



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

# Implementing a More Inclusive Peace Agreement in South Sudan

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Kelly Case

South Sudan has been in violent conflict for two years the brutality of which shocked the world. What started as a conflict between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and those supporting former Vice President Riek Machar quickly devolved in a tribal war. South Sudan's two largest tribes, the Nuer and Dinka, began systematically targeting and killing each other, which resulted in entire communities being leveled and displaced and tens of thousands killed. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—an eight-country regional trade bloc—made several failed attempts to mediate between the warring parties. After tense negotiations and heightened international pressure, the warring parties finally signed a comprehensive peace agreement in August 2015. While the agreement was welcomed by many in South Sudan, a common criticism of the process was that while civil society and other parties were present at the negotiations, the mediators and parties did not prioritize meaningful civil society representation, and the implementation agreement runs the risk of following a similar path.

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As the focus turns toward implementation, inclusion must be prioritized if the agreement is to ultimately be successful. Women’s full and meaningful engagement in the upcoming implementation and transition period is an investment in bringing sustainable peace to South Sudan. Research demonstrates time and again that broad, meaningful, and effective inclusion of women increases the durability of peace accords. This is critical not only during peace talks, but in a post-conflict context when a country is rebuilding. A cross-national analysis of post-conflict contexts since 1945 with a high risk of descending back into conflict found that women enjoyed greater political participation, the prospect for a sustainable peace was stronger because the engagement of the community in rebuilding their country increased.<sup>1</sup> Women broaden social participation – they deepen the engagement of the community allowing them to feel a sense of ownership in the process. Yet, little attention or support goes toward ensuring inclusion in what can be the most critical aspect of the peace process: implementation.

The meaningful inclusion of civil society, particularly women, lends legitimacy to the process, increasing public buy-in. Warring parties are often seen by the population as having blood on their hands, especially when they are perceived as having perpetuated violence for political gain. If implementation of the peace agreement in South Sudan is built upon an inclusive and transparent framework, however, there is an opportunity to rebuild trust at the local and national levels, potentially transforming the social fabric of the country.

Whatever structure and accompanying bodies are included in the implementation mechanism, they must reflect the specific context and character of South Sudan while remaining flexible enough to evolve as the process moves forward. Most importantly, these structures must provide communities with a space to make their voices heard and ensure that the end results reflect their needs, priorities, and proposed solutions.

The recommendations in this brief suggest ways to ensure that civil society, particularly women, are effectively consulted and involved in the implementation process. The implementation arrangements as laid out in the agreement offer many opportunities for women to meaningfully engage, but these opportunities must be formalized. The first section proposes general recommendations for the overall agreement and all actors involved, centered on three areas: composition of the implementation bodies, creating effective feedback loops and information sharing, and providing gender expertise throughout the process. The subsequent sections provide analysis and specific recommendations for each chapter of the agreement.

These recommendations should inform further discussions as there is no substitute for consulting diverse South Sudanese communities directly, meaningfully, and consistently throughout the implementation of the agreement.

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## Recommendations

### Composition of Implementation Bodies:

- 1. No less than 30% of women should be included throughout the implementing bodies, including security-heavy mechanisms.** In South Sudan, women have continuously called<sup>2</sup> for parties to address the underlying drivers of conflict that have plagued the country. Their direct representation in official monitoring and implementation bodies would allow delegates to move beyond the parties' direct interests, and instead set a more responsive agenda allowing for provisions that are informed by the needs of the people. By including a critical mass (a minimum of 30 percent), women have a greater likelihood of creating space for these broader interests including those that address the specific priorities of women and girls. Including a mandate for women's participation in peace agreement implementation bodies is also consistent with South Sudan's existing 25 percent quota for key bodies such as the executive and legislative branches.
- 2. Methods for the inclusion of civil society should be explicitly stated in implementation committees' terms of reference.** The peace agreement in South Sudan does include select details around the composition of several committees responsible for implementing, overseeing, and monitoring the agreement. However, parties should ensure the terms of reference for each of those bodies make specific reference to the structures and modalities for civil society participation, particularly women, and prioritize their contributions. Structures could include official or unofficial civil society representatives in the committee, consistent engagement with civil society groups via community consultations, or the creation of technical advisory teams to support the implementation body.
- 3. The selection of civil society delegates throughout implementation bodies should be fair and transparent and gender parity prioritized within groups consulted.** Too often in South Sudan, parties appoint civil society representatives who are strongly aligned with partisan agendas and interests. In order to reap the benefits of inclusion, officials should select delegates who will be perceived as impartial and legitimate interlocutors by the country's diverse communities. Ideally, representatives would be chosen by the South Sudanese people through a transparent selection process, with clear selection criteria. A participatory process of this sort requires a strategic communications plan to ensure that those interested know when and how to participate. Careful attention must be paid to identifying representatives who are: committed to ending the conflict; seen as neutral in their communities; representative of the diversity of society (including tribal affiliation, gender, youth, ethnic and political minorities, etc.); and knowledgeable about technical areas that add value to the process.

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## Information and Feedback Channels:

- 4. A feedback loop should be established between the official implementation process and communities.** Whether civil society representatives have formal roles in implementing bodies or act in an advisory capacity, they are a crucial communication channel between implementation actors and their constituents. Creating a formal feedback loop allows parties to transmit their agenda and positions to the general population, and for communities to raise their needs and perspectives to the official process. Official bodies should regularly share information on the status of implementation of the agreement with relevant civil society organizations. The lack of access to information about the substance and status of the implementation process is a primary barrier to women's engagement. The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) should mandate development of a strategic communications plan for the regular sharing of information between senior advisors and/or gender advisors and civil society, including women's groups. Existing networks and communication channels should be used to disseminate information, especially to regions outside of the capital and large cities. For example, information could be disseminated via the gender focal points for the gender ministry as well as other broad-reaching civil society initiatives. The JMEC should also mandate that the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU) must broadcast information through radio, public meetings, and other relevant media to ensure that updates reach broader communities.
- 5. The regional and international community should dedicate funding to facilitate the convening of women's organizations.** Women living in the communities will play an essential role in determining the success or failure of the implementation. Women's networks arose immediately after the conflict erupted and have been working for peace since, but their sustained engagement requires dedicated funding from the donor community. Committed funding could support regular convenings to provide space for women's organizations to receive updated information on the implementation, learn from advisors and technical experts, and plan strategies for advocacy to ensure effective inclusion and input into the implementation process.

## Enhance Gender Expertise Across Implementation Actors:

- 6. A technical advisory committee should be established to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout the implementation of the agreement.** Technical advisory bodies can deliver much-needed expertise to those involved in implementation, as well as provide confidence building measures between the parties by raising issues and finding solutions of common interest between the parties—such as food security. The committee should be comprised of South Sudanese women and civil society representatives, with at least 50 percent of the representing organizations focused on gender or social inclusion. For the committee to be effective and provide targeted recommendations, it should have authority, funding, and members with practical expertise. It must have clear, explicit mandates for participation within official meetings, review of technical documents and outcomes, and open channels of communication with the requisite implementation bodies.

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**7. All representatives and staff supporting the implementation of the agreement should receive training on women, peace, and security and gender-integration in policies.** Part of the reason inclusion failed in the talks may have been due to the inability of the parties to truly understand how women’s participation can make the process more effective overall. The need for training on women, peace, and security is great even among women who participated in the negotiations, as many were selected not for their gendered expertise but for tribal or party affiliation. All representatives and staff involved in the process—male and female alike—should be supported with technical capacity building around gender integration strategies and best practices in women, peace, and security policies. This can be done through mandatory training sessions on gendered policy analysis, or through optional skills building sessions on how specific topic areas related to implementation impact women, men, boys, and girls differently. This level of gendered training would not be unique to South Sudan: the Philippines’ Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process is constructing six training centers to facilitate women’s inclusion throughout implementation of the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement.<sup>3</sup> The aim of these centers is to “provide capacity building on gender and development but also to train women to be economically empowered.”<sup>4</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, "Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 4 (July 2009): 505-523.
- 2 In advance of the last round of Intergovernmental Authority on Development-led talks, the South Sudan Taskforce on the Engagement of Women and other women leaders convened in Nairobi from June 9-11, 2015. Their goals were to identify the root causes of the conflict and determine concrete steps toward a more inclusive and effective peace process that prioritizes, above all else, the needs and interests of the people of South Sudan.  
[www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SS-Taskforce-Statement-June-2015\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SS-Taskforce-Statement-June-2015_FINAL.pdf)
- 3 IPI Report – p.25
- 4 "ARMM to Construct Women Peace, Training Centers," Government of the Philippines, (December 22, 2014).  
[reliefweb.int/report/philippines/armm-construct-women-peace-training-centers](http://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/armm-construct-women-peace-training-centers).

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## About Inclusive Security

Inclusive Security is transforming decision making about war and peace. We're convinced that a more secure world is possible if policymakers, security sectors, and conflict-affected populations work together. Women's meaningful participation, in particular, can make the difference between failure and success. Since 1999, Inclusive Security has equipped decision makers with knowledge and tools that strengthen their ability to develop inclusive policies and approaches. We have also bolstered the skills and influence of women leaders around the world. Together with these allies, we're making inclusion the rule, not the exception.



**INCLUSIVE  
SECURITY**

Kelly Case

[kelly\\_case@inclusivesecurity.org](mailto:kelly_case@inclusivesecurity.org)

1615 M Street NW, Suite 850, Washington, DC 20036

202.403.2000 | [@InclusvSecurity](#)

[inclusivesecurity.org](http://inclusivesecurity.org)

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