. This is to say no one solution fits all, therefore the a need to fashion the lessons and policies that may be drawn from this study to be specific to each post-conflict milieu.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This study chapter will analyze and discuss the data gathered from the participants' questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. We will cover the following areas: participants' background information, their perceptions of youth involvement in peacebuilding, the actual practice of youth in peacebuilding, the challenges they face, and the opportunities available to them.

We'll first delve into the participants' background information, including their gender, level of education, and their respective kebele in Mandi town. A total of 55 individuals participated in the study, all selected from two different kebeles to contribute to peace-building activities. The data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

4.1 Participants' Background Information

Gender / Education	Male	Female	Total
Tertiary	5	6	11
Secondary	13	11	24
Primary	11	9	20
Total	29	26	55

Table 2: Participants' Background Information

Source: Field Survey, 2024
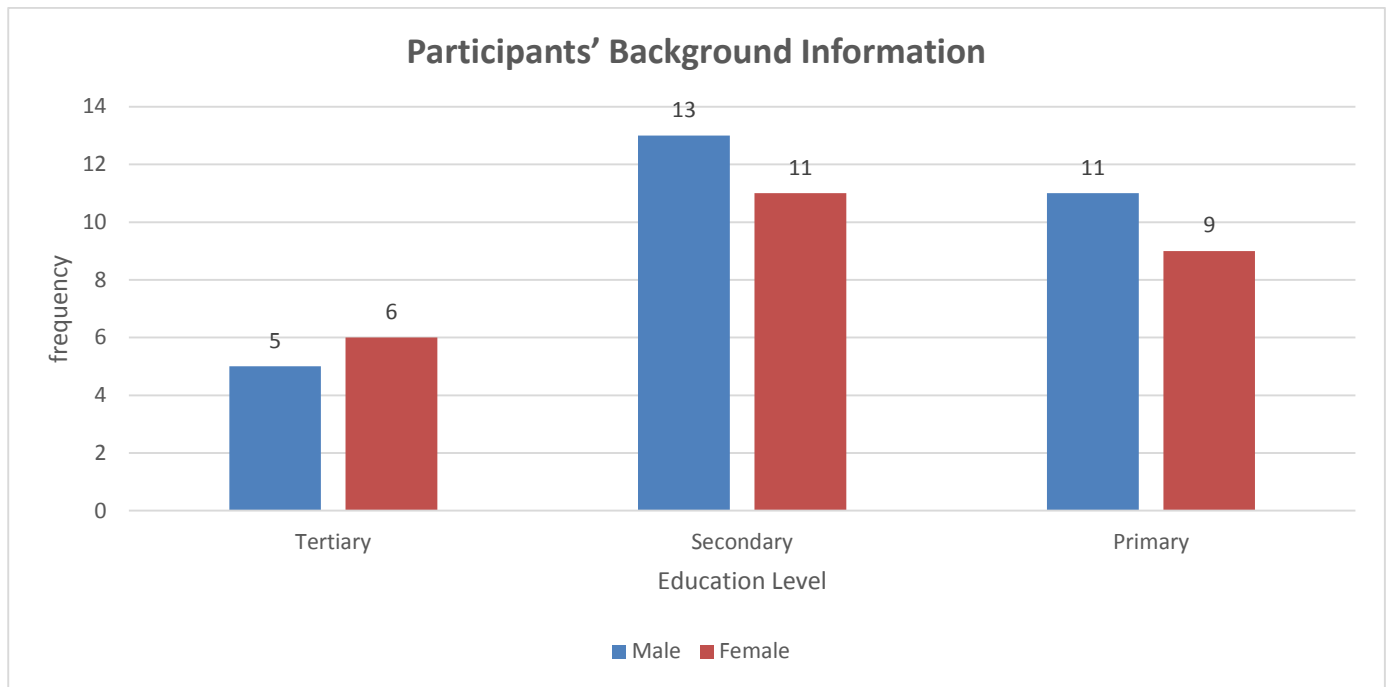
Figure 6: Bar graph showing Participants' Background Information

Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process

S/N	Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Q1	Youth can come up with new ideas to address	6	10.9	5	9.1	3	5.5	13	23.6	28	50.9

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	conflicts									
Q2	You can play a vital role in the building process	3	5.5	2	3.6	5	9.0	15	27.2	30	54.5
Q3	Youth can transfer their war capacities to peace promotion	5	9.0	8	14.5	2	3.6	17	30.9	23	41.8
Q4	Youth are important actors in the peace-building process	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	18.1	45	81.8
Q5	Youth are creative, open-minded and dynamic in peace-	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	27.2	40	72.7

	building											

Table 3: Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process
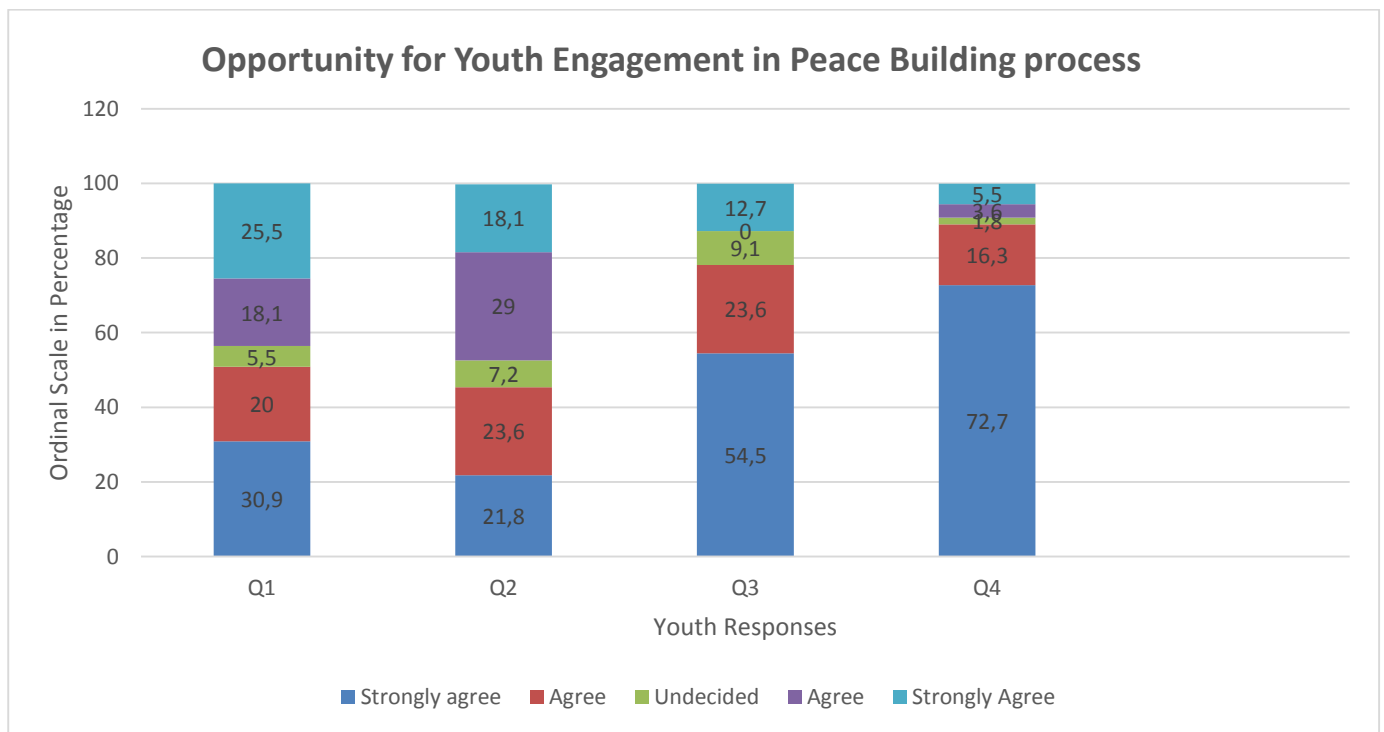
Figure 7: Bar Graph showing Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process

In Table 3, it is shown that 50.9% of the youths responded that they can come up with new ideas to address conflicts and be involved in peace-building practices. Additionally, 23.6% of the respondents agreed with this statement, while 5.5% were undecided. On the other hand, 9.0% of the respondents disagreed with the idea of coming up with new ideas to address conflicts for peace-building purposes. The remaining 10.9% of the respondents reported that they did not come up with new ideas to address conflicts for peace-building.

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The data from the table shows that 54.5% of the youths believe that they can play a vital role in the peace-building process, while 27.2% agree with this belief. Meanwhile, 9.0% were undecided, 3.6% disagreed, and 5.5% had a different opinion. Additionally, interviews with participants confirm that youths have a positive attitude towards peacebuilding. For example, an interviewee from Chomo Dabus Kebele expressed that the youth in their area hold positive and constructive views on youth involvement in peacebuilding, and many support the youths with advice and financial assistance for peace development.

The findings of this study are in line with those of Visser (2015), who states that young people are capable of either healing the world or destroying society and everything in a nation. Therefore, the perception of youth towards peacebuilding greatly influences the presence of sustainable peace in developing countries, such as South Sudan. For instance, an interviewee named Gaaniko in Yambio provided the following information: "In the past, some youths were seen as the cause of conflict. They saw themselves as heroes when they caused conflict. However, nowadays, they have changed their mindset and believe that youths are peacemakers. As a result, the people of the WES and the youth cooperate to resolve conflicts in their area."

Similarly, interviewee M, who was interviewed in Nzara, responded as follows: "Previously, the youth in my Nzara were seen as the cause of conflict rather than peacemakers, and the society did not respect them. However, since the people know and accept that youth are actors of peace and development, the society provides ideological and financial support to the youths of the kebele."

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About peace promotion, Table 1 shows that a large number of the respondents (41.8%) strongly agreed that youth can transfer their war capacities to peace promotion. 30.9%, 3.6%, and 14.5% of the respondents agreed, were undecided, and disagreed about youth being able to transfer their war capacities to peace promotion, respectively. However, 9.0% of the respondents did not think that youth could transfer their war capacities to peace promotion. In line with the above findings, Interviewee H from Hombosha Kebele also mentioned the following: "The establishment of the right of people to speak by the government is a very good chance for youth peacemakers as well as peace promotion and gives a chance to compete for different types of jobs.".

The table shows that 81.8% of the participants believe that youth are important actors in the peace-building process, while 18.1% agreed and 0.0% were undecided. 0 individuals (0.0%) disagreed,

and 0.0% reported that youth are not important actors in the peace-building process. Similarly, Interviewee Gaaniko emphasized the potential for youth to be peacebuilders in the WES. They stated that if youth are encouraged and engaged in various activities, they can help maintain and promote peace in their area. Additionally, most people believe that youth are key players in peace and conflict management and have the ability to handle conflicts.

The focus group discussion participants in Juba mentioned that with the support of the community policing office and local elders, most youths have the potential to be strong peacebuilders. This finding is consistent with a study by (reference), which states that neglecting adolescents and older young people is shortsighted and counterproductive in terms of peacebuilding, especially in the crucial post-accord phase with its twin challenges of violence prevention/accord maintenance and societal reconciliation and reconstruction. The youth's contribution to peacebuilding and their challenges are numerous, according to the participants, but the main hindrance is the societal misconception regarding the value of youth participation in peacebuilding. However, the youth's perception of creating peacebuilding is very constructive. The final question regarding the perception of youth was their creativity, open-mindedness, and dynamism in peacebuilding.

Among the respondents, 72.7% of youths strongly agreed that they were creative, open-minded, and dynamic in peacebuilding, while a large number of respondents (27.2%) agreed with this statement. 0.0% were undecided, 0.0% disagreed, and 0.0% strongly disagreed. In addition to this questionnaire, the focus group discussion participants and the interviewees further explained that youth have various perceptions in analyzing conflicts.

The following information, taken from an interview with L, can be seen as an example: In WES, conflicts arise due to marketing competition, tax payment, and village border issues. As a result, I have been involved in analyzing and resolving such conflicts based on the rules and regulations of each case. In addition, since the youth in this kebele are creative and open-minded, most of the conflicts in WES have been resolved through youth participation. Focus group discussion participants in WES also mentioned that youths were creative, open-minded, and dynamic in the peace-building process. This finding is similar to the study of 13, which defines the creativity and open-mindedness of youth as their greatest strength in peacebuilding, allowing them to "transcend" structures and attitudes that promote conflict. The study explores the relationship between youth and peacebuilding, examining how youth approach peacebuilding differently than

other age demographics. The result is also consistent with the findings of 14, which state that young people are open, energetic, and creative. They are especially well-positioned to come up with new ideas to address community problems and can play a vital role in the peace-building process by modeling alternatives to violence and showing that change can be made peacefully. Based on these results, we can interpret that in Mandi woreda, most of the youths can come up with new ideas to address conflicts and perceive that they play a vital role in the peace-building process. The youth in Juba and Nzara are creative, open-minded, and dynamic in peacebuilding, demonstrating their abilities to analyze and resolve various conflicts.

4.2 Challenges of Youth Involvement in Peace Building Process

The study presented the challenges of engaging youth in peacebuilding and thematically discussed the data obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

S/N	Challenges of Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Q1	Unemployment impedes young people from actively participatin	2	3.6	5	9.0	7	12.7	11	20.0	30	54.5

	g in peacebuilding efforts.									
Q2	Inferiority feelings can present a challenge to the involvement of youth in peacebuilding.	7	12.7	11	20.0	3	5.4	13	23.6	21	38.1
Q3	Many young people who consume excessive alcohol lack mechanisms for building peace.	11	20.0	8	14.5	1	1.8	10	18.1	25	45.4
Q4	The current youth communic	9	16.3	10	18.1	0	0.0	11	20.0	25	45.4

	ation platform is insufficient for addressing peacebuilding challenges.										
Q5	Inadequate awareness creates challenges for peacebuilding.	2	3.6	7	12.7	0	0.0	12	21.8	34	**61.8**

Table 4: Challenges of Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process
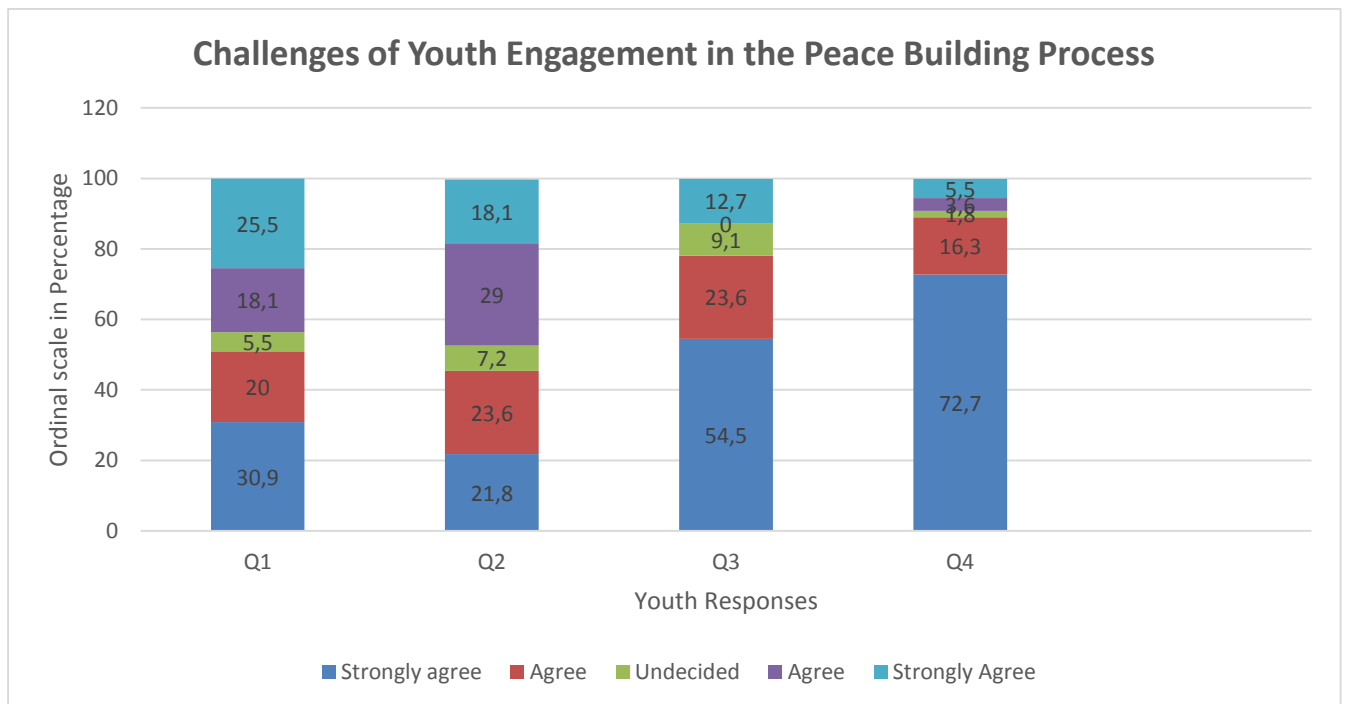

Figure 8: Bar graph showing Challenges of Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process

In Table 4, it is evident that most respondents (54.5%) indicated that unemployment hinders youth from participating in peace-building activities. Additionally, 20.0% agreed with this sentiment, while 12.7% were undecided. On the other hand, 9.0% of respondents disagreed that unemployment hinders youth from peace-building involvement, and 3.6% stated that it does not hinder youth from peace-building involvement. Therefore, it can be inferred that many participants believe unemployment impedes youth from engaging in peace-building efforts.

Similarly, the data in the aforementioned table reveals that a large percentage of respondents (38.1%) identified inferiority as a challenge to youth peace-building engagement, while 23.6% agreed with this view. Conversely, only a small percentage (5.4%) of the participants claimed to be undecided about whether inferiority feeling poses a challenge to youth peace-building engagement, and 20.0% stated that it is not a challenge. These findings suggest that inferiority feeling presents a significant obstacle to youth involvement in peace-building practices. Furthermore, the data also indicates that a substantial number of respondents (12.7%) agreed that excessive alcohol consumption among youths leads to a lack of peace-building mechanisms.

In contrast, smaller percentages of respondents agreed, were undecided, or disagreed with this viewpoint. Notably, 45.4% of respondents strongly agreed that excessive alcohol consumption contributes to a lack of peace-building mechanisms among youths.

Finally, the data from Table 2 highlights that a significant percentage of the respondents (18.1%) disagreed with the notion that inadequate youth communication platforms pose challenges to peacebuilding, while 1.8% agreed with this idea. Additionally, 14.5% of respondents were undecided about whether inadequate youth communication platforms present challenges to peacebuilding.

However, some participants (20.0%) and 45.4% of youths believe that the lack of a suitable platform for youth communication does not challenge peacebuilding. They either strongly disagree or strongly agree, respectively. It can be concluded that inadequate youth communication is a challenge for most young people to engage in peace-building activities. Additionally, 16.3% of respondents, strongly disagreed that inadequate awareness creation challenges peacebuilding. 12.7% of the respondents agreed that inadequate awareness creation challenges peacebuilding. A small number of respondents (7.5%) or 6 youths were undecided about whether inadequate awareness creation challenges peacebuilding or not. 25.3% and 6.3% of youths disagreed and

strongly agreed, respectively, about the challenge of inadequate awareness creation on peacebuilding. As a result, the data shows that inadequate awareness creation is a challenge to peacebuilding in the study area.

In addition to the questionnaire data, interviewees and focus group discussion participants reported various challenges in peace-building practices. They mentioned challenges such as the lack of strong and uncorrupted leaders, lack of quality awareness creation, and a high number of unemployed youth in the kebele. An interviewee from Meti Kebele mentioned that common challenges for peacebuilding in the area included a lack of quality education, inferiority, lack of effective peace-building training, excessive alcohol consumption, and unemployment. Another challenge is that some conflicting parties prefer to solve conflicts only through the court instead of by youth. Moreover, another interviewee mentioned facing various challenges in peacebuilding experience in their kebele, including unemployment, lack of budget for youth job creation, excessive alcohol consumption, and the belief that conflicts should only be solved through court. When conflicts occur, many people want to report their conflicts to the police and court instead of resolving them with local youths. Additionally, some people in the community refuse to acknowledge their problems, possibly due to reasons such as not respecting the advice of their elders or feeling inferior. Lack of knowledge and funding from relevant authorities were also significant challenges. One participant mentioned facing challenges in peacebuilding, including people not believing in the ability of youths to build peace, difficulty convincing others to work with youth, and some individuals exacerbating conflicts for personal gain. Another respondent highlighted the lack of job opportunities for youths, the unwillingness of conflicting parties to make peace, and their lack of knowledge and skills in conflict resolution. Lastly, one interviewee mentioned being considered incapable of making peace by conflicting parties.

Some conflicting parties do not want to engage in negotiations with young peacemakers and prefer elder religious leaders. They fail to understand the ideas of youth peacemakers and refuse to accept their negotiation methods. One female interview participant mentioned some challenges in peacebuilding. She shared that when she attempted to negotiate with certain conflicting parties, they dismissed her as a young person incapable of making peace, telling her to "grow slowly until you become an elder." These conflicting parties believed that only elders could facilitate peace and excluded the role of youth in peacebuilding. Some even refused to engage in negotiations

unless their ideas were accepted, while others postponed participating in peacebuilding for their future. Additionally, interviewees highlighted the emotional well-being and unemployment of youths as the most challenging issues in CES. The participants in the focus group discussions also acknowledged the numerous challenges faced by youths involved in peacebuilding activities. Some government officials expressed their belief that certain conflicting parties should only be negotiated with by religious leaders, excluding youth peacebuilders.

In addition, they replied that some peacemaker youths become hopeless when the conflicting parties oppose each other during reconciliation. As one of the government-employed participants speaks out: In my opinion, in WES lack of knowledge and experience in peacebuilding are the challenges of youth peacebuilders. The leaders are unable to provide adequate budget and training on peace and security. Some individuals demoralize the youths during the negotiation process. Lack of rule of law and lack of budget are the other challenges. In other terms, some people did not respect the rules and regulations of the Youth Association. Some conflicting parties are unable to come to the negotiation place due to lack of willingness. The above finding of the study was discussed as follows with different scholars, in line with this point, 34 revealed that youth have various challenges that hinder them from full engagement in peacebuilding activities, and essential factors that promote them to participate in various peace-building activities. The biggest challenges for promoting youth participation in peacebuilding are poverty and unemployment. 16 also revealed that there is a great deal of youth who are unemployed in Uganda and therefore it makes them unable to construct a living and engage in peace-building initiatives. In line with unemployment-related obstacles, education may contribute to community peace and enhance youth to be part of economic development, as it may lead to further social and political participation. In the same vein, 17 found out that youth need to get quality education and other vocational training so that they get required skills, and get into jobs. If youth are brought together like in a vocational school, that would promote peace because this would bring youth together and this would create avenues for supporting one another and building longer relationships, apart from skilling them. The demanded possibility of technical and vocational schooling is understandable since such training aims to link education to employability and can lead to poverty reduction. Lastly, 18 investigated that the other issue that keeps youths" perpetrating conflict instead of contributing to peacebuilding is so much poverty. Since economic empowerment is a key element

for social and political engagement, engaging youth in income-generating activities is essential. The feeling of inferiority is the other challenge for youth peace-building engagements. For this reason, youth need to be empowered to embrace peace-building approaches and gain self-esteem. The main challenges for greater youth participation in peacebuilding are related to unemployment, poverty, alcohol abuse, and inferiority feelings. Moreover, alcoholism which often results in violence is a hindering factor to being unable to participate in peacebuilding. Excessive consumption of alcohol among youth is one of the main conflict drivers, as well as hinders youth involvement in peacebuilding. Such youths did not think of various peace-building activities as important for instance instead of meeting colleagues to discuss. All rights reserved good things, a youth would choose to go and take alcohol so that it enables them to forget the problems. Generally, based on the above result the researcher concludes that unemployed youths are exposed to conflict, and youths feel inferior were not participating in peace-building activities. Intake of excessive alcohol has a direct influence on youth's involvement in peacebuilding. In addition, insufficient youth communication platforms and inadequate awareness creation about the necessity of peace in the community are the main challenges to youth involvement in peacebuilding.

4.3 Empowerment of the Youth as a result of the Engagement in Peace building Process

S/N	Empowerment of the Youth as a result of the	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree

	Engagement in Peace building Process	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Q1	Youth have access to education which empowers them to practice the building process	17	30.9%	11	20.0%	3	5.5%	10	18.1%	14	25.5%
Q2	Youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace the building	12	21.8%	13	23.6%	4	7.2%	16	29.0%	10	18.1%

Q3	There are job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement	30	54.5%	13	23.6%	5	9.1%	0	0.0%	7	12.7%
	process										
Q4	There are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement	40	72.7%	9	16.3%	1	1.8%	2	3.6%	3	5.5%

Table 5: Opportunities of Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process

Opportunities of Youth Engagement in Peace Building

Youth Responses	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Strongly Agree	25,5	18,1	12,7	5,5
Agree	18,1	29	0	3,6
Undecided	5,5	7,2	9,1	1,8
Agree	20	23,6	23,6	16,3
Strongly agree	30,9	21,8	54,5	72,7
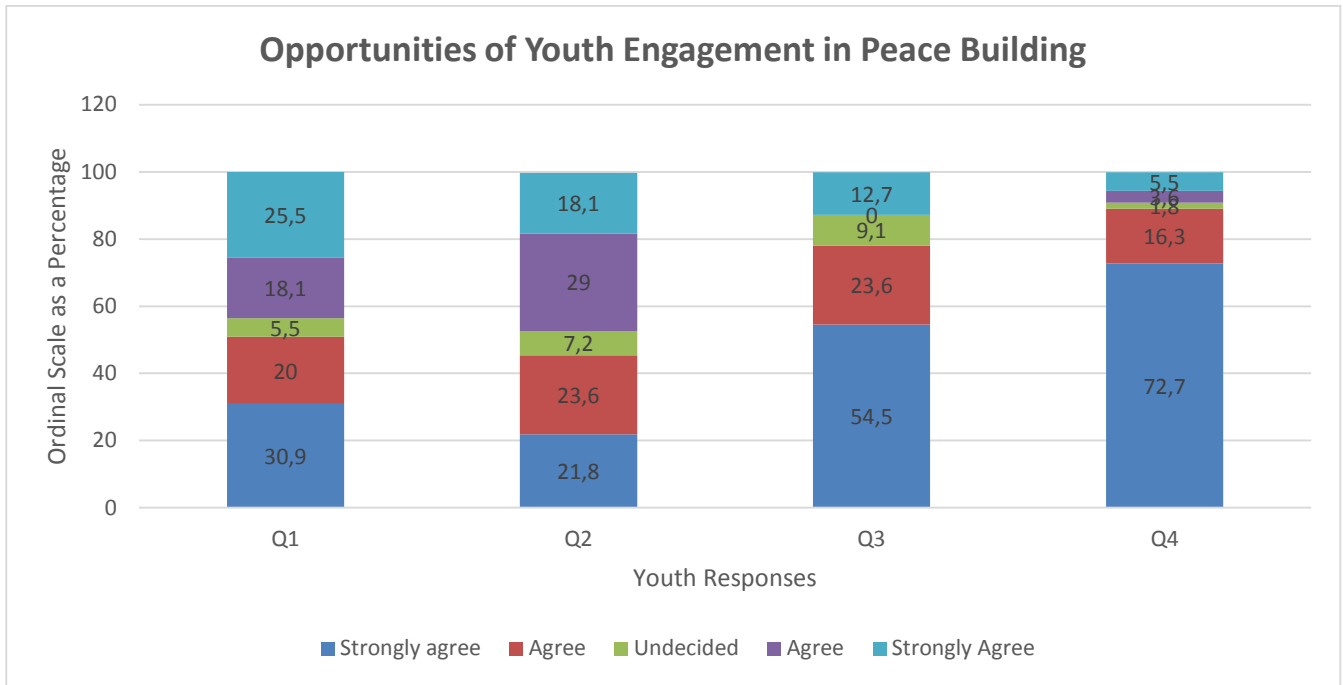
Figure 9: Bar graph showing Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peacebuilding Process

Table 5. shows that most of the respondents (25.5%) reported that youth have access to education which empowers them to practice peace-building. 20.0% of the respondents replied that they disagreed about access to education empowering them to practice peacebuilding. 5.5% or 3 youth were undecided about whether they have access to education that empowers them to practice peacebuilding or not while 18.1% of them agreed. However, the remaining respondents (30.9%) or 17 youth reported that youth have no access to education that empowers them to practice peacebuilding. Therefore, it can be understood that most youths don't have access to education which could empower them to practice peace building.

The above table also indicates that most of the questionnaire respondents (21.8%) youths strongly disagree that youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace peace-building approaches. 23.6% of the respondents replied that they were dis agreed that youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace peace-building approaches. 7.2% were undecided about whether youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace peace-building approaches or not and 29.0% of them agreed. However, another group of youth (18.1%) reported that they agreed that youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace peace-building approaches.

Based on the above information, we can understand that most youths were not empowered to gain

self-esteem and embrace peace-building approaches. Regarding job opportunities, the result in Table 3 shows that most of the participants (54.5%) questionnaire respondents strongly agreed that there are job opportunities that promote youth peacebuilding involvement, and (23.6%) of respondents disagreed that there are job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement. 9.1% of respondents were not sure if there are job opportunities that promote youth peacebuilding involvement or not. However, a small number of respondents (0.0%) strongly agreed that there are job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement, and the remaining 12.7% agreed that there are job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement. Thus, it can be concluded that there are no adequate job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement in Mandi woreda.

Finally, a large number of respondents (72.7%) youth strongly agreed that there are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement. 16.3% of the respondents were dis agreed that there are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement while 1.8% of youths were undecided whether there are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement or not. However, the remaining 3.6% and 5.5% of the respondents agreed and strongly disagreed that there are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement respectively. Therefore, considering this result we can conclude that there are unities of youth that promote peace-building engagement in the study area.

Generally, access to education, job opportunities, self-esteem empowerment, and the unities of youth were not given for youths to be involved in peace peace-building process. Regarding the opportunities for youths in involved in peacebuilding practices, the youth interviewees reported that even though there are various peace-building opportunities in Hombosha kebele including the availability of peace committees, community policing, and peace advisors they do not work properly. As they reported, most importantly, since the police officers work with the community, it helps us to work on peacebuilding efficiently. The interviewee from Hombosha Kebele stated that: Even though, adult education, training, and the availability of youth leaders in the kebele are good things for youths' peace-building involvement.

Most of the youths in South Sudan do not get these opportunities. In addition, some youths are organized in various developmental teams which can be taken as opportunities. Apart from these, there are still inadequacies, the kebele and woreda leaders provide training on peacebuilding, the

police officers work with youth, and the society shares farming land with some youth. Similarly, the interview participants further explained that access to various communication technologies like cell phones, radio, and Television are good opportunities. However, there is no additional availability of various educational institutions in the kebele. The existence of elderly fathers and mothers who regularly provide bits of advice is also an opportunity to work on peace-building. One of the respondents from CES reported that: The good opportunity for youth involvement in peacebuilding practice that I found is the society's good acceptance of the youths' peacebuilding engagement. Most people of South Sudan have access to mass media like Newspaper, Television, and radio. Access to these mass media can be taken as an opportunity for our peace-building practice in the country.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study was an exploration of the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. It involved engaging both women organizations and individuals during the field data collection process in Liberia. The study aimed to contribute to existing literature by increasing understanding of the relevance of individual women and women's organizational agencies and roles in the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes. This chapter brings together the concluding summary of chapters one to four of this study, the summary of research findings presented in chapters five to seven, recommendations for the preceding chapter seven on the challenges that confront women in their roles as peacebuilders, contributions of the study, and suggestions for further research.

The study was initiated because the role of women in peacebuilding had not been extensively researched in conflict and peace studies. However, with the emerging trends in the practice of peace operations, there has been a focus on identifying, incorporating, and understanding the role and contribution

of women to the narratives and outcomes of peacebuilding agendas. The study noted that the growing attentiveness to the women-peacebuilding debate is surrounded by ideological inquiries concerning their link, especially in influencing policy outcomes. The scholarly community has been overwhelmed with literature that either attempts to respond, explain, analyze, and rationalize the apparent role of women in peacebuilding or their exclusion thereof.

The study focuses on understanding the role of youth in post-conflict transition using the South Sudan experience as an example. It aims to investigate the impact of youth and youth organizations in empowering peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, and development processes in South Sudan. The research questions and objectives are based on the argument that the active involvement of youth in post-conflict revitalization processes is crucial for achieving peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development goals. Chapter one provides context to the youth-peacebuilding discourse, while the second chapter reviews relevant literature on youth in peacebuilding and international policy perspectives. The literature review emphasizes the need to recognize and include youth in decision-making structures to improve their conditions at all levels of society.

To address the lack of information found in the literature, the study utilized the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, Molyneux's organizational theory, and the rights-based approach to peacebuilding, as discussed in chapter three. By examining the relationship between these theories, the chapter established the importance of youth's roles in peacebuilding within society. It focused on understanding how peace is built in post-conflict societies and underlined the theoretical significance of the pillars that constitute post-conflict processes, emphasizing their vital role in achieving peace. Additionally, the theoretical chapter sought to identify the role of youth in post-conflict recovery agendas by suggesting that youth's organizations and youth interests, as proposed by Molyneux, are the driving force for their involvement, representation, and inclusivity in these processes. Furthermore, the chosen theoretical frameworks directed the research methodology and methods employed, as presented in chapter four. This chapter described the research approach and methods used for data collection, research sample techniques and population, sources and the research process, types and methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, research limitations, and the challenges encountered during the study. It was revealed that selected youth's organizations that were active in building peace during and after the South Sudan's civil wars, as well as key government, local, and international stakeholders in South Sudan post-conflict processes, were purposefully sampled as the focus of this study. As a result, the research study involved sixteen individual participants for semi-structured interviews and four focus group discussions, totaling forty-five participants, of which six were also part of the sixteen who participated in the individual interviews. In total, the study engaged fifty-five participants.

5.1 Summary of the research findings

The study aimed to contribute knowledge and insight to discussions on the interconnectedness between women and (post-) conflict peacebuilding architectures in Africa. It focused on the contributions and engagements of youth and youth organizations in South Sudan to better ground the discourse. The South Sudanese experience was used as an example to highlight the influence of youth in transforming the conflict landscape toward peace and the current leadership environment in the country. The study also assessed the evolving roles of youth in South Sudan's peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes. It emphasized the need to make peace processes more

inclusive by ensuring youth's equal participation after conflicts end. The study highlighted that before the 21st century, research on youth and peacebuilding was underdeveloped, but it has now received increasing attention. This led to significant scholarship on the relationship between youth and peacebuilding, focusing on three key points identified in the development of this dissertation.

In times of conflict, youth play various important roles such as being active participants, caregivers, and peace activists. However, due to the gendered nature of modern conflicts and societal sexism, youth are disproportionately victimized and marginalized (McKay, 2004).

The experiences of youth during conflicts offer a unique and transformative perspective on peace-building at both the structural and practical levels (Alaga, 2010: 2).

The achievement of sustainable peace is dependent on the active inclusion of youth, who represent more than half of societies. Therefore, both adults and youth must be involved in post-conflict development agendas (Ernest, 1997: 7; Schirch, 2004: 5).

The study also found that international, regional, and national policy instruments addressing youth issues, particularly youth's rights in times of conflict and peace, have been insightful for the youth and peace-building dialogue. Acknowledging these policy instruments, the study noted that they have expanded the space for youth's public participation and increased their involvement in decision-making and peace processes. Moreover, the study revealed that youth, organizing under civil society groups and non-governmental organizations, have successfully advocated for meaningful responses and approaches to enhance their roles in peace processes. Through advocacy and activism, youth have continued to establish themselves as agents and architects of peace and security, as well as socio-economic and political development. This progress in youth's agency and roles is partly due to the gradual but supportive engagement of their governments, as well as international, regional, and local institutions and organizations. Therefore, the study emphasized the urgency of recognizing youth's indispensable role in the success and sustainability of peace-building agendas.

The text discusses the importance of youth's role in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. It addresses the historical marginalization of youth in public decision-making and their evolving role in peacebuilding. The study emphasizes the need to recognize women as key contributors to peacebuilding efforts and highlights their diverse strategies for responding to conflict situations. It also stresses the significance of including youth in post-conflict processes for sustainable peace, reconstruction, and development. Furthermore, it underscores the instrumental role of South

Sudanese youth in paving the road to peace and their transformation from traditional roles to public influencers and decision-makers. The text concludes by emphasizing the necessity of youth's full and equal involvement in peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes for sustainability.

Youth and youth's organizational roles and contributions to peacebuilding processes are widespread and intertwined with their distinct strategic interests and operational strategies. Their leading role in peacebuilding, which is to contribute to the sustainable realization of peace before, during, and the event of post-conflict reconstruction and development at all levels of the society, is an everyday developing reality in the case of South Sudan.

Youth's involvement in peacebuilding continues to be informed by the need to realize their practical interests, that is, socially accepted basic needs, such as safe water and food, housing, health care, sanitation, education, remunerations, and employment (Molyneux 1985; UNESCO 2003). Of these, some may in effect be strategic interests depending on the setting and how individuals and groups define their interests, in that while housing and education for example, may be basic interests for one group, it is strategic for another. Generally, these interests fall under the banner of social and economic well-being in the context of post-conflict and are indispensable for daily human survival and peace itself.

Youth's role also builds on their strategic interests. This includes the need for equal opportunities and representation in development and decision-making processes (Reeves and Baden 2000); the need for transformation in the domains of power sharing and division of labor that allows youth equal political rights and social liberty, equal access, control and ownership of resources or credits (Molyneux 1985). The South Sudanese example includes the coordination of youth organizations vying for 30% (now 50%) equal quota representation of both adults and youth in public decision-making processes.

The mandate for civil society inclusion (youth organizations in this case) to be part and parcel of overseeing and implementing post-conflict recovery processes to consolidate peace and development that is long-term, speaks to the adoption of the rights-based approach and the acknowledgment that youth's rights, voices, and perspectives matter.

Engaging youth at all phases and levels of peacebuilding and reconstruction processes (security sector reform/transformation; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance

and participation), gives them a sense of ownership. It also empowers especially youth at the grassroots level to take charge in managing situations of conflict and post-conflict by transforming and reconciling their families and communities (Lederach 1997).

Youth's peacebuilding roles in the context of post-war South Sudan are internationally recognized and acknowledged.

Though youth's contributions to peacebuilding and post-conflict processes are informed by a common objective of "a South Sudan that is peaceful, just, secured, developed, recognizes and respects human rights, security and equality for all", their strategies for attaining this vary from one organization to the other and intersect severally. These strategies include advocacy campaigns, lobbying and networking, raising awareness, peaceful demonstrations, training, and capacity building, attending conferences and peace talks, sex strikes, prayer and fasting, entreating rebels to cede, community outreach and engagements, participation in TRC, involvement in electoral processes, conducting peer review of the presidential office, fostering education and peace club initiatives, etc.

Youths as peacemakers in South Sudan have gradually and continue to move from leveraging their status as non-combatants and as a voice somehow 'above' politics to entering the fray of electoral politics, while continuing to strive in their roles as peacemakers and peacebuilders.

The urgency and effectiveness of youth's role in peacebuilding and decision- making does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation from the broader support accorded by the government of South Sudan as well as international and internal local based organizations. The strategies employed by the government, local, and international organizations have so far been reasonably youth-responsive to the foundational security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation processes of South Sudan's post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development agenda.

Despite the impact and contribution of youth in the reconstruction and relative development of South Sudan, the challenges to their roles as peacebuilders remain quite enormous and include elements such as the marginal representation of youth in political leadership and decision-making processes; sexual and gender-based violence; patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices; disunity and class divide among youth organizations; and capacity building challenge.

The underrepresentation of youth in decision-making simply spells that, the fact that the country is

being led by a a-not-so-old president and youth hold seats in parliament and ministerial offices, does not necessarily result in or mean better opportunities for youth, substantive representation of youth's interests, or addressing all the challenges that confront them. So the youth gap in South Sudan is still wide.

Youth's role as peacebuilders is an everyday work in progress and there is still much to be done by the South Sudanese youth, so their resolve is unwavering.

5.2 Recommendations for youth's peacebuilding challenges

Noticeably, the challenges that confront youth organizations in their peacebuilding efforts are multifaceted, varying in terms of political, economic, socio-cultural, and organizational factors. Addressing these challenges would require strategies specific to the South Sudanese context. While there is no one solution fits all for these challenges, there are however some shared global measures that are essential for addressing them and advancing sustainable processes.

Looking at the challenge of under-representation, it is recommended that the few youths who sit in offices and positions of power need to strengthen their leadership roles by being exemplary in offering meaningful support and substantively representing youth by way of 'doing and not just saying'. In this manner, likely, they may also change the mindsets of the old who are very conservative. However, achieving this would require a lot of capacity building and affirmative action to be set up to secure more youth seats just for youth in the legislature. Also, there is a need for the South Sudanese permanent Constitution to provide a forum that authorizes and empowers the Legislature to ratify protocols that increase the citizenries' access to political and economic participation and advance the realization of social justice as a step towards promoting youth and youth's rights. While the Youth Bill for Equitable Representation and Participation in the House of Representatives was passed in 2016 following a series of consultations, the practical operationalizing of the bill remains a concern and the inquiry of whether it would safeguard the participation of more youth continue to loom.

Surely, having a general election where youth are selected to represent each geographic community or county in parliament would most certainly undercut the problem of underrepresentation. In addition, the ethos of governance needs to and should practically build on

encouraging political will for transparency and accountability. Advancing and adhering to these governance and developmental values would most certainly bridge the gap of marginal representation and in turn embolden participation. This is in the sense that it would necessitate for apt institutional authorities and resources in place to address issues of corruption and inequalities. Alternatively, involvement and participation in leadership should not be perceived as limited to the political and government arena alone, but also in the markets and communities. Therefore, South Sudanese youth and the society at large need to be cognizant of this and monopolize the options to participate proactively and effectively in these areas. More so, encouraging an approach where youth participate by their capacity and capability, rather than viewing leadership only in the formal, creates a level of complementarity in the process of advancing women's meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making.

Transforming conflicts and creating environments of positive change quintessentially requires that post-conflict processes factor in imminent challenges and strategies for moving forward. Literature is replete with the fact that SGBV remains one of the major challenges in most conflict societies and addressing it seems arduous. In the context of post-conflict South Sudan, the UN and government already have a joint program on SGBV, where the concentration has been mostly on building courts, training judges, and ensuring there are protection sections for youth, girls, and children in most of the police depots. Likewise, there have been ample awareness and sensitization on SGBV, revolving particularly around issues of rape. With the rape law in place, there is, therefore, the need to increase access to justice, seeing as a lot of youth are still violated and abused. The justice system must play a larger role in enhancing the youth's role in peacebuilding processes by passing out punishments to violators, if not, there could be a revolution only by the youth.

Also, cognizance must be taken of the fact that some communities have watchdog systems that empower their people to develop their strategies to prevent some of the community challenges and ensure there is zero tolerance for rape and sexual violence in the communities. Therefore, the recommendation for the implementation of social protection policies and a bottom-bottom approach where such systems can be adopted by the government, external and even some internally well-grounded organizations working with youth grassroots groups and communities, to address the SGBV challenges by building more monitoring capacity. Mindful of the cultural barriers that cloud the reporting of such violence, the inclusion of all voices like the ministers, Council of State members, chiefs,

teachers, especially the men and boys on the matter will go a long way to underline its severity and the importance to curb such acts and sanction perpetrators. For example, when HIV awareness started in Uganda, every principal and teacher of secondary schools spoke about it at least twice every week, chiefs, sub-chiefs, and district officials spoke about it every week, and awareness was raised as such. Consequently, if the same policy is adopted where everybody is engaged in to fight against GSBV in South Sudan, then the people and communities will own these strategies and not discard them as something coming from the government and external bodies only.

Patriarchy is quite a complex challenge to the youth's peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. Addressing patriarchy and the gender inequalities that come with it mainly entails training and nurturing men to be practical and proactive in addressing patriarchy by challenging themselves and their fellow men on their sexist ideologies and practices Therefore, providing educational opportunities and building the capacities of marginalized groups or people subjugated to patriarchal culture and practices is a given way forward from this challenge. To build such capacities, there is a need for skills training and the meaningful involvement of youth organizations to work with communities where patriarchy remains a dominant practice and to monitor progress and outcomes. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the lack of/or inadequacy of financial resources is a challenge for most youth organizations, especially those at the rural grassroots levels. Moving above this challenge, there is a need for these organizations to be supported in proposal writing skills to present projects and initiatives that would enable them to seek and source funds for their activities from donors and the government. Also, there is a need for them to acquire skills in financial capacity training, taking into account that learning these skills would likely lead to their ability to develop their networks of support.

Generally and as presented in this study, there is no gainsaying how important and impactful youth organizations have been in building the South Sudan that there is today. However, in the supposed absence of a rally to unite in pursuit of a common goal, the disunity and class divide among them have become a challenge that affects their working together and collaborating as youth and youth organizations. The study found that there is no strategic framework on how youth could unite and work together presently. However, the agenda UMIL-OGA is undertaking and implementing in South Sudan as discussed, is in several ways efforts to forge the unity of youth around issues, to enable them to start thinking more strategically and broadly in tackling the challenges youth are

facing in South Sudan. For example, looking at the issue of domestic violence and rape, youth organizations working on these issues can conduct research that can be presented to and used by the youth legislative caucus for advocating and driving policies to address such challenges in the legislature. Such research can also be used by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and other ministries, and for press conferences to lay the facts on the table. The strategy here is for youth not to work as if they are competing, but to see how they can complement each other in terms of the peacebuilding work they accomplish as youth. Besides, South Sudanese youth, whether urban or rural, have a key role to play in ensuring the peace and development of South Sudan in one way or another. So far, youth have taken steps in working on the unity of youth in South Sudan, evidence being the presence and participation of the Youth of South Sudan Task Force in the Constitutional review process to tackle issues of youth's interests.

In addition, this study ascertained that there is a need for a culture of inclusivity among youth organizations, as well as across-the-board coordination of activities and equal space for especially grassroots youth organizations to express their ideas on issues and developments in South Sudan. It also articulates Mother Mary Brownell's recommendation that South Sudanese youth and youth organizations at all levels of society *"need to observe and practice the basic principles of South Sudan's distinctive religions, which cautions South Sundaese to love, leading to unity and to be more empathetic and be each other's keeper."* Overall, the study recommends that "the Unity of South Sudanese youth" can be developed as a "Procreative Concept" out there to see and envisage how the unity of youth can be driven into the work and processes they participate in and implement.

5.3 Contribution of the study

Given the growing attentiveness to the youth and peacebuilding discourse, numerous normative, discursive, and critical analyses have been undertaken of the participation and contributions of youth to conflict, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Therefore, this study made contributions to the emergent literature on this discourse, as well as to the fields of conflict transformation and peace, youth, and development studies. A key contribution of the research ***"Building Peace in Post-Conflict Societies: An Exploration of the Role of Youth in South Sudan's Peacebuilding Architecture"*** is that it is one of the first studies to have examined comprehensively the positions, agencies in the

pursuit of defined goals, and strategies of youth and youth organizations in peacebuilding by critically analyzing them in the framework of each of the pillars constituting the process of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development. Not only did the study delve into exploring how youth fit into the equation of South Sudan's post-conflict recovery agenda, but also how their practical and strategic interests and human and civil rights to equal participation and representation are both meaningfully and substantively integrated into the initiation and implementation of the peacebuilding processes at all levels of society.

The study also contributed by explaining how the South Sudanese youth have evolved from passive participants to active contributors in political, economic, social, and security matters in the country. It analyzed the various ways in which South Sudanese youth impact peacebuilding and decision-making processes, mobilize support, and carry out peacebuilding activities. The study also highlighted the challenge of unequal youth representation in politics and peacebuilding processes. It suggested that the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development offers an opportunity to redefine gender roles, empower youth to take up leadership positions, and ensure equal and inclusive participation. However, it emphasized that the practical implementation of such initiatives is crucial for the government and institutions to address the diverse needs of youth effectively.

In the area of addressing the challenges to youth's peacebuilding roles, the study noted that the strategies in place are bottom-up mechanisms, which though has led to an increased number of cases being reported as compared to before, has not caused the prevention of SGBV acts. Moving forward, the study contributed to this effect by recommending the bottom-bottom approach. This approach necessitates that actors and stakeholders, including youth organizations, should go back into the communities to ask the leaders and people about what they as a people can and are doing in the phase of the increasing rape cases; what accountability mechanisms they have emplaced as communities; and what are the key messages upon which they drive and encourage the building and sustainability of their communities. Engaging communities through such inquiries would normally demand participation, responses, and solutions that emanate from the people themselves, seeing as they know about what is happening and are in a better position to develop and own the strategies for resolution. Formulating an operational framework that builds this bottom-bottom strategy and is complemented by the bottom-up approach, would most likely limit the instances of SGBV

against girls and in communities.

Another key contribution of the study was the methodological use of narrative analysis, which was used to present accounts of the South Sudanese experience through the eyes of the participants. By using the narrative method, the study was able to connect the trajectories of youth's contributions and bearing in South Sudan's peacebuilding processes during and in the aftermath of the country's decades of civil war. The approach also served as an essential point of departure for assessing extant and prolific literature on the youth and peacebuilding intrinsic links in South Sudan, through which the study was able to establish that there was sparse narrative in the areas where the study identified gaps in literature. Addressing the gaps, the study made several contributions to knowledge. First, it put into perspective the nexus between youth- and peacebuilding by departing from the historical to contemporary perspectives and engendered understanding that youth's (sub)conscious participation in peace and decision-making processes is not so new a phenomenon and has been long-established on varied responsibilities and approaches. Second, it ventured to deter from the tendency of generalization by espousing post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development framework and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory. Exploring the applicability of the theories, the study gathered that as diverse and strategic as the processes of post-conflict are, so too are the youth's roles, experiences, and interests on which their strategic organizational goals for peace are founded.

Overall, the study was quite interdisciplinary and used structurally innovative approaches to convey the experiences of youth in peacebuilding by locating the broader study in terms of how peacebuilding and youth's organizing are understood from both deeper critical literary, theoretical, and analytical perspectives. It also embodied societal efforts to appraise the evolving thoughts that if youth are accorded more opportunities in governance, South Sudan and the African continent could achieve unprecedented levels of development taking into consideration the roles youth play in their everyday actions of rebuilding states and nations in the context of post-conflict societies.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

The research findings and areas to which the study contributed drew attention to the need for future research. For this reason, further research explores mainly the role of grassroots (rural) youth organizations in South Sudan and if not other post-conflict societies in Africa in influencing and

implementing outcomes of post-conflict peacebuilding and development processes. A study like this is necessary because when examined together with youth organizations at the national (urban) levels, the voices of the latter in terms of their activities and visible contributions to peacebuilding are often more dominant than those of the former who feel excluded and marginalized. Therefore, conducting such a study and sharing the findings would most likely give the youth grassroots organizations a sense of belonging.

Moreover, most studies examining the role or link between youth organizations and peacebuilding recurrently employ or recommend the bottom-up approach. Blending the bottom-up approach with the bottom-bottom approach which this study earlier recommended as relevant to peacebuilding, would most definitely be an interesting area of research to consider. Such research can explore the significance of the bottom-bottom approach to make empirical recommendations. Speaking of approaches, it would be quite relevant to also engage in a study that looks at existing theories like neo-functionalism and constructivism which are linked to current peacebuilding processes in the region that are supported by the United Nations, and discuss them about the African Union peace and security architecture.

Researching the South Sudanese experience, the study also mentioned the role of youth organizations in peacebuilding in countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Sierra Leone. This spells out the need for further research on comparative case studies that could be focused on a sub-region. Research along this line might use both the qualitative and quantitative research methodology (interviews and surveys) to explore the subject and compare levels of representation, participation, and success in influencing outcomes of processes. Such a study would shed more light on the various ways youth contribute to peacebuilding and how distinct their role, interests, and organizing strategies are. Also, literature in the area of post-conflict peacebuilding would benefit enormously from a study

that capitalizes on making a comparison of other African peacebuilding processes in the continent to find out how youth organizations in other regions of Africa reconcile themselves with the political and socio-economic realities in their efforts and quest to end conflicts and build peace.

The study also recommends research that would aim at critically analyzing how peace is built in post-conflict societies and the role of youth therein as an indispensable component for attaining sustainable processes should center on youth organizations that emerged after the official end of the South Sudan conflict, which is post-2005. In this study, the discussions and analyses focused on the agency, strategies, and activities that drove youth and youth organizations' pursuit of peace during and in the aftermath of conflict in South Sudan and how they continue to influence distinctive outcomes of the peacebuilding process. Therefore, undertaking a study that provides a nuanced demonstration of how the roles of youth have changed over time and which critically examines how individual youth organizations as key actors in post-conflict peacebuilding are mediated in the central state in contemporary, would constitute a good contribution to knowledge and literature in the field. Also, conducting a study that focuses particularly on youth organizations in peacebuilding that emerged in the post-conflict could serve as an impetus for identifying what drives them. Such a study should also explore new strategies to address the many challenges youth face in their roles as peacebuilders or further build on those already proposed by this study. It would also be interesting to study the role of youth in peacebuilding as a form of agency located in the wider African peace and security architecture, as this would strengthen and expand the current peacebuilding framework in place.

This study also thought it was interesting that youth as peacemakers in South Sudan moved from leveraging their status as non-combatants and as a voice somehow "above" politics to entering the fray of electoral politics and continuing to be effective peacebuilders. The gender politics of having a female Speaker of the National Assembly in South Sudan and its implication for gender (women) responsive policies and positions in decision-making offices, was discussed.

And, would it be any different if it is a democratically elected male at the echelon of decision-making, as is currently the case in South Sudan, or should the focal point shift from youth commonalities to the competency of the leader and representatives in positions of decision-making power? A research along this line, aimed at addressing these questions would be a relevant contribution to the youth and peacebuilding discourse.

If there is peace in South Sudan today, we the youth of South Sudan can tap our chests and boldly say, we played a major role"

(Mother Mary Brownell, July 2015).

For a narrative of South Sudan youth's experiences of conflict to be documented, it must be told in two parts: youth as victims of the civil wars, that is, the traditional stories of rape, abuse, violation, and disempowerment of youth; and the story of youth's victory over the display of patriarchy and political violence.

(Leymah Gbowee 2011).

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

This survey explores youth's role in South Sudan's peace-building architecture. Your valuable insights will contribute to a better understanding of this context. Please note that all your responses will be confidential and used only for research purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to skip any question or withdraw from the survey at any time. Your cooperation in providing accurate and thoughtful responses is kindly requested. Your input will be instrumental in gaining comprehensive insights into the above-mentioned context. Thank you for your participation and valuable contribution.

Background Information

1. Gender   Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Level of Education

Tertiary   ☐

Secondary   ☐

Primary   ☐

3. Area of Residence

Juba   ☐   Yambio ☐

Tombura   ☐   Ezo ☐

Objective 1: To Examine the Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peace building Process

Give your responses to the reaction of the following statements on an ordinal scale ranging from: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (A)

S/N	Opportunities for Youth Engagement in the Peace building Process	SD	D	U	A	SA
Q1	Youth can come up with new ideas to address conflicts					
Q2	You can play a vital role in the building process					
Q3	Youth can transfer their war capacities to peace promotion					
Q4	Youth are important actors in the peace-building process					
Q5	Youth are creative, open-minded and dynamic in peace-building					

Objective 2: **To Examine the Challenges of Youth Involvement in Peace Building Process**

Give your responses to the reaction of the following statements on an ordinal scale ranging from: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (A)

S/N	Challenges of Youth Involvement in Peace Building Process	SD	D	U	A	SA
Q1	Unemployment impedes young people from actively participating in peace building efforts.					
Q2	Inferiority feelings can present a challenge to the involvement of youth in peace building.					
Q3	Many young people who consume excessive alcohol lack mechanisms for building peace.					
Q4	The current youth communication platform is insufficient for addressing peace building challenges.					
Q5	Inadequate awareness creates challenges for peace building.					

Objective 3: **To examine how empowered as a result of their Engagement in Peace building Process**

Give your responses to the reaction of the following statements on an ordinal scale ranging from: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (A)

S/N		SD	D	U	A	SA
Q1	Youth have access to education which empowers them to practice the building process					
Q2	Youth are empowered to gain self-esteem and embrace the building process					
Q3	There are job opportunities that promote youth peace-building involvement					
Q4	There are unities of youth that promote peace-building involvement					