

## Case study

# Southern Sudan at odds with itself: addressing conflict in Southern Sudan

Sudan's civil war, which caused almost two million deaths and was fought between the north and the south, ended with a peace agreement in 2005. However tensions within the south have remained high and violent attacks on civilians in Southern Sudan have increased.

### Client request

Pact Sudan works closely with the Government of Southern Sudan and local peace actors to support peace building and community security. As part of its DFID-funded South Sudan Peace Fund project, Pact wanted to improve understanding around existing and potential causes and triggers of conflict in Southern Sudan in the short- and mid-term, and how to best address them in preparation for the 2012 referendum on its possible secession.

### Approach and methodology

Professor Tim Allen and Mareike Schomerus of LSE's Department of International Development have worked in Sudan since the early 1980s in such areas as the causes of violent conflict, transitional justice and community healing. They recommended an initial visit to Southern Sudan to recruit local partners and hold initial meetings with the client and other stakeholders, and put together a team of researchers from LSE, the Southern Sudan Peace Commission and the Centre for Peace and Development Studies of Sudan's Juba University.

Following a desk-based literature review, interviews with donors and organisations, they brought the UK and Sudanese researchers together for a five-day training session.

The team then spent six weeks in three Southern Sudanese states, using a qualitative methodology to elicit community perceptions and draw out the subtleties of local conflict dynamics. The researchers conducted nearly 300 interviews with elders, donors, local and international NGOs and even the emerging youth gangs. They ran focus group discussions, carried out ranking exercises using pebbles to cast votes for different answers, organised university discussion seminars and administered questionnaires. In several local schools, the researchers invited young students to map their own conflict experience.



### Contact us to find out more:

LSE Enterprise Limited  
London School of Economics  
and Political Science  
Eighth Floor, Tower Three  
Houghton Street  
London  
WC2A 2AZ

Email:  
[lseenterpriseconsulting@lse.ac.uk](mailto:lseenterpriseconsulting@lse.ac.uk)  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7955 7128  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 7980  
Website: [lse.ac.uk/consultancy](http://lse.ac.uk/consultancy)

'Working with school children can be very helpful and insightful,' says Professor Allen. 'The team got them to write essays on different topics, and used drawing competitions to find out when they'd felt most safe and most at threat. The local patterns to this were very different to the timings suggested by formal peace agreements.'

Finally, the team compiled and analysed their data before presenting it to the client and producing a final report. They found that tensions between state-building and conflict management, modernisation and traditionalisation have led to a fragmented approach to governance. Decentralisation policies have led to the creation of ethnic fiefdoms, rather than to accountable localised administration. Due to the simplistic understanding of these complex conflicts as tribal, many solutions have focused on involving tribal leaders, who might inadvertently emphasise divisions, rather than bridge them.

'Reasons for local violent conflict tend to be many-fold, says Mareike, 'but it is often very hard to get to the bottom of why violence breaks out. What struck me most about our findings was how intricately connected very local issues are with broader political developments within southern Sudan, but also with the various development approaches by the international community.'

The report emphasises that peace needs to be made concrete through economic and infrastructural development; that specific local issues must be thoroughly analysed and that there is an acute need for longer term funding and planning up to – and beyond – the referendum on independence.

## Benefits

The experienced team of researchers brought considerable local knowledge to the task as well as the expertise of the Department of Development. They used diverse approaches to cover the historical, political, structural and geographical areas of research, collecting quantitative data on levels of conflict, investigating perceptions and exploring particular incidents affecting the peace process.

They brought a much needed rural focus to the research: 'Lots of work has been done looking at the peace process from the perspectives of international diplomacy, donors and towns,' says Professor Allen. 'But you get a very different perspective from the more remote areas.'

Meanwhile there were benefits for the region too: long lasting partnerships were created and research capacity in Sudan was built with training for the Sudanese students who worked alongside the LSE researchers. Materials such as the laptops used in the field were donated to Juba University.

The results of the study have been used to inform the decisions of peace actors such as the Government of Southern Sudan, donors, the UN and NGOs on peace building, community security and conflict prevention.



'I learned that in order to be able to contribute constructively to a more peaceful environment, it is necessary for the international community to be very clear about its conceptual approach. This broader, unified vision is obviously very difficult to achieve, with so many actors involved, but lack of it does have an effect on how peaceful the environment is in which southern Sudanese citizens live.'

*Mareike Schomerus*

