

Impacts of Development Aid to South Sudan 2008 – 2021

A Systematic Review of Evaluation Reports

## Part III

# A Synthesis of 58 Program and Project Evaluations

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# Humanitarian Interventions

## The Evidence Base

### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

Julius, M. & Araku I.P. 2018. CARE. *End of project evaluation report: Enhancing the food security and livelihoods coping mechanisms for conflict affected communities in Imatong State*. Available at: <https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/SDC-II-END-OF-PROJECT-EVALUATION-REPORT-AUGUST-2018.pdf>

Sulaiman, M. 2010. *Incentive and crowding out effects of food assistance: Evidence from randomised evaluation of food-for-training project in Southern Sudan*. EOPP/ 2010/19. Suntory Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/eopp/eopp19.pdf>

### Good Enough Evaluations

Bell, L. 2019. *SSJR 2018: Final Evaluation*.

Frankenberger, T., Miller, K. & Taban, T.C. 2020. *Decentralized evaluation of UNHCR's livelihoods program in South Sudan (2016–2018): Evaluation report December 2019*. TANGO International. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5e99cc3d7.pdf>

Nguka, G., Ochola, Q., & Hussein, F. 2018. *End of program evaluation report for Disaster Emergency Committee WV Relief Program in South Sudan - DEC Phase I and II*. Available at: [https://www.worldvision.org.uk/media/j4mpg0eh/world\\_vision\\_final\\_evaluation\\_report\\_-\\_dec\\_east\\_africa\\_response\\_2018.pdf](https://www.worldvision.org.uk/media/j4mpg0eh/world_vision_final_evaluation_report_-_dec_east_africa_response_2018.pdf)

O'Hagan, P. 2011. *An independent impact evaluation of UNHCR's Community Based Reintegration Program in Southern Sudan*. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/4e41237a9/independent-impact-evaluation-unhcrs-community-based-reintegration-programme.html>

UNIDO Evaluation Group. 2014. *Independent evaluation South Sudan: Integration and progress through protection and empowerment of displaced groups in South Sudan*. UNIDO Project Number: TF/SUD/12/001. Available at: [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-03/PRO-South\\_Sudan\\_TFSUD12001-Integr-progr-displ-groups\\_Final\\_Eval\\_Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-03/PRO-South_Sudan_TFSUD12001-Integr-progr-displ-groups_Final_Eval_Report_0.pdf)

Humanitarian interventions include those targeted at refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), their host communities, and local populations or groups otherwise afflicted by conflict. All seven of the evaluation reports discussed in this section deal with

interventions that focus on some combination of food security and livelihoods (FSL); water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); social protection; and nutrition. Additional focus areas include: cash transfers; food assistance for training; education; gender relations; and, in those interventions that deal specifically with refugees, returnees, and IDPs, community-based reintegration, the development of infrastructure, and promotion of self-reliance.

Some of the interventions were carried out and/or funded by multiple partners and donors. BRAC – Southern Sudan’s pilot program, *Food-for-Training and Income Generation* (FFTIG) in Juba (Sulaiman 2010), was conducted in collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP) and the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), a global partnership of more than 30 development organizations. The South Sudan Joint Response (SSJR) program of 2018 was the fourth in a series by the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), a coalition of 16 Dutch NGOs (Bell 2019). The program was led by Save the Children and involved eight other international partners: CARE Nederland; Cordaid; Dorcas; ICCO & Kerk in Actie; Red een Kind (Help a Child); PLAN Nederland; Tearfund NL; and WarChild Holland. In most locations the program was delivered in part by a local partner or national NGO: ACROSS, CEDS, FLDA, Global Aim, and WDG. Additionally, the program worked with three other NNGOs, ACDF, ECS-DART, and WOCO, for capacity strengthening. World Vision’s *Relief Program* (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018) was funded through the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), an umbrella group of British charities, with supplies for the Out-patient Therapeutic Program (OTP) and Targeted Supplementary Feeding Program (TSFP) provided by UNICEF and WFP respectively.

UNHCR’s extensive 2005–2010 *Community Based Reintegration Program in Southern Sudan* (O’Hagan 2011) was implemented with the support of several partners. Its *Livelihoods Program in South Sudan* (2016–2018) (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020) also involved a number of partners. In neither case were the partners named in the evaluation reports.

Two of the humanitarian relief programs evaluated in this section (O’Hagan 2011 and Sulaiman 2010) took place in *Southern Sudan*, the southern region of the former united country of Sudan, following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 but prior to the 2011 Referendum and independence of the new country of South Sudan. The remaining five studies took place after 2011, in South Sudan. Some states had their names or boundaries changed, others only existed between 2015 and 2020, whereafter they were amalgamated to form larger states.

Pre-independence, programs took place mainly in the east and south of Southern Sudan, with three of the evaluated programs operating in Central Equatoria – in Juba city and county (Sulaiman 2010; O’Hagan 2011; UNIDO 2014), and one also in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, and Upper Nile states (O’Hagan 2011). Post-2011 interventions took place in six states:

- In Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, at Aweil East and Aweil North (Bell 2019)
- In Western Bahr el Ghazal state, at Wau and Jur River (Bell 2019) and Yambio (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020)
- In Central Equatoria state at Juba (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018); Lainya (Bell 2019); and Juba and Yei (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020)
- In the former Imatong State, in Torit and Pageri counties, now part of Eastern Equatoria (Julius and Araku 2018); in Torit (Bell 2019)

- In Unity state at Koch (Bell 2019) and Jamjang in the Ajuong Thok, Yida, and Pamir refugee camps (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020)
- In Upper Nile state at Malakal and Fashoda (Bell 2019); in Greater Maban, in the Doro, Yusuf Batil, Kaya, and Gendrassa camps (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020); and at Kor Adar, Malakal and Melut (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

Food security and livelihoods (FSL), water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and social protection were key components of most of the programs reviewed, whether they focused on the local population or refugees, returnees, and IDPs.

World Vision's program in 2017–2018 (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018) received funding from the Disasters Emergency Committee, and supplies for the Outpatient Therapeutic Program (for MAM) and Targeted Supplementary Feeding program were provided by UNICEF and WFP respectively. The program focused on WASH activities in Juba, and in Kor Adar, Malakal, and Melut in Upper Nile state. It included the provision of adequate fresh clean water for the population of Kor Adar. A protection component in Juba focused on child protection and the training of Child Protection Committees and local leaders in GBV prevention and response. A major nutrition component was included in Juba. Desired outcomes of the latter included a reduction in cases of acute malnutrition among children under five and pregnant and lactating women, and the management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) through an Outpatient Therapeutic Program (for MAM) and a Targeted Supplementary Feeding program (for SAM). Activities were based around Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) and included the establishment of two mobile outreach facilities to diagnose and treat MAM and SAM; training of Community Nutrition Volunteers (CNV) on case identification in the community through middle upper arm circumference (MUAC) and oedema assessment; community and facility-based screenings for acute malnutrition; training of health workers; and establishment of Mother Support Groups.

The SSJR intervention of 2018 (Bell 2019) had a budget of € 6.68 million for 12 months. It combined multi-purpose cash transfers with FSL, WASH, protection, and nutrition. Women, girls, boys, and disabled persons were specifically prioritized, and among these groups, single mothers, female-headed households, child-headed households, households with one or more disabled persons, and separated children. The primary focus was on FSL and protection mainstreaming and to promote access to basic services for the displaced and other vulnerable people. The main FSL activities involved transfer of cash, e.g., for the purchase of small livestock or inputs such as seed, tools, or fishing kits. In some locations, SSJR supported the establishment of Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and business training. In the nutrition component, the main focus areas were the management of acute malnutrition in the most vulnerable, including infants and children, pregnant and lactating women, and older people, and improved access to maternal, infant, and young child nutrition programs to prevent under-nutrition.

CARE's 2017–2018 FSL program in Imatong state (Julius & Araku 2018), funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, focused on income generation and community

resilience. The project was intended to improve food security and strengthen the resilience and coping mechanisms of conflict-affected communities through sustainable livelihoods and income generation opportunities by means of innovative crop production and diversification, food vending, restaurant services, or trade. Developing community structures and enhancing capacity were also intended to contribute to sustainable livelihoods through peacebuilding, environmental protection, and the improvement of gender relations at household level and prevention of GBV.

The 2008–2009 pilot intervention by BRAC – Southern Sudan, which provided food-for-training in support of income generation (Sulaiman 2010), received funding from the UK's then Department for International Development. The intervention focused specifically on female-led households. The basic premise of the program was that whilst food transfer by itself met immediate needs, it failed to generate entrepreneurship and risked crowding out of private transfers, reduced the incentive to work, and risked promoting long-term dependency. By combining food transfers with skills development and financial services components, it was considered that households could develop a regular source of income. The building of an asset base as a safety net to enable households to cope with minor shocks was a source of protection. Each participating household received food for a period of nine months. Five training options were provided, though most participants chose vegetable cultivation, and participants received approximately ten hours of training. Although the food aid was designed to allow the households to start income-earning activities, the transfers took place irrespective of whether they took up the new activity.

The 2012–2013 project undertaken by UNIDO (2014), funded through a US\$ 1.5 million grant from the Government of Japan, focused on vocational training for livelihood development. At the time, local institutions were in their infancy, and the project's overall development objective was "to help consolidate the peace process and economic recovery of South Sudan". At the outset, local counterparts were involved in the project formulation and design. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Human Resource Development, with the Vocational Training Centres (VTC), was actively involved in course selection and curricula development. The project aimed to contribute to the UN's Development Assistance Framework for South Sudan in the areas of peacebuilding, social protection, and community development, and to the Millennium Development Goals of poverty alleviation (MDG 1) and gender equality and women empowerment (MDG 3). Primarily, the project sought to develop human capital by strengthening vocational training, by increasing the capacities of selected VTCs around Juba and expanding the range of courses offered, and, through these institutions, by providing a minimum of 750 youth, including women, IDPs, and ex-combatants, with marketable skills to enable them to obtain jobs or start their own businesses.

During the initial stages of the project a market analysis of public and private sector employment was undertaken. Based on identified market demand, training courses lasting three to six months were provided in hospitality, tailoring, carpentry, electronics, mobile phone repair, electricity, auto mechanics, plumbing, welding, information and communication technology (ICT), and construction. Selection of beneficiaries and activities was participatory. A baseline survey of individual beneficiaries was undertaken prior to commencement of training. In line with



South Sudan's Vocational Training Policy that foundation programs should be less than one year's duration, the training was practical in nature. Equipment was distributed to the VTCs and the most dynamic trainees were given their own toolkits. The project also provided small-scale financial support, including initial costs of rent and fuel consumption, to some trainees setting up a business. Overall, training of trainers (ToT) provided skills in business development and entrepreneurship. On-the-job training of recent graduates increased their employability, and mentoring supported those developing a business. No conflict sensitivity analysis was undertaken at either the design or implementation stage, but the project upheld the principle of 'do no harm' and was conducted with a degree of conflict sensitivity through its focus on the South Sudanese as beneficiaries and also as project managers and partners.

The two UNHCR interventions focused on support for refugees, returnees, and IDPs. UNHCR's 2005–2010 Community Based Reintegration Program (CBRP) in Southern Sudan (O'Hagan 2011), following the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, focused on community-based infrastructure development and provision of basic services (health, WASH, education, and livelihoods). Projects were implemented in four states that had received high numbers of returnees and IDPs – Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, and Upper Nile. Within the five-year period, UNHCR implemented over 950 CBRPs, supporting the repatriation, protection, and reintegration of refugees returning to Southern Sudan from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, and elsewhere, as well as supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. The primary aim was to ensure repatriation would be sustainable, with returnees becoming self-supporting as soon as possible and with the necessary social infrastructure and services to help them settle down, without the need to return to refugee or IDP camps for assistance.

UNHCR's 2016–2018 livelihoods program (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020) benefitted from UNHCR South Sudan's expanded livelihood budget, which increased from US\$ 2.2 million in 2015 to over US\$ 4.1 million in 2018 and had a total operating budget (2016–2018) of US\$ 10.4 million. The program focused on support for refugees, of whom there were almost 300,000, and another 3,000 asylum seekers, most of whom were from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR operated in both emergency and protracted refugee contexts. In the emergency settings of Unity and Upper Nile states, UNHCR focused on provision of basic needs and access to livelihood opportunities to improve food security for 30% of the refugee households, plus a parallel intervention for host community households equivalent to 30% of the number of targeted refugee households. The program aimed to increase assets and capacities and reinforce social services to attract development investments. In the protracted refugee settings in Central and Western Equatoria and Jonglei, where refugees had been settled for longer and had better agricultural conditions and/or were closer to towns, the program objective was to support the socio-economic self-reliance of 70% of the refugee households through improved agricultural production and marketing, microenterprise development, entrepreneurship, business and skills training, and infrastructure development.

## Methods

The two more rigorous evaluative studies (Sulaiman 2010 and Julius & Araku 2018) each took a different approach.

The evaluation of BRAC – Southern Sudan’s food assistance for training project (Sulaiman 2010) took the form of a randomised control trial at household level. Participants in the intervention were selected in a three-step process. In each of six BRAC branch offices, a list of very poor households was prepared through consultation with village elders, local chairmen, and microfinance group members. After ten households were named in a village, BRAC asked villagers to name more households in similar circumstances. Each household was then visited and assigned a poverty score. Of the original 1,250 households, 1,058 were eligible to participate in the program. Of these, 500 were randomly selected to receive the treatment and 549 as a control group. In the baseline survey, the total number that could be interviewed was 994, of whom 943 could be interviewed a year later in the endline survey. However, the intervention was not fully compliant as it was found that 14% of the control group had received the treatment due to confusion over common names. The group from the branch with the lowest compliance was eliminated from the analysis, preventing estimation of the average treatment effect on the treated. Analysis of the data relied on a standard double-difference equation and regression analysis, with checks for robustness. Potential spillover effects were calculated using density of treatment households within a specific distance from control households and were found to be insignificant in terms of both change of income and probability of receipt of transfers.

By contrast, the evaluation of the CARE project in Imatong state (Julius & Araku 2018) involved both quantitative and qualitative methods and applied a participatory, most significant change approach. Participatory group tools were used to identify important changes that had taken place in the target community and to explain the factors that had contributed to the changes. Evaluators also studied the project theory model, analysing the process through which the actions produced observable changes; how the changes were measured; and contextual factors that explained variances in outcomes in different project areas. Data collected during the evaluation were compared to baseline data and the project assessment reports against the same indicator. The sample of 258 participants, 98 in Torit and 160 in Nimule/Mugali, included 39 government officers, customary chiefs, social workers, food security officers, and role-model farmers, obtained through purposive sampling, and 219 project beneficiaries, obtained through simple random sampling. The counterfactual was based on baseline data that recorded the situation pre-intervention, including project reports and assessments prepared in the course of the project. A household survey questionnaire was administered to 164 project beneficiaries. The evaluators triangulated the data using key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with the purposive sample groups, observations, and literature reviews. A 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Sometimes; Agree; Strongly Agree*) was used to analyse and interpret levels of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. Survey questions were used to measure a respondent's opinion or attitude towards the relevance, impact, etc. of a given activity. Based on beneficiary responses, ratings out of 5 were calculated using SPSS or Microsoft Excel.

The remaining five evaluation reports adopted mixed method approaches, with their analyses based largely on qualitative rather than quantitative data. The SSJR (phase 4) program evaluation (Bell 2019) involved the review of secondary quantitative evidence, including the logframe and other internal documents, and external documents such as the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan. Data were extracted and used to inform the design of tools for qualitative data collection in the field. A purposive sample was drawn up to provide a “comprehensive and equitable representation of the different actors”. This comprised 117 adult and child beneficiaries, 21 staff of partner organizations, 9 local partners / NNGOs, 11 external humanitarian actors, 13 community leaders, and 12 local government stakeholders. Qualitative data were collected by means of FGDs with beneficiaries and in KIIs and group interviews with other stakeholders. Two beneficiaries selected for detailed case studies were identified at FGDs. There was no baseline survey. Qualitative evidence was entered into a framework and analysed thematically. The quantitative component of the evaluation was limited to an analysis of secondary quantitative data collected by SSJR partners against the logframe indicators and was used to complement qualitative findings.

Due to practical constraints, the evaluators could only visit two of the nine field locations – Malakal and Aweil East (Bell 2019). The evidence base for the evaluation was therefore somewhat inadequate – qualitative data obtained from 117 beneficiaries in two locations. Given the data constraints, it was not possible to make a full assessment of the program, nor to understand to what extent issues that had arisen in the locations visited applied elsewhere. Other limitations of the evaluation were the non-assessment of the nutrition component, limited ability to assess efficiency, and lack of outcome-level quantitative data.

The evaluation of the World Vision program (Nguka, Ochola and Hussein 2018) took place in both the program locations, Juba in the former Jubek state and Kor Adar in Melut, Upper Nile state. In Juba, four out of eight health facilities in Juba town were visited and facility-level data collected. The evaluation team also visited households with children under five and/or pregnant and lactating mothers who had benefited from the facilities’ nutrition programs. The household sampling was done by means of snowballing and through local Community Nutrition Volunteers. In total, 384 households were interviewed. In Kor Adar, all households were beneficiaries of a new water supply during the prolonged drought period, so households were selected for interview through random sampling. A total of 293 were interviewed, 60% IDPs and 40% from the host community. There was no specified comparator.

In Juba, qualitative data were collected through structured interviews with the 384 beneficiary households and through 6 FGDs and 13 KIIs with program staff, government officials, INGOs, and community leaders (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018). In Kor Adar, in addition to the 293 household interviews, there were 2 FGDs and 8 KIIs. The data were translated into English and uploaded into NVivo software, organised into themes, and emerging trends and patterns identified. Quantitative data on nutrition were obtained from routine monitoring information already collected by the program and entered into SPSS for analysis. Data were triangulated using the ‘Barriers, Boosters, and Questions’ (BBQ) framework that facilitates iterative data collection and categorization.

The UNIDO (2014) project evaluation covered the full period of the project and focused on its relevance to the Government of South Sudan, the peace process, and South Sudan's economic development; the cost-effectiveness of the project design; project ownership, coordination, and management; the efficiency of its implementation; and on its expected impact and sustainability. The evaluation involved an extensive document review, including of the project logframe, market assessments, and progress reports. However, the logframe is said to have been incomplete in that, for example, it gave no indication of how project outputs could achieve the targeted outcomes and did not include any measurable indicators, all of which limited the scope of the evaluation.

Extensive personal and household data were collected in the project's baseline survey of beneficiaries but the evaluator could find no evidence of its being used to analyse the success of the project or for any short-term impact evaluation. This was apparently due to time constraints.

A total of 204 UNIDO project beneficiaries (145 male and 59 female), "based on a generally representative sample covering gender, training location, and training course" from all the sites where training had been provided were selected to participate in a questionnaire survey. The majority were under 30 years of age. The survey focused on the quality of training; whether, after completion of training, the trainees were earning an income through employment or self-employment; and on the effect that the training and provision of toolkits had had on their livelihoods. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire survey were triangulated with information obtained through FGDs with 100 out of the same group of beneficiaries, and through client interviews. Although 32% of the project beneficiaries were interviewed, some courses were better represented than others. The evaluator undertook visits in the local area to assess working conditions and general welfare. Given that the evaluation took place immediately after project completion, it was not possible to evaluate the project's longer-term sustainability or impact.

The evaluation of UNHCR's five-year Community Based Reintegration Program (O'Hagan 2011) was underpinned by the People First Impact Method<sup>1</sup>, which recognizes that beneficiaries have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and identify the impact of the assistance on their lives. Representative groups of beneficiaries of the program and of non-beneficiaries (the counterfactual) provided qualitative evidence, which was substantiated quantitatively through systematic grouping and ranking by frequency of occurrence. The evaluation had two thematic focus areas – community-based reintegration and livelihoods.

The evaluation team for the CBRP conducted 21 site visits over a six-week period (O'Hagan 2011). FGDs were held with 33 representative groups of the population, totalling 919 primary stakeholders, mainly women, to determine positive, negative, and neutral impacts on their lives in relation to the entirety of their community-level reintegration and livelihood development since 2005. The sample is said to be random but no details are provided about the sampling process. Six FGDs were conducted in Upper Nile with a total of 170 people; seven in Jonglei with 221 people; 13 in Eastern Equatoria with 358 people; and seven in Central Equatoria with 170

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<sup>1</sup> People First Impact Method, P-FIM® 2010: [www.P-FIM.org](http://www.P-FIM.org)

people. KIIs were conducted with a cross-section of 60 stakeholders from the Southern Sudanese and international communities, including community members, government staff, UNHCR and its partners, INGOs, and churches. The majority of these participants were men. The purpose of the KIIs was to explore key positive and negative impacts, raise awareness of perceived issues, and consider which needed to be addressed to better support reintegration at community level. Two validation workshops were held in Yei and Juba after the fieldwork to confirm, reject, or nuance any findings. The 25 participants from INGOs, the donor, and bilateral and UN agencies in Juba, and the 19 attendees from Yei, generally confirmed the evaluation's findings. Given time and access constraints, the field exercises took place in urban and peri-urban settings.

The evaluation considered the impact of all actors on returnees and their livelihoods, not just those involved in UNHCR's CBRP (O'Hagan 2011). The wider context within which UNHCR operated underscores the inter-relatedness of impacts and drivers of change which may be attributable to the community, the Government of Southern Sudan, civil society actors, other UN agencies, and INGOs and NGOs, as well as UNHCR. The disadvantage of this broad approach is that it is not clear which impacts can be attributed specifically to the UNHCR CBRP. However, integration of all the different contributions is likely to have enhanced the sustainability of the program and its impact.

The decentralized evaluation of UNHCR's 2016–2018 livelihoods program (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020) focused mainly on protracted refugee settings. It included a quantitative survey of 406 participant households, 209 in Maban and 197 in Unity state, randomly selected from the list of beneficiaries, excluding the host community, in the two regions. The aim of this survey was to establish an evidence base to triangulate with qualitative data to inform UNHCR's future livelihoods and economic inclusion strategy in South Sudan. Sampling was designed to provide statistically representative results of beneficiaries (margin of error of 8% at the 90% confidence level) for two program intervention categories – agriculture, including inputs and training, and entrepreneurship, including vocational training and business support. Target sample size, including a buffer for non-response (30%), was 250 respondents for each of the two categories, to give a total sample of 500 across the two regions. The final sample of 406 beneficiaries, all refugees from Sudan and of whom the majority were women, was not representative of the entire refugee population in these regions. No members of the host community were included, apparently due to budget constraints, although a proportion was included in the intervention. Another major limitation of the quantitative survey was the lack of a counterfactual, which limited the evaluators' ability to attribute observed outcomes to the UNHCR program. The team attempted to address the issue by including questions in the survey requiring respondents to recall changes in their livelihood behaviours and conditions, as well as their assessment of the reasons for those changes. This approach at best relies on memory and honest reflection but is subjective, incomplete, possibly misleading, and likely to include responses biased towards what respondents believe they should say, so therefore generally unsatisfactory.

The findings of the quantitative survey were used to inform and complement the subsequent qualitative study (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020). Qualitative data were obtained through

FGDs with 104 livelihood program beneficiaries from both the refugee and host communities and non-beneficiaries. Sites were selected based primarily on the origin of the refugee population, population size, length of time activities had been implemented, and diversity of geographic setting. In addition, 84 KIIs were held with stakeholders including UNHCR staff, government officials, partners, private sector representatives, and donors. Participants in the qualitative study were selected by purposive sampling to ensure that “the most significant partners, including host communities, and perspectives” were included. A key evaluation question was intended to identify changes and results emerging from UNHCR-funded livelihood interventions on employment, business opportunities, and household well-being and to determine factors contributing to economic inclusion, self-reliance, and resilience. A second key question was to identify how UNHCR might better position its role in refugees’ livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what opportunities there were for enhancing sustainability.

For data analysis, the team coded data according to themes and concepts and developed a resilience analytical framework. This conceptual framework linked UNHCR’s support for protection and basic services with its support for livelihoods, skills development, and economic inclusion to aid recovery and develop long-term resilience. The framework was integrated into UNHCR’s new livelihoods strategy (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020).

## **Relevance**

All programs and projects were considered relevant in their local humanitarian context. The CARE project was rated overall at 3.93 (78.6%) out of 5 on the Likert scale (Julius & Araku 2018). In the case of the SSJR project, Bell’s (2019) evaluation of the SSJR program indicates that relevance might have been enhanced by allowing greater field-level input in the design and planning process, providing more opportunities for sharing good practice, and allowing partners to operate singly in a location to respond to high priority needs.

## **Efficiency**

Efficiency was rarely discussed in the selected evaluations, with the exception of that for the CARE project (Julius & Araku 2018), the SSJR program (Bell 2015), and the UNIDO project (UNIDO 2014), which are most closely based on OECD’s DAC criteria. For the CARE project (Julius & Araku 2018), overall efficiency of implementation was rated at 3.84 (76.8%) out of 5 on the Likert scale, and that of individual outputs was also rated highly. Bell (2015) noted that the SSJR system of targeting locations where partners have an existing presence and allocating activities based on existing strengths and comparative advantage carries inherent and substantial efficiency benefits. However, this approach may not cater to those in greatest need. The UNIDO project also leveraged previously established institutional relationships and programs in the former Sudan, and collaborated with existing VTCs and trainers with the capacity to teach the desired courses (UNIDO 2014). This served to increase the capacity of trainers as well as trainees, and was also more cost effective.

A major constraint on the efficiency of the UNIDO (2014) project was that five different government ministries were involved in technical and vocational education and training in South Sudan without any clear definition of their individual responsibilities. The UNIDO project had a relatively limited scope but in the case of more complex interventions similar problems would likely have had a greater impact on project efficiency.

There are references to delays in agricultural seed distribution in three out of the six interventions evaluated – the first year of the CARE project (Julius & Araku 2018), UNHCR's CBRP (O'Hagan 2011), and UNHCR's Livelihoods Program (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020). The delays impacted seed viability and potential benefits of the treatment. This suggests a problem with the supply of time-sensitive inputs, whether on the part of the vendors or due to local logistics, that needs to be taken into account in subsequent projects.

## Impacts

### *World Vision program*

The 2017–2018 World Vision's program (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018) focused on WASH and protection activities in Juba, Kor Adar, and Malakal, with a major nutrition component in Juba. The evaluation indicates that the program was very active and produced a large number of outputs leading to positive outcomes. The program's impact is not discussed and has to be inferred from the extensive description of outputs and immediate outcomes seen during the program and evaluation period.

As a result of the WASH component in Kor Adar, 7,860 people received daily deliveries of clean water treated with chlorine as well as hand-washing facilities, and learned how to purify water for drinking. 1,682 households received water storage containers and 6,820 received hand soap every two months. Beneficiaries were made aware of the risk of disease from not practising hand-washing, and the intervention brought positive impacts on health and hygiene. However, following the end of the program, water trucking ceased and the community had to revert to drawing water from the River Yal. Although the water was treated with chlorine, the colour and smell were unpleasant. This change detracts from the earlier positive impact of the program. In Juba, plastic tanks were provided for drinking water at health facilities, benefitting an average 4,500 people who collected their drinking water from there. Sanitation facilities were constructed at two health centres in Juba, and both private and communal toilets were constructed at Kor Adar (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

In Juba, World Vision set up five Child-Friendly Spaces where informal learning was provided for street children. 97 child protection committee members were trained in SGBV prevention and response. Messaging on children's rights was disseminated through mothers in the nutrition program. Cases of abuse were referred for medical treatment, and World Vision worked with protection partners to address abuse in the community (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

In World Vision's nutrition program, the intervention impacted very positively on the health and nutrition of young children and pregnant and lactating women, and on their households.

Community awareness and local health and nutrition services were improved so that CNVs were able to detect cases earlier and refer them for treatment. At 11 sites (8 fixed facilities and 3 mobile outreach facilities) a total of 60,869 children under five were screened for acute malnutrition, out of which 1,689 were found to suffer from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and an additional 4,642 children indicated MAM. 29,579 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were screened, of whom 1,435 had MAM. Performance indicators for treatment at the four health facilities sampled during the evaluation were well within acceptable SPHERE standards, with a cure rate of 87% (SPHERE >75%) in the OTP intervention and 88% in the TSFP intervention for children under five. The TSFP cure rate for PLW was just over 70%, this lower figure being due to the fact that supplementary feeds were shared with the rest of the family. In response, World Vision provided these households with monthly food vouchers for two months. The opening of mobile outreach posts overcame problems of distance and transportation cost and enabled more eligible families to visit a clinic. At the same time, radio programs and nutrition messaging in the community made mothers more aware of the symptoms of malnutrition and encouraged them to make use of the local health and nutrition services (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

Trainings can enable major components of the program to continue after the end of the project so that positive impacts on health, nutrition, WASH, and the safety of women and children are sustainable. Individuals and community project committees concerned with WASH and SGBV were supported with training. On-the-job training of local staff, particularly of CNVs in malnutrition identification, treatment, and prevention, and capacity-building of government employed staff at health facilities, appear to have impacted on the treatment and reduction of malnutrition cases during the project lifetime and had the potential to help it become sustainable (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

### *SSJR program*

The evaluation of the SSJR program (Bell 2019) examines both positive and negative impacts on beneficiaries and on the wider community, as well as on local partners. Impacts rely largely on anecdotal evidence obtained from beneficiaries and key informants during the evaluation. The nutrition component was not covered by the evaluation, because it was not implemented in either of the two project locations visited and also because it was the smallest, least-resourced component, implemented only in areas where other actors were absent.

Targeted and actual outputs for key indicators covering all components of the SSJR intervention were compared in the program logframe (Bell 2019: Annex 2). Most targets were substantially exceeded, notably availability and access to food and short-term livelihood support under FSL; number of people benefitting from unconditional and unrestricted cash; access to adequate and safe water under WASH; child protection, and number of persons with increased information on rights and entitlements under the protection component. Activities that did not achieve their targets were number of children under five admitted for treatment of SAM or MAM, number of people benefitting from conditional and unrestricted cash, and hygienic disposal of excreta. Some targets were under-achieved due to lack of need or else limited accessibility due to poor local security.



Positive impacts on beneficiaries were identified by the evaluation team (Bell 2019) in relation to individual well-being; improved personal confidence and self-esteem, self-respect and dignity; social capital and community; social cohesion; reduced social isolation, especially for the most vulnerable; and a sense of unity and solidarity, sometimes across ethnic divides. Evidence regarding impact is largely anecdotal. Whilst the output target for food availability was exceeded, there was a lack of evidence on food consumption and dietary diversity. Anecdotal evidence from beneficiaries indicated that, as a result of the intervention, children were better fed; additional food and clothing were the most commonly cited uses of cash transfers, followed by medicine and school fees.

VSLAs were reported to have had a positive effect on coping strategies and on investment in business and, in some cases, led people to diversify their sources of income. VSLA beneficiaries also spoke of passing on business and money management skills to their children and other household members, and of plans to give loans to community members outside the group to help them start an income-generating activity, thus broadening the impact of this intervention. Another benefit of unconditional cash was that it reduced the burden on those assisting relatives (Bell 2019).

FSL and multi-purpose cash interventions were associated with renewed or improved self-respect and dignity, particularly for the most vulnerable, such as orphans, elderly people, and the disabled. Unrestricted cash apparently enabled them to rejoin and feel an equal member of their community (Bell 2019).

A positive impact on female empowerment, attributed by the evaluator to protection activities, was evident amongst girls and young women, who learned about and sought to assert their rights. Anecdotal evidence indicated that increased awareness in the community as a whole led to positive changes in attitude and behaviour with respect to engagement in education, early child marriage, and corporal punishment. However, some Child Protection Committee members said that although awareness-raising was worthwhile, there were often structural economic drivers behind prostitution which made protection messages ineffective (Bell 2019).

In relation to community/social cohesion, participants spoke of SSJR activities breeding a greater sense of commonality within their group, amongst their peers, and even in relation to other tribes. There were indications that, in some areas, SSJR's support reduced migration and allowed people to stay in their home area (Bell 2019).

Whilst not specifically intended as program beneficiaries, local implementing partners gained improved technical capacity, a higher organisational profile, and broader linkages, potentially enabling them to make a greater ongoing contribution to the community (Bell 2019).

Some negative effects of the program were identified:

1. In 2018, delays to seed distribution and late planting resulted in poor crop yields in Aweil East – said to be due to the late start of project activities and consequent overrun of the conditional cash-for-work activity, the building of community access roads. Beneficiaries

were forced to choose between continuing with road-building or planting. Most chose the former, impacting on their harvest.

2. Lack of complementarity between different sets of FSL beneficiaries who received different levels of support caused confusion and tension amongst communities.
3. Protection case management was not continued from one year to the next, so that ongoing cases were no longer supported, adversely affecting beneficiaries (Bell 2019).

### *CARE project*

CARE's 2017–2018 FSL project was delivered in the former Imatong state (Julius & Araku 2018). Project impact was based on measurement of variables measured using a five-point Likert scale, where the higher the rating the greater the agreement among beneficiaries that the impact on their livelihoods was positive. Ratings were calculated for each activity and the average calculated for each project component. The average rating by the beneficiaries of the impact of the whole project was 3.81 (76.2%) out of 5 on the Likert scale. The overall impact was greater in Torit County compared to Nimule and Mugali in Pageri County.

In the FSL component, the impact of innovative crop diversification and community structures on reducing food insecurity and promoting food availability and accessibility for 2,900 vulnerable and food-insecure households was rated high by the beneficiaries at 3.6 (72%) out of 5. The beneficiaries were given vegetable seeds to plant, with tools and training, and could consume some of the produce and sell the remainder as a source of income. Obtaining food from gardens reduced household expenditure and also improved nutrition in children who were previously malnourished. Beneficiaries were also able to save money by taking seeds from their fields to plant the following year instead of buying them in the market. The impact of training of farmers was generally rated high. However, the impact of training in post-harvest handling processes was low; according to the evaluators, this was due to a lack of extension staff at harvest time (Julius & Araku 2018).

The impact of the project's objective to strengthen resilience through sustainable livelihoods and income generation was rated at an average of 3.77 (75.4%) out of 5. Before the project commenced, community members did casual labour for money to buy food. New VSLAs led to activities such as selling second-hand clothes, fishing, food production, and retail businesses. 39.6% of the total beneficiaries pursued agriculture, 37.9% took up commerce and trade, 13.6% manufacturing, including food vending, and 5.1% provided services such as restaurants. Increased savings and capital strengthened small-scale income generation and enabled beneficiaries to cover school fees and emergencies or to repay loans. Business skills training is said to have encouraged hard work among women (Julius & Araku 2018).

The average rating of the impact related to enhancing community capacities and contributing to sustainable livelihoods through peacebuilding, environmental protection, and GBV prevention was high, at 4.07 (81.14%) out of 5. There was a positive impact of community systems on promoting gender equity: gender-specific issues were addressed, and women and men were able to participate together in farming activities. There was also equal sharing of family resources by men and women in the household. Physical, emotional, and psychological abuse of women in the community, including cases of rape and wife battering, were reduced through

awareness and training. The GBV interventions helped a family remain in harmony and concentrate on improving the household income (Julius & Araku 2018).

Beneficiaries agreed that enhanced community systems had had a strong positive impact on peaceful coexistence (4.4 (88%) out of 5 on the Likert scale) as people came to know each other through workshops and meetings. Over 30 participants were selected in each boma as peace committee members and trained in peacebuilding and creating dialogue in the community. Other positive impacts included training in conflict mitigation (4.8 (96%) on the Likert scale) and a reduction in crime (Julius & Araku 2018).

The impact of community systems and training on protecting the environment, such as the construction and use of energy-saving stoves and maintaining a clean environment, and on environmental risk and disaster response, was moderate to high (average 3.6 (72%) on the Likert scale) (Julius & Araku 2018).

#### *BRAC – Southern Sudan pilot project*

The 2008–2009 pilot intervention by BRAC – Southern Sudan provided food for training in support of income generation (Sulaiman 2010). It was hypothesized that food for training might have greater potential as a development tool than simple food distribution because it is directly linked to livelihood development. However, results based on multiple regression analysis showed that there was no substantial change in the economic activities of project participants as a result of the project. There was no effect on hours of work or on the type of economic activities of adult household members, and the objective of the project, to increase farming through the training of participants, did not materialize.

Alongside a general decline in per capita income, there was a significant negative impact (about 13%, Sudanese pounds (SDG) 120–130) amongst the treatment group. Since most of the participants received training in agriculture, a shift to farm self-employment could have caused a reduction in income over a short period. Alternatively, the treatment could have provided a disincentive to work. However, the decline in income was mostly attributable to a reduction in child labour and income. The data showed a positive correlative effect on school enrolment for girls (about 10 percentage points) (Sulaiman 2010).

Food transfers ended three months before the follow-up survey, so any impact observed on food consumption was likely to reflect the indirect effects of food assistance through changed income and/or taste. No impact on per capita food consumption was observed. Impact on monthly expenditure on non-food items, such as transportation, fuel, and toiletries etc., could also reflect changes in income or taste, but the only observed impact was a small positive impact on expenditure on toiletries (Sulaiman 2010).

There was a general improvement on housing indicators, to be expected given the poor housing status at the baseline. There were some positive impacts on housing quality: participants were more likely to have acquired homestead land and to have replaced mud-pole walls with unburned bricks. A significant impact at the 99% confidence level was observed on the number of rooms in the house. Only about 5% of households had an electricity connection at the

baseline and a small positive effect was observed in the follow-up evaluation. Significant positive impacts, albeit small, were observed in the probability of ownership of a shade for livestock, of electric fans, and of insecticide-treated bed nets (Sulaiman 2010).

The likelihood of household borrowing increased as a result of participation in the project since microcredit was included in the intervention. With increased borrowing, the likelihood of having savings at home declined amongst the participants. Food transfers do not seem to have affected liquid savings (Sulaiman 2010).

The evaluation did not find any indication of crowding out of incoming private transfers amongst recipients of food transfers. This was considered most likely due to the extent of private transfers being very low to begin with (Sulaiman 2010). If food transfers did have a disincentive effect, the negative impact on income should have been higher for wealthier households but the size of the effect declined with increasing wealth. However, there was a statistically significant positive impact on the likelihood, and also on the value, of transfers given out by beneficiaries. Increased transfers were the result mainly of transfers in-kind rather than cash transfers, corroborating that this was an effect of the receipt of food transfers. There was also a strong positive correlation between the receiving and giving out of transfers, which suggests reciprocity. Lack of an association between treatment density and change in transfers received by control households also indicated that transfers might not have been exchanged with neighbours.

The evaluation of the BRAC project does not indicate whether the beneficiaries intended to pursue their new livelihoods after project closure (Sulaiman 2010).

#### *UNIDO project*

The project trained 672 beneficiaries (33% female) in a wide range of trade and service sector skills. The majority of trainees studied auto mechanics, electricity supply, and hospitality. Of those who received training, a high percentage completed their course, with 448 out of 451 (99%) of males and 197 out of 221 (89%) of females graduating. 289 toolkits were distributed to the most proficient trainees across the various graduates training courses. Additional training included entrepreneurship skills for 75 selected trainees, of whom 26 were female. The need for working capital by new and developing businesses was not reflected in the project design and had no financial allocation. However, the project was able to allocate limited funding to three new companies in hospitality, mobile phone repair, and welding to cover initial costs of rent and fuel. Overall, the project delivered 8% of the South Sudan Development Plan's 2013 national target for vocational training for youth (UNIDO 2014).

Prior to participating in a course, the great majority of trainees had no job. The value of the pre-training market analysis of public and private sector employment was reflected in the high number of beneficiaries that found work in the field in which they had been trained or had set up micro-businesses. Around 60% of both males and females said that the training had enabled them to start up their own business and 40% of both sexes to gain employment. Almost 70% of male and just shy of 50% of female beneficiaries surveyed in the evaluation also reported that their income had increased as a result of the training received. After completion of training,

beneficiaries were reportedly sharing toolkits and experience among other members of the community. Former trainees in the construction trades contributed to the rehabilitation of a training centre, whilst others produced marketable goods or provided services. Women reported that the most important aspect of the training had been their ability to gain some economic independence. Those working in hospitality or tailoring were, in some cases, earning slightly higher incomes than men as a result of the training. The project also served to empower the women and local communities, and female beneficiaries reported an increase in self-esteem (UNIDO 2014).

Two five-day training of trainers (ToT) workshops were held in Juba to give trainers the ability to promote youth and women's economic and social empowerment and to create a "business mind-set" among low-income youth and women in small-scale income generation activities. The ToT workshops also increased the capacity of trainers to provide basic business management and entrepreneurial skills and to design and present mentoring programs. Participants included trainers from the VTCs and representatives of the government (UNIDO 2014). As a follow-up to their training, the trainers were required to implement a short course for the UNIDO project's trainees in their VTC.

Technology and skills transfer had a positive short-term impact on the individual livelihoods of trainees. It also appears to have had a positive impact on their communities in terms of economic development. Project beneficiaries and implementation partners all indicated that the project had also contributed to the broader processes of stabilisation, integration, and peacebuilding by providing unemployed and underemployed youth with skills that made them more employable and which, in many cases, were transferable. FGDs consistently indicated the beneficiaries' own perspective, that the project had reduced the potential for conflict due to their new abilities to focus on income generation. However, this is difficult to quantify.

Although there was no independent measure, the project appeared to have been successful within its fairly limited scope. Only 672 beneficiaries were trained, a relatively small number and 78 shy of the target figure of 750, all in the Juba area. This has to be set against the high level of need. Furthermore, many beneficiaries said they would have appreciated additional training as well as financial support to set up businesses. Despite its limited scope, the project could not be accomplished in the allocated 12 months and required a six-month no-cost extension to achieve its objectives.

#### *UNHCR's Community Based Reintegration Program*

The evaluation of UNHCR's Community Based Reintegration Program (CBRP) in Southern Sudan (O'Hagan 2011) considers the impact of all actors, including government and the community, on returnees and their livelihoods, not just that of UNHCR's CBRP. As the evaluation report says, it is not possible to isolate and understand impacts in relation to any one agency intervention. The report provides a great deal of information about impacts on the target population but attribution of specific impacts to the CBRP is difficult.

The evaluation of the CBRP (O'Hagan 2011) examined impact through a qualitative survey and assessment of the "impact differences" in returnees' reintegration and livelihoods between "what

returnees had expected to find and what they considered the reality was for them on arrival and over the past five years” (2005–2010) in terms of reintegration and livelihoods. Beneficiary responses were ranked by frequency of occurrence and presented as percentages. The basis of the impact assessment, respondents’ expectations and their findings on arrival, is rather dubious. Furthermore, the statement itself is unclear, since there are three time periods mentioned – pre-arrival, at the time of arrival, and during the five years of the program. The charts presented in the evaluation refer to positive and negative impacts since 2005, i.e., during the lifetime of the program, so that “expectations” and “findings on arrival” are lumped together to provide a counterfactual and identify any before–after treatment difference effect. A total of 182 qualitative impact statements were recorded from community-based FGDs across the four states where the intervention took place, but they are not listed in the report. Returnees were also asked to indicate which groups or organizations they believed were drivers of these differences. The information presented in the report reflects the opinions of all the respondents and is a generalization; it may be that the experiences of one or more of the 33 groups of respondents are significantly different from the whole.

#### Impact differences related to reintegration

Of seven key positive and negative reintegration impact differences between 2005 and 2010, *increased access to services* – school classrooms and teachers’ offices; boreholes; health centres and Primary Health Care Units – was ranked highest, by 28% of the 919 respondents from 33 representative groups, followed by *improved security* (24%). However, a negative impact difference, *inadequate service coverage and quality of services* was ranked third (23%), followed by *land disputes and related conflict* (9%). Access to basic health, WASH, and education services was highly relevant to UNHCR’s primary aim of ensuring sustainable repatriation, the ability of returnees to become self-supporting as soon as possible with the necessary social infrastructure to permit them to settle. Inadequate coverage was mentioned by respondents in all four states and partly reflected problems of access due to the short dry season and hence the fact that most infrastructure development was in towns or along main roads (O’Hagan 2011).

It is perhaps surprising that the figure for land disputes was not higher, and it may have been so in one or more of the 33 groups. Although managing land disputes was not a responsibility of UNHCR, such disputes have a negative impact on the development of agricultural livelihoods. Disputes arose between those who fled and returned and those who stayed throughout the conflict, and between pastoralists and the expanding settled farming communities. Other negative impact differences related to *lack of support for vulnerable groups* and *limited communication between government, humanitarian actors, and communities*. Given that the contributions of all the actors were said to be interrelated, this latter negative impact difference is much more important than its rating of 3% by beneficiaries suggests (O’Hagan 2011).

Respondents in FGDs attributed the highest positive drivers of reintegration impact differences to the national Government of (the former) Sudan, due largely to the negotiation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and resulting peace (O’Hagan 2011). They considered that the Government of Southern Sudan had been responsible for creating the enabling environment

in which the UN and NGOs could work. “Government” (undifferentiated) was thus ranked first (39%), followed by the community (18%), NGOs (18%), and then “the UN” (17%), with business and others (e.g., churches) at 4% each. FGDs attributed the highest negative drivers of reintegration impact to the community (71%), followed by government (18%), NGOs (5%), and then the UN (4%). In the case of neutral impacts, usually related to lack of coverage of interventions that had a positive impact elsewhere, e.g., construction of boreholes and health centres, the UN again ranked fourth (12%), after government (50%), NGOs (19%), and the community (13%).

### Impact differences related to livelihoods

In rankings related to seven key positive and negative livelihood impact differences, a negative impact difference, *inadequate coverage and access to livelihood support and inputs*, was ranked first (40%). This was followed by *increased access to land and the practice of agriculture* (32%), and then the negative impact difference *high youth unemployment* (12%). *Increased sub-regional trade* had a positive impact (10%). *Vulnerable groups lacking support* (3%) and *localized insecurity* (2%), and also *increased government and humanitarian job opportunities* (a tiny 1%) had a very small impact difference and likely reflected local circumstances and opinions. Apart from *inadequate coverage and access to livelihood support and inputs*, *vulnerable groups lacking support* and *humanitarian job opportunities*, the impact differences were not the direct responsibility of UNHCR. Access to unlimited agricultural land, particularly in Central and Eastern Equatoria, was one of the key dividends of peace but dependent on UNHCR support for inputs and training. Lack of support for livelihoods of vulnerable groups was said to have been mentioned in multiple FGDs. There was also repeated mention of high numbers of humanitarian jobs, including unskilled jobs, being given to people from neighbouring countries. Many returnees came back with higher educational qualifications than they would otherwise have obtained and had high expectations that they would find work, which was largely not the case (O’Hagan 2011).

In the attribution of positive livelihood impact differences, the community was ranked first (38%), followed by NGOs (23%), government (18%), and the UN (13%). In the attribution of negative livelihood impact differences, “Government” (of Southern Sudan?) was ranked first (44%), with the UN fifth at (7%). For neutral livelihood impact differences, the UN and others ranked equal fourth at 4% (O’Hagan 2011).

### Impact differences by state

*Improved access to services and agriculture* was weighted highest in three out of four states, followed by *improved security* and then *freedom of movement*. As such, this adds little to the analysis by reintegration and livelihood, but the full dataset (available on request) may reveal more useful information about the impact differences and ongoing needs of individual states (O’Hagan 2011).

The evaluation report (O’Hagan 2011) shows that, overall, the biggest drivers of both positive and negative change in Southern Sudan were national actors – the government and communities, as well as civil society actors and NGOs. The conclusion to the report states that,

within this context, “UNHCR’s CRBP had a clear, visible, and undeniable positive impact” over the five-year period. Areas where the evaluation found the UNHCR CBRP to have contributed to this were increased access water and sanitation facilities; health services and facilities; primary education; skills and vocational training opportunities; income generating activities; and access to land and agricultural practice. Whilst this may be true, the evidence presented in the report is inadequate to confirm the extent of UNHCR’s specific contribution and its impact.

### *UNHCR Livelihoods Program*

UNHCR and its partners’ *Livelihoods Program* (2016–2018) (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019) integrated agricultural production, marketing, and microenterprise development, entrepreneurship, and business training with five other components – vocational skills training; peaceful coexistence with local communities; natural resources and protection of the shared environment; advocacy; and infrastructure development, though there was no activity related to the latter. The evaluation, part of a multi-country evaluation, sought to identify changes that had taken place as a result of the intervention (before–after differences) and the factors that contributed to these changes but this was in the context of how UNHCR might better position itself in refugee livelihood and economic inclusion programming vis-à-vis other stakeholders and inform its global strategy development rather than in terms of impacts *per se* on the lives of beneficiaries. Assessment of program impact was based on quantitative and qualitative surveys of refugees in both emergency and protracted refugee settings and drew on reports prepared by partner organizations, including ACTED, the International Rescue Committee, and Relief International describing their own contributions and findings.

97% of the 406 respondents to the quantitative survey in emergency camps reported participating in at least one UNHCR/partner livelihood training program in 2016–2018. The most common trainings were in kitchen gardening, farming, and micro-enterprise / business development, all designed to increase resilience and self-reliance. Most beneficiaries (89%) received productive assets, such as seeds and tools, associated with their training, and 5% received cash grants or business start-up support. 55% of respondents reported that they had made changes to how they earned money as a result of their participation. Most reported increased income (85% in Maban and 73% in Jamjang) and improved access to food (89% and 77% respectively). Over 300 of the 406 survey respondents reported that they were better able to meet household food and non-food needs as a result of participating in UNHCR livelihood programming (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

According to the quantitative survey, 61% of respondents reported being food secure in Jamjang, whereas just under 50% reported the same in Maban. Most of the refugee households interviewed said that with their income they were now able to purchase additional staples and a wider variety of food. The need for food insecurity coping strategies was reduced compared with the situation before the program commenced. Another positive impact was that the majority of respondents in the quantitative survey (85%) said they had more control over their lives, and nearly 70% reported an improved ability over the life of the program to cover social costs, such as paying a dowry or medical expenses for relatives. A majority also reported that as a result of participating in livelihood activities, their overall feeling of safety for family members had



increased (84% of 209 in Maban; 79% of 197 in Jamjang) and that protection risks had decreased (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Agriculture production and marketing

According to the qualitative survey and program reports, agricultural production had increased “dramatically” in all the camps in Maban, thanks to climate-smart agriculture for small areas such as perma-gardens, and had had a positive impact on household access to vegetables for consumption and sale. Perma-gardens were linked to nutrition interventions and contributed to improved nutritional status, said to have been confirmed by annual nutritional surveys between 2016 and 2018. In Maban, UNHCR and Relief International reached 600 households and 12 schools with agri-nutrition messages and arranged for nutritionally vulnerable households to be referred from the health facility to the agri-nutrition centre. 31 trainers were trained in nutrition-sensitive farming and supported 16 producer groups to produce crops and cereals. However, according to key informants, an imbalance of investments between refugees and host communities caused tension and there was a need for host communities to receive more resources. In Unity state, the International Rescue Committee provided training for 100 lead farmers who in turn trained 2,101 farmers and also transferred knowledge to the host community. 75% of the 406 survey respondents believed UNHCR programming had improved access to markets for purchasing inputs and selling agricultural goods. This was confirmed in the quantitative survey. About 160 of the 197 respondents in Jamjang compared with about 125 of the 209 in Maban reported that they had access to markets outside their camp. Constraints to selling produce included the camps being too far away from markets, lack of transport (Maban), and road closures due to conflict (Jamjang) (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Microenterprise development, entrepreneurship, and business training program

Lack of access to financial services in remote refugee-hosting areas was a serious concern. Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) set up in Maban and Jamjang proved very successful and a positive outcome was an increase in savings. 83% of households with savings in Maban and 60% in Jamjang reported that their savings had increased in the past year, due to higher income from employment. In the quantitative survey, about 30% of the 209 Maban beneficiaries said they had taken out a loan, and a third of these said it was from a VSLA. In Jamjang, just over 10% of the 197 respondents had a loan, about 50% of which were from a VSLA (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Vocational and skills training

Training was intended to promote entrepreneurship and contribute to improved management, performance, and sustainability of the enterprises established. Two vocational training centres (VTC) were established in the Ajuong Thok and Pamir camps in Jamjang. Each had 100 students (80% refugees, 20% host community) and offered four nine-month courses on welding and metal fabrication, building construction, furniture-making, and tailoring, and one 18-month course on solar and electrical installation. Soft skills training was held for 30 students in each camp. A positive outcome was that some graduates of the programs won contracts for construction, making school desks, and sewing school uniforms. Positive impacts included

improved coping mechanisms amongst beneficiaries, a sense of inclusion, and greater self-esteem, and also the transfer of knowledge to others in the region. Challenges reported by participants in an FGD included the long duration of courses without provision of food or incentives; the opportunity cost of the loss of time for farming; limited or no support from the NGO after graduation; limited access post-graduation to necessary materials, and limited business or employment opportunities post-graduation, indicating that the impact could potentially have been much greater had some of these issues been addressed (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Peaceful coexistence with local communities

The main sources of tension between host communities and refugees related to access to land, theft, and livestock raiding. In Maban, peacebuilding efforts were apparently very successful at easing tensions. Peace committees were established and included representatives of both groups, and it became much easier for people to do business together and move more freely. In Jamjang, participants in KIIs and FGDs said that refugees had been given land for cultivation but that the host community had on multiple occasions reclaimed the land, sometimes after ploughing or at harvest time. The Peaceful Co-Existence and Conflict Resolution Committee in Jamjang, with support from the local government, was said by key informants to have made great strides in easing tensions. Nevertheless, the impacts in this component of the program appear to have been mixed, perhaps because of limited collaboration with local government and community organizations (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Natural resources and environmental protection

Environmental awareness was increased through planting of nurseries, distribution of trees and fruit trees to refugees and host communities, and reforestation. The introduction of energy-saving stoves was credited with reducing the demand for wood and helped reduce conflict with the host community over firewood. In Maban, the refugees were producing 7,000 stoves per year. The stoves were also linked to the nutrition intervention, for cooking food grown in the perma-gardens (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

#### Advocacy

Information on UNHCR's advocacy was provided by key informants. UNHCR was trying to gain access to land for refugees, access to schools and teachers for refugee children, and access to healthcare. It also sought to ensure that refugees were not taxed. Obtaining a work permit, which required to secure a job, was made more difficult due to the large number of unemployed in the host communities, but this was not addressed by UNHCR and its partners (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

Extrapolated findings from the livelihoods program include synergies from the integration of livelihood programming with nutrition, education, and protection, such as improved nutritional outcomes, women's economic empowerment, the reduction of protection risks such as the need for early marriage and withdrawal of children from school, and reduced tension with the host community. The evaluation report also infers program impacts on resilience capacity and self-

reliance. By ensuring basic needs were met, resilience capacities could be increased. Social capital was built through farmer groups and VSLAs and human and social capital as a result of group training programs. Beneficiaries gained greater ability to participate in family social events. As livelihood diversity increased, and assets and savings, so too did confidence and psychosocial health. In the more secure environment, women's empowerment also increased (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

## Sustainability

As Bell (2019) indicates with respect to the 12-month SSJR intervention, it may not be appropriate to refer to sustainability in the context of an emergency response, where the primary focus is on responding to immediate needs. However, some components of the SSJR were intended to continue after the life of the project, particularly community assets, protection systems, and WASH infrastructure. Given the short duration of the program and lack of time to consolidate new practices, sustainability may be elusive. In the BRAC program (Sulaiman 2010), food for training was used as a catalyst for 'sustainable change' in beneficiary livelihoods, to enable households to build an asset base to cope with minor shocks. In a pilot project of only nine months, and with only about ten hours of training, this was over-ambitious and the evaluation did not find the project to have had any sustainable developmental effect over the short run.

The UNIDO (2014) project was also fairly short, but it built on previous work with training centres in the region and an ongoing food security and livelihoods project in Juba. UNIDO accommodated the requirements of the South Sudan government's vocational training policies and followed the approved curricula, thus laying the foundations for project sustainability. Nevertheless, the number of ministries involved with TVET and the limited budget meant that ongoing support to VTCs would be limited. The enhanced capacity and equipment of the VTCs, and the ToT program, were intended to improve the prospects for sustainability but without annual government funding the VTCs will not achieve their potential. This will place more reliance on former trainees sharing their skills in the community.

Sustainability is linked by Bell (2019) to connectedness. The development of communications to increase collaboration and sustainability was also a key recommendation in O'Hagan's (2011) evaluation of UNHCR's CBRP program. To promote sustainability, he identified the need for coordination with other agencies and INGOs, and, above all, with the host government, local NGOs, and community leaders, to maintain infrastructure and facilities, provide supplies to clinics, and pay salaries after project closure. However, sustainability is difficult to achieve without an ongoing budget.

Julius & Araku (2018) asked beneficiaries of the CARE program to what extent they believed the benefits of the projects would likely be sustained and outcomes continue. Beneficiaries scored sustainability 3.86 (77.2%) out of 5 on the Likert scale, implying they thought that, overall, it was sustainable. Since government staff, boma chiefs, religious leaders, model farmers, and medical workers were involved in the program's implementation, a strong basis was established for follow-up activities that could lead to sustainability.

UNHCR and other agencies supporting returnees after the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement had the primary aim of ensuring sustainable repatriation, i.e. that returning populations could become settled and self-supporting as soon as possible, with the necessary social infrastructure to prevent their returning to refugee camps (O'Hagan 2011). UNHCR's livelihoods program (Frankenberger, Miller and Taban 2019) sought to develop sustainable livelihoods in both emergency and protracted refugee settings. Sustainability after program completion depends on the program beneficiaries becoming self-reliant. Like all of the programs reviewed, CARE's interventions aimed to provide opportunities for more sustainable livelihoods and income generation, with the objective of developing resilience and greater self-reliance (Julius and Araku 2018). Building self-reliance is a core mandate area of UNHCR and a feature of other agencies' aid programs. Yet self-reliance may take much longer to develop than short project lifecycles allow, with the result that some or all of a program's achievements will fail to be sustainable.

Settling into a new location and developing a sustainable livelihood also requires integration and economic inclusion of refugees or returnees in the local community. This can be promoted by supporting host communities alongside refugees, as in the World Vision program (Nguka, Ochola and Hussein 2018). Access to land plays a major role in reintegration and livelihood development, and such inclusive interventions are more likely to generate community support in the prevention or resolution of land-related conflict. Youth were identified in the evaluation of UNHCR's CBRP (O'Hagan 2011) as needing more support to develop a sustainable livelihood amongst the returnees and in the host community. Failure to support youth livelihood options and overcome high youth unemployment risked growing resentment and conflict, which would adversely affect the sustainability of the repatriation program.

## Barriers

Local logistical difficulties – ongoing insecurity, the threat of violent conflict, and frequent population movements – affected most programs. Environmental conditions also hampered program activities. O'Hagan (2011) comments that there is only a 3–4 month window in the dry season when program activities can be carried out, especially construction work or projects that require supplies to be delivered to remote sites. Thereafter, the roads become impassable. CARE struggled with distribution of agricultural inputs to the more distant places, especially in Nimule and Mugali (Julius and Araku 2018). Nguka, Ochola, and Hussein (2018) also noted the poor quality of roads, as well as the limited transportation and long walking distances for beneficiaries to access treatment. Low government capacity, a weak enabling environment, and lack of access to markets, coupled with political uncertainty and insecurity, restrict livelihood options and also make it difficult to attract development actors to work in the more remote areas. Furthermore, the livelihood options they can provide are limited by high levels of illiteracy and limited functional literacy.

A significant barrier noted in several reports is that demand for treatment exceeds capacity that is limited as a result of budget and/or time constraints, resulting in restricted program coverage. Julius & Araku (2018) reported that the demand for both training and agricultural tools in the

CARE project was enormous and that many potential beneficiaries could not be helped due to budget constraints. CARE's delivery of nutritional education was also affected. Excess demand for treatment is exacerbated by the inclusion of host community members in aid programs, but this was considered important in reducing tensions, avoiding jealousies, and supporting reintegration. With increasing com& Taban 2019).

Shortages of supplies, such as therapeutic and supplementary foods (Nguka, Ochola and Hussein 2018), seeds (Julius & Araku 2018), spare parts (UNIDO 2014), or materials for leatherworking (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019), were amongst the challenges cited by beneficiaries which adversely impacted on development of livelihoods and reduced program effectiveness. Expectations of CARE program beneficiaries were disappointed – they thought that CARE should offer them a total solution, which was impossible due to the limited budget (Julius & Araku 2018). The plan by UNIDO (2014) to provide toolkits to only the most proficient trainees was never going to work. In such a context, where everyone needs tools and tools are scarce, and in a culture where it is inappropriate to give to some and not to others, a lack of toolkits to be given out at the end of the project would have prevented some from working and risked causing ill-feeling.

Failure to allow adequate time for program activities may reduce effectiveness and impact. The BRAC food for training pilot project evaluated by Sulaiman (2010) appears to have provided skills training for new livelihoods typically in only five two-hour sessions over the course of a week. This is unlikely to be adequate for beneficiaries to become proficient at new livelihood skills, especially since no follow-up support is mentioned. Participants could easily have lost interest, especially since an initial reduction in income was likely and food transfers were not conditional on whether participants took up the new livelihood activity.

Some programs reported staffing constraints, including shortages of local staff, resulting in high workloads. High attrition rates of trained Community Nutrition Volunteers leaving the World Vision program for better livelihood opportunities diminished the capacity of government staff to manage cases (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018). The UNHCR livelihoods program was constrained by the limited number of its own livelihood officers. At the time of the evaluation in 2019, there had been no monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff in Juba for two years due to lack of funding. A strategy was in place for monitoring of nutrition and food security, to be implemented by partners, but lack of direct UNHCR M&E involvement meant that indicators were not harmonized. The absence of a UNHCR Livelihood Officer in Juba limited the ability to engage other UN partners, donors, and government on livelihood matters and to advocate for additional livelihood programs and funding (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2019).

A barrier to sustainability after completion of a program is the lack of an exit strategy, lack of preparation for beneficiaries to become self-reliant, and lack of follow-up and transition arrangements between project cycles. Bell (2019) reported that key activities, e.g. multi-purpose cash distribution, might cease to be supported by SSJR partners at the transition between one 12-month joint response program and the next. Likewise, management of protection cases, which can last for up to three years, was not supported through program transition periods. Lack

of continuity leaves beneficiaries without support and has significant potential to negate past achievements.

The main constraints to sustainability of the World Vision program appear to have been lack of provision with local authorities or NGOs for the continued transportation of clean water to Kor Adar, and the supply of specialist feeds to combat acute malnutrition (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018).

## Summary

Some of the programs and projects discussed in this report had an immediate positive impact on beneficiaries. World Vision's nutrition component (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018) stands out: it had an impact on the health of many malnourished and acutely malnourished children in Juba, with a high cure rate and many lives saved. It thus achieved its aim to save lives and reduce or avert the suffering of children and families, and strengthened capacity in the community to identify the signs of malnutrition. The clean water deliveries provided by World Vision to Kor Adar and other WASH activities improved the health and wellbeing of over 7,800 people. UNIDO's (2014) training programs gave previously unemployed youth the opportunity to obtain employment or set themselves up in business and to generate an income. Additional, follow-up support in the form of on-the-job training or linking program graduates to mentoring support also had a positive impact, but such support needed to have been made available to all the former trainees.

The infrastructure and livelihood development provided in the two UNHCR programs also had an immediate impact. In the CBRP (O'Hagan 2011), infrastructure and livelihood development were both key to helping returnees to settle and become self-supporting. Whilst coverage was considered inadequate, there were logistical reasons for this, many of which were not within UNHCR's control. Despite UNHCR's efforts, the beneficiaries perceived the government to be most responsible for the positive impact difference in reintegration and the community in the development of livelihoods, with the UN well behind in both cases. Yet many of the negative comments by the evaluators related to the government being unable to supply staff or drugs, or pay salaries, and lack of action in controlling disputes between pastoralists and settled farming communities. In UNHCR's livelihoods program (Frankenberger, Miller and Taban 2019), the impact on food security varied according to locality but climate-smart agriculture is said to have greatly increased production. The establishment of VSLAs also had a positive effect but promotion of entrepreneurship, while effective, appears only to have had a short-term impact.

The UNHCR CBRP lasted more than five years and operated in four states, each of which had large numbers of returnees and IDPs. It is difficult to evaluate impact in emergency contexts where the focus is on security, survival, and settlement and the evaluation of the CBRP did not clearly distinguish that of UNHCR from other actors. The livelihoods program covered two years but operated in two states and worked both with community members and refugees in protracted as well as emergency settings and could be expected to have a longer term impact.

The other projects were short, as little as nine months in the case of the BRAC food for training project (Sulaiman 2010), or were administered on an annual basis, such as the SSJR program (Bell 2019). The BRAC project, according to Sulaiman (2010) had little impact on livelihood development and its positive, unintentional impact was a reduction in child labour and an increase in school enrolment, though it is not clear if this would be sustained. The main objective was to see if the project crowded out private transfers. Although there was an increase in transfers during the project, the fact that private transfers were very low at baseline, led the evaluators to conclude there was no impact. This might not have been the case had there been more transfers prior to the project.

Most target outputs in the SSJR program (Bell 2019) were found to have been exceeded but the extent of their impact on beneficiaries relied on anecdotal evidence rather than measurement. Negative impacts associated with the SSJR program (Bell 2019) related to the discontinuity between annual interventions. The World Vision program was conducted in two phases of six and nine months, but appears to have achieved a great deal in that period. Likewise, the one-year CARE project (Julius & Araku 2018) which targeted 2,900 households across two counties was rated highly by beneficiaries for its impact on strengthening resilience through sustainable livelihood development and income generation, reducing food insecurity, and peacebuilding and protection.

Provision of youth training in marketable skills was a means to achieving the UNIDO (2014) project's main objective – to contribute to South Sudan's economic recovery, stabilization, community integration, and peacebuilding. The extent to which this objective will be achieved in the medium and longer term will be difficult to quantify, though the government, the UN, project partners, and beneficiaries all agreed that income generation opportunities for vulnerable members of the community is key to stabilization and integration. UNIDO did not undertake a peace and conflict assessment prior to the commencement of the project, though UN policy recommends this in post-crisis interventions. The project followed the basic principle of 'do no harm', which had been recommended for a previous UNIDO project in the former Sudan.

When interventions take place in a limited timeframe or with many groups of beneficiaries their impact risks being diluted. This is not necessarily because of a program having too many components but appears from this study to be related to the amount of time that can be spent following up on the initial intervention, whether that is livelihood training or supplementary feeding for infants. It is a case of program staff giving extra time when and where it is most needed, being present during all seasons of an agricultural project, and, above all, making workable arrangements for continuity after program closure. In this way, positive impacts can be consolidated and negative impacts mitigated. Impact cannot be properly judged without reference to program or project sustainability.

This issue is not only related to humanitarian programs: many projects fail to allow time and funding for follow-up activities, which results in their having only a limited medium- and longer-term impact. Humanitarian programs, however, are commonly faced with many issues that need to be addressed all at once – shelter, food security, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, protection, and livelihood development. Host communities and refugees or returnees need to

learn to live alongside each other, and to facilitate this aid agencies and INGOs need to provide assistance to members of the host communities as well as the incomers. Programs have to be ambitious because the need is so great, and as a result their impact might be expected to fall short.

Finance and staff capacity are never adequate to fulfil the expectations of people in need, and compromises have to be made. Sustainability of the programs and projects in this study was hampered by limited finance, which resulted in short timeframes, and the huge scale of need which meant that assistance risked being spread too thin. FSL, WASH, nutrition, and protection are each major focus areas, and when combined with resettlement and continuing insecurity it should not be surprising that programs do not have the desired, sustainable impact. Some of the interventions studied did, however, include activities that could have been anticipated as unlikely to be sustainable. Any project requiring regular transport, for instance, such as that for the transportation of water from the River Nile to Kol Adar and the mobile nutrition outreach facilities set up by World Vision (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018) risks not being sustainable after project closure unless vehicles, maintenance facilities, spare parts, and access to pre-paid fuel supplies are provided on a long-term basis. Added to that is often the lack of all-weather roads. Another issue hampering sustainability is the provision of supplies and consumables needed to provide continuity, such as agricultural inputs and supplementary feeds for malnourished children. Above all, there is the problem of an insufficient number of trained local staff who can provide ongoing support, as well as the means to pay them.

Bell (2019) and O'Hagan (2011) linked sustainability to connectedness, communication, and collaboration, with other agencies and INGOs in the area, and above all with the government and local NGOs, since it is they who will need to ensure the project continues to have an impact after the internationals have left. Bell (2019) considered that ownership and capacity of community volunteers and structures, key enablers of sustainability, were generally strong but that handover and linkages to government and other humanitarian actors was inconsistent. UNHCR, in the CBRP (O'Hagan 2011), brought together representatives of 45 different organizations including community workers and representatives, local government bodies, INGOs and UN agencies, which resulted in a high degree of connectedness and showed the program's ability to foster links between local groups. The livelihoods program, however, (Frankenberger, Miller and Taban 2020) focused on developing resilience and self-reliance amongst beneficiaries, but had limited networking with partner organizations. CARE (Julius & Araku 2018) was concerned with developing resilience in the community and involved government staff, chiefs, religious leaders, and local medical workers, creating a strong basis for sustainability.

Sustainability has to be built into program design, and relationships need to be nurtured and provision made for facilities and supplies to be maintained well before the end of the program. When the program team is fully occupied with treating large numbers of beneficiaries, sustainability planning is easily set aside or left until the last minute and as a result is inadequate. The sustainable impact of WASH, FLS, and other humanitarian interventions relies partly on well-informed, contextualized project design, partly on awareness of likely barriers and possible mitigatory measures, a great deal on sound implementation, but above all on



relationship-building with local communities and with those who have the capacity to take over the intervention after project closure. Ideally there needs to be a handover period before program staff depart.

In humanitarian assistance programming, the support of the host community and local leaders is crucial for stabilization as well as program sustainability. Without their support, returnees or refugees will not be integrated, resulting in ongoing disputes. The best way to gain support of the community is to involve them as beneficiaries of the program, e.g. in livelihood skills training (Frankenberger, Miller & Taban 2020) or by training them to work alongside project staff, for example as Community Nutrition Volunteers (Nguka, Ochola & Hussein 2018). Community leaders' selection as key informants in qualitative surveys suggests to them that their opinions and concerns are respected. The CBRP (O'Hagan 2011), which focused on reintegration of refugees and IDPs, provided health and education services and infrastructure where little or nothing had previously existed, which benefitted the whole community.

As O'Hagan (2011) says, it is not possible to isolate and understand impact in relation to any one agency intervention. Different actors make contributions that ideally have complementary effects. Collaboration between agencies and NGOs, and with local community and government leaders, can help increase and sustain program impacts, and contribute to the development of stabilization in conflict-torn regions.

## Nutrition Sector

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

None

#### Good Enough Evaluations

Doocy, S., Tappis, H., Paul, A., Klemm, R. & Funna, S. 2013. Preventing malnutrition in children under two (PM2A): A case study in the food insecure context of South Sudan. *World Health and Population*, 14(4), 12–22.

A single study is included, that of Doocy et al. (2013), which evaluates a project carried out in 2011–2012 by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Concern Worldwide, Food for the Hungry, and the Malaria Consortium in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap states in the northern region of South Sudan. The project was funded by USAID.

The Preventing Malnutrition in Children Under 2 Approach (PM2A) integrates maternal and child health and nutrition programming with food assistance. PM2A is a central feature of US Title II non-emergency food aid programs (Title II of the *Trade* portion of the US Farm Bill provides for the donation of US agricultural commodities and humanitarian assistance to meet emergency and non-emergency food needs in other countries). The approach has been adopted on a widespread basis only since 2010 and with the aim of preventing chronic malnutrition (stunting) in non-emergency settings. There remains a paucity of evidence as to whether PM2A is effective in acutely and chronically food-insecure situations, such as was prevalent in South Sudan.

The PM2A project evaluated by Doocy et al. (2013) was a component of the Consortium's South Sudan Health, Nutrition and Empowerment (SSHINE) program, which included health, empowerment, and agricultural interventions. The SSHINE program was implemented from mid-2011 in three 'payams' in each of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap states. Within each payam, only a subset of communities was selected to receive the PM2A intervention due to budget constraints. Community selection was driven by access considerations and community size. There was no baseline survey and no control group, which was particularly unfortunate given the newness of the PM2A approach.

Core components of the PM2A treatment included conditional food rations for pregnant and nursing women and children under two years old based on participation in behaviour change interventions (care groups), behaviour change messaging, and preventive and curative health and nutrition services for women and children. The first PM2A food allocation was distributed in December 2011, immediately prior to a mixed methods study. Ration cards were issued to each adult beneficiary. The planned ration included 3 kg of fortified corn-soya blend (CSB) and 0.3 kg of oil for each pregnant woman, mother of a child 0–5 months and a child 6–23 months of age, as well as 14 kg of bulgur, 1.5 kg of lentils and 1 kg of oil for each beneficiary's household. Households in both states reported receiving greater amounts of bulgur, lentils and oil, but only 1.86 kg of CSB.

## Methods

There are a number of points of confusion in the text, including between the evaluation of the PM2A intervention which took place immediately after the final PM2A ration distribution in December 2011 and the January 2012 mixed methods study. Furthermore, target households for the evaluation, as for the intervention, are said to have included mothers with children aged 6–23 months, but, according to data in the *Results* section of the report, children under 2 were present in only 73% of households interviewed.

The mixed methods study took place in January 2012. Its primary purpose was to determine household food sources and challenges to program implementation to better inform policymakers and practitioners about advantages and disadvantages of the PM2A approach in food insecure contexts. The report provides a substantial amount of data on household food production and gathering.

The evaluation of the PM2A project took place six months after the intervention commenced, within the month following the distribution of the final ration package, so that beneficiaries had maximum exposure to the PM2A intervention. It took place in a period before the normal 'lean season' of May–August when food was generally expected to be harder to obtain.

Communities ('payams') in designated PM2A areas were selected for inclusion in the sampling frame based on security and access considerations, and 'similarities to communities benefiting from the SSHiNE project'. The significance of the latter reference is not clear. Of the communities in the sampling frame, four were selected: two each in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap states, with 20 participants per community. The selected communities were in the payams of Kuach North (Gogrial West county) and Toch East (Gogrial East county) in Warrap State, and in Ariath (Aweil North county) and Gojuer Centre (Aweil West county) in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State. Selection was conducted without the involvement of program staff to eliminate potential selection bias. The absence of community-level information and lack of a baseline survey meant that there was no comparator group.

Data collection methods included structured interviews with 80 mothers of children aged 6–23 months who had benefited from PM2A ration distributions. Sample size was based on 'anticipated saturation' (the likelihood that no new information would be discovered), length of the questionnaire, and logistical considerations. The evaluation report does not indicate the number of households receiving treatment so it is impossible to judge how representative the sample might be, though it seems very small. In each of the four study areas, 20 adult female beneficiaries (pregnant women and/or mothers of children under 2 years) were interviewed using a structured questionnaire to assess household food sources, ration receipt, and ration use. Approximately half of the mothers were recruited from the centre of each community and half from the outskirts. In addition, eight focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with beneficiaries, two in each study area with six to ten mothers of children aged 6–24 months. There was no overlap between interview respondents and focus group participants. Two further FGDs were conducted with six to ten SSHiNE program staff to gain a more qualitative understanding of available food sources, ration use, and the challenges faced during project implementation.

All interviews and focus groups with community members were conducted in Dinka by SSHiNE program staff who did not have regular contact with the PM2A beneficiaries. Interviewers were trained on interview techniques, focus group facilitation and the data collection tools, and participated in pilot testing and finalizing the questionnaire. FGDs were conducted in Dinka, with a note-taker writing in English. The focus groups with SSHiNE staff were conducted in English by members of the research team from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Structured interview questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics in STATA. Focus group data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis and via summary texts.

## **Relevance**

There is no discussion of project relevance in the evaluation, but doubts are expressed about whether a PM2A intervention against chronic malnutrition is, as it stands, appropriate in a context where severe acute malnutrition is prevalent.

## Efficiency

There is no discussion of the project's efficiency and it is not possible to judge from the limited evidence available in the report.

## Impacts

The report provides only very limited information about the impacts of the project, most of which appear to be negative. There is little information about beneficiary responses during the household surveys or in focus groups from which impact could be determined.

During the project implementation period, food insecurity was driven by conflict; by increased demand for food due to the growing populations of IDPs, returnees and refugees; below-average harvests; reduced imports from Sudan; and high cereal prices. Evidence indicated that household food security remained poor despite ration receipt. At the time of data collection for the evaluation, few households had any rations remaining. The ration accounted for less than 25% of the food consumed by the household in nearly two-thirds of households. Sales of ration food were not reported by any household. Widespread use of coping mechanisms reported among beneficiary households indicated that, despite food assistance, food insecurity remained high. Rations were helpful but insufficient. When ration distribution ended, focus group participants said they relied on foraging, agricultural production, and sales of livestock and other assets in order to buy food. The mixed methods study had found that primary sources of food included home-grown vegetables and grains, primarily sorghum and maize. In the FGDs, only a minority of households considered expanding their gardens, due to lack of resources and because many families were new to the area and did not feel settled. Participants also felt challenged by living in an area where drought conditions made the entire year a 'lean season'.

The evaluation revealed several issues related to the appropriateness of the PM2A approach, including targeting and coverage and the ability of the project to meet the caloric needs of targeted beneficiaries. PM2A projects are intended to target the most food-insecure districts and be linked with existing health services. Prevalence of global acute malnutrition was estimated at 31% in Warrap and 26% in Northern Bahr el Ghazal around the time of community selection, indicative of widespread food insecurity. Poverty rates in the two states were estimated at 64% and 76%, respectively. PM2A guidance recommends 100% coverage but beneficiaries were dispersed across different administrative units. PM2A rations are expected to be provided to all members of households with pregnant or lactating women and children under two in the target community, including adequately nourished children and adults, while vulnerable households not meeting these criteria receive no rations. In the context of South Sudan this appears to have been an inappropriate distinction that would not have been understood by the community. PM2A guidance also indicates that adequate access to treatment for severe acute malnutrition must be available, and that acutely malnourished children from non-PM2A households should be referred to community-managed programs for outpatient treatment. However, these services appear not to have been readily accessible. Resource shortages, including low availability of foods and capacity for nutrition screening and recuperative program implementation, restricted the services available in Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

The prioritization of chronic malnutrition prevention over the treatment of acute malnutrition is also ethically questionable: the rations designed for prevention of chronic malnutrition are calorically inadequate for treatment of acute malnutrition and, without access to recuperative services, children with acute malnutrition face increased risk of death. Furthermore, the report indicates that at the time of the SSHiNE program acute malnutrition had persisted at emergency levels for an extended period and the program designers should have been aware of this and the fact that PM2A was approved for use in *non-emergency* settings. The experiences of the SSHiNE project confirm that PM2A is not appropriate for food insecure settings with high levels of acute malnutrition, and that programs supporting community management of acute malnutrition should be prioritized.

A major contributing factor to the selection of an inappropriate intervention was the fact that evidenced-based community selection, through which the most vulnerable communities are identified, is not required in USAID multi-year assistance programs such as SSHiNE. Instead, it is assumed that, because target communities are within food-insecure states, food-insecure communities will be selected. Food insecurity is likely to vary within states and research towards a fuller understanding of local conditions would better inform selection of those communities most in need and determine the type of intervention most urgent.

PM2A is intended to be coupled with broader food assistance and livelihood strategies but this program had difficulty achieving adequate food production in the prevailing drought conditions. The PM2A ration is intended to supplement existing household food sources, and so preventing malnutrition is dependent on stable food supplies. In highly food insecure contexts such as South Sudan, this assumption does not hold. Chronic food insecurity and large seasonal differences in food supply mean that rations replace rather than augment other food sources and fail to achieve the goal of preventing malnutrition. Furthermore, in the Dinka communities where the SSHiNE program was implemented, food is shared equally among those present, including non-household members, which impacts the quantity of food available for children and makes targeting food aid difficult.

Although food security would have been even worse in the absence of rations, the PM2A project did not meet its objectives and did not have the desired impact of preventing malnutrition. The scale of the problem and low budget allocation defeated efforts to prevent malnutrition and failed to help those already suffering from moderate or severe acute malnutrition. The program design failed to research and/or understand the local context and to consider whether a PM2A approach was appropriate and feasible. Attempting such a project in a situation where food resources were scarce and without an adequate budget and logistical means to supplement food supplies was injudicious. It was also seriously misguided in that it targeted prevention of malnutrition rather than treatment in a region where acute malnutrition was rife.

## Sustainability

There is no reference in the report to sustainability. It was noted that the budget was tight and provision was made for the ongoing supply of the PM2A rations. Given the SSHiNE program had limited means to improve general food security, the PM2A project could not be sustainable.

## Barriers

Lack of requirement for a baseline survey and needs assessment, and the assumption that food-insecure communities varied little within food-insecure states, likely prevented some of the households most in need of treatment from being targeted.

The SSHiNE program was affected by a challenging operational context. Insecurity, drought, limited access to treatment communities due to poor road conditions, limited human resources, and delays in receipt of supplies were major challenges. The short length of the project implementation period precluded a proper assessment of outcomes and the validity of the PM2A approach in food insecure contexts.

The primary limitations of the evaluation were the lack of a baseline survey, which precluded any possibility of comparison, and the small sample size for the household interviews. Selection of participants for the sampling frame was not random or even based on community profiles but on security and access considerations. The custom of sharing available food prevented any evidence-based conclusions being drawn about the impact of the project.

## Summary

Although the US Office of Food for Peace specified PM2A as the preferred maternal and child health and nutrition approach for its development programs in food insecure environments, there is a paucity of evidence to determine whether the approach is effective in acutely and chronically-food insecure environments.

At the time of the SSHiNE intervention, the PM2A approach was relatively new and little guidance was said to be available to practitioners on how to determine the appropriateness of PM2A in a given context. It was intended for use within non-emergency food aid programs, and given the food insecurity levels and drought in South Sudan, and acute malnutrition persisting at emergency levels, use of the PM2A approach was injudicious, experimental, and high-risk. Doocy et al.'s (2013) report states that, at the time of community selection, global acute malnutrition affected about 31% of the population in Warrap and 26% in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. Risk was exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the local context and culture, and the implementation of the project with an inadequate budget and resources. More extensive research and consideration at the project design stage could have identified the PM2A approach as being ill-suited to a context where the immediate prospect of improvement in overall food security was unlikely and where other project components would not be able to provide support.

# Rural Development and Climate

## The Evidence Base

### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

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Schneider W., Wani, C. E. & Ubor, W.A. 2019. *Adaptation of agricultural cultivation methods to climate change and stabilisation of livelihoods*. Central Project Evaluation. Available at <https://d-nb.info/1208079484/34>

### *Food security and livelihoods*

Of the seven studies included, four reports assess projects aimed at improving food security and livelihoods, including through food-for-training programs, small business workshops, enhanced agricultural cultivation methods based on a climate change perspective, and fishing techniques (Pretari & Anguko 2016; Sulaiman 2010; NRC 2013; Schneider et al. 2019).

The first report (Pretari & Anguko 2016) evaluates the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Project*. This project delivered training on methods of farming to increase crop

diversity as well as providing small business workshops. Other outputs were the creation of village savings and loan associations (VLAs) and the delivery of cash grants. It was implemented by Oxfam Great Britain in conjunction with the National Relief Development Corps (NRDC) between October 2012 and April 2016, and benefitted approximately 1,200 households.

Sulaiman (2010) analyzes the *Food-for-Training and Income Generation (FFTIG) Project*, which was implemented by the World Food Program (WFP) and the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) from March to October 2008. The project's main outputs were combining food transfer with skills development and financial services to strengthen households' resilience by enabling them to increase and sustain their income, regardless of minor external shocks. Examples of these outputs were the delivery of food for selected households for nine months, followed by compulsory enrolment of the female head or spouse of head of beneficiary households into small group and income-oriented training opportunities (i.e. vegetable cultivation, nursery, tailoring, petty trade, and cattle rearing). The program provided support to 500 households from six branch offices in Juba.

Schneider et al. 2019 assess the Transitional Development Assistance (TDA) program, *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan*. This project was implemented by two organizations: Johanniter International (JOIN) and Vétérinaires sans Frontières Germany (VSFG), from January 2013 to December 2018 with a budget of EUR 5.3 million. The project's main outputs include training on the adaptation of agricultural methods to climate change to facilitate the production of staple foods, the introduction of vegetable cultivation during the dry season, training the staff of the County Agriculture Department (CAD) in Jur River county, and the promotion of resource-efficient income-generating activities (IGAs). The project targeted socio-economically vulnerable communities and households with a focus on Jur River county in the state of Western Bahr el Ghazal, especially those communities with a high proportion of returning refugees and women-led households.

The final report (NRC 2013) reviews the *Food Security and Livelihood Program (FSL)* implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states of South Sudan from 2010 to 2012. The project's main outputs consisted of training on vegetable crop production under irrigation during the dry season; beekeeping; fisheries; reforestation; school gardening in selected schools; and workshops on income generating activities and small-scale business. Most of the project's beneficiaries were returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who for the most part are not farmers and have few agricultural skills.

### *Water and sanitation*

Two reports (CDP 2019; PEMConsult 2020) evaluate projects designed to improve water and sanitation in South Sudan, through improved water infrastructure and water management and policy, as well as water management and sanitation training

CDP (2019) evaluates *The Water for Lakes (W4L)* project, one of two projects under the *Program for the Water Sector between South Sudan and the Netherlands (ProWaS/SSN)*. The



project commenced in 2013 with a budget of EUR 31,865,600 and ended in 2018. A series of water-related outputs was delivered, including the construction of new wells/boreholes and new water yards, as well as latrines in public institutions and open spaces; the establishment of water and sanitation committees; the formulation of land and water management policies and strategies; the delivery of training on the water/sanitation/IWRM program and other comparable programs. These activities were delivered to five focus counties: Cueibet, Rumbek Central, Rumbek North, Rumbek East and Yirol West. In addition, the project aimed at improving government capacity through engagement with government authorities at all levels (local, regional, and national), based on training on the use of geophysical equipment, water monitoring systems, and borehole construction.

The report by PEMConsult (2020) assesses *The Water for Eastern Equatoria Project (W4EE)*, a project implemented by the Dutch and South Sudanese governments through the South Sudan Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI). The project's lifespan was 2013 to 2019 and it had a budget of US\$ 28,390,077. W4EE's main outputs were the delivery of training for farmers on agricultural and water management best practices; coaching on credit and saving operations; provision of agriculture and livestock water facilities; creating linkages between farmers and Water and Farm Service Centres; the rehabilitation of existing boreholes; the establishment of IWRM governance structures at catchment, sub-catchment, and community levels and ensuring these were operational; and ongoing consultation with government authorities at the community, state, and national levels for project implementation and capacity development.

#### *Small infrastructure*

One report (Balina et al. 2015) evaluates a project designed to improve agriculture-based economic opportunities through enhanced infrastructure. *The Responsive Assistance for Priority Infrastructure Development (RAPID)* project was implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Office for Project Support (UNOPS), from 2011 to 2015, with a budget of US\$66,740,106. *RAPID's* main outputs were the rehabilitation of roads, bridges, schools, health and laboratory facilities, and water and sanitation facilities; assistance of South Sudan's ministries and authorities (SSRA) in managing its infrastructure portfolio; and assistance in development of local government capacity, including classroom instruction and job training. The target beneficiaries were business and rural communities, farmers, university students and faculty, and government road authority employees in six South Sudan States (Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Western Bahr El Ghazel).

#### **Relevancy and efficiency**

All but one project was said to be relevant. Balina et al. reported that the *RAPID project*, which aimed to improve agriculture-based economic opportunities through enhanced infrastructure, had not been relevant due to lack of engagement with its intended beneficiaries (South Sudan's government, local contractors, and the communities) to promote appropriate design, government capacity building or long-term sustainability. Additionally, the report assesses the effort made in planning and implementation to have been inconsistent.

With regards to efficiency, all projects were said to be efficient except the RAPID project. Balina et al. evaluate the RAPID project as inefficient due to UNOPS' poor performance in design and quality assurance for project implementation, which was partly due to failure to engage with stakeholders or to develop standard designs across projects. "In the most unfortunate example of design flaws, the Kaya Bridge, in Central Equatoria, collapsed shortly before its inauguration".

## Methods

Two reports adopted a quantitative approach to evaluate the impact of food security and livelihoods projects (Pretari & Anguko 2016; Sulaiman 2010). Pretari and Anguko (2016) compared households supported by the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Project* with those with similar characteristics but not supported by the project. They randomly selected non-participant and participant households for interview. Statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and socio-economic differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, to increase confidence when making estimates of the project's impact.

Sulaiman (2010) adopted a randomized evaluation to evaluate the *Food-for-Training and Income Generation (FFTIG) Project*. Once eligible households were identified, 500 households were selected randomly for the intervention and 549 households were assigned as a control group. A baseline survey was conducted in March 2008, just before the intervention started. Out of the 1049 households, 994 households could be interviewed at the baseline. The follow-up survey took place a year after and 943 households were interviewed.

Five reports adopted a qualitative methodology to evaluate projects on food security and livelihoods, water and sanitation, and small infrastructure. This consisted of a desk review of project documents, key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions, and field visits (CDP 2019; Schneider et al. 2019; NRC 2013; Balina et al. 2015; PEMConsult 2020). In all cases, interviewees were selected through convenience sampling. One report (Schneider et al. 2019) had a baseline for each output.

## Impacts

### *Food security and livelihoods*

Pretari & Anguko (2016) conclude that the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Project* had a positive impact on the use of improved seeds, ploughs or power tillers, production, and usage of organic materials, as well as on the production of crops. The improved agricultural practices adopted led to revenue diversification among participants, so that the average number of sources of monetary income was higher among project participants than non-participants. Additionally, there was a positive impact on food consumption among participants compared to non-participants. Nonetheless, the authors state that no effect was detected on women's participation in decision-making in agriculture groups, nor was there evidence of impact on crop diversity.

Sulaiman (2010) concludes that *Food-for-Training and Income Generation (FFTIG) Project* had a positive effect on children's enrolment (especially girls, with an increase of 10% percentage points) in schools which led to a negative effect on income per capita (about 13% percentage points) for the treatment group due to the investment in children and reduction of labour supply. There was no significant effect on the hours spent by beneficiaries on different earning activities nor on their productivity (measured as earnings per hour worked in non-farm self-employment activities). There is no major impact on different types of other household assets. Program participation did not necessarily lead to any significant accumulation of physical assets.

Schneider et al. (2019) claim that the *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan Project* led to positive effects on food security and livelihoods, the environment, female empowerment, and structural development. The project led to increased cultivation of staple foods and vegetables and increased income from a marketable surplus, as well as new income-generating activities (IGAs). Similarly, the report claims that beneficiaries started using living fences for the farms and new wood-saving cooking stoves produced by NRM groups that reduced the need for firewood and tree cutting. As for women's empowerment, Schneider et al. state that the high turnout of women in all project components (more than 70% female participants) shows female empowerment for sustainable development, since the adoption of wood-saving cooking stoves reduced the burden of firewood collection for women and children, the use of charcoal, and the unhealthy smoke inside the houses. Nonetheless, this evaluation presents weak evidence to attribute causality between the project's inputs and measurable results.

NRC (2013) concludes that *the Food Security and Livelihood Program (FSL)* had positively affected the availability of food in households and had no effect on lowering the employment of coping strategies to provide food and income among beneficiaries. In the state of Warrap, the study found that 60% reported improved vegetable crop production harvest for certain varieties (okra, eggplant, and kale), household food security, and income generation from sales. There was no project effect on beneficiaries' self-reliance, and no decline in the use of coping strategies or the need to supplement income from other sources in addition to alternative skills in the short time between the end of the project and the evaluation.

#### *Water and sanitation*

PEMConsult (2020) argues that the *Water for Eastern Equatoria Project (W4EE)* led to a series of positive effects on income generation, employment opportunities, access to safe water, improved hygiene, and sanitation. The report concludes that increased income generated as a result of female economic activities has enabled these women to pay school fees and buy uniforms for their children, resulting overall in a better learning environment. Job opportunities and income were created by beneficiaries from agricultural activities since training allowed them to increase their income and production and to hire new personnel to help in the cultivation. As for safe water for household use, the infrastructure developed under the project has brought safe water closer to the communities, resulting in improved hygiene in the households and schools. Nonetheless, the report's evidence is weak and more details on the link between the project's inputs and results are needed.

CDP (2019) posits that the *Water for Lakes (W4L)* project had a positive effect on a clean water supply and on health, hygiene, and food security. Beneficiaries reported that the project led to more savings in health expenditure due to improved hygiene and a reduction in water-borne disease. CDP (2019) also assume that the training in horticulture had led to an increase in household income, which could in turn be used to generate other sources of income, such as livestock keeping and small business activities. With regards to government capacity, CDP (2019) states that the project led to an improvement of governmental capacity to manage and monitor water supply. Nonetheless, the study lacks robust evidence to sustain such findings, either by not providing a measurement of positive impact or by basing its arguments solely on testimonies from project's beneficiaries.

### *Small infrastructure*

Balina et al. (2015) concluded that there was no robust evidence of negative or positive impacts stemming from the *Responsive Assistance for Priority Infrastructure Development (RAPID) Project*. The evaluation team concluded that the RAPID program was only partially meeting the capacity building objectives of the implementation plan. This focus on capacity building at times interfered with other project outcomes such as product quality.

## Sustainability

One report on food security and livelihoods (Schneider et al. 2019) posits that project results were sustainable. Schneider et al. (2019) explain that the *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan Project* has applied measures and methods that facilitate the continuation and replication of the achieved results by the partners themselves. According to them, the main factors for durability in agriculture, natural resource management, as well as in the income-generating components of the project, are the knowledge and skills the households have acquired in the capacity building of their respective groups and at vocational training in the training centre of the Dutch NGO, Dorcas Aid International. An example is the management of hand-dug wells by the communities to secure safe water for agricultural production as well as the farmer field schools and natural resource management groups, which are also part of the policies and strategies of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Commerce from South Sudan.

One report on water and sanitation provides both positive and negative results on the sustainability of projects' outcomes (CDP 2019). Concerning the *Water for Lakes (W4L)* project, CDP (2019) concludes that, on the one hand, the benefits from the establishment of Water User Committee Associations (WUCAs) will be sustained, and thereby the infrastructure they manage, as a result of community ownership, as well as horticulture and hygiene activities which are also linked to WUCAs. On the other hand, the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) component is at risk. The IWRM is a valuable database of water points for the whole of Lakes State, and it is managed by seconded staff in the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure in Rumbek. The database physically consists of an Excel sheet on a notebook computer. With the end of the project, and possibly the transfer of the seconded staff, the

sustainability of the IWRM data storage is at risk, limiting the impact of the project on water and sanitation.

Three studies conclude that project results were not sustainable (NCR 2013; Balina et al. 2015; PEMConsult 2020). NRC (2013) claims that the stories of success and sustainability were not evident from the *Food Security & Livelihood Program (FSL)*, which could be attributed to the short intervention period. However, similar to CDP's (2019) conclusions, the study posits that longer term sustainability objectives could be achieved via the FSL training interventions to build beneficiaries capacity and skills. Cases of the success of beneficiaries utilizing skills independently to increase their agricultural productivity and income generation indicates a pathway towards the project's sustainability.

Balina et al. (2015) conclude that sustainability of the Responsive Assistance for Priority Infrastructure Development (RAPID) project is severely compromised due to lack of consistent engagement with stakeholders in the project's planning and implementation. Thus a number of completed or near completed projects are at risk of becoming non-functioning (e.g. the Primary Health Care Centre WASH projects).

PEMConsult (2020) evaluates the sustainability of the *Water for Eastern Eatoria Project (W4EE)* as uncertain due to financial constraints and political instability. First, W4EE activities are only sustainable if funding is available after the termination of the project. Secondly, civil unrest is one of the major threats to sustainability of the project's best practices due to the resulting displacement of people and subsequent discontinuity of the sustainable use of water in agriculture, livestock keeping, and entrepreneurship productivity.

Two reports did not assess sustainability's concerns (Pretari & Anguko 2016; Sulaiman 2010).

## Barriers

Four reports mention barriers and constraints to project implementation and the achievement of outcomes. The barriers mentioned by the studies are varied and can be listed as follows: government rejection of cooperation with civil society organizations (CDP 2019); urban violence and insecurity (Schneider et al. 2019; PEMConsult 2020; Balina et al. 2015 ); economic depression and inflation (Schneider et al. 2019); and challenging climate and infrastructure conditions (PEMConsult 2020).

CDP (2019) reports that the main obstacle for the *Water for Lakes (W4L)* project implementation was local government resistance to the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs). It felt that CSOs were given tasks and benefits that should have been given to government institutions. Additionally, since the project did not and never intended to reach the entire community of Lakes State, local government felt that it was blamed by segments of the population not assisted by the project.

Schneider et al (2019) explain that urban violence was the main obstacle to the *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan Project's* implementation since banditry and theft along the

Wau–Juba main supply road led to periodic shortages of essential commodities and inputs, resulting in the delay of some activities, such as the construction of hand-dug wells, due to lack of construction materials. In a similar vein, PEMConsult (2020) reports that the implementation of the *Water for Eastern Equatoria Project (W4EE)* was delayed due to conflict and only took off after a semblance of peace returned to the project areas, meaning that some level of stability is a prerequisite for executing undertakings of this nature.

Schneider et al. (2019) also highlight that high inflation rates in South Sudan and the devaluation of the South Sudanese Pound represented a significant obstacle, as they affected the project's budget negatively. Therefore, lower quantities of inputs were available for the project and even basic agricultural tools had to be shared between farmer groups. As the whole population suffered from the economic crisis, targeting the neediest households was also difficult because everyone hoped to be targeted in order to gain an opportunity to increase their income.

PEMConsult (2020) mentions that, in addition to the barriers imposed by the ongoing conflict in the country, climate conditions such as heavy rains negatively impacted the *Water for Eastern Equatoria Project (W4EE)*. These natural hazards, in conjunction with poor infrastructure, create barriers to providing water storage and supply solutions, as floods and landslides may lead to failure to sustainably utilize the constructed infrastructure.

Balina et al. (2015) conclude that with regard to project implementation, the major constraints faced by the *Responsive Assistance for Priority Infrastructure Development (RAPID)* included volatile security conditions and limited management capacity of contractors, resulting in delays in implementation. There are inherent seasonal constraints in some states due to flooding during the rainy season. These seasonal constraints limit, in some cases even eliminate productivity during the wet season, by closing off roads and making construction impossible. However, UNOPS was expected to mitigate these constraints as much as it could by factoring them into all aspects of project planning.

## Summary

Overall, the impact of rural development and climate projects in South Sudan can be considered significant in specific areas, such as the improvement of food security and agricultural techniques among beneficiaries, and insufficient in others, namely water and sanitation, and infrastructure. More specifically, looking at the two projects in water and sanitation, no evidence of impact either positive or negative can be claimed due to methodological concerns. As for the one project in small infrastructure, no evidence of impact can be stated owing to the RAPID program only partially meeting its capacity building objectives.

On a positive note, communities in South Sudan are eager to learn and innovate to diversify their income-generating activities and ensure their food security, as illustrated by Pretari & Anguko (2016) and Sulaiman (2010). The most successful projects, the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Project and Food-for-Training and Income Generation (FFTIG)*, were able to leverage the communities' willingness to learn through training on agricultural methods,

crop diversification, and the use of organic material, ensuring the project's sustainability. Beneficiaries acquired the knowledge and skills to replicate what had been taught, resulting not only in improved livelihoods but also in the reduction of children's work and an increase in female school enrolment rates.

However, some barriers represent serious threats for the successful implementation of ongoing and future rural development projects in this country, such as urban violence and political instability, economic crisis, poor infrastructure, and the lack of government and civil society cooperation. Urban violence and the eruption of the civil conflict after 2016 imposed delays in the delivery of project inputs due to the theft of project's supply, safety concerns for personnel, as well as the need of some level of stability to execute project activities in rural and urban communities (Schneider et al. 2019; PEMConsult 2020; Balina et al. 2015). The economic crisis and high inflation in South Sudan has reduced the purchasing power of project budgets. Poor infrastructure makes roads impassable due to heavy rains in the wet season and negatively impacts the implementation of water management systems. Finally, the rejection by local government of civil society participation in project implementation creates barriers for the successful implementation of activities, since civil society can engage in track-three processes, influencing more local and grassroots communities.

Only two reports (Schneider et al. 2019; NCR 2013), both on food security and livelihoods and aimed at increasing beneficiaries' resilience to external shocks (i.e. drought, flood, armed and/or political conflict). Schneider et al. (2019) conclude that the *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan Project* enhanced households' resilience through improved capacity development as the target groups continue to apply agricultural practices and have diversified their income-generating activities. However, since no new severe shocks have occurred since the end of the project, it remains to be seen whether the improved resilience and stabilized livelihoods of the target groups are strong enough to enable fast recovery after acute shocks or stress. NRC (2013) could not determine whether the food and livelihoods program had an impact on resilience because NRC lacked a knowledge base and reliable baseline data to measure this component.

Only three reports, two from water and sanitation, and one from small infrastructure, included government capacity improvement as one of their desired outcomes (CDP 2019; Balina et al. 2015; PEMConsult 2020). Overall, CDP (2019) concludes that the *Water for Lakes (W4L)* project was effective in improving government capacity at the state level as state governments acknowledged in interviews that the capacity of its staff and civil society organizations on water and geophysical monitoring had strengthened. However, the same cannot be said for local governments who were reticent with the project leadership of civil society organizations. The political dispute on the control of the operation of water facilities hindered local authorities from truly engaging in project activities. PEMConsult (2020) could not conclude whether the *Water for Eastern Equatoria Project (W4EE)* had an impact on government capacity. As for small infrastructure projects, Balina et al. (2015) also agreed that the RAPID project improved government capacity through liaison with the Ministry of Roads and Bridges and the Roads Authority, and the Tambura water supply community on the construction of bridges and roads.

They highlight the model of consultation between UNOPS and the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure for both contractor and CBO supervision as an efficient model to ensure government capacity and ownership.

Lastly, only two reports, both from the food security and livelihoods section, take into consideration the “do no harm” principle (Schneider et al. 2019; NRC 2013). Schneider et al. (2019) conclude that the construction of hand-dug wells for vegetable production in the dry season with the support of the *Adaptation of Agricultural Cultivation Methods to Climate Change and Stabilization of Livelihoods in Western Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan Project* created rivalry between farmers and livestock keepers for the use of water. This was considered the only unintended negative impact of the project. According to the “do no harm” principle, the project found a solution to de-escalate the ‘divider’ – water – and to establish an organized management of the wells under the control of the communities: with the supply of plastic containers to be filled at night, water can be secured for vegetable production, while during the daytime it is also available for animals. With regard to the *Food Security & Livelihood Program (FSL)* that aimed to develop agriculture capacity among returnees and displaced persons, NRC (2013) considered that the vulnerability assessment conducted was consistent with the “do no harm” principle, and the selection of beneficiaries comprising 75% returnees and 25% host community was found valid as returnees’ vulnerability was considered higher than that of host community members. Moreover, the policy approach was found to be positive in its attempt to reintegrate host community and returnees by including them together in its support interventions.

In sum, projects on rural development and climate in South Sudan, including those related to food security and livelihoods, water and sanitation, and small infrastructure, have great potential for success. This potential, however, needs to be rigorously investigated. There is a lack of evidence on whether projects that aim to improve water management and overall infrastructure are working. At the same time, these very same components (or the lack of them) prevent project implementation, such as when flooding occurs and dirt roads become impassable in the rainy season. But not only that, most projects did not address important concerns, namely the “do no harm” principle and beneficiaries’ resilience. It is urgent that future projects aim at increasing the target population's ability to deal with external shocks that range from the heavy rains already mentioned to economic disruptions and to civil conflict, while ensuring that project inputs do not generate disputes among beneficiaries. Should these concerns be taken into account, the South Sudan population will greatly benefit.



# Health

## The Evidence Base

### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

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Malel, Z.J.B, B.B., Henry, B.B., Legge, S., Palmieri, J. & Agarth, A. 2020. Introduction of Postpartum and Post Abortion Family Planning into Three Hospitals in South Sudan. *South Sudan Medical Journal*, 13(3), 90–94. Available at:

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Tongun, J.B., Tumwine, J.K., Ndeezi, G., Sebit, M.B., Mukunya, D., Nankunda, J. & Tylleskar, T. The effect of health worker training on early initiation of breastfeeding in South Sudan: A hospital-based before and after study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(20), 3917. Available at:

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<https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/5/4/e002093.full.pdf/>

## Good Enough Evaluations

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Anderson, F.J. 2014. Evaluation of maternal and child health transformation project in Warrap state, South Sudan. USAID, World Vision. Available at: <https://www.mcsprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/WV-S.-Sudan-FE-Report-2.pdf>

Hughes J. & Ali, M. 2012. *Sudan health transformation project phase II: end of project performance evaluation report*. USAID. Available at: <https://pdfroom.com/books/evaluation-sudan-health-transformation-project-phase-ii-end-of-project-performance/zydD8zLQd14/>

Integrity. 2018. Evaluation of the South Sudan Health Pooled Fund. Department for International Development (DFID) and Global Affairs Canada.

Kisanga, A., Abiuda, B., Walyaula, P., Losey, L. & Samson, O. 2019. Evaluation of the functionality and effectiveness of the CORE Group Polio Project's Community-Based Acute Flaccid Paralysis Surveillance System in South Sudan. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 101(4 Suppl.),91–99. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31760972/>.

We included 12 evaluations on health. One is in the field of infectious disease control (in this case, malaria), four are in reproductive health care, and seven are in health policy and administrative management. Seven of the evaluations are rigorous impact evaluations.

### *Infectious disease control*

Inambao (2010) evaluates the Global Fund's Malaria Round Two program that was designed to reduce the burden of malaria as a disease in an estimated population of 1.9 million in more than 17 counties in Southern Sudan. UNDP was the principal recipient for the grant on behalf of the Ministry of Health. The project distributed insecticide-treated nets to children and pregnant women (33% and 45% targets achieved respectively), trained net distributors for children and pregnant women (80% and 92% targets achieved respectively), ran awareness programs, trained emergency preparedness workers (73% achieved), provided anti-malaria treatment (64% of target achieved), strengthened health information systems in health facilities (94%) and trained IT professionals (124%). The financial allocation during the evaluated period was US\$ 25 million over five years. The evaluation uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data collection was based on the set of performance indicators established and agreed with the Global Fund. The evaluation sample for the qualitative research was based on a purposive cluster sampling from the 17 counties with an estimated population of 1.9 million people.

However, there was neither a baseline nor a control group against which outcomes and impacts could be measured.

### *Reproductive health care*

Izudi et al. (2019) evaluate an intervention that provided health education on birth preparedness and complication readiness (BPCR) based on World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. The study is based on a previous cross-sectional study on early postnatal care in Mundri East county. The evaluation uses propensity score matching to compare a treatment group and a control group. No funding information is provided.

Malel et al. (2020) assess training of health care workers to introduce postpartum / post abortion family planning to women who have delivered or undergone spontaneous abortion at Juba Teaching Hospital, Tambura Hospital, and Yei Hospital. To achieve this, 22 health care workers were trained. No information on funding is provided.

Anderson (2014) evaluates a maternal health and child health transformation (MaCHT) project in Warrap State, South Sudan by USAID and World Vision. No funding amount is indicated in the evaluation report. The report assessed the utilization of the Health Pooled Fund (HPF). The project was funded by Canada, Denmark, the EU, and Australia. The HPF aimed to improve health facilities and link them with communities. The project wanted to improve maternal, neonatal, infant, and child health outcomes at the household/community level through the training of Home Health Promoters, a newly approved cadre of Community Health Worker in South Sudan, supported by the Health Facility Management Committees (HFMCs) and Mother Leader Groups (MLGs). Additionally, the project sought to strengthen the capacity of the health system through investment in the increased human resource capacity and improvement at health facility level. To achieve that, over 100 women were trained as home health promoters to deliver these interventions and provide education. Four midwives were also trained.

The evaluation uses a mixed method approach, with primary quantitative data collected through knowledge, practice, and coverage (KPC) surveys carried out at baseline and endline (on 298 and 510 mothers of children under two respectively) and qualitative data collected during the evaluation through interviews and focus group discussions.

Tongun et al. (2019) evaluate the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) training course for health workers to improve their competence to foster optimal breastfeeding at Juba Teaching Hospital in South Sudan. The paper employs a quantitative method by collecting baseline and endline data. The sample size was 803. There was no control group. No funding information is provided.

### *Health policy and administrative management*

Palmer et al. (2014) assess a training intervention for Health Care Workers in peripheral facilities in Nimule, South Sudan to increase knowledge of Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT) symptomatology and the rate of syndromic referrals to a central screening and treatment centre. The project trained 108 Health Care Workers from 61 public, private, and military peripheral health facilities in the county during six one-day workshops. The authors collected

baseline and endline data through survey questionnaires, knowledge test records, and hospital administrative records. There was no control group. The complementary qualitative analysis is based on interviews with various stakeholders including hospital workers and on focus group discussions. No funding information is provided.

Rosales et al. (2015) evaluate the Maternal and Child Health Transformation (MaCHT) Project implemented by World Vision, which was aimed at improving maternal, neonatal, infant, and child health outcomes. Note that this is the same project evaluated by Anderson (2014).

Kisanga et al. (2019) evaluate the CORE Group Polio Project (CGPP) which established and executed a community-based acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance system in conflict-affected and inaccessible parts of South Sudan. The project established partnerships with other key players – local and international – to reach greater numbers of people, particularly displaced populations. The paper uses a qualitative approach that includes desk review and interviews with key informants at the county level. In addition, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with relevant partners and stakeholders engaged in the CGPP CBS system. Quantitative data were obtained from routine reports of the CORE Group Polio Project, community-based surveillance system, and the WHO line-list for 2016 and 2017. A total of 118 participants were interviewed, of whom 108 were from the six selected counties and ten were working at the national level in Juba. No funding information is provided.

Alwar et al. (2016) assess the Global Fund Round 9 Health System Strengthening project for South Sudan funded by the Global Fund and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) South Sudan. The project had a budget of US\$ 44.6 million. The project provided major infrastructural support to increase the capabilities of the South Sudan Health sector for training health workers; established systems for health commodity supply chain management; established health information systems; and improved access to quality of health services. The study applies qualitative and quantitative methods with data from primary and secondary sources. The data sources are document review and analysis; interviews and discussions with key beneficiaries and key stakeholders including donors, government officials, and UN agencies; field visits; participatory observation; and stakeholder feedback to the draft evaluation report. The report does not mention either baseline or endline data or a control group.

Hughes & Ali (2012) evaluate a project intended to strengthen the health system of South Sudan. The project had results in service delivery, health system strengthening, and demand increase. The project ran from February 2009 to October 2012 with a total available funding of US\$ 58.5 million. The project sought to improve the management system of the County Health Departments, for example by producing county health plans and developing county health budgets. The project also established and trained village health committees and involved community organizations in mobilizing and increasing demand for health services. A micro-grants program was expected to fund community organizations to promote health awareness, knowledge, service utilization, and reductions in high-risk health behavior. Finally, formal training was provided to staff through seminars and workshops, on-the-job coaching, and mentoring. The methodology used is predominantly qualitative in nature, with some supplementary quantitative information about service delivery. A comprehensive review of

project and government documents through desk review was undertaken. Over 40 key informant interviews were conducted.

Integrity (2018) evaluated the Health Pooled Fund (HPF). This was a multi-donor trust fund led by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Global Affairs Canada, the EU, Sweden, and USAID, with a total financial volume of US\$ 264 million for 2016–2018. Its objectives were to establish an effective public health system that would deliver improved access to quality health services in South Sudan and would respond to emergency response with a specific focus on reducing maternal and child mortality. The project reached the end of its second phase in September 2018. The evaluation covers the first (2012–16) and second (2016–18) phases of the program. The third phase began in October 2018. The Health Pooled Fund had a heavy focus on women and children. The key expected outcomes were to 1) strengthen service delivery, 2) strengthen health systems (HSS), 3) improve community engagement, and 4) improve nutrition services. The major outputs were 1) provision of basic health services by the non-state sector in line with the HSDP, 2) support to country hospitals, 3) work with the community to create demand and governance mechanisms, 4) work with the central and state Ministry of Health to build capacity in managing the fund, if possible, and 5) support the country's health departments.

Integrity (2018) adopts a mixed-method approach. Qualitative data are collected using focus group discussions and key informant interviews with semi-structured question guides from a range of different groups including beneficiaries and other stakeholders. For quantitative analysis, a cellphone-based beneficiary survey was conducted along with a health facility survey at all the twenty facilities visited. Overall, the evaluation concludes that results of the HPF were very positive.

Finally, Valadez et al. (2020) examine overall investments on the maternal, newborn, child, and reproductive health (MNCRH) service in the context of the national conflict in South Sudan. The study conducts two national cross-sectional probability surveys in ten states in 2011 and nine states in 2015. Trained state-level health workers collected data from randomly selected households using probability proportional to size sampling of villages in each county. County data were weighted by their population sizes to measure state and national maternal, newborn, child, and reproductive health services coverage. The study finds that South Sudan made moderate progress in health system strengthening in the five years from independence (2011). The results document moderate improvement in several key indicators: institutional delivery, immunization, malaria prophylaxis during pregnancy, malaria and diarrhoea treatment, and HIV testing. However, in 2015, South Sudan was still far from meeting national and international targets for these and other services due to persistent instability caused by domestic political-military conflict. Without continued international support, health system improvement could be threatened, and health service delivery would deteriorate.

## Methods

There are five rigorous evaluations which use predominantly quantitative methods, such as data collected by structured survey questionnaires for both baseline and end line. There are six 'good

enough' evaluations which are typically based on qualitative methods, for example, focus group discussion, interviews, and previous reports and documents. One academic study does not provide any methodology of the analysis.

## Impacts

### *Infectious disease control*

Inambao (2010) finds that measures such as distributing long-lasting insecticide treated nets (LLITN) to children under five years and pregnant women as well as awareness programs significantly reduced the burden of malaria despite indications of lower-than-expected achievement in performance. The reduction of malaria is reflected in reduced level of malaria infection, improved capacity of health workers to diagnose and treat malaria competently, creation of a high level of community awareness by involvement of community leaders in the education process, increased population awareness on the prevention and management of malaria through the use of insecticide impregnated mosquito nets, and seeking of early treatment and protection of pregnant women by taking IPTs.

### *Reproductive health care*

Izudi et al. (2019) find that health education on birth preparedness and complication readiness (BPCR) improved skilled birth attendance, but not early postnatal care use. This suggests healthcare providers engaged in maternal and child health services provision should routinely provide pregnant mothers with correct and consistent information on birth and complications.

Malel et al. (2020) found that training of health care staff to advocate and promote postpartum / post abortion contraception is effective and can contribute to family planning services.

Anderson (2014) observes that training of Home Health Promoters coupled with investment in human resource capacity and improvement at health facility level had the highest impact in the areas of antenatal care, malaria prevention and treatment, diarrhoea and pneumonia treatment, as well as essential newborn care coverage, which correlates with 90 percent of allocated efforts and funds. Conversely, immunization coverage showed the highest negative change over the course of project implementation. Results provide evidence of the positive impact on health coverage and status in the population of pregnant women and children under five years of age by delivering essential health services through community structures.

Tongun et al. (2019) find that training provided by the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) for health care workers increased the prevalence of early initiation of breastfeeding from 48% to 91%. The mothers were 70% more likely to initiate breastfeeding early after health workers' training.

### *Health policy and administrative management*

Palmer et al. (2014) find that training health care workers on knowledge of Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT) symptomatology increased HAT referrals. About 36 health care workers

(37.1%) and 35 facilities (71.4%) reported having made at least one HAT referral, corresponding to a 1.4-fold and 2.1-fold increase in the proportion of referring health care workers and facilities, respectively, compared to baseline measure one. Immediately after the training, there was a statistically significant increase in syndromic knowledge. Despite a decrease in test scores between the training and evaluation (11.0/14), improvements in HAT knowledge from before the training remained statistically significant at the evaluation period four months later.

Rosales et al. (2015) found that the training of HHPs, investment in increased human resource capacity and improvements at health facility level caused significant and positive change in all the seven maternal care-related variables over the life of project implementation. For example, there was a 17% increase in the proportion of surveyed mothers reported having the included showed significant increases.

Integrity (2018) found that significant results were achieved by the US\$ 264 million Health Pooled Fund (HPF). For example, both the total patient attendance rate and the attendance rate for children under five had more than doubled since the program began. All respondents in Juba expressed a reasonable level of satisfaction and reported significant improvements in service delivery. These accomplishments must be considered a major success, especially considering South Sudan's extremely difficult operating environment and severe underfunding of service delivery. The HPF-supported community engagement made considerable progress on raising awareness and increasing service uptake. HPF also made a significant contribution in the improvement of the Health Management Information System (HMIS), and the report finds the HMIS to be reasonably effective in generating data on progress. There are no prospects for long term sustainability of the program, either financial or institutional. Nevertheless, some elements of HPF are likely to have a lasting effect beyond the end of the program. These include capacity building, health committees, and good health practices promoted by the program's awareness-raising activities.

The report asserts that "a pooled funding model is an effective modality in fragile states, provided its design is based on the context", and the evaluation considers the South Sudan HPF a highly successful model given the context. The structure permits constructive engagement with the government at the sector level through technical staff in the Ministry of Health, and through decentralized structures, even in situations where the donor community is in conflict with the national leadership. "Success stories, such as the HPF, should be communicated effectively to the international community in order to attract much needed funding" (Integrity 2018: 8).

Kisanga et al. (2019) find that establishment and execution of a community-based acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance system increased case reports from 0.0% to 56.4% between January 2016 and June 2017.

Alwar et al. (2016) find that infrastructural support to increase the capabilities of the health care workers, the establishment of supply chain management, and the establishment of a health information system made significant contributions to strengthening the South Sudan health systems.

Hughes & Ali (2012) find that improvements in the management system of the County Health Departments, establishment of trained village health committees, and formal training of health workers achieved encouraging results at the supported facilities. 96 percent provided five of seven high-impact services; four out of five pregnant women received some form of antenatal care (ANC) (nearly double the national average); and three out of four children under one year of age received the third dose of Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus (DPT3) vaccine. However, the availability of services was vulnerable to persistent supply and equipment shortages and lack of qualified health workers.

Valadez et al. (2020) find that investments on maternal, newborn, child, and reproductive health (MNCRH) services resulted in significant improvements in 22 of 27 national indicators relating to MNCRH services. For example, institutional deliveries increased by 10.5% to 20%, measles vaccination coverage in children aged 12–23 months increased by 11.2% to 49.7%, and mothers treating diarrhoea in children aged 0–59 months with oral rehydration salts rose from 17.7% to 51.4%.

## Sustainability

Only five out of the twelve reports discuss sustainability.

Inambao (2010) observes that the Global Fund's Malaria Round Two program had no exit strategy for sustainability beyond the grant support. The program has failed to effectively get community buy-in. Sustainability of the program is compromised by the lack of counterpart capacity on the government side to provide resources to support activities at the end of the program period.

Malel et al. (2020) mention that the project on the training of health care workers to introduce postpartum / post abortion family planning to women had a sustainability plan, but they provide no further details.

Rosales et al. (2015), in their evaluation of a Maternal and Child Health Transformation (MaCHT) project, observe that violent conflict and government instability significantly affected project activities related to drug procurement and availability of transportation. As a result, sustainability was threatened.

Alwar et al. (2016) find that the Global Fund Round 9 Health System Strengthening project for South Sudan was fully owned by the government. However, capacity had not been adequately built for preventive maintenance of equipment. There was also a gap in human resource capacities, and there was no clear exit strategy for the project.

Integrity (2018) sees no prospect for long term sustainability of the Health Pooled Funds (HPF), either financial or institutional. Nevertheless, some elements of HPF are likely to have a lasting effect beyond the end of the program. These include capacity building, health committees, and good health practices promoted by the program's awareness-raising activities.



## Barriers

Malel et al. (2020) observe that there was lack of protocols and guidelines concerning postpartum / post abortion family planning.

Palmer et al. (2014) found that the lack of an organized, accessible patient transportation system in the county was a barrier since it put the onus of referral completion on the patient.

Hughes & Ali (2012) mentioned that lack of guidance by the Ministry of Health about community-level health services was causing general confusion at the community level among all stakeholders. The report also noted a lack of skilled human resources.

Similarly, Anderson (2014) noticed that the greatest barrier to health care in South Sudan was the lack of skilled human resources.

Alwar et al. (2016) mentioned that the main challenges faced during implementation of the R9 HSS grant were lack of national standard specifications for medical equipment and designs of civil works; delay in construction of civil works due to insecurity; constrained access to the project site due to the and poor road network, often impassable during the wet season; and limited local capacity for preventive maintenance of medical equipment.

Integrity (2018) found that many women refused to access specific services because the health service providers were men. The report also mentioned that in a fragile context where gender roles are reified, addressing sexual health needs and issues around sexuality becomes critical. In many communities, unfavourable gender roles and societal norms continue to be a barrier to access to care, particularly in areas with poor literacy and high poverty rates. The 'rigid roles' created for men and women were highlighted as one of the biggest barriers to women getting health care.

## Summary

We included 12 health evaluations: one in the field of malaria control, four in reproductive health care, and seven in health policy and administrative management.

The study on malaria control suggests that the intervention (the distribution of insecticide treated nets to children and pregnant women combined with an array of supporting programs) performed well.

All the interventions on women's reproductive health and child health involved education and training, either directly for the beneficiaries (mothers) or for other stakeholders such as health care workers. The findings of these reports suggest that the various educational and capacity building programs had positive impacts in improving access to healthcare services for mothers and children. For example, health education on birth preparedness and complication readiness (BPCR) improved skilled birth attendance. Another report found that training of newly appointed community health workers increased coverage of various types of healthcare (e.g. antenatal care and malaria prevention.). However, there are a few methodological issues. One report

does not provide any methodology for the evaluation. One compares the endline with the baseline without having a control group, whereas another conducts a propensity score matching with a control group, but does not use any baseline data.

There are seven evaluations on strengthening the health system (Palmer et al. 2014; Rosales et al. 2015; Kisanga et al. 2019; Hughes & Ali 2012; Alwar et al. 2016; Valadez et al. 2020; and Integrity 2018). The interventions focused on service delivery, capacity building of healthcare professionals, infrastructural improvements, and health information system developments. All evaluations report positive results in terms of achieving outputs and having positive impacts on service delivery. For example, one project was reported to increase delivery of high-impact services (some of which are women- and children-specific) by improving the management system of the County Health Departments, establishing and training village health committees, and engaging community organizations and providing formal training, on-the-job coaching, and mentoring to the human resources. Another example involves a community-based surveillance system for reporting acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) which was found to significantly increase reporting of disease-afflicted cases.

Notably, the massive Health Pooled Fund (HPF) was credited with significant results in improving health services. The evaluation suggests that the HPF was a success story and that this aid modality should be implemented in other fragile contexts.

Only five out of twelve reports discussed the issue of sustainability. From these five reports, it appears that interventions in health are rarely sustainable in a context such as South Sudan without continued support by donors.

## Sustainable Economic Development

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

Collins, E. & Ligon, E. 2017. *Asset transfers and household neediness*. UC Berkeley. CUDARE Working Papers. Available at: <https://escholarship.org/content/qt24t720fk/qt24t720fk.pdf>.

#### Good Enough Evaluations

Chiwara, R. 2012. *Creating opportunities for youth employment in South Sudan: Final evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan%20-%20YEM%20-%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>

Chowdhury, R., Collins, E., Ligon, E. & Sulaiman, M. 2017. *Valuing assets provided to low-income households in South Sudan*. CEQA. Available at: [https://economics.ucr.edu/pacdev/pacdev-papers/valuing\\_assets\\_provided.pdf](https://economics.ucr.edu/pacdev/pacdev-papers/valuing_assets_provided.pdf)

Three studies are included, two of which refer to the same program implemented and funded by BRAC (Chowdhury et al. 2017; Collins & Ligon 2017). Neither study indicates the total program budget. The third study (Chiwara 2012) is of a joint UN and Government of Southern Sudan program to mainstream the creation of employment opportunities for youth and to equip them with appropriate skills training. Funding for this Joint Program was provided entirely by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). The total budget was US\$ 4,534,228 and was allocated between nine participating UN agencies.

The BRAC program incorporated distribution of both unconditional cash transfers and transfers to the ultra-poor. The first study (Collins & Ligon 2017) is a rigorous analysis of the pilot program of transfers to the ultra-poor (TUP). The second study (Chowdhury et al. 2017) offers a direct comparison of the transfers to the ultra-poor with unconditional cash transfers (UCT). Both the UCT and the TUP frameworks are direct capital transfer interventions but take a very different approach: TUP programs guide and constrain the use of capital towards productive investment whilst UCTs allow households to invest and consume as they see fit.

In late 2013, BRAC piloted a program of transfers to the ultra-poor near the town of Yei in Central Equatoria (Collins & Ligon 2017). Women in very poor households were provided with physical assets and appropriate training to encourage their participation in a micro-enterprise. 249 women were given start-up capital at a marginal cost of about \$240 and received livestock, agricultural materials, or retail stock. They then participated in training specific to the assets provided and were given periodic food support valued at \$110.

The TUP program consisted of four phases: targeting and selection, training and enterprise selection, asset transfers, and monitoring. A census survey was designed to establish program eligibility. A subset of eligible women was identified, and a random sample of these was then selected to be surveyed in a baseline survey conducted in 2013. A third follow-up survey was subsequently conducted in 2014. The first round of data collection consisted of a census of women in households within a 6 km radius of the regional BRAC office. These women typically lived on small plots of land with several one-room mud buildings. 80% of the surveyed women were between the ages of 20 and 40, with between one and three children. The TUP program relied primarily on a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria based on wealth correlates taken from a community-wide survey. Surveyed households were excluded if they contained a salaried worker or participated in another NGO program. Participation was limited to women with access to cultivable land, since this was necessary for some of the TUP enterprises. Of these women, BRAC identified 650 as eligible, who fitted at least three of the following criteria: 1) the head of household worked as a day labourer; 2) the household had two or more children; 3) at least one child was working; 4) the household had fewer than three rooms; and 5) the household included an adult female who had not completed secondary school (Collins & Ligon 2017).

Of the 1,279 households surveyed during the census, 58% met all of the eligibility requirements. Of these 745 eligible households, enumerators were able to locate and interview 649 in the baseline survey in July 2013, and 554 of these were located and interviewed in the follow-up survey in 2014. Both the baseline and follow-up surveys contained modules on enterprise and income-generating activity, household composition, food security, and consumption of a range of food and non-food goods (Collins & Ligon 2017).

250 of the 649 women interviewed at baseline were randomly selected to participate in the TUP treatment program. Most selected women worked either as housewives or in small-scale agriculture. 80% lived in households with some agricultural output, 35% had poultry or livestock, and roughly 36% were involved in small trade or retail. Average reported daily consumption expenditures amounted to roughly \$1.50 per person (Collins & Ligon 2017). 125 of the other women interviewed in the baseline survey and meeting all criteria received unconditional cash transfers and the remaining 274 were assigned to a control group (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

After a general orientation to familiarize the beneficiaries with the program, each was asked their preference for type of business amongst selling dry fish at market, raising goats, raising ducks, and growing maize. BRAC set the number of participants in each group beforehand, ensuring that many but not all participants received their preferred asset type (Collins & Ligon 2017). Whilst the staff tried to map households' asset types to their respective preferences and skills, a disproportionate number stated a preference for goats or small trade. 75 enrolled in agricultural activities (vegetable cultivation), 85 in duck rearing, 45 in goat rearing, and the rest in small trade businesses (Chowdhury et al. 2017). Beneficiaries were also enrolled in business skills training, some of which was program-wide, such as basic and financial literacy, but most was specific to the type of asset provided. Training occurred over four days at BRAC's office or demonstration farm. Initial intensive training sessions were subsequently replaced by monitoring and mentorship from local extension staff, as well as small support groups of 8–12 beneficiaries (Collins & Ligon 2017).

Asset transfers to beneficiaries began in late 2013. There was an effort to keep the market value of the transferred goods constant across enterprises. Each beneficiary in each enterprise group received assets valued at roughly \$240. After transfers were made, BRAC also provided weekly food transfers valued at roughly \$110 per beneficiary, which were intended to ease their household budgets, compensate them for time spent training, and encourage them not to sell the assets before their businesses took off (Collins & Ligon 2017). According to Chowdhury et al. (2017) a random subset of half the TUP and UCT beneficiary households received an additional \$60 in assets later in 2014 but this was not part of Collins & Ligon's (2017) study.

The 125 households in the UCT group were randomly divided in two to receive cash of the same amount. Unfortunately, political instability forced the closure of the BRAC regional office, preventing completion of TUP asset transfers and the simultaneous disbursement of the cash transfers. A midline survey was conducted in June 2014 to try to separate pre- and post-conflict changes in outcomes. Cash transfers were disbursed immediately after the June 2014 survey. There was, therefore, a difference of three to six months between the two interventions. Since some of the asset transfers were made before the office closure, estimates of the difference

between programs may be affected if rates of return changed in the intervening months (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

An endline survey was conducted in mid-2015 to estimate the effect of program participation on households' financial situation and welfare. The survey conducted in mid-2014 had provided information on *short-term* treatment effects of the TUP program within six months of the asset transfers, whilst providing a second baseline for the cash transfers. There was no comparison group to be able to assess the effects of the 2013 conflict on economic conditions in Yei; instead, estimates of treatment effects on the severity or likelihood of exposure to the conflict are reported. The 2015 survey permitted an estimation of treatment effects 15–18 months after the asset transfers and 12 months after the cash transfers. In order to obtain estimates on household welfare for the UCT group in the slightly longer term, five short surveys were conducted on a monthly basis from November 2015 to March 2016. These collected only a subset of the full consumption modules, with a few questions tracking major transactions and shocks. The short length of the survey permitted its administration via the mobile network, reducing cost and improving response rate (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

The Joint Program (JP) between the UN and the Government of Southern Sudan (GRSS) (Chiwara 2010) focused on mainstreaming the creation of employment opportunities for youth. The lead agency was the ILO, supported by eight other UN organizations, the GRSS, NGOs, and other national partners. The JP took place in five states of Southern Sudan: Western Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, and Jonglei.

The program was originally drafted in 2008, and during April–May 2010, the UN and GRSS undertook a joint Inception Mission to enable changes in local circumstances to be taken into account. The proposed outcomes were revised and a total of 16 of the original 22 outputs were retained. The new proposed outcomes were:

- 1) Developing youth policies and Youth Employment Action Plans at national and state levels
- 2) Scaling up MGD-based good practices on employment creation and life skills, and contributing to the development of a youth employment and life skills program
- 3) Development and implementation of practical employment and life skills training opportunities for men and women tailored to their choices and needs.

The JP's logic model and theory of change was based on a) addressing challenges in the enabling environment and mainstreaming youth in national and state-level development policies and action plans, and b) developing and implementing interventions to demonstrate what is possible and what could be done to empower the youth at local level and in the context of specific labour markets (Chiwara 2010).

For outcome 1, the main implementation strategy was to intervene at policy level to facilitate development of an enabling environment and institutional capacity for creating opportunities for youth. Three UN agencies– ILO, UNDP, and UNICEF – contributed to this outcome, which used approx. 8% of the total JP budget (Chiwara 2010).

For outcome 2, the JP was potentially designed to contribute to five Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Chiwara 2010):

- Goal 1, target 1B – Achieve decent employment for women, men and youth
- Goal 2, target 2A – Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3, target 3A – Share of women in wage employment (in the non-agricultural sector)
- Goal 6, target 6A – Have halted (by 2015) and begun to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS
- Goal 8, target 16 – Develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

To meet outcome 3, the JP undertook youth employment and baseline surveys in Juba (Central Equatoria) and Wau (Western Bahr el Ghazal) for the urban markets approach, in Magwi County (Eastern Equatoria) and Bor County (Jonglei) for the rural markets approach, and in Warrap and Jonglei states for the agro-pastoralist approach. Locally hired data collectors and translators facilitated quantitative and qualitative surveys. Interviews were conducted with consumers, community leaders, business owners and employees, and youth in each location to assess consumer demand for goods and services and market opportunities. A comparative analysis of 22 market assessments was commissioned. In the Youth Survey, 37% of respondents were female, while in the Market Opportunity Survey, 36% were female. The JP also supported an Urban Labour Force Survey. No comparators were specified. Program strategy was based on demonstrating quick impact activities that were not constrained by educational barriers in three thematic areas and two primary entry points. Entry points were quick workplace learning with employment support, and short skills training, also with employment support (Chiwara 2010).

## Methods

### *The TUP and UCT programs*

The rigorous evaluation of the effects of BRAC's TUP program (Collins & Ligon 2017) focused on the welfare of the household, using a measure related to the household's marginal utility of expenditures, or the household's 'neediness', which is simultaneously equal to the marginal benefit of additional consumption expenditures, time, investment, and inputs to production. Neediness is related not only to consumption expenditures, but also to key variables such as the marginal product of labour, investment, and participation in both market- and self-employment. This approach allowed inferences to be drawn regarding which households would benefit most from a hypothetical cash transfer.

The methodology adopts the model of Bandiera et al. (2013)<sup>2</sup> but extends it to accommodate both time and uncertainty. It is interpreted in this case as a model of household rather than individual behaviour, since most of the data available to test the model are at the household level. It is a dynamic model, involving both asset accumulation and occupational choice, and

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<sup>2</sup> Bandiera, O., Burgess, R., Das, N., Gulesci, S., Rasul, I. & Sulaiman, M. 2013. *Can basic entrepreneurship transform the lives of the poor?* International Growth Centre, Working Paper. Available at: <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Bandiera-Et-Al-2013-Working-Paper.pdf>

enables production, consumption, and investment decisions made by the household to be linked (Collins & Ligon 2017). Using data on expenditures and household characteristics, estimates of neediness can be obtained. Neediness parameters are key to understanding the connections between consumption, investment, production, and occupational choice, and permit measurement of the extent to which an intervention operates via its effects on wealth versus the effects it may have on production or occupational choice. Differences in the mean of the inferred neediness log between treatment and control groups will be equal to the average treatment effect (Collins & Ligon 2017).

The interactions of the TUP assignment were used with 2014 and 2015 indicators as the treatment effects at 6–8 and 15–17 months respectively. Interactions with the UCT group in 2014 and 2015 offered a second baseline and a 12-month treatment effect. Given the difference in timing of treatment, a t-test of the hypothesis  $\beta_{TUP,t} - \beta_{Cash,2015} = 0$  was conducted for both 2014 and 2015. That for 2015,  $\beta_{TUP,2015} - \beta_{Cash,2015} = 0$ , was considered to be the central hypothesis, that there was no difference between the TUP and UCT groups (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

A crucial assumption was that the treatment and control groups were selected appropriately. The evidence suggested that the treatment and control groups were similar in observables at baseline, with the exception that the cash group had atypically more motorcycles and clothing (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

In the TUP group, 21 participants could not be found in 2014 (8% attrition), but five were found who were not identified in the baseline survey. Eight additional TUP households were found in 2015, for a final attrition rate of 5%. In the UCT group, 12 were lost (9.6%), then two more in 2015, making the attrition rate 11%. The control group saw very high attrition in 2014 (22%); a large number of households were found who were not identified at the baseline, yielding a comparison group only 6% smaller. The high attrition rate in the control group was due largely to the fact that these households did not have the consistent contact with BRAC that the TUP group had, and the local area lacked infrastructure to easily locate people. This was exacerbated by the uncertain political situation and early harvest. Attrition in 2015 was 6.7%, with 85 more households identified who were not in the baseline survey. In order to take advantage of the households not included in the baseline, an indicator was included for whether or not the household was in the baseline (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

The results for the TUP study are ANCOVA estimates of the effects of being in either of the two groups CTL (Control) and TUP (targeted ultra-poor treatment group) which received assets, training, and food subsidies. Other household characteristics included as controls were the number of people in the household and the number of children. Baseline values of expenditure were included as an additional control, with a complete set of village/area fixed effects (constrained to sum to zero). Where recorded values of consumption expenditure are equal to zero, these are regarded as missing and dropped from the analysis.

### *The Joint Program*

The objectives of the evaluation of the Joint Program (JP) (Chiwara 2012) were concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery and achievement of outcomes, rather than with the impacts on beneficiaries. The objectives were: 1) to measure to what extent the JP had contributed to solving the needs and problems identified in the design phase; 2) to assess the JP's efficiency and quality of outputs and outcomes delivered against what was planned; 3) to determine the extent to which the JP had attained development results in the targeted populations; 4) to measure the JP's contribution to objectives set in the MMDG-F thematic window on Youth Employment and Migration; and 5) to identify and document substantive lessons learned and good practices.

Evaluation criteria reflected the nature of the objectives and were 1) the extent to which the objectives of the program were consistent with the needs of the people, the country, and the MDGs; 2) the extent to which resources/inputs were turned into results, and whether there was effective exercise of leadership by the country's national/local partners; 3) the extent to which the objectives of the program were achieved; and 4) the probability of the program benefits continuing in the long term (Chiwara 2012).

The methodology comprised the collection of documentary material and analysis; individual and group interviews of beneficiaries, implementation partners, and other relevant stakeholders such as youth and women's associations, vocational training institutions, and civil society organizations; and direct observation at projects sites and institutions. Qualitative data collection was based on semi-structured interviews and group discussions with over 90 individuals and stakeholders, including central and state government officials, UN agency staff, and youth and other beneficiaries. Visits were undertaken to sites in all five states, permitting triangulation of information from multiple sources (Chiwara 2012).

Data collected from documents and interviews were analysed qualitatively. Preliminary findings were presented to the evaluation reference group (ERG) as part of a process to validate and triangulate the information. The JP's outcomes and outputs framework did not specify indicators or baselines and it was difficult to be able to collect suitably targeted data. Assessment of outcomes was based on qualitative analysis of program achievements in order to identify what the JP had accomplished in terms of positive development change. The evaluation focused more specifically on the sustainability of JP results and processes (Chiwara 2012).

### **Relevance**

There is no reference to the TUP program's relevance in the report by Collins & Ligon (2017) nor to that of the UCT program in Chowdhury et al.'s (2017) report. The extent of poverty and lack of productive livelihoods amongst the target population made both interventions relevant.

The JP components and target populations were redesigned prior to inception to be made more relevant to the current need in Southern Sudan. As the GRSS itself had said, it had recently taken on a large number of new responsibilities for which it did not yet have the capacity to formulate and implement policies for the medium and longer term. There was therefore an



overwhelming need for attention to policy formulation and institutional capacity development to which the JP aimed to respond. The JP introduced significant innovative approaches (TVETE, Y-Peer, etc.), which were intended as demonstration projects whose replication and up-scaling depended to a great extent on the availability of an enabling policy environment and institutional capacity. Since the creation of opportunities for youth is a cross-cutting issue that requires a multi-sectoral approach, the collaboration of different UN agencies and the engagement of various sector ministries to develop a common strategy was very relevant even though, unfortunately, the results were limited (Chiwara 2012).

## **Efficiency**

In the case of the JP intervention (Chiwara 2012), there were too many UN agencies involved, especially at the downstream level. Some of the UN agencies did not have the capacity nor comparative advantage to operate at that level, and, in some cases, this resulted in some critical activities not being implemented that had a major bearing on the JP's theory of change. The JP logic for creating youth opportunities was premised on the assumption that, after they had obtained appropriate skills training, most youth would establish income generation activities and microenterprises, but the JP failed to implement the key activities for establishing the microfinance and microcredit outputs. An effective M&E plan with indicators for measuring and reporting on results was lacking.

The evaluation identified a number of missed opportunities where different UN agencies could have contributed to a common output. For example, in Wau, Western Bahr el Ghazal State, UNIDO undertook two-week courses to train unemployed youth in masonry, carpentry, welding, and painting. Prior to that, IOM had subcontracted work for the construction and renovation of the Youth Training Centre. This was an opportunity for the two UN agencies to work with the same youth to provide work experience and complement each other's efforts and results (Chiwara 2012).

The UN agencies could also have worked more closely with the GRSS. Since a key objective of the JP was to strengthen the enabling environment and to mainstream youth issues into national development plans, institutional capacity building should have been a critical component of the program. However, the JP used the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), whereby the UN took full responsibility for program implementation, which did not promote national capacity building, nor was there an institutional venue for program sustainability. There were also differences in provision of funding. UNICEF, for example, operated through a grant contract with PLAN International who had subcontracted to the Indian CAP Work Force Development Institute. ILO and UNDP, on the other hand, provided funds and capacity building support for the Labour Market Survey direct to South Sudan's National Bureau of Statistics (Chiwara 2012).

## Impacts

### *The BRAC Program – the TUP and UCT components*

Chowdhury et al. (2017) describe the results of both the TUP and the UCT components of the BRAC program and provide statistical data. Collins & Ligon (2017) interpret only the statistical findings of the TUP study and discuss the results. However, they provide little information about the program's impact on beneficiaries.

Several measures of welfare were compared between the treatment groups of both components and the control group. These were household consumption, food security, asset holdings, savings, land holdings, income, and level of exposure to conflict (Chowdhury et al. 2017)

Household consumption is defined as the market value of goods or services used by the household and in this project a sizable basket of goods was used as the measure of the welfare or poverty of a household. Although prices for each good during the period were not known, between 2014 and 2015 inflation was as high as 100% (Chowdhury et al. 2017). To extrapolate from the summary analysis of the TUP component (Collins & Ligon 2017), the neediness of the treatment group showed a statistically significant reduction relative to that of the control group. This was mirrored by an increase in consumption of 6.5 SSP (South Sudanese Pounds) (about \$1.62 USD) in a subset of observed daily household expenditures. Increased income amongst the TUP treatment group was indicated by their greater demand for fuel, transport, soap, and cosmetics, and also vegetables, sugar, cooking oil, and cereals. The reduction in neediness seen in the TUP group does not indicate how changes in welfare were distributed across individual households, but it does appear that welfare gains in the TUP group may also have had a positive impact on neediness in the control group, except for the least needy. The higher level of consumption seen in 2014, several months after the asset transfers, was not observed in 2015, after about 18 months. Similarly with the UCT treatment group, which had higher consumption when this was measured in 2015, just over a year after cash disbursement, but not when the effects were monitored by additional telephone interviews up to six months later (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

The short-term consumption effects of both the TUP and UCT components were economically significant, and represented a roughly 16% increase in average total consumption for both treatment groups. In both groups, the increase in total consumption appeared to have been driven mainly by increased food consumption, with smaller effects on non-food goods and durables (Chowdhury et al. 2017). The data therefore suggest that, in respect of consumption, neither the TUP nor UCT approach had any long-term impact. Furthermore, there was little evidence of any significant treatment effect on food security by the endline in 2015 (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

Both the number and value of productive assets held by TUP treated households were seen to increase. The inclusion of estimated household neediness as an additional covariate provided a means of distinguishing between wealth and substitution effects of the treatment. When neediness was taken into account, the *less* needy households were found to be more likely to have more assets. When controlling for neediness, therefore, the observed increase in furniture

and mobile phones in the treatment group appeared to be due only to the wealth effect of the TUP program (Collins & Ligon 2017).

Members of the UCT group did not appear to have increased the total value of their assets by 2015. Since the TUP treatment revolved around asset transfers, it might be expected that their assets would increase. There was a significant increase in the value of both poultry and small animals, unsurprising since the treatment had involved giving ducks and goats to over half of the treated households. More significant was the fact that they were still present and had not been eaten or sold six months after the asset transfer. This indicates that the transfers affected own-production and were more than just a store of wealth (Collins & Ligon 2017).

The TUP group had significantly more asset wealth than either the cash or the control groups in both 2014 and 2015. The TUP group had an increase of 536 SSP on average, a 43% increase over control households, with  $p < .01$ , suggesting that the difference would not have been observed if the intervention had had no benefit. In the case of productive assets, the TUP group had 320 SSP (95%) more than the control group at the midline. The effect on total assets was higher in absolute value than the effect on productive asset value, suggesting that the increased wealth could not be explained purely by households keeping asset transfers for the length of the program's monitoring phase. The TUP group was the only group for whom total measured asset holdings did not fall on average over the two years of the program. This asset effect was the only feature of the households' financial situation in which a persistent effect could be seen, but this effect was not necessarily sustainable in the longer term (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

Both treatment types had a significant impact on the average value of cash savings within households by 2015. The TUP households were strongly encouraged to pay into a savings account maintained by BRAC each time they met. This resulted in TUP participants being 44% more likely to report having any savings at all. Among those who had savings, TUP households reported having roughly 43% (81 SSP) more in value (Chowdhury et al. 2017). UCT households appeared no more likely than control households to report having cash savings (around 45% in each group), but households that did report having any savings reported having 47% (91.4 SSP) more in value. This is significantly less than was given to these households but combined with the short-term consumption results helps explain the lack of effect on physical asset accumulation (Chowdhury et al. 2017). The local context may also have had an effect on behaviour: it is common in the region to store maize, cassava, or millet as a form of savings. This seems reasonable in a high-inflation context, where the price of grain had doubled in the previous year, and in fact at least as many households reported saving in food (53%) as in cash (46%), with an average market value of 106 SSP. However, no evidence was found that either treatment group had actually increased food savings. Neither was there any evidence that either treatment increased the size or likelihood of giving or receiving inter-household transfers (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

There were significant increases in participation by the TUP treatment group in both business and livestock husbandry, with roughly 20% more of TUP households moving into self-employment than out of it as a consequence of their participation in the program. A major impact was that, following the TUP program, households in the treatment group were

significantly less likely to be engaged in unpaid housework or to be working as agricultural labourers on someone else's land. There was a move away from casual agricultural labour into more skilled forms of market labour, self-employment, and also, possibly, leisure (Collins & Ligon 2017). Land ownership and cultivation were surveyed each year. There was no evidence that either treatment group was more or less likely to report owning or cultivating at least some land. However, members of the UCT group who were involved in agriculture were found, after the cash transfers, to be cultivating 65% less and owning 70% less land than the control group. This raised the possibility of the cash group switching occupations from farming to non-farm self-employment. It also raised questions around the provision of support for agricultural livelihoods in the TUP component, if indeed unconstrained transfers prompted households to seek alternative livelihoods (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

The 2014 survey captured the number of people from all groups in each of 35 occupations. Of the people in the top twelve occupations listed, fewer than 22% were engaged in remunerated productive work. Of these 22%, 61% were engaged in cultivating household land, either for home consumption or for sale of produce. An additional 12% worked in their own small business, while the remainder (26%) sold their labour. 70% of people unemployed and not seeking work were young, but 22% of the unemployed who were looking for work were under the age of 17 (Collins & Ligon 2017). It might have been expected that people would have reported occupations related to the TUP program, such as vegetable farming or poultry or livestock husbandry, or the operation of a small business, since all of these were offered by the program as possible occupations. However, no significant increases for any of these occupations were observed. Unfortunately, baseline and endline data on occupation were not compatible, and so do not help answer the questions regarding appropriateness of support for agricultural livelihoods (Collins & Ligon 2017).

Total income was not very different between the groups. Income too was reliably measured only in 2015, and so estimates did not control for baseline values. The control group in 2015 had a measured income of roughly 4,325 SSP per year (approx. \$540 US). The TUP group saw a 327 SSP (\$41, 7%) increase in annual average income, but with a fairly skewed distribution and high standard errors. The main outcome was that the TUP group had measurably more reported livestock-related income and less farm income, indicating a shift away from farming. The UCT group may have exhibited some substitution away from farm and livestock (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

In 2014, survey respondents were asked about whether they were directly affected by the outbreak of widespread armed conflict, and if so, in what way. However, there was no clear group to which program participants could be compared, and no means of identifying the effect of the conflict on household welfare (Chowdhury et al. 2017). TUP participants were 24% less likely to report having been affected by the conflict, and 38% less likely to report that they were affected specifically by being unable to plant crops or invest in their business. This was the second most common way in which households reported being affected, after 'needed to relocate or migrate' where respondents were not clearly different (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

In sum, the level of economic development as a result of either the TUP or UCT treatment was relatively low and short term. A few individuals may have benefitted in the longer term, but whether this level of intervention was sustainable is doubtful. The agricultural livelihoods were particularly susceptible to an extended 'lean season' and chronic drought, and were also dependent on regular and timely access to feedstuffs or grazing, or to seeds and other inputs. The scale of support for the projects was small, which suggests that beneficiaries would not have become firmly entrenched in their new occupations before program staff moved on. Without any provision for future inputs, sustainability of the TUP group's asset-based livelihoods was unlikely. In the case of the UCT group, changes to occupation may have been sustained but not necessarily profitable.

It is highly unlikely that a short intervention, comprising the handover of some livestock agricultural seeds, and training, would bring positive and sustainable livelihood changes in a context such as South Sudan where, in addition to insecurity, there are limited food and water supplies, uncertain access to inputs, sparse grazing, and a continuous risk of drought. In such precarious contexts, cash transfers are easily spent on the necessities of life or repayment of debt, and animals and tools are sold to realize cash. In any case, sustainability in economic development has to be measured after a longer period – say five years, but few agencies have the resources to undertake long-term monitoring.

### *The Joint Program*

The JP's most significant and strategic achievements were made under outcome 1, the development of youth policies and youth employment action plans. The JP is said to have made a major contribution to mainstreaming youth issues into the national policy and strategy frameworks and to have facilitated the establishment of a task force comprising representatives of the GRSS, UN agencies, and CSOs, including youth associations. Particularly notable was the inclusion of specific youth issues under all the pillars of the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP). UNICEF provided support to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MOCYS) to develop a youth policy which was quickly produced. With JP support, the GRSS was working towards creating a legal framework to establish a conducive environment for cooperatives and to target pro-poor, inclusive development. Due to the program's collaboration with South Sudanese government departments and local organizations, and its success in mainstreaming youth interests, the potential for a positive and lasting impact on youth economic development of the youth appeared high (Chiwara 2012).

There were, however, some scheduling and coordination problems. The JP had proposed three areas to be addressed through the youth policy: 1) a medium-term youth employment strategy; 2) an associated fast track delivery mechanism in the form of a Youth Fund; and 3) the establishment of a country-wide Payam Youth Service. The idea of the Youth Fund had not yet been endorsed by GRSS, yet the Fund was very strategic to the promotion of youth empowerment (Chiwara 2012).

The JP supported the development of state-level action plans and consultations were undertaken in Jonglei and Warrap State for the Agro-Pastoralist Livelihoods Approach; Eastern Equatoria State for the Rural Markets Approach; and Western Bahr El-Ghazal State and Central

Equatoria State (Wau and Juba) for the Urban Markets Approach. The evaluation found that some aspects of state action plans were already being implemented as part of the JP activities. For example in Wau, ToT training had been provided to 22 youth. They, in turn, had provided training to 85 additional youth. However, the ToT trainers noted that the training had been designed and developed by UN agencies without consultation with them, and did not include skills that they considered as priorities such as language training and computer skills (Chiwara 2012). The lack of collaboration weakened the program's impact and its sustainability.

Most significantly, the JP did not implement the activities intended to develop microfinance policies for youth employment. Providing microfinance and microcredit to youth who had completed entrepreneurship training from other components of the JP would have significantly strengthened the JP's effectiveness and increased its impact. This output was a critical component of the JP theory of change, and the failure of the JP to establish and provide microcredit facilities was a strategic weakness (Chiwara 2012). Provision of microfinance could have made a great difference to sustainable economic development amongst the youth.

To achieve outcome 2, the JP was expected to contribute to five MDGs and interventions were implemented in all the target locations. The interventions did not, however, have the critical mass or magnitude to make a significant impact in terms of the scaling up of MDG-based practices on employment creation and life skills. The interventions were intended to demonstrate innovative approaches. However, based on information obtained by the evaluators from state government officials and participants, there was no intention on their part to sustain these alternative approaches, with the result that any impact would be considerably weakened. The general feeling was that the interventions (particularly the 2-week vocational skills training) were too short to effectively address the youth unemployment challenges in the states. In addition, the state governments were faced with budget constraints, which would prevent their continuing with the interventions (Chiwara 2012). Greater coordination at the planning stage might have led to a compromise which would have seen some new approaches carried forward.

From the youth employment and skills and market opportunities surveys in support of outcome 3, to implement practical employment and life skills training opportunities for youth, it was found that 1) youth lacked basic numeracy, literacy, and language skills, 2) they lacked business knowledge and know-how, and 3) existing vocational training centres did not fulfil the demand and were often underfunded and not operational. Based on this evidence, the JP seconded a Technical Vocational Education Training and Youth Entrepreneurship (TVETE) advisor to the government to support key line ministries to:

- 1) develop six-month and shorter courses, including standardized curricula and accreditation in six basic trades, as well as piloting courses in JP demonstration centres
- 2) develop a framework and guidance for mobile skills training (e.g. agro-pastoralist and fisheries) including piloting
- 3) strengthen TVETE reporting
- 4) develop a curriculum in a minimum of three selected vocational trades, to include standardized HIV and AIDS information, career guidance, and entrepreneurial skills modules

- 5) develop Entrepreneurship Education and Training activities that were or had been carried out at vocational training centres, and
- 6) develop a strategy on how to synchronize TVETE curricula with the needs of labour markets, including self-employment, in coordination with the main training providers (Chiwara 2012).

UNFPA introduced the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-Peer), a non-formal social learning approach to reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, gender equality and family planning that targets youth who are not in school to train them to teach their peers. The network used radio programs to reach out to youth, and personal contact in schools and within the community. There was, however, a high dropout rate among the trained peer educators due to lack of incentives and support to cover costs for transport and related activities. The peer educators also stated that government support was minimal and they did not have sufficient materials such as HIV and AIDS testing kits (Chiwara 2012).

The JP introduced the Payam Youth Service, as a job creation scheme and as a national civic service, but the funding did not materialize. The JP was also planning to support Amadi Rural Development Institute to become a national centre for sustainable livelihood skills training, including training of trainers (ToT) in farmer field schools. The evaluation found that the JP had not been able to effectively link these initiatives to achieve an impact. Furthermore, activities were undertaken in different locations, and there was no specific follow-up to evaluate the practical aspects of their application to determine their effectiveness and support the youth to utilize their acquired skills (Chiwara 2012).

The JP's failure to provide start-up support in the form of microfinance and microcredit to the trainees seriously limited the impact of several interventions. Very little evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, was obtained to indicate that the trained youth were putting the acquired skills to any meaningful use in terms of establishing micro-enterprises that could create employment (Chiwara 2012).

The JP developed training modules for functional literacy in collaboration with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MOEGI). However, there was no coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Public Service or the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports under whose mandates the vocational and youth training centres fell. Many of the youths that were consulted as part of the evaluation appreciated the training, but most of them noted that its duration was too short for them to acquire the skills. The evaluation also found that the youths had somewhat different priority areas that they would have wanted to be better trained in, notably language and computer skills. The lack of ministry coordination could impact the effective implementation of functional literacy. Line ministries with responsibility for vocational training believed that the skills training offered through the technical secondary schools that were run by MOEGI placed more emphasis on the theoretical aspects of training rather than the practical aspects, which were emphasized by the VTCs and YTCs (Chiwara 2012).

At field level, the implementation of activities also had some unintended consequences. In Wau, UNIDO partnered with Don Bosco Vocational Training Center to run a 2-week skills training course. The JP provided a stipend to participants, with food, and a startup toolkit, whereas

regular students of the Don Bosco center, who were registered for 2-year courses, did not receive such benefits. This created some bad feeling. In addition, the general opinion of the State Ministry officials and staff of the VTC was that the 2-week certificate had very limited market value. There was also no follow-up to monitor how the trainees were using their skills or the startup kits (Chiwara 2012).

Overall, the activities did not fully achieve the combined effect necessary to realize the impact anticipated in the theory of change. From the evaluation report, it appears that, for outcome 3, the program staff did not communicate so effectively with the relevant government departments and nor did they consult much with the target beneficiaries – the youth themselves. This was particularly important. If youth had been included in consultations about length of training courses, choice of skills, practical experience, and post-training support, this would have been beneficial for the project and would have created a much greater and sustainable impact on youth economic and social development.

The mainstreaming of youth empowerment into all the four pillars of the SSDP was probably one of the JP's most significant achievements. The JP introduced innovative approaches that the GRSS could, if it wished and had the resources, upscale to accelerate the youth empowerment agenda. Through market assessments, the needs of individual communities can be assessed, and vocational and skills training programs better tailored to improving livelihoods and creating micro-enterprises in the local economy, thereby contributing to local markets rather than channelling youth into seeking employment opportunities in urban centres. The JP also introduced the concept of mobile training, which can be effective in rural and agro-pastoralist areas where VTCs are few and often inaccessible or not sufficiently flexible to provide demand-driven training (Chiwara 2012).

## Sustainability

Collins & Ligon (2017) and Chowdhury et al. (2017) do not discuss sustainability. Yet the TUP program was intended to permit a group of ultra-poor women to develop sustainable livelihoods in their sector of choice through provision of start-up assets and training. Although there was some monitoring and mentorship after the program was underway, there is no reference in either report to ongoing support after that. Developing a sustainable livelihood often requires a longer period of assistance and support than was offered in this case. The reports do not indicate whether and how the treatment group made productive use of their assets, only that some of their assets were remaining in 2014 but not in 2015. Data on livelihood and occupation collected in the 2014 post-treatment survey are very telling: the fact that after the intervention most beneficiaries, when asked about their occupation, did not see themselves as poultry or goat keepers suggests that they did not consider this to be their main livelihood activity. However, in the South Sudan context, there may be many other factors in play, especially given the beneficiaries were women heads of household. It may be the case that the conditions were not good for ducks, particularly if there was a lack of water. Many households have goats, and perhaps this was not seen as a formal means of livelihood. Local disputes might also have affected the sustainability of pastoral and agrarian livelihoods. The reports mention the outbreak



of violence and closure of the BRAC office, and although the treatment group was, apparently, not seriously affected, the interruption to the program could have had a differential impact on members of the treatment and control groups. This was recognized by the evaluators but difficult to measure. The short-term nature of the program, with no follow-up advice or training was also not conducive to sustainability.

The Joint Program (Chiwara 2012) was concerned with the sustainable economic development of youth. The collaborative work with the government in mainstreaming youth issues and their inclusion in the South Sudan Development Plan strongly supported the sustainability of the project's achievement and the potential for youth to develop sustainable livelihoods.

A number of project activities were, however, dependent on each other for the success of the overall outcome, so that the failure or non-implementation of any one of them (such as the microfinance component) had the potential to jeopardize the sustainability of a large section of the program. A key weakness that seriously impacted the implementation and sustainability in outcome 3 was the lack of adequate institutional support. Furthermore, many of the interventions, particularly those that had high dependence on government, do not appear to have received adequate budgetary support. For example, the Vocational Training Centre in Wau and the Juba Youth Training Centre, facilities constructed and renovated by the JP, were not being utilized due to lack of budgetary support from the GRSS. This adversely affected the impact on beneficiaries and program sustainability. At the Juba centre, the JP had also provided toolkits for skills training, but the equipment was not maintained or properly stored to ensure it would be available when training and operational budgets were available (Chiwara 2012). The program appears to have been more successful in gaining institutional support for policy development and the mainstreaming of youth issues, but not in guaranteeing a government budget in support of operations. The latter is hardly surprising, but essential if training centres are to continue to provide services.

One of the JP's more impressive outputs was the entrepreneurship training in Magwi County, which led to establishment of group-based micro-enterprises which were producing and marketing their products. However, interventions undertaken by the JP at community level were highly subsidized with virtually no input from participants. This was not sustainable. All the groups reported a high dropout rate because of low returns. Dropouts were also happening in the Peer Education Network groups (Chiwara 2012). It is a huge challenge to sustain the motivation of participating youth and communities and to continue with innovatory programming in the absence of committed financial resources, a supply of materials, and a market for products. The guarantee of an acceptable level of economic return to participants is critical to long term sustainability.

Chiwara (2012) observed that there were no independent community-based initiatives to emulate the successful practices demonstrated by the JP-supported groups. For example, in Magwi County, the farmers' group noted that they had experienced increased yields as a result of practising the new farming methods introduced to them. However, no other farmers' groups had formed in the community to learn from the established group. This was not encouraging in terms of program sustainability or the development of sustainable livelihoods.

The multi-dimensional attributes of sustainability require that, if interventions such as these are to be sustainable, a rigorous sustainability analysis is needed at the time of program formulation, followed up by development of a strategy to ensure that sustainability is integrated in the design and execution of a project. Any development activities that are not demand driven and that lack national ownership, including through a local budget commitment and institutional support, are unlikely to be sustained beyond the life of the project.

## Barriers

The TUP component was interrupted by outbreaks of violence, the effects of which were difficult to estimate, given that there could be no comparison group (Chowdhury et al. 2017). The conflict, or fear of conflict, could have differentially impacted behaviour and attitude to productive assets, resulting in different outcomes from those which might have occurred had the conflict and interruption not taken place. The cash transfer component did not commence at the same time as the TUP project, meaning that the treatment groups were potentially differently affected by the conflict, economic conditions, and inflation. Attrition rates in the control group in particular were reportedly high (Chowdhury et al. 2017).

The Joint Program (Chiwara 2012) took place during a period of political transition when the peace was fragile and access to some target states was difficult. In 2009, the UN country team was based in Khartoum and there was only a sub-office in Southern Sudan, which resulted in many coordination challenges. Changes in local circumstances necessitated revisions to the design of the program prior to its implementation. The GRSS did not fully concur with the locations selected and some of the proposed activities, and it was agreed that the JP needed to focus more on providing youth with employability skills rather than on long-term schooling and vocational training. This required further research and revision of the design, and involved field visits, consultations, and focus group meetings during the inception phase. Disagreement over priorities and projects between the UN team and the government, as well as the shorter time for planning and preparation of the revised interventions, could have resulted in some of the coordination and budget problems referred to above. Three line ministries (Labour, Education, and Youth) were leading the mainstreaming of youth employment through the TVETE approach, and there were a large number of participating UN agencies, resulting not only in coordination difficulties, but also in overlap and duplication of functions, and inefficient use of time and money (Chiwara 2012).

Interventions that were implemented in collaboration with NGOs such as PLAN and ADRA, or directly with Youth Associations (Warrap State Youth Union) or CSOs, showed better results than those that had a higher dependence on government support (Chiwara 2012). The motivation and direct involvement of these groups gave them a sense of ownership, and was also more likely to ensure the interventions' sustainability.

## Summary

BRAC's TUP and UCT projects (Chowdhury et al. 2017; Collins & Ligon 2017) both had short-term impacts on their beneficiaries. In neither case, however, did these impacts last beyond 18 months. The paper by Collins & Ligon (2017) focuses on the method of evaluation and statistical data analysis, and whilst this is informative about the TUP project's outputs and outcomes, it says little about its impact on people's livelihoods, on sustainable economic development. The TUP project beneficiaries were poor women, yet it was a criterion for selection that they had access to cultivable land. In fact, most chose to rear ducks or goats rather than cultivate maize. This may have been due to uncertainties regarding risk of conflict and having to flee their homes before making a harvest, inadequate or intermittent water supply, and/or, if the land to which they had access was community land, and therefore communal, the need to share their harvest with others. The women's position in the community would have been low, and ducks, or especially goats, would have been an easier option. Given the level of insecurity, it is surprising that some of the assets had not been eaten or sold six months after the transfer.

The TUP group had significantly more asset wealth and savings than the UCT and control groups in both 2014 and 2015 (Chowdhury et al. 2017), suggesting that the cash transfers were spent relatively quickly on household goods. But it is also clear that savings are held in grain rather than cash, which has the benefit of being a source of food and also keeping pace with the rampant inflation. The cash was perhaps seen as an opportunity to spend money on durables rather than just on food, and also for a member of the household to switch occupation away from farming.

Impact on sustainable economic development is more than a measure of welfare and can be best captured by comparing information from qualitative interviews, such as in the census, baseline, and endline surveys. However, to assess whether interventions have had any impact on sustainable economic development it is necessary to follow up over a longer period after project closure. Furthermore, in addition to provision of a few assets and some training, it is necessary to work at community level to increase stability and general welfare if economic progress is to be sustainable. Whilst the targeted women benefitted in the short-term, many would be unlikely to advance further over the longer term without an enabling environment within the community. Livelihood interventions such as the TUP project need to take place over a much longer period, with follow-up support and training in the wider community, if their impact is to be sustainable.

A large multifaceted program, such as the UN's Joint Program (Chiwara 2012), risks either lack of coordination or duplication. Overall, the implementation team seems to have avoided these problems, although it is said that some interventions might more appropriately have been implemented by a different agency. The mainstreaming of youth issues in government policy and the national Development Plan was the JP's most significant contribution to youth economic development.

In such programs, smooth interaction between different components is key to both program efficiency and impact. A delay or break in interlinked activity chains adversely affects the whole

program. In the case of the JP, the failures revolved around funding. At government level, the UN had proposed the establishment of a Youth Fund to help deliver the government's youth employment strategy, but the proposal had not been endorsed by the government. At the practical level, which would have immediately benefitted youth, the JP did not implement activities to develop microfinance and microcredit facilities for youth. This seriously impacted youth who had completed entrepreneurship training provided by other components of the JP and who were ready to begin developing their own enterprises. Access to finance is key to livelihood development and sustainability and the facilities proposed in the JP could have made a great difference to economic development amongst the youth.

The overall impact of the UN Joint Program (Chiwara 2012) on sustainable economic development could have been greater had there been (more) discussion, before and during the program, with youth representatives, male and female, in each state to learn how they perceived their situation and their training needs. Some at least had wanted language and computer skills; instead, they received only two-week vocational skills training. The JP's youth employment and skills and market opportunities surveys found that youth lacked basic numeracy, literacy, and language skills as well as business knowledge and know-how. Had the surveys been undertaken sooner they could have had an impact on the skills training provided. Coordination issues prevented those who had been trained from getting key practical experience on local JP construction projects. Some could also have been involved in the development of microfinance groups. Unfortunately, there seems to have been some compartmentalization of training through use of the urban markets approach, the rural markets approach, and the agro-pastoralist livelihoods approach, which may not have satisfied actual needs. If the youth had been more involved in developing the practical components of the program, this would have been beneficial both for them and the project, would have given them a sense of ownership and responsibility, and would have created a much greater and more sustainable impact on youth economic and social development.

Overall, the three studies indicate the importance of continued interaction with beneficiaries and follow-up support, training, or practical opportunities if any positive short-term impacts of an intervention are to be sustained and lead to economic development. Interaction and a degree of flexibility are needed during the program so that the choice of interventions remains appropriate to the target beneficiaries. Implementation of inappropriate or inadequate training is discouraging and ineffectual. Community support and involvement is also important if economic development is to be sustainable and also transferable. In the case of the youth, training should fit them for employment, which requires literacy and language skills and functional literacy as well as vocational skills. The UN had wanted to include long-term schooling in the program but the government had not approved this and wanted them to focus on short-term training. Nevertheless, computer skills could be considered essential for employment and have been included in the trainings.

The last point indicates how any program requires government support and how the design and implementation teams need to recognize host government constraints in terms of finance and capacity to follow up on external programs and that the government also has its own priorities that must be taken into account. In the end, if a program is to have any impact on sustainable

economic development it must collaborate with the government, local NGOs, civil society groups, and the community to contextualize the programming to local circumstances and to encourage follow-up support after program closure.

## Gender

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

None

#### Good Enough Evaluations

Allen, A.L. 2018. *End of project phase evaluation report: A gender analysis/assessment of a gender based violence (GBV) project of CARE supported by UNICEF in Twic East & Duk Counties of Jonglei State, South Sudan. Project title: Enhancing Holistic Emergency GBV Prevention, Response, and Mitigation Interventions in Conflict Affected Communities of South Sudan. CARE – South Sudan, UNICEF.* Available at: <https://www.careevaluations.org/evaluation/enhancing-holistic-emergency-gbv-prevention-response-and-mitigation-intervention-in-conflict-affected-communities-in-south-sudan/>

Dziewanski, D. 2020. *Endline evaluation for the project: Strengthening women's role in violence prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding.* Nonviolent Peaceforce South Sudan. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Epstein, A.I. & Opolot, S.P. 2012. *Gender equity through education (GEE): End of project performance evaluation report.* Management Systems International. USAID.

Munene, I.I. & Wambiya, P. 2019. Bridging the gender gap through gender difference: Aiding patriarchy in South Sudan education reconstruction. *Africa Education Review*, 16(5), 86–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/r10.1080/18146627.2018.1429052>

Four reports are included. Three of these are project endline evaluations, and one is an academic paper. Two reports focus on gender-based violence (GBV) (Allen 2018; Dziewanski 2020) and two on girls' secondary education (Epstein & Opolot 2012; Munene & Wambiya 2019).

### *Gender-based violence*

Dziewanski (2020) evaluates a project that aimed to promote women's role in protection and peacebuilding, transform conflict in communities, and reduce the prevalence and impact of Gender Based Violence (GBV). The 18-month project had a budget of US\$ 1.8 million.

To achieve these objectives, the project created Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) as the focal point for community engagement and awareness-raising activities. The project also mainstreamed GBV in humanitarian programs through coordinating with various local, national, and international actors. These activities amounted to eighteen outputs, which were all provided. For example, the project created seven Women's Protection Teams against a target of four WPTs and trained 292 (target 300) women from Women's Protection Teams or women's groups in relevant non-violent strategies for conflict resolution, conflict management, peacebuilding, etc.

Dziewanski (2020) conducts a baseline survey on 522 households whereas the endline survey is on 498 households. Qualitative data are collected through a dialogic format, allowing for follow-up and probing questions to generate thorough descriptions of GBV and its underlying dynamics.

Allen (2018) evaluates a project which sought to increase access to life-saving multi-sectoral GBV response and prevention services to vulnerable women and girls. The target beneficiaries were internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and the host communities. The major output of the project was to conduct 620 awareness sessions in which around 34,000 beneficiaries (9,707 women, 5,147 men, 12,044 boys, and 10,515 girls) participated. The report confirms that most of the target outputs were achieved. However, the table that was supposed to provide this information with numbers is missing in the report. There is no mention of the amount of monetary assistance. The evaluation is based on a survey on 531 respondents and a qualitative analysis including 21 key informants, 360 focus group discussion participants, and 150 heads of household. There is no mention of a baseline survey.

### *Education*

Epstein & Opolot. (2012) and Munene & Wambiya (2019) both assess the impact of a USAID program which aimed to provide incentives to girls and disadvantaged boys to complete secondary school and to mentor women to enter the teaching profession, by reducing financial, infrastructural, social, and institutional barriers. The program provided stipends to girls and young women to further their education at the secondary school and teacher-training college levels respectively. Social barriers were addressed through advocacy, community mobilization, and mentoring programs. To lower the institutional barriers, technical assistance and training were provided to relevant ministries and directorates. For five years, the project had funding of US\$ 9.9 million.

Epstein & Opolot (2012) collect primary data through qualitative interviews with leaders, education officials, head teachers, teacher mentors, and focus group discussions with GEE scholars.

Munene & Wambiya (2019) use a short survey among 43 households. The paper applies a convergent design of qualitative and quantitative data and interviews female students and teachers in ten states of South Sudan.

All the reports used qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative data are collected through focused group discussion, key informant interviews, and desk research, whereas all the quantitative research uses survey data. Finally, none of the four reports has any control group.

## Impacts

### *Gender-based violence*

The two evaluations on GBV do not present robust evidence for a significant impact, despite attaining project output targets.

Dziewanski (2020) notes a 12.9% increase in female participation in protection and peacebuilding (defined as being a member of a community group, local authority, committee, club, or religious organization) and attributes this increase to a better enabling environment for such participation. The proportion of female leadership positions in such groups is also reported to have increased. The report also finds that violence prevalence rates in project sites remained similar at baseline and endline; however, the endline asks about violent incidents during a time period that is twice as long as the one at the baseline, which might suggest a decrease in perceived violence.

In case of intimate partner violence (IPV), the impact is ambiguous as there is a decrease in reported physical and verbal abuse (by 5%) but an increase in marital rape (no figure is reported). The report does not provide any indicator of the magnitude of change, which makes it difficult to judge the findings. Furthermore, no concrete reason is provided for these findings (except that this could be due to increased reporting). 90.2% of respondents at the endline hold the view that a man's opinion is more important in decision-making in family affairs in comparison to 90.6% at the baseline. Finally, compared to the baseline, fewer female endline respondents were likely to report more than one incident of being threatened, hit, or forced into sex.

It should be reiterated that these are perceptions reported by respondents in a baseline and endline survey, but the sampling frame makes it impossible to draw conclusions about causality, because the data reflect changes in attitudes of the general population.

Allen (2018) claims that a significant impact on response to gender-based violence was observed. This is because 76% of the beneficiaries of the community discussion group participants agreed to "positive social norms" on GBV. By this vague formulation, the report means that 76% of those present at weekly community discussion initiated by the program said that they agreed with social norms which were classified as "positive" by a "GBV assessment tool". This tool is not explained in the report. This does not qualify as evidence for the claim that the project contributed to a meaningful change in norms.

The report also claims to observe improvements in community vigilance on GBV due to the presence of 150 male champions, 14 community discussion leaders, and seven care group volunteers in the communities. The report observes a growing practice of duty bearers' / actors' keenness to identify service delivery issues within their sectors and collaboration with other actors as evident through the monthly GBV sub-cluster coordination meetings and utilization of the referral pathways. It is important to note that there are no baseline data to track the changes in impact and, therefore, the findings are questionable.

### *Education*

Regarding the evaluation of the education projects, the following picture emerges. Epstein & Opolot (2019) find that the school retention rate of GEE beneficiaries was approximately 15–20% better than the state and national averages of their non-GEE counterparts, despite a 50% GEE beneficiary drop-out rate throughout the life of the project. For the female-to female mentoring component, the impact is claimed to be large, even though about one in five interviewed girls planned to pursue a career other than teaching. Finally, the impact of ministerial and departmental staff training to address gender equity was very good and deeply valued.

Munene & Wambiya (2019), evaluating the same project, find that the project was only partially successful. Although there was an increase in enrolment and completion of studies by female students in secondary schools and teacher training institutions, the program failed to deconstruct the prevailing gendered power relations that subordinated women and it may have inadvertently strengthened them.

Munene & Wambiya (2019) conclude that the project “failed to deconstruct the prevailing gendered power relation”, whereas Epstein & Opolot’s (2019) report concludes that “[it] is a good project embedded in a very weak system ... . That makes [the project] components either unsustainable or their benefits short-lived.”

## Sustainability

### *Gender-based violence*

Allen (2018) claims that the project established the community care volunteers, and that their ability to follow up on community concerns with local authorities and duty bearers was a strategic sustainability arrangement. Women/Girls Friendly Spaces in Panyagor and Kongor prepared women with income generation opportunities and mechanisms for self-sustenance. GBV actors trained and engaged during the project had embraced girls' and women's rights protection in their various jurisdictions.

Dziewanski (2020) observes the presence of several components that presumably added elements of sustainability. One such component was the incorporation of women into decision-making processes and connecting them to important institutions. Another component was capacity-building of community groups, and community-based protection mechanisms like the Women's Protection Teams (WPTs) through awareness raising, training, workshops, and



mentoring sessions. Another important part of the strategy for sustainability was to create relationships between other actors working in violence prevention, protection, and peacebuilding, so that these would have existed as channels of advocacy and action upon the project's closure.

### *Education*

Epstein & Opolot (2012) and Munene & Wambiya (2019) find some sustainability in the capabilities of staff and institutional capacity to enable these staff to apply and share their capabilities. The most promising sustainable outcome was the mentor-teachers union in Wau. Consisting of 15 members, each member paid 10 SSP per month to support presentations, advocacy, and further training to teachers and families on the value of girls' education. Overall, sustainability plans were insufficient in that they were modified too late in the project cycle to reflect changed conditions and relied too heavily on a program that had yet to prove its sustainability.

## Barriers

### *Gender-based violence*

The main barriers in the GBV projects appear to be the lack of access to appropriate health care and psychological support, as well as insufficient appropriate security, redress, and access to justice. Throughout the country, law enforcement services are anaemic and implemented by police that are both under-trained and under-resourced. Even if the survivors did come forward, they continued to face systemic barriers to justice that included a lack of resources, infrastructure, and personnel. Instability, insecurity, and pandemic in Yambio added to the worrying situation of women and girls. Importantly, there was no sitting judge in Yambio and, unfortunately, lack of institutional capacity also hindered implementation.

### *Education*

The main barriers in the education projects appear to be the institutional framework of state education, which restricts any radical challenge to patriarchal values inherent in the education system. The program assumed that embedded and deep-seated cultural patriarchal values could only be surmounted by providing economic incentives for formal western education. But GEE had a limited ability to deconstruct local gender biases. Furthermore, the education system continued to face debilitating challenges including large class sizes and language barriers on the part of both students and teachers. The government also lacked resources to provide support to the schools. The schools had to charge registration fees whereas students had to spend on books, uniforms and other school supplies. There was also no publicly funded teachers' training. The state ministry lacked monitoring capacity.

## Summary

The reports evaluate four projects that intend to address gender inequality. Two reports are on projects targeting GBV; the other two reports assess the same project on education.

The two reports on GBV do not provide compelling evidence for any effects. They are not equipped to provide counterfactuals, and they report mainly outputs. For example, Allen (2018) maintains that the presence of 150 male champions, 14 community discussion leaders, and seven care group volunteers is an indicator of greater community vigilance on GBV. However, without any reflection on effects, these numbers signify outputs. Furthermore, the data shows that there was an increase in a certain type of IPV. The report correctly suggests that this may have been caused by increased reporting due to greater awareness of the issue. However, a deeper investigation of such changes, especially whether they were caused by the project, would be beneficial. Finally, Allen (2018) mentions that the community members had tendencies to expect payments for attending meetings which would have made project sustainability difficult to achieve.

Epstein et al. (2012) and Munene and Wambiya (2019) find a modest impact of education projects. They conclude that there was an increase in female enrolment and completion in secondary school, and higher retention and enrolment of female teachers in Teachers Training Colleges. Munene and Wambiya (2019) also observes attitudinal improvements towards female education over the course of the program but also observes the persistence of significant attitudinal differences towards female education and gendered role in society.

Finally, we note that the reports lack a discussion of financial sustainability. Allen (2018) claims that the project established community care volunteers who could follow-up on community concerns with local authorities and duty bearers. We however think that in the absence of any monetary support, the volunteers may not continue to follow-up community concerns.

Dziewanski (2020) observes the presence of several factors that presumably added elements of sustainability. One such factor was the incorporation of women into decision-making processes and connecting them to important institutions. The sustainability here depends considerably on how these networks are maintained. In addition, it is possible that the connections established might have been effective due to the presence of the implementing agency. In its absence, it is not clear whether these connections would be effective.

Epstein et al. (2012) and Munene and Wambiya 2019 find that both the staff and institutional capabilities were enhanced which adds to project sustainability.

# Rule of Law

## The Evidence Base

### Rigorous Evaluations

None

### Good Enough Evaluations

Collin, C. & Batali, G. 2018. *Final Evaluation of UNDP South Sudan Access to Justice and Rule of Law Project*. Available at <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/11838>

One study was included. The report of Collin & Batali (2018) evaluates a project designed to improve access to justice and the rule of law in South Sudan and to strengthen peace and governance in this country. This project, named *Access to Justice*, was implemented by the United Nations Development Program between October 2013 and October 2017. More specifically, the project aimed to deliver a legal and regulatory framework for the provision of legal aid services for the South Sudanese population (including for IDPs and other vulnerable groups) as well as to improve government capacity in the rule of law so that it can deliver accountable, effective, and equitable justice services. The project's main outputs included a series of activities, such as the establishment of three Justice and Confidence centres to provide mediation and referral services; the establishment of a rule of law forum tackling specific issues at the State level; delivery of vocational training in prisons, police training centres, and universities; the development of policy options on alternatives to imprisonment; and technical assistance on the revision of the local governance act.

The project was evaluated as relevant.

With regards to efficiency considerations, the project was considered inefficient. Colin and Batali (2018) assess that the project could have leveraged more funds than originally planned in the project document for the various strategic objectives. Secondly, the high level of staff turnover at both UNDP or partner's levels, constituted a strong limitation in the efficiency of the interventions and occurred at every level – from political to local level in the states. As a result, monitoring was limited by the lack of a dedicated staff, limited visits and spot checks, notably for civil society organizations and partners; by indicators that were not always appropriate to assess the project results and variations in the indicators over the years; and inaccurate reporting (reports mention the creation of Special Protection Unit (SPU) desks in hospitals in some states, which was not done). Lastly, state partners, including at the Rule of Law level, were also not fully involved in the monitoring of the results and faced limited accountability or investigation in case of misuse or theft of equipment.

The study uses a qualitative approach, based on the review of project documentation, two field visits (to Aweil and Torit), and 95 semi-guided interviews and seven focus groups in some locations (Aweil, Torit, and Juba) with project beneficiaries, UNDP staff, state agents, and civil society organizations. Evaluators employed a convenience sampling and a baseline was available for some indicators.

## Impacts

Collin and Batali (2018) conclude that the Rule of Law project in South Sudan had several outcomes. Nonetheless, the study lacks robust evidence to sustain some findings. For example, the report states that the project led to a reduction of crime and improved the prevention of gender-based violence. However, the results are based on feedback from interviews with police officers and on crime statistics, and there is no in-depth discussion of other factors that may have contributed to this result. Similarly, an increase in the prevention of gender-based violence is based on the perceptions of some women interviewed in the evaluation phase, who felt less threatened after new laws on this theme were approved. The authors highlight an increase in confidence in the police as another outcome, with the endline at 52% among project beneficiaries compared with a baseline level of 28.7%. In sum, we cannot conclude that the Rule of Law project had any significant effect.

## Sustainability

It is not possible to state that the Rule of Law project was sustainable. Collin and Batali (2018) conclude that the project had elements of sustainability, such as the institutionalization of some initiatives (i.e. community policing), but they also state that the capacity building efforts are not associated with institutional and long-term planning, to which various organizations contribute.

## Barriers

Collin and Batali (2018) mention some barriers to project implementation, such as the security situation in South Sudan, logistical challenges, the limited availability and management of resources by the government, and traditional practices concerning gender-based violence. For instance, the government lacked capacity to provide funding, tools, equipment, and human resources to Rule of Law institutions. Furthermore, a four-month judges' strike occurred in 2016/2017, negatively impacting the project's activities. Traditional practices prevented community leaders from consistently reporting cases of gender-based violence to the community police, and corruption is still a major threat to state confidence. Interviewees report that perpetrators would sometimes bribe the police and then the case would be dismissed or a marriage arranged.

## Summary

This study might suggest that the effectiveness of Rule of Law programs in South Sudan is low. The only study available (Collin & Batali 2018) that met the threshold for this systematic review does not present robust evidence on the project's impact, whether positive or negative.

The *Rule of Law project* faced significant barriers that negatively impacted its sustainability and effectiveness. In addition to the challenging security situation and poor infrastructure in South Sudan, the government lacked capacity to provide basic inputs for the Rule of Law institutions, which resulted in project delays. The high staff turnover among UNDP officials prevented solid monitoring and accountability of project activities resulting in weak implementation.

Future projects should be aware of these challenges, and more funding should be available to finance robust evaluations that enhance rule of law institutions in this country.

## Education

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

None

#### Good Enough Evaluations

O'Hagan, P. 2013. *Impact evaluation report of the South Sudan Education Cluster*.

Available at:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South%20Sudan%20EiE%20Impact%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 2012. *South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) performance evaluation report*. Available at:

<https://www.eccnetwork.net/sites/default/files/media/file/pdacy415.pdf>

United States Agency International Development (USAID). 2020. *Psychosocial Support on Children's Well-being, Literacy, and Math Outcomes in the South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education Services Activity*. Available at:

[https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00WS33.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WS33.pdf)

Three studies were included. USAID (2012) evaluates a project designed to improve equitable access to quality education in South Sudan. Named the South Sudan Interactive Radio

Instruction (SSIRI) project, this initiative was implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC) from 2004 to 2012 and covered all states after 2009. The overall financial allocation during this period was \$15,469,303. The SSIRI had as its specified outcomes increased support for education in selected communities; improved literacy and numeracy skills of participating learners/students; improved teaching skills of targeted teachers; and increased institutional capacity of government and non-government officials to use technology appropriately in education. To achieve such goals, SSIRI's main activities included the provision of 480 Learning Village audio lessons for teachers and students that were distributed via radio and by digital audio player; the delivery of printed teacher's guides; and the assistance of out-of-school youth with 180 RABEA (Radio-Based Education for All) audio programs offering the primary school curriculum together with civics, health, and English-language content.

Two reports assess projects designed to improve education for children in emergency situations (O'Hagan 2013; USAID 2020). O'Hagan (2013) evaluates the Education in Emergencies (EiE) project. This project focuses on increasing access to protective education opportunities for children and youth affected by emergencies. EiE developed the following activities: coordination of emergency response; capacity development; advocacy and resource mobilization; information management; monitoring and reporting; planning and strategy development. This project was implemented by the Government of South Sudan, in particular its Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF and Save the Children from 2010 in all 10 of South Sudan's states.

USAID (2020) evaluates the Psychosocial Support on Children's Well-being, Literacy, and Math Outcomes in the South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services Activity, a project implemented by UNICEF. IEEE's overall goal was to improve children's psychosocial and social-emotional learning skills in an emergency context. More specifically, the project intended to 1) increase equitable access by restoring and expanding the availability of safe and appropriate learning opportunities; 2) improve instruction in and increasing application of essential skills (reading, math, life skills and social and emotional competencies); and 3) improve recovery and resilience through linking education, health, water and livelihoods support and providing psychosocial services to children, youth and their families, including victims of gender-based violence.

Two reports adopted a qualitative approach, consisting of a desk review of project documents, key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions, and field visits (O'Hagan 2013; USAID 2012). In both cases, interviewees were selected through convenience sampling.

One report adopted a quantitative approach, based on a quasi-experimental design (USAID 2020). To evaluate the Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services Activity, project implementing partners selected schools with the highest needs in conflict areas, followed by the assignment of these 46 schools to control or treatment groups by the evaluators. In addition, a desk review of project documents, field visits, student and teachers surveys, and five case studies was conducted.

All projects were said to be relevant. No report assessed the efficiency of the project.

## Impacts

O'Hagan's (2013) study does not provide robust evidence to assess the impact of the Education in Emergencies (EiE) project. The report makes positive statements on the project, such as that it has kept children safe and occupied, that conflict has been reduced, and that EiE was considered life-saving by beneficiaries. Nonetheless, conclusions are based only on perception.

USAID (2012) concludes that the impact of the South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services project could not be determined, given the time and data at their disposal. However, the report also states that, considering the current context of schooling conditions in South Sudan, it is not entirely reasonable to expect a noticeable positive differential in learning gains attributable to SSIRI, seeing as SSIRI is still a small part of a student's schooling experience. Weak evidence shows that there were increased learning gains and higher promotion rates among Learning Village students, though the gains appear to be concentrated in certain counties and states. With regard to beneficiaries, USAID mentions that there was a broad consensus among teachers and head teachers, education officials, and parents that SSIRI had a positive impact on both primary school achievement and on attendance, even if they were often unable to substantiate these assertions with data.

USAID (2020) concludes that the psychosocial component of the South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services Activity had positive impacts and should be included in education programming in conflict-affected settings. The study identifies meaningful gains in both student well-being and academic performance, suggesting the effectiveness of inclusion of psychosocial support in the IEEE activity. First, the report finds significant differences between students in treatment group and control schools in terms of social and emotional well-being. Beneficiaries were more responsible and concerned with their tasks. Among teachers, there were differences in teachers' perception of changes in student/classroom culture. However, there were no significant differences in resilience/coping between treatment and control school students. Resilience was measured using questions from the Child and Youth Resilience Measurement (CYRM) method, which was focused on dispute resolution, calming skills, mood understanding, concentration in class, and teacher listening.

## Sustainability

Only one report consistently assessed project sustainability. USAID (2012) states that the South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) project had not been sustainable. According to the agency, the main implementing partner, the Education Development Center (EDC), had not been able to build capacity in the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) to sustain the project in the near term, for two main reasons. First, no audio production capacity was built in South Sudan, as EDC, for reasons of efficiency, chose to produce the programs in Nairobi. Secondly, the financial streams between the various levels of government in the MoGEI were weak or unreliable and a barrier to a successful, even partially financed handover of the project.

## Barriers

Two reports mention barriers and constraints to project implementation (O'Hagan 2013; USAID 2012), whilst one report mentions modifiers to project outcomes (USAID 2020).

O'Hagan (2013) reports that the main barriers for the successful implementation of the Education in Emergencies (EiE) project were 1) low community buy-in and ownership of EiE responses in some communities as humanitarian agencies were locally perceived to operate unilaterally, and 2) the poor quality of teaching in EiE due to an overall lack of teachers and understanding of the purpose of project.

USAID (2012) concludes that the main obstacles for the South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services project's psychosocial support component were the language barrier (especially English) among teachers and the lack of quality education obtained by SSIRI teachers which made it very difficult for teachers and pupils to realize the benefits of SSIRI.

Lastly, USAID (2020) highlighted a series of modifiers for the outcomes of South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services Activity. First, the agency mentions that the role of teacher training and development was an integral factor for student outcomes. Secondly, the relationships with friends and family also emerged as a strengthening factor for student's social and mental well-being. USAID's data showed that the relationships students had with their family members appeared to impact their social well-being. Family ties seemed to bring a sense of security as children saw their parents support them with food and other essential resources. Third, sports and other physical activities seemed to be a critical outlet for students to develop friendships, but also feel "free" as a child. USAID claims that student responses indicated that physical activities offered, like football, volleyball, and jump rope seemed to not only to influence the students' moods and emotions, but also their attentiveness, their friendships, their ability to practise peacebuilding and their mental attitude related to hope and freedom. Playing sports made them forget about the conflict and their worries.

## Summary

In sum, the impact of education projects in South Sudan appears to be low, with only one report providing a successful intervention. First, there is a methodological failure in most projects since inception, which persists to the evaluation phase and prevents any analysis of causal attribution between the project and desired outcomes. Most reports rely on anecdotal evidence, mainly from interviews following convenience sampling and they lack any quantitative measurement of progress on outcomes, such as a baseline and endline, resulting in weak evidence.

The most promising project focuses on the availability of psychological intervention into education programming in conflict settings. This includes the delivery of training and implementation of psychosocial support activities, and attitudes towards teaching and classroom management. As USAID (2020) shows, the psychosocial component of South Sudan Integrated Essential Emergency Education (IEEE) Services Activity had a positive impact on treatment



groups, who expressed higher levels of well-being, academic performance, and resilience of adolescents (measured through surveys from the Child and Youth Resilience Measurement).

## Stabilization

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

Pretari, A. & Anguko, A. 2016. *Livelihoods in South Sudan: Impact evaluation of the 'South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion' project*. Available at: <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/620864?show=full>

#### Good Enough Evaluations

Africa Centre for People, Institutions, and Society (ACEPIS). 2021. *Program end term evaluation report. Cordaid*. Available at: <https://www.cordaid.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/Final-Report-End-of-Term-Evaluation-Cordaid-SP-Capacitating-Change.pdf>

Chiwara, R.M & Batali, G. 2018. *Evaluation of South Sudan Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) (2016–2018)*.

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Kimote, J. & Deng, P. 2020. *UNDP South Sudan Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) Project*. Available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/16741>

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WYG International. 2013. *Mine Action Evaluation*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/320563/Mine-Action.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/320563/Mine-Action.pdf)

12 studies were included.

A rigorous impact assessment evaluates a project designed to improve food security among rural communities in South Sudan (Pretari & Anguko 2016). Implemented by Oxfam Great Britain in conjunction with the National Relief Development Corps (NRDC), between October 2012 to April 2016, the project, named *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion*, delivered training on methods of farming to increase crop diversity as well as small business workshops. Other outputs were the creation of village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and the delivery of cash grants. Approximately 1,200 households benefitted.

#### *Prevention and reduction of inter- and intra-community conflicts*

Four reports assess projects aimed at preventing and reducing inter- and intra-community conflicts, including resource-based conflicts and youth-led conflicts (Spoelder et al. 2016; New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy 2016; Kimote & Deng 2020; IOM & UNDP 2019).

Spoelder et al. (2016) assess the project *Peace Under Reconstruction*, which was implemented by Care Netherlands from June 2012 to June 2016 with a budget of EURO 7,102,905. The project provided training to partner organizations and also built peace clubs and committees to teach how to mediate conflict and develop warning systems, especially for women. Additionally, radio recordings or broadcasts were used to sensitize communities on thematic issues related to peace and violence. Other outputs were a scorecard developed to allow both community members to rate government services and the government to use the public feedback for improvement, and training on entrepreneurship in village savings and loan associations.

New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016) evaluates the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project*, implemented by World Vision South Sudan from July 2012 to December 2015 with a budget of US\$ 6,393,539. The project developed a series of outputs, such as advocacy campaigns, training/workshops, mass media, distribution of community handbooks, and community dialogues. Most activities aimed at improving livelihoods – including

sanitation, access to water and water management , improving literacy and entrepreneurship skills, especially among women and the youth, and improving crop and vegetable cultivation technologies, including the distribution of seeds and goats and sheep to vulnerable households.

Kimote & Deng (2020) focus on the *Peace and Community Cohesion Project* implemented by UNDP from April 2017 to March 2020 with a total budget of US\$ 47,512,367. Its main outputs were the establishment of 215 peace committees to mediate conflicts ranging from child abduction to cattle rustling to resource management, and the delivery of training on transformational leadership, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and peacebuilding. Other outputs were the delivery of training to the youth on entrepreneurship and start-up capital to increase their livelihoods, as well as the training of counsellors to support victims of conflict and gender-based violence.

IOM & UNDP 2019 evaluate the *Beyond Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site (POC) Youth Reintegration Strategy*, which they had jointly implemented. The main project outputs were the conduction of surveys to understand the context of male and female youth displacement, return and reintegration dynamics; the organization of youth forums; the provision of training to develop youth capacity to resolve local conflicts, including training on transformational leadership, sexual and GBV; and the provision of livelihood opportunities, including small-scale business enterprises, agri-business vegetable farming, and assorted vocational training such as bakery, carpentry, masonry, tailoring and driving.

#### *Reconciliation through faith-based activities*

The USAID (2019) evaluation assessed a project designed to increase reconciliation through faith-based activities This project, named *Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS)*, was implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in support of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Project activities focused on supporting the four pillars of the Action Plan for Peace (APP): 1) advocacy – enabling the SSCC to undertake advocacy, particularly through participation in the national peace process and visits to external influencers such as the U.S. and South Africa; (2) reconciliation – enabling the SSCC to und – supporting the development of the formal institutional structures and processes of the SSCC.

#### *Implementation of local peace agreements and increase cooperation among tribes in the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia*

One evaluation analyzed the effectiveness of two projects to increase the implementation of local peace agreements and increase cooperation among tribes in the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia (Te Velde 2016). Named *Hope & Recovery on the Ethiopia–South Sudan Border – ZOA (HRESSB) and Enhancing Peace Stability and Poverty Reduction along the Ethiopia–South Sudan Border*, these projects, funded by the government of Netherlands and implemented by the Nile Hope, SALT, and Christian Mission Aid (CMA), lasted from November 2012 to December 2016 with a total budget of 3 million euros for both countries. The project's activities include the establishment of peace committees and farmer groups, and the large-scale distribution of seeds and farming tools.

### *Access to public services and the resilience of communities*

Three evaluations analyze projects that aim to improve access to public services and the resilience of communities (ACEPIS 2021; Chiwara & Batali 2018; Mc Gearty & Deng 2017). The first study (ACEPIS 2021) sheds light on the program implemented from January 2016 to March 2020 by Cordaid, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), 45 local Civil Society Organisation (CSO) partners, and five international NGOs. The project's main outputs were related to capacity development, enabling environment, and policy influencing. Examples of outputs include the delivery of training to CSOs and communities in Torit on case handling, referral, and full documentation; on the mobile court system in Nimule and Magwi to lawyers, judges, and magistrates; media engagement through radio and newspapers to amplify the voice of communities through radio talk shows and other community awareness campaigns. In addition, a coalition of partner CSOs engaged the Law Reform Commission and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare to push for ratification of the Maputo Protocol. Finally, CSO partners lobbied MPs to put pressure on the government to honour 2% and 3% oil revenue sharing with States and communities; CEPO held L&A meetings with government officials to push for implementation of the Family Law.

The report by Chiwara & Batali (2018) assesses the Interim Cooperation Framework (2016–2017), developed by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in South Sudan with a total budget of \$336 million. The Interim Cooperation Framework (2016–2017) replaced the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012–2016 to sustain efforts promoted by the Agreement on Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) signed in 2015. As a basis for the UN work in this country in the absence of a national framework, the main outputs were the development of food security warning systems and the assessment of the Crop and Food Security Mission (CFSAM) as well as the vaccination and/or treatment of 8.2 million livestock and the destruction of 35,000 explosive hazards (anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mines, and unexploded ordnance). Other outputs included the creation of new cooperatives, the delivery of microfinance and lending services to women, the development of a National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) for management of natural resources, a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and the Study on the State of the Environment (SoE).

Mc Gearty & Deng (2017) evaluate the Community Security and Small Arms Control (CSSAC) project, implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) from 2012 to 2016. CSSAC aimed to improve government services and reduce the proliferation of arms and resource-based conflicts around land, grazing, and water in order to promote peace and reconciliation in South Sudan. To achieve this goal, the project delivered several outputs, such as the provision of technical support to state offices to develop gender-oriented policies and an arms control agenda and provision of technical support to the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission for SSPS and civil authorities in Jonglei, Lakes, and Unity states. The target population was communities and government organizations in all South Sudan's states.

## *Demining*

Another evaluation (WYG International 2013) analyzed a project aimed to clear landmines and other explosives remnants of war. Named *Chase Mine Action (MA) Program*, this project was implemented by the HALO Trust and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), between 2011 and 2013, with a total budget of 31 million euros. Its main outputs were demining, through the technical tasks of locating and clearing landmines and removing unexploded ordinance (UXO) and releasing land that was not contaminated; and education activities to reduce the risks of demining and increasing its support.

## *The reintegration of ex-combatants*

Finally, one report assesses the reintegration of ex-combatants (Haile & Bara 2013). Entitled *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program*, it was implemented from 2009 to 2012 by the Government of South Sudan (GoSS). The project's main outputs were to promote community security and social cohesion through capacity development at local and national levels to ensure the sustainability of reintegration efforts by: 1) supporting the social, economic, psychological, and political reintegration of ex-combatants and associated members; and 2) enhancing the capacity of relevant institutions to ensure the sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants.

## Methods

11 out of 12 studies adopted a qualitative methodology, consisting of a desk review of project documents, key informant interviews and/or focus group discussions, and field visits. In all cases, interviewees were selected through convenience sampling (New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy 2016; Kimote & Deng 2020; Spoelder et al. 2016; Gearty and Deng 2017; IOM and UNDP 2019; Te Velde 2016; ACEPIS 2021; Chiwara & Batali 2018; Haile & Bara 2013; USAID 2019; WYG International 2013. Two reports had a baseline for each output (New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy 2016; Chiwara & Batali 2018).

One report adopted a quasi-experimental design (Pretari & Anguko 2016). This study compared households supported by the project and households not supported by the project but with similar characteristics, and randomly selected both non-participant and participant households for interviews. Statistical tools of propensity-score matching and multivariate regression were used to control for demographic and socio-economic differences between the project participants and non-participants, to increase confidence when making estimates of the project's impact.

All projects were said to be relevant.

## Impacts

Overall, most projects did not have a significant impact on stabilization in its narrow sense, that is, a process of prolonged and sustainable peace. Among projects with reported impacts based

on robust evidence, only two marginally contributed to stabilization (New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy 2016; IOM & UNDP 2019). By increasing community awareness on human rights and strengthening the legitimacy of abuse reporting bodies, such as the so-called Protection of Civilians sites (PoC) and the UN police, the *Beyond Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site (POC) Youth Reintegration Strategy* marginally contributed to stabilization by reducing the perception of community violence (IOM & UNDP, 2019). Similarly, New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016) reports that the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project* partially contributed to stabilization by increasing the use of conflict resolution structures, such as peace clubs, to resolve disputes at the community level.

Pretari & Anguko (2016) conclude that the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion project* had a positive effect on the use of improved seeds, ploughs or power tillers, and the production and use of organic materials, as well as on the production of crops. The improved agricultural practices adopted led to revenue diversification among participants; that is, the average number of sources of monetary income is higher among project participants than non-participants. Additionally, there was a positive impact on food consumption among participants compared to non-participants. Nonetheless, the authors state that no effect was detected on women's participation in decision-making in agriculture groups, nor was there evidence on crop diversification. Despite these achievements, this project did not contribute to stabilization in the narrow sense; that is, achieving prolonged and sustainable peace.

#### *Prevention and reduction of inter- and intra-community conflicts*

Spoelder et al. 2016 determine that no strong conclusions can be drawn from the anecdotal evidence gathered about behavioural changes among beneficiaries in the *Peace Under Reconstruction Project*. The anecdotal evidence showed that people are continuing to attend community-based peace committees that are still active after the end of the project. There was no evidence of the impact of scorecards due to their late implementation, so it is unclear whether the action plans will lead to improved services.

New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016) finds a positive effect on conflict resolution as a result of the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project*. The implementation of community structures that are conflict-sensitive, such as youth and women's associations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, community management committees, peace committees, children's clubs, and other groups, increased from the baseline of 58.4% to 89.7% at the end of the project. Similarly, the percentage of target beneficiaries who reported that they had improved opportunities for employment and income generation increased from 0% to 36.1%, and the percentage of target beneficiaries who access 15 litres of water increased from the baseline of 25.1% to 45%. However, results of the household survey and the focus group discussions showed that there is a deterioration of the food security situation of the community. For instance, the percentage of beneficiaries who report that they were able to meet daily food needs has reduced from the baseline of 57.2% to 48.1%. This could be explained as a result of the drought triggered by El Nino. As a result, we can conclude that the Warrap project has marginally contributed to stabilization by increasing

the use of conflict resolution structures, such as peace clubs, to resolve disputes at the community level.

Kimote & Deng (2020) conclude that the *Peace and Community Cohesion Project* helped in increasing social cohesion and collaboration among community members and this, in turn, contributed to promoting a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the authors assess that the project promoted peaceful conflict resolution through capacity building and training on SGBV, conflict analysis, and mediation, as well as the establishment of peace committees. Evaluators measure the project's success based on outputs and respondents' perceptions, such as the number of social and economic initiatives and projects targeting women to promote social cohesion among communities, the number of disputes around land, cattle rustling, domestic issues, and revenge killings were resolved peacefully, and focus group interviews. Nonetheless, evidence is weak to attribute causality between the project's inputs and measurable results.

IOM & UNDP's (2019) evaluation concludes that the *Beyond Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site (POC) Youth Reintegration Strategy* had a positive impact on perceptions of violence reduction within communities. 58% of the youth interviewed reported a reduction of violence between them and communities in the Protection of Civilians sites and the host communities due to behavior change approaches and conflict mitigation mechanisms. This is a result of increased awareness levels of the human rights and case reporting pathways by the youth – 70% would report cases of abuse to the UN police at the POC site and 65% would do so at the Community High Committee, whilst 62% would report cases to the police and 34% to the local leadership. Additionally, 91% of those interviewed reported that the start-up kits had improved their businesses and incomes. 67% of those who received the support and were interviewed said that the entrepreneurial training and the start-up kits received helped them to generate more income or establish a sustainable income. In sum, we can state that the project has marginally contributed to stabilization by increasing community awareness on human rights and strengthening the legitimacy of abuse-reporting bodies, such as the POC sites and the UN police.

#### *Reconciliation through faith-based activities*

USAID (2019) concludes that the *Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS)* program did not contribute significantly towards achieving an improved environment for sustainable peace, that is, the project failed to ensure community engagement that would lead to projection of community voices to the national peace process. Secondly, the project also failed to restore post-conflict socio-economic infrastructure and revive the economy, although it made some contribution towards employment generation. The agency claims that the lack of impact is mainly due to the program's inability to downsize the army and release resources from defence to peaceful developmental activities. The contribution of the program towards reducing threats to human security was also minimal, as well as restoration of socio-economic infrastructure and revival of the economy. Lastly, efforts to bring community participation into the peace process were also insufficient. The evaluation team assessed that the impact of radio messaging on behaviour change was unclear, and nor could they find evidence linking radio broadcasting to participation in peace and reconciliation settings within the community. As for peace talks,

community participants in all field locations noted that the meetings were too short and that more days were needed for real discussion and participation. With the limited time, women did not have many opportunities to talk, due to social hierarchies and also the fact that the period for dealing with trauma and healing and forgiveness was extremely limited or totally excluded.

*Implementation of local peace agreements and increase cooperation among tribes in the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia*

Te Velde (2016) evaluates that the lack of systematic records from the *Hope & Recovery on the Ethiopia–South Sudan Border Project* prevents any measurable impact on this project. Anecdotally, there have been some improvements in the implementation of local peace agreements since peace committees have been established and some peace agreements are signed, including bylaws. However, other components of the project have not met the desired indicators, such as the targeted Food Consumption Score – an indicator to measure food security – and the targeted increase in average crop production.

*Access to public services and the resilience of communities*

ACEPIS (2021) presents anecdotal evidence on the impact of the Cordaid program, which aimed to increase access to public services and improve the resilience of communities. The report's conclusions of a positive impact are not supported by strong evidence. For example, the report states that the program had a positive impact on capacity development through improved capacity in lobbying and advocacy amongst partner civil society organizations, which increased commitment and action from the South Sudanese government to address oil pollution and facilitate prudent sharing and management of oil revenues, especially the disbursement of 2% and 3% oil revenues to communities and States, yet no evidence is presented to sustain these findings.

Chiwara & Batali (2018) conclude that the effects of the outputs of the United Nations Interim Cooperation Framework (2016–2017) did not achieve the desired outcomes for establishing lasting peace and improved security in South Sudan. The lack of impact is highlighted by decreasing confidence in peace and security by the interviewed beneficiaries in Juba and Aweil, from 53% in 2015 to 47%. However, the authors conclude that the project was satisfactory in increasing the resilience of communities and the inclusion of women, with fewer households relying on coping strategies (down from 78% to 38%). Furthermore, more women are in parliament as the percentage of women in cabinet ministerial posts increased beyond the baseline (from 10% to 16%) and there was an increase in the number of discriminatory laws and traditions being reformed. No significant effect was felt on food security, the strengthening of social services for vulnerable people, or youth employment. These results should be received with caution. Although the UN Interim Cooperation Framework was a national project, evaluators did not conduct surveys and focus group discussions in all states due to transport limitations. Generalization of the results is therefore limited.

Mc Gearty & Deng (2017) claim that UNDP CSAC interventions, such as the technical support to state governments in developing an arms control agenda and the technical support to the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC), contributed to peace and



security at a local level by increasing people's sense of security, improving inter-group relationships, and by building more resilient communities that are better able to resist violence and provocation. This work has also strengthened the peace infrastructure at local level, built the capacity of local government, and strengthened the social contract in these states. These conclusions are mainly drawn from project documentation and perceptions from survey respondents. Therefore, evidence to sustain these findings is weak.

### *Demining*

WYG International (2013) states that there was a positive effect of demining for mine-affected communities in South Sudan. Compared to the control community visited, supported communities were able to return to their villages upon the release of land from mine contamination following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Another outcome is an increased awareness of the mine clearance process and areas among beneficiaries compared to non-beneficiaries. Nonetheless, there was no strong evidence of community participation in mine action, nor on the inclusion of women and girls after demining.

### *The reintegration of ex-combatants*

Haile & Bara (2013) conclude that the *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Program* did not contribute much towards achieving the UNDAF and CPAP outcomes of an improved environment for sustainable peace, restoring post-conflict socio-economic infrastructure, and reviving the economy, although it made some contribution towards employment generation. This was mainly because the program did not achieve its objective of downsizing the army and releasing resources from defence to peaceful development activities. This was mainly because the program was introduced at a time when the communities were not at peace with themselves and the government did not have the will to engage in proper demobilization of the armed forces. The contribution of the program towards reducing threats to human security was also minimal, as well as the restoration of socio-economic infrastructure and the revival of the economy.

## Sustainability

Two reports posit that project results related to capacity building and the establishment of peace clubs were sustainable (New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy 2016; Kimote & Deng 2020). Nonetheless, the evaluations were unable to provide substantial evidence that accrued benefits of the projects would continue in the medium and long term. New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy's (2016) sustainability assessment of the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project* is based only on the premise that the participation of beneficiaries in training would lead them to apply these skills in the long run. Similarly, Kimote & Deng (2020)'s assessment of the UNDP *Peace and Community Cohesion Project* relies on the assumption that the capacity-building activities and knowledge passed on to the project beneficiaries enabled them to continue participating in dispute resolution and community dialogues and to promote a sense of social inclusion and participation. Additional evidence is needed to evaluate the sustainability of these projects' outcomes.

Three reports provide both positive and negative results on the sustainability of project outcomes (Spoelder et al. 2016; Gearty & Deng 2017; IOM & UNDP 2019). Spoelder et al. (2016) consider that the establishment of peace committees at the community level functions as a structure of reference for reconciliation and peacebuilding for the *Peace Under Reconstruction Project*. Similarly, Mc Gearty & Deng (2017) conclude that structures created by the UNDP's *Community Security and Small Arms Control (CSSAC) Project* for dispute resolution of resource-based conflicts at the community level can be sustained. However, both reports conclude that the projects' sustainability is dependent on external and uncontrollable factors, mainly the political situation in South Sudan. IOM & UNDP's report (2019) states that the *Beyond Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site (POC) Youth Reintegration Strategy* shows good technical sustainability among the youth as a result of the training and skills they have developed. Nonetheless, the project's sustainability is challenging for several reasons. First, political sustainability is compromised because of the delay in the national reconciliation process, which further delays the implementation of the peace agreement signed in 2018. As a result, social divisions among youth groups in the POC, Bentiu, and Rubkona towns have widened. Secondly, economic sustainability is not viable because the project is completely dependent on the United Nations for funding.

Five reports conclude that project results were not sustainable (Te Velde 2016; ACEPIS 2021; Chiwara & Batali 2018; Haile & Bara 2013; USAID 2019). The outcomes varied and do not follow a pattern. Te Velde (2016), ACEPIS (2021), and Chiwara & Batali (2018) assess that the project's outcomes related to peace committees and farmer groups, capacity development and policy influencing, the creation of cooperatives, and the delivery of microfinance and lending services to women were not able to transcend the volatile political economy and fragile context of South Sudan. Similarly, USAID (2019) assesses that the results of the *Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS) Project*, through peace and faith-based committees, radio broadcasting, and advocacy were not sustainable because the project failed to sufficiently ensure follow-up on reconciliation meetings and community conversations, limiting activities as one-off events with poor internal or external coordination to inform other activities or interventions. This makes the community conversation, for example, an extractive process that fails to move beyond a dialogue forum. Haile & Bara (2013) conclude that project results, based on capacity development at local and national levels to ensure the reintegration of ex-combatants, were not sustainable due to the low capacities of national institutions (especially due to the low involvement of the government in implementation), limited economic and livelihood opportunities, and low entrepreneurial skills of ex-combatants.

Two reports did not assess sustainability concerns (Pretari & Anguko, 2016; WYG International 2013).

## Barriers

Eight reports mention barriers and constraints to project implementation and achievement of outcomes. Most reports suggest that the main barriers were enduring violence and conflict, and poor infrastructure (Kimote & Deng 2020; Spoelder et al. 2016; Te Velde 2016; Chiwara & Batali

2018; Haile & Bara 2013). Some reports also mention the government as a significant obstacle (Haile & Bara 2013; Mc Gerty & Deng 2017). These factors are deemed to severely affect the implementation of project activities by preventing access to beneficiaries. Moreover, Chiwara & Batali (2018) explain that the continuing conflict situation constrained UN capacity to mobilize planned resources and deliver services due to increased operational costs. The majority of donors needed to reassign their funds to focus on emergency humanitarian work rather than development programs. As for peace outcomes, Kimote & Deng (2020) highlight that easy access to small arms and light weapons makes it difficult to sustain peace at the local level, as peace agreements, signed after community mediation and dialogues, are often violated. When considering the government's role, both Mc Gearty & Deng (2017) and Haile & Bara (2013) highlight a lack of political will that forestalled project implementation. In the case of the UNDP *Community Security and Small Arms Control (CSSAC) Project*, Mc Gerty & Deng (2017) explain that the South Sudanese government failed to engage meaningfully in the peace process and to ensure that the peace talks were inclusive. There was a focus on identity politics, favouring the Dinka ethnic group to the detriment of ethnic minorities, that fueled project beneficiaries' perception of political marginalization and undermined government credibility with UNDP and external partners. Haile & Bara (2013) mention that the government was an obstacle for the effective implementation of the *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Program* because it lacked the political will to promote peace between communities and to engage in demobilization of the armed forces; it prompted the return of ex-combatants to barracks and left non-combatants to be the major clientele of the DDR project.

## Summary

Overall, the impact of stabilization projects in South Sudan appears to be extremely low, with few examples of success. The lack of impact can be attributed to many causes, including methodological failures, the volatile context in South Sudan after December 2013, and the lack of consensus on the meaning of stabilization. In this regard, most studies rely on the success or failure of peace clubs or peace committees to evaluate the project's achievements on sustained peace. Peace clubs constitute a central focus of stabilization efforts and the majority of projects which include these dispute resolution bodies are implemented not by coincidence after the civil war broke out, showing an international effort to stabilize the country. However, other considerations are still nascent, such as the "do no harm" principle, when conceptualizing these international development projects.

First and foremost, there is a methodological failure in most projects since inception that persists to the evaluation phase and prevents any analysis of causal attribution between the project and desired outcomes. Most reports rely on anecdotal evidence, mainly from interviews from convenience sampling, and lack any quantitative measurement of progress on outcomes, including a baseline and endline, resulting in weak evidence.

Secondly, even when projects are properly implemented and both quantitative and qualitative reliable data are available, the volatile context in South Sudan, especially after the eruption of the civil war in December 2013, as well as poor infrastructure and low government capacities to

provide and maintain public services impede project success. Project delivery becomes more costly with the ongoing conflict, heavy rains prevent implementers from reaching beneficiaries, resulting in interruption or abandonment of project activities.

Thirdly, there seems to be a lack of consensus of what stability means as no project defines this concept and only very few studies provide any stability measure. Most projects measure the extent of stability and peace on the success of peace clubs based on respondents' perceptions obtained through surveys or at focus group discussions. The exception is IOM & UNDP's report (2019) which relies on the percentage of cases presented and solved through youth peace committees. Spoelder et al. (2016) rely on survey respondents' sense of security (in terms of free movement, ability to cultivate, and hope) and peace committees' reports of a decrease in reduction of conflict (for example, stick flights among children, cases of gender-based violence, or family issues) and a decrease in cases of cattle raiding.

Thus, it is noticeable that most projects rely on the establishment of peace clubs as a tool for conflict prevention and resolution. Although some projects initially aimed at scaling up these peace clubs and peace committees to the regional and national levels, lack of funding and dependency on the national government act as barriers to this endeavor. For instance, Mc Gearty & Deng (2017) mention that lack of political will to ensure inclusivity in the peace clubs was an obstacle for the project's success as beneficiaries felt that the government promoted ethnic domination of the Dinka tribe, raising beneficiaries' suspicions against the government.

There is also no consensus on the sustainability of peace committees. ACEPIS (2021) and Chiwara & Batali (2018) assess that the project outcomes related to peace committees were not able to transcend the volatile political economy and fragile context of South Sudan. Similarly, USAID (2019) assessed that the results of the *Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS) Project* through peace and faith-based committees were not sustainable because the project failed to sufficiently ensure follow-up on reconciliation meetings and community conversations, limiting activities as one-off events with little internal or external coordination to inform other activities or interventions. However, New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016) identified a positive effect on conflict resolution as a result of the peace committees established through the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project*.

Regardless of the government's absence or activism in the peace committees, all studies agree that the peace clubs were only implemented at the local level. Some projects used pre-existing structures and traditional knowledge (including indigenous knowledge) to establish peace committees (i.e., *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project*, evaluated by New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016)), whilst other projects relied on Western notions of the rule of law to establish them (i.e., USAID's *Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS)*). No significant difference in impact exists between these two modalities.

Interestingly, it is also noticeable that most projects were implemented and evaluated after 2014, when the civil war broke out. Among the projects implemented after January 2014, were those of Pretari & Anguko (2016), Te Velde (2016), ACEPIS (2021), Chiwara & Batali (2018), Kimote & Deng (2020), IOM & UNDP (2019), and USAID (2019). However, there are also projects that started before the rebellion and continued through its aftermath, such as those

evaluated by Spoelder et al. (2016), that lasted from 2012 to 2016, Mc Gearty & Deng (2017), which covered the period from 2012 to 2017, and New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016), whose project lasted from 2012 to 2015. Two projects ended before the 2014 civil war: Haile & Bara (2013) whose project started in 2009 and ended in 2012; and WYG International (2013), which evaluated the project between 2011 and 2013.

It is surprising that only two studies explicitly took into consideration the “do no harm” principle (WYG International 2013; IOM and UNDP 2019). WYG International (2013) concludes that the evaluation of the *Chase Mine Action Program* included efforts to not raise false expectations among respondents, to address language, gender, and data protection issues, as well as to fact-check the accuracy of findings from in-country fieldwork. With regard to the evaluation of the *Beyond Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site (POC) Youth Reintegration Strategy*, that aimed to reduce youth-led conflicts, IOM & UNDP (2019) state that the “do no harm” principle to ensure that methods of data collection was in place when dealing with target groups.

All in all, success seems to be restricted to the local level, in projects that do not directly impact stabilization in its narrow sense (i.e., livelihoods and food security to prevent resource-based conflict) and those that partially address stabilization through community awareness on human rights, the legitimacy of abuse-reporting bodies, and conflict resolution structures, such as peace clubs. As the *South Sudan Peace and Prosperity Promotion Project* illustrates, the provision of training on methods of farming to increase crop diversity, and small business workshops, aligned with cash grants, improved the livelihoods of beneficiaries, better integrated them in the context of displacement, and reduced the risk of conflict by lowering the level of food insecurity. As for peace clubs, the *Warrap Reconstruction for Peace and Human Security Project* (New Enlightenment Training & Consultancy (2016) was successful with respect to youth-led conflict, based on the use of pre-existing structures and traditional knowledge to increase social cohesion.

## Good Governance

### The Evidence Base

#### Rigorous Impact Evaluations

None

#### Good Enough Evaluations

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Soni, R. & Magidu, N. 2012. *Review of Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI)*. UNDP South Sudan. Available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/6383>

The Good Governance group of interventions includes eight studies, two of which were concerned with public financial management and budget strengthening (Cox & Robson 2013; Foon 2020); two focused on capacity building and capacity placement (AWEPA 2016; Soni & Magidu 2012); two on democracy and governance activities (MSI 2015, 2016); one on peacebuilding and human rights education (MacLeod et al. 2020); and one on a free press (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

#### *Public financial management and budget strengthening*

The Budget Strengthening Initiative (BSI) program was designed as a model for providing strategic advice and technical support to governments in fragile states on the development of their budgetary and financial systems. The program operated in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as South Sudan. In each country, it was envisaged to support the management of both domestic revenue and external assistance, with the additional goal of promoting accountability to national parliaments and civil society. The prime beneficiary of the program was the South Sudan Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP). The intervention provided support on aid coordination, budget policy reform, public financial management reform, the planning and budgeting process, aid coordination, peer learning, and support to the Presidency (Cox & Robson 2013).

The BSI program was funded from a DFID-accountable grant of £6.6 million over five years, which covered its management costs and annual operating budgets in the three countries of operation. AusAID contributed about £172,000 to these core costs. BSI sought to raise additional funding for its country operations. At the time of the mid-term evaluation, the program had received £1.5 million for the period 2010–11 to 2012–13 from the DFID South Sudan country program and a further grant of £2.4 million was in the pipeline. It had also received tied grants of £330,000 from AusAID, £107,000 from Danida, and £13,000 from World Bank for its g7+ work stream (Cox & Robson 2013).

BSI aimed to influence national public financial management (PFM) policy through provision of both strategic advice and technical support. It sought to have a catalytic effect by accelerating reform programs and also influencing approaches taken by other partners. In addition, it aimed to support international policy on fragile states, through its support for the g7+ process and by disseminating innovative approaches to supporting fragile states through its research outputs. BSI is one of a number of aid delivery mechanisms that ODI's David Booth has described as 'arms-length organizations' – programs that are allowed operational freedom from their funders and from restricted project design, permitting them to operate as free agents in the pursuit of agreed goals.

Foon's (2020) report presents the findings of the summative evaluation of UNDP's *Public Finance Management (PFM) Project* during the period January 2016 to December 2020. The PFM Project sought to increase non-oil revenue generation in South Sudan in order to address the main development challenges of suboptimal delivery of basic services to the people of South Sudan at the subnational level. The total cost of the PFM project was US\$ 4,427,000, funded by the Government of Japan (GOJ), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). UNDP served as the Implementing Agency (IA). Six states of South Sudan (Jubek, Gbudue, Aweil, Torit, Gogrial, and Jonglei) were beneficiaries of the project.

The PFM project was intended to strengthen the overall governance and PFM systems at state level in order to optimize state governments' capacity for resource generation, planning, and public service delivery. Improved service delivery was identified as having the potential to mitigate the impact of conflict within communities and facilitate socio-economic recovery and stabilization. These outcomes were, in turn, expected to contribute to strengthening peace and governance in South Sudan (Foon 2020).

The project was linked to Outcome 3 of the *Interim Cooperation Framework-ICF (2016–2017): Peace and Governance Strengthened in South Sudan*, with the project output as "Capacity of states in non-oil revenue mobilization, budgeting, and public accountability enhanced". It was subsequently linked to Outcome 2 of the *UN Cooperation Framework 2019–2021*: "Local economies are recovered, and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity". The PFM project also contributed to UNDP's Country Program 2016–2018, Outcome 3: "Peace and governance strengthened" and remained consistent with the country program document for South Sudan (2019–2021) under Outcome 1: "Strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance at the national, state, and local levels" (Foon 2020).

The specific objectives of the evaluation (Foon 2020) were partly related to the impact on PFM in South Sudan, partly on the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation. The objectives were: i) to assess the relevance and strategic positioning of the project with respect to South Sudan's public financial management and improved service delivery needs; 2) to assess progress made towards project results and determine whether there were any unintended results; 3) to capture lessons learned for ongoing and future UNDP public financial management and institutional capacity enhancement initiatives in South Sudan; 4) to determine whether the project management arrangements, approaches, and strategies were well-conceived and efficient in delivering the project; and, 5) to analyse the extent to which the project enhanced the application of a rights-based approach, gender equality and women's empowerment, social and environmental standards, and the participation of other socially vulnerable groups such as children and the disabled (Foon 2020).

Both the BSI and PFM evaluations used a largely qualitative approach, based on desk review, evaluation of the project against its logframe, assessment of the theory of change, and the collection of primary data through key informant interviews and field visits (Cox & Robson 2013; Foon 2020). Neither intervention had a specific comparison group in South Sudan, but the BSI intervention was implemented in two other countries (Cox & Robson 2013).

#### *Capacity building and capacity placement*

The Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) capacity-building program in South Sudan commenced in 2012 and was implemented simultaneously with a European Union (EU) supported program that focused on governance and democratic process which lasted until 2016. The AWEPA program for Local Councils and the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) in South Sudan had the overall objectives of improving human security; strengthening the law; and decreasing structural poverty through participatory leadership, governance, accountability, and improved service delivery by increasing the effectiveness of the legislatures in South Sudan. Specifically, the objectives were 1) to improve the capacity of the 10 local councils in Western and Central Equatoria States and the National Legislative Assembly to enable them to respond to challenges faced in their legislative, oversight, and representative functions, and 2) to improve the capacity of the legislatures to carry out their functions, thereby helping to decrease structural poverty and improve human security, and to ensure financial efficiency and proper use of government funds so as to improve service delivery. The project was funded by the Netherlands Government during the whole period from June 2012 to June 2016 (AWEPA 2016).

The project design was built on the training modules and interventions offered to councillors and women Members of Parliament (MPs) and tailored to equip participants with the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively execute their respective mandates. The design was consistent with the Netherlands Government's development policy of enhancing the security of citizens, contributing to a legitimate government with sufficient capacity, and creating a peace dividend. It was also in line with the European Union's (EU) development policy that seeks to strengthen democratic governance by supporting key governance institutions whose impact is critical for the development of the new state. Public accountability, fighting corruption,



and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are major EU concerns and were covered in the South Sudan Development Plan (AWEPA 2016).

The final evaluation in June 2016 was undertaken as a planned activity within the project implementation process to assess achievement and impact, project outcomes and outputs, and, based on the assessment, to recommend to AWEPA and the Netherlands Government strategies and mechanisms for implementing future projects. Specifically, the final evaluation focused on determining the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the project (AWEPA 2016).

UNDP South Sudan's Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI) commenced in March 2010 with the support of the Government of Canada through CIDA and additionally the Strategic Partnership (SP) and the Global Fund. RCPI phase 1 was built on similar initiatives in other sub-Saharan Africa countries where civil servants and United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) had provided urgently needed technical assistance in post-conflict states (Soni & Magidu 2012).

The RCPI program had begun under the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and continued through the Referendum on Separation (January 2011), and Independence (July 2011). During this period of transition, RCPI UNVs and specialists worked towards two objectives of state-building:

- 1) Immediate 'gap filling' of essential public administration positions in order to resurrect and maintain 'embryonic' government functions
- 2) Human, organisational, and institutional capacity building of evolving state structures through training, facilitation, and other relevant organizational development interventions, including one-to-one counterpart training and mentoring; structured classroom-based group training and workshops; organizational restructuring, development of systems and procedures, and strategy and policy formulation; and drafting of new and revised legislation (Soni and Magidu 2012).

UNDP's decision in 2009 to offer resident technical assistance, co-located with local counterparts within government, was radical at the time but was grounded in the expressed need of local partners. The program envisaged placing up to 154 qualified United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in key public sector institutions across the country to rapidly revive and scale up public administration performance and service delivery. In the event, the program placed 125 UNVs over the review period, more than half of whom (69 out of 125, 55%) were on the ground across the ten states by the time of the 2011 Referendum. The participation of RCPI UNVs in the conduct of the Referendum was seen as a key partnership-affirming act and helped to build trust.

The program evaluation was commissioned by UNDP and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In-country fieldwork and stakeholder consultations for the review were undertaken in June 2012. Two lines of enquiry were pursued: an assessment of the RCPI approach, with suggestions to improve the design and implementation of RCPI 2 and similar post-conflict initiatives, and an assessment of the impact of the RCPI interventions on building organizational and institutional capacity at the state level, particularly in the areas of

development planning, public finance management, and urban management (Soni & Magidu 2012).

Both the AWEPA and UNDP programs also used a largely qualitative approach, based on desk review, evaluation of the project against its logframe, assessment of the theory of change, and collection of primary data via key informant interviews and field visits (AWEPA 2016; Soni & Magidu 2012). In the case of the AWEPA study, baselines, milestones, and final targets were determined at the inception phase. The final evaluation of effectiveness focused on a quantitative and qualitative profiling of progress against project outcomes at close of project in June 2016 (AWEPA 2016). The UNDP program collected quantitative data but only with respect to the recruitment and deployment of UNVs in key public sector institutions and not their impact.

### *Democracy and governance*

Under USAID's Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) implemented what was initially planned as a three-year democracy and governance project in the then Sudan, including the southern region, lasting from January 2009 to January 2012 (MSI 2015). The agreement underwent ten modifications, which involved extending it until September 2014 through a combination of cost and no-cost extensions. After the 2011 Referendum, the project limited its activities to the newly created and recognized Republic of South Sudan. The main purpose of the project, not clearly expressed, was to "support civic participation in a holistic manner, by promoting the adaptation of a sound legal framework for major political process that promotes civic participation by preparing citizens to inform, participate in, and observe those processes".

After almost ten years of implementing civic education and citizen participation-related activities, the NDI effectively ceased operations in South Sudan in December 2013. The three-year, US\$ 44 million project was extended by 32 months, to September 2014, with the award of an additional US\$ 17 million, ostensibly to provide ongoing and related support in the construction and development of the new country. The total US\$ 61 million "Supporting Civic Participation, Peace-Building and Conflict Mitigation" project was wholly funded by USAID (MSI 2015).

Management Systems International (MSI) was commissioned to evaluate the achievements of the 2009–2014 NDI initiative, identify lessons learned, and formulate recommendations for potential future programs in South Sudan. The performance evaluation sought 1) to assess the level of achievement of goals, strategic objectives, and intermediate results; and 2) to determine and document lessons learned and best practices for improved future programming of similar project activities (MSI 2015).

When the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, there was a general belief that South Sudan's political actors would have to be prepared to lead the new country when independence was attained. Once the CPA's most significant political milestones were reached, the scope and concentration of technical assistance and support diminished. USAID's more than US\$ 140 million portfolio to support elections, civil society, and political parties in the pre-independence period was cut by more than half in 2012. Similar activities carried out by the

United Nations and its agencies were also significantly reduced or discontinued. Yet this was precisely the time when South Sudan would need the greatest levels of assistance (MSI 2016).

From 2004 to 2014, the International Republican Institute (IRI) provided ongoing technical assistance and support to political parties in Sudan, including in what was initially Southern Sudan. IRI also provided key assistance to the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, the precursor of today's South Sudanese National Legislative Assembly. Whilst IRI received separate and/or complementary funding from other sources throughout this period, most of its activities were implemented under USAID's Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening mechanism (MSI, 2016).

The IRI USAID- / South Sudan-funded *Political Parties as Institutions of Democratic Governance in South Sudan (PPIDG) project* was modified seven times, including with the addition of two no-cost extensions. Implementation began after Sudan's 2010 electoral process and the subsequent 2011 Referendum. It was designed to address the challenges faced by the newly created Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS). Its main goal was to strengthen the political parties and to provide governance assistance to GRSS's nascent institutions in a bid to create a more pluralistic, competitive, and accountable political system. Its four objectives were to: 1) improve the organization and professional development of political parties; 2) increase the capacity of political parties to develop issue-based platforms that represented core constituents; 3) improve the effectiveness of political party members as representatives in national and state legislative assemblies; and 4) increase the participation of political parties in the making of public policy.

Following the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, USAID and its implementing partners evacuated South Sudan, temporarily suspending project activities. In June 2014, IRI received authorization from USAID to return to South Sudan. Given the ongoing instability in the country, the scope of IRI's activity was significantly reduced and focused on four specific tasks: the certification of Youth Leadership Academy participants; certification of state legislative assembly workshop series participants; democracy dialogues; and an IDP survey (MSI 2016).

The evaluation report (MSI 2016) focuses only on the final phase of the IRI's involvement in South Sudan, covering the 2012–2014 period and summarizes the post-implementation performance evaluation carried out by the Monitoring and Evaluation Support Project of the PPIDG activity.

For the evaluation of USAID's NDI project, MSI had anticipated receiving statistical data but its lack of availability meant that they could only use a qualitative approach based on a desk review of project documents and reports, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Most in-country interviews were held in Juba with only one external site visit in Torit (Eastern Equatoria) (MSI 2015). For the IRI project (MSI 2016), quantitative information concerning beneficiaries was available only for the capacity building component of the PPIDG. Qualitative data for all components were gathered by means of desk reviews, key informant interviews, group meetings and FGDs.

### *Peacebuilding and human rights education*

PAX and Amnesty International Netherlands (AINL), working together under the Freedom from Fear (FFF) alliance, aimed to contribute to transformative change in fragile and conflict-affected situation. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) contributed EURO 59.5 million as part of the Dialogue and Dissent (D&D) Strategic Partnership for the period 2016–2020 in support of five thematic programs to be carried out by the FFF in South Sudan: Community-based Security & Citizens Rights (CBS&CR); Dealing with the Past (DwtP); Protection of Civilians (PoC); Natural Resources, Conflict & Human Rights (NRC&HR); and Humanitarian Disarmament (HumDis). AINL worked on the Human Rights Capacity Building Program (HURICAP), which fell mainly under CBS&CR, while PAX's activity was spread across all five thematic programs (MacLeod et al. 2020).

Interventions in the Community-based Security & Citizens Rights and Dealing with the Past programs were seen as contributing to the transformative processes in societies and included organization and mobilization of civil activism, strengthening social cohesion within society and between and within groups of the population, and the reform of the state into responsive and legitimate institutions. The interventions in the areas of Natural Resources, Conflict Rights, and Humanitarian Disarmament were intended to help mitigate external stress factors, while the interventions in the field of Protection of Civilians contributed to the provision of external support for the protection of civilians and compliance with human rights. Each program had its own theory of change (MacLeod et al. 2020).

The evaluation relied mainly on qualitative information and was based on review of program documents and published sources; collection of primary data through interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with FFF staff, partners, and others during field visits in South Sudan; remote FGDs and interviews with FFF staff of four of the thematic programs (DwtP, HumDis, NRC&HR, and PoC); remote interviews with senior PAX, AINL, and MFA staff; and feedback from the shared draft report and presentation of findings to the Project Group, senior staff, and then MFA. No baseline or endline surveys were conducted with beneficiaries (MacLeod et al. 2020).

### *The free press*

Radio Tamazuj was governed as a project of the Dutch Free Press Unlimited (FPU). Funding of EURO 2,730,896 was provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Embassy in South Sudan. FPU staff were part of the management team of the Radio Tamazuj project, which took place from July 2014 to December 2017. The project's aims were to enhance freedom of expression and to provide South Sudanese people with access to independent information. Early in 2016, a decision was taken to transform the Radio Tamazuj project into an NGO, for which a roadmap was under development at the time of the evaluation (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

Radio Tamazuj started its operations in 2011 with a weekly radio program on Sudanese Radio Dabanga that was focused on the marginalized border areas between Sudan and South Sudan. Thereafter Radio Tamazuj grew steadily and at the time of the evaluation had around 15 staff

and covered the whole of South Sudan. It broadcast news twice daily, provided public service announcements and information, and communicated investigative reporting in both Arabic and Juba Arabic. Some programming integrated audience feedback. Content was not confined to the security situation but included reporting on health and social issues. It also disseminated information through a newsletter, a website, and via social media. Radio Tamazuj maintained a stringer network in South Sudan, where it was the only independent, uncensored media outlet (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

Interventions of the Radio Tamazuj project targeted several groups of beneficiaries: listeners to the radio in marginalized communities without access to other (FM or telephone) sources of information; an online audience of activists, media houses, policymakers, the business community, humanitarian workers, the international development community, the diaspora and, more recently, refugees. The original proposal of 2014 made no specific assumptions, but the logframe included expectations related to literacy level, access to a radio, and/or access to the internet. The project plan was quite positive about the political situation, despite the recognition of high risk. An audience baseline survey was conducted in 2015 and an endline survey in 2017 (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

The objectives of the evaluation were to independently assess whether and to what extent the project's aims had been achieved and to analyse the potential for Radio Tamazuj to become an autonomous organization. The mixed method approach of the evaluation included outcome harvesting, appreciative inquiry, and the five capabilities ("5C") organisational model. Data were collected through desk review, a fact-finding workshop, 5C self-assessment, key informant interviews, radio broadcast content quality assessment, and an online audience perception survey (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018). A half-day workshop was organised with Radio Tamazuj staff for verification of the findings and to give staff the opportunity to reflect on the conclusions and develop their own recommendations.

## **Relevance**

In the case of the UNDP Public Finance Management project (Foon 2020), relevance was assessed on the basis of the extent to which the objectives of peace and good governance suited South Sudan's national development priorities and policies, and also whether the project was in line with the PFM strategic priorities under which the project was funded.

The evaluation by AWEPA (2016) showed that the objectives of the capacity-building program for Local Councils and the NLA were relevant in the context of continued instability in South Sudan and of the Interim Constitution and Local Government Act of 2009 which emphasized decentralization of governance. The project was responsive to the need to strengthen the capacity of both councillors and MPs in representing their communities.

At the design stage of the Radio Tamazuj project, South Sudan was in a state of transition, facing numerous challenges, including ongoing conflict, a humanitarian crisis, limited access to basic needs, and a nascent form of governance. In such an environment, independent media can fulfil a critical role. The project was ambitious, not only in numbers – reaching two million people across South Sudan, but also in the effect it envisioned it would have on South

Sudanese people by stimulating debate, allowing people to make informed decisions, and uncovering abuse. The project was therefore very timely and relevant. Due to censorship of other media houses, Radio Tamazuj's presence as an independent source of information became even more pertinent (De Rijck and Gathigi 2018).

The relevance of the FFF program was not specifically discussed in the context of South Sudan. Rather, relevance was considered at a general level from the point of view of the implementing organizations' objectives and because, in in the many countries in which FFF worked, it collaborated with the local civil society on approaches and issues which were considered relevant, increasing the chances that interventions would be based on local realities, would be seen as legitimate, and would more likely be sustainable (MacLeod et al. 2020).

### **Efficiency**

A low level of efficiency can impact on project progress. Delays in supply of IT equipment to the UNDP PFM project, which led to slow progress in training programs and the automation of taxpayer information, together with the limited responsiveness of the project due to unfilled positions in project management impacted on project progress and resulted in an efficiency grading of only moderately satisfactory (Foon 2020).

## **Impacts**

### *Public financial management and budget strengthening*

In South Sudan, the Budget Strengthening Initiative (BSI) team worked collaboratively with other partners and helped to design and introduce or strengthen key elements in the annual budget process, including a new planning and budgeting calendar and guidelines; a National Budget Plan containing macro-economic and fiscal plans and budget priorities; the 2012 Budget Speech detailing the annual budget policy; a Donor Book describing donor programs by sector; and a Budget Book providing revenue and expenditure estimates. Quarterly budget execution reports were also introduced. The innovations supported Sector Working Groups in health, education, water, and community infrastructure in their preparation of Budget Sector Plans, which define intended outcomes, priority activities, and aid financing plans, and development of Service Delivery Frameworks – mapping the responsibilities for service delivery and identifying blockages. BSI also assisted in developing an understanding of these new processes and their functions across MoFEP and in key sectors and demonstrating how they should be implemented. Overall, the intervention made good progress towards the goal of introducing more effective, transparent, and accountable planning and budget processes (Cox & Robson 2013).

The BSI tracks its own results through "stories of change". This approach captures changes that took place which were not anticipated when the program was designed and were not therefore measured by means of outcome indicators. It can also provide a more contextualized assessment of the program results. The evaluation team examined these stories and assessed whether they offered a fair representation of the results achieved and of BSI's contribution. They

also rated the significance of the changes in terms of their likely contribution to the overall goal of improving economic governance. Nine of the twelve stories of change were rated as having significant change outcomes. These related to BSI's activities and impact related to budget and aid management, described below. The remaining three stories were considered accurate but of less significance to the overall goal (Cox & Robson 2013).

The intervention led to a more structured approach to budget preparation, which was underpinned by a better understanding of strategic spending priorities, the aggregate resource envelope, and the importance of budget ceilings. A budget timetable was established and key inputs into the budget process were being produced, disseminated, and utilized. The main requirements of the South Sudan Financial Management and Accountability Act in relation to the budget process were being met (Cox & Robson 2013).

These reforms were severely tested by the fiscal crisis. The BSI team saw evidence of disruption to MoFEP's reform program and the budget cycle but were impressed at the resilience of the new budget processes. Despite severe cutbacks in expenditure, the structure and discipline of the budget processes remained intact. There were signs that, in response to the crisis, the government increased its commitment to transparency and improved its engagement with both national and international stakeholders in the preparation of its austerity budgets. The presence in country of BSI is also considered to have played an important role in minimizing disruptions and encouraging MoFEP to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the crisis (Cox & Robson 2013).

The BSI's second goal was to introduce effective aid management processes. To that end, it supported the development of an Aid Strategy that described the main aid coordination processes. Its implementation was, however, disrupted by the fiscal crisis. Donors expressed concern about the level of government attendance at some events, and at the failure of the government to convene the planned high-level forum. The BSI designed and implemented a mechanism for integrating aid data into the budget planning system, allowing aid and national budget data to be presented jointly. The team provided strategic advice and support to MoFEP in its dealings with the donor community. The BSI also developed a Local Services Support Aid Instrument, which set out principles and processes by which donors could shift to financing local services and infrastructure through government systems. This initiative influenced the design of World Bank's Local Government and Service Delivery Program, to which BSI provided technical support. It also led to the development of a coordinating structure within certain sectors to address constraints on effective service delivery (Cox & Robson 2013).

The BSI's stories of change provided the evaluators with additional information and also an evaluation by those involved in the project on its results, impact, and challenges. Given that the study by Cox & Robson (2013) is a mid-term report, it is not possible to assess the long-term impact of the BSI's activities. The fiscal crisis hindered the reforms to budget processes and aid management from becoming embedded but the evaluators considered that the new systems and processes would become more established once the fiscal crisis was resolved. Some of the donor representatives interviewed said that BSI's support to MoFEP had helped to prevent further deterioration in their development partnerships and to rebuild lines of communication

(Cox & Robson 2013). Embedding of the reforms requires the development of cross-sector collaboration and time for counterparts to become familiar with the new systems.

UNDP's four-year Public Financial Management (PFM) project (Foon 2020) offered a longer period over which impact could be assessed. It also had a much broader remit, to increase non-oil revenues in order to address development challenges and service delivery at subnational level. The phase of the project being evaluated was specifically intended to strengthen PFM systems at state level, to improve capacity for resource generation, planning, and public service delivery in State Revenue Authorities and State Legislative Assemblies for non-oil revenue mobilization.

The PFM project (Foon 2020) developed enabling legislation for establishing State Revenue Authorities (SRAs), trained tax officers, legislators, and other stakeholders in public financial management in six states, and supported infrastructure development for taxation. The impact of the project was measured by the amount of tax revenue collected and the expansion of the tax base. The South Sudanese have not had a culture of paying taxes, and voluntary tax payment has been the most cost-effective means of collecting tax. An alternative source of revenue data, critical to the measurement of project impact, was state budget estimates. These approached an acceptable standard in Jubek state but were below standard in the other two other states covered by the evaluation. The reliance on budget estimates, which were adequate at the aggregate level but lacked detail, was vital for revenue base analysis, such as contributors to revenue by size of account and by economic sector. An inadequate energy supply and only basic office equipment was found to affect SRAs' productivity and hindered tax administration. Revenue data were not available from the SRAs because of the lack of an effective system of taxpayer data recording. Most information was recorded manually with only limited automation.

The major contribution of the PFM project was the institutional capacity built in SRAs and the accountability fostered in public finance governance and management at the subnational level. This was the view of a broad section of project beneficiaries, including SRA officers and SLA legislators as well as civil society organizations. Their assessments were supported by objective criteria indicating that SRAs contributed to more revenue being collected and more social services being offered. Legislators said that, as a result of the project, they had become better equipped to perform budget oversight. In this regard, the elaboration and enactment of the SRA Acts by the SLAs and ratification of the laws by State Governors, which led to establishment of functional State Revenue Authorities in the six states, were key to the project's achievement. This together with capacity building in the SRA formed the basis of a modern revenue authority. This was complemented by capacity building of members of State Legislative Assemblies to enable them to better carry out their oversight functions and take accountability in the management of public resources. The Non-Oil Revenue Mobilization and Accountability (NORMA) project, which commenced in January 2018 and was intended to continue until June 2021, built on the PFM project's achievements in providing technical assistance to national and state governments on budgetary planning, public financial management, and a harmonized tax management system through the provision of ICT infrastructure (Foon 2020).



The project-supported non-oil internally generated revenue (IGR) in the three states sampled by the evaluator grew in a full year of implementation to June 2017 by 150% in Jubek and Gbudue and 340% in Torit. During the project's implementation period, the share of internally generated revenue (IGR) grew from 11% to about 50% of total revenue. State expenditure on goods and social services rose by over 450% in Jubek between 2016 and 2019, partly funded by transfers from the national budget. In Gbudue and Torit, the IGR was used for the construction of the airstrips in the state capitals, which facilitated immediate access for humanitarian assistance and potentially for commercial traffic (Foon 2020).

The impact of the project in revenue generation and service delivery, contributing to peace and governance in the states of South Sudan, was rated *Significant*. The establishment of SRAs was expected to remain a permanent feature of the state governance structure. The PFM project achieved increases in non-oil revenue, which expanded the fiscal space for local economic recovery. Effectiveness was rated *Satisfactory* based on direct project output and short- to medium-term outcomes. Achievement against only one of the five output indicators was rated *Unsatisfactory*: "increased number of taxpayers filing tax returns". The PFM's contribution to gender and women empowerment was rated only *Moderately Satisfactory* because, apart from a training program in gender mainstreaming in the budget and participation of women in capacity programs and the management of SRAs, there was no discernible impact of gender mainstreaming in the states' fiscal budgets (Foon 2020).

Unintended benefits of the PFM project included a strategic role for states in the government's broader political vision. The PFM project's promotion of taxation contributed to a "culture of participation and citizenship" within the framework of democratic governance. Paying taxes as a manifestation of the social contract between the government and the people requires that the taxes paid should lead to provision of public services in return, to the benefit of the taxpayers and society as a whole (Foon 2020).

#### *Capacity building and capacity placement*

Outcomes and impacts of the AWEPA project (AWEPA 2016) include:

- A better understanding of the role and mandate of councillors and members of the National Legislative Assembly as representatives of the people. This has led to county executives, commissioners and community leaders consulting with their councillors on a regular basis on priorities and problems related to community development.
- Facilitation of the acquisition of knowledge and skills among councillors and MPs on legislation and the legislative process, which helped to promote good governance and the rule of law.
- Capacity building of local councils to strengthen the oversight and monitoring of Government programs. Councillors have played a role in passing budgets, the implementation of school projects, and in passing bylaws related to land, environment, and customary law. They also have the capacity to monitor service delivery and influence its efficiency.
- Training of 60 South Sudanese trainers. The training of trainers (ToT) component has built capacity for the ongoing transfer of knowledge and skills and project sustainability

after closure. Central and Western Equatoria states are now able to field their own teams to deliver similar training courses without having to rely on external trainers.

- Capacity building of the state governments. By training councillors and executives, the project has assisted, through their subsequent promotion, in building the capacity of state governments.

The primary achievement of the four-year AWEPA intervention (AWEPA 2016) was to foster effective legislative representation. AWEPA's capacity building helped to improve the competence of MPs and local councils in enacting laws and passing resolutions and bylaws. Outreach visits by MPs to communities also contributed to socio-economic development by promoting girl child education, peace and reconciliation, and protection of natural resources. Community outreach through peace and reconciliation activities promoted by AWEPA through the MPs and local councils helped to build harmonious communities. It also enhanced the protection of women and promoted the rights of women in society. The project impacted on the resolution of conflict and on community life, including the organization of markets and social events and ceremonies, and supported social change in the community.

The project trainings created a new type of councillor who knew their responsibilities as the people's representative and as the watchdog of Government programs. Prior to the trainings, local councillors did not fully understand their roles, but afterwards they were holding legislative sessions, deliberating the budget, initiating bylaws, and planning service delivery. This was evident in all the counties supported by the project (AWEPA 2016).

The AWEPA intervention impacted on good governance through fostering oversight and accountability as councillors became able to hold executives accountable for the use of government funds in service delivery. This resulted in enhanced rule of law in the communities and promoted the protection of people and property, as well as ensuring good governance and accountability. Support to local councils became a cornerstone of the decentralization system enshrined in the Constitution and the Local Government Act (AWEPA 2016).

The AWEPA intervention enabled some of the trained councillors to take on higher responsibilities. For example, in Amadi State two of them were elevated to the State Legislative Assembly. In the same state, both the Speaker and the Director of Finance and Administration were graduates of the AWEPA ToT program. In Maridi State, an AWEPA trainer became Minister of Local Government (AWEPA 2016). These appointments illustrate appreciation for AWEPA's capacity building and its ability to produce competent staff able to improve local governance. Their loss to the local councils is mitigated as a result of the project's ToT intervention.

UNDP South Sudan's Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI) (Soni & Magidu 2012) utilized United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to enhance public administration and service delivery in all the states of South Sudan. Most of the UNVs were deployed at state level through the Democratic Governance Support to the States project. About 5% were deployed at the national level with key central government ministries.

There was unequivocal endorsement of the RCPI program by both national and state governments and public servants. Six themes were drawn out of the comments of stakeholders when they were asked to reflect on the impact and value of the program. All revolved around an appreciation of the fundamental strength of the program: that RCPI UNVs were resident TAs, located on government premises and subject to the conditions and constraints within which government operates, on hand to address technical problems and emerging policy issues, and influencing public sector reform both through formal capacity building and day-to-day conduct. UNVs performed and demonstrated regular PA tasks; undertook capacity building, training, and mentoring and developed systems, policies, and laws; developed inter-departmental policy and operational linkages; provided horizontal and vertical linkages with other states and the national government; resolved problems with other donor-funded projects; and scoped forthcoming donor-funded projects (Soni & Magidu 2012).

The view was that the RCPI UNVs worked with and in government and that they were “substantively and qualitatively distinct” from bilateral TAs, particularly those who made sporadic visits to the country. There was no sense of a particular policy agenda being pursued by UNDP. In fact, RCPI specialists offered models of public sector institutions and management from their own countries, which have been adapted locally. In one case, the state set up a direct capacity building compact with the Government of Rwanda, with the costs to be met wholly by the two parties. It was generally acknowledged that in the first year the UNVs had to earn professional and personal trust, build networks and relationships with politicians and civil servants, and develop a deep understanding of the local context. The second year was accepted as being more productive and having a greater impact on staff and systems development. When government respondents were asked, in an attempt to gauge the counterfactual, how the governance systems and public administration would have fared without RCPI, the general response was that such a scenario was inconceivable, especially at the state level (Soni & Magidu 2012).

A long list of the direct contributions by UNVs to governance is included in the evaluation report, with their outcomes. They cover work in public financial management, public sector reform and management, statistics and development planning, ICT and communications, urban management, rule of law and access to justice, and revenue collection. Impacts included improved coordination in planning and budgeting; improved evidence-based decision-making by political leaders and technical staff; increased participation and ownership of working documents; more integrated strategic planning and budgeting; more effective program and budget execution and reporting; improved transparency; an increase in non-oil based revenues; and improved predictability of available resources. Frameworks and structures were put in place for the effective and efficient functioning of the state ministries, and staff trainings and capacity building programs were undertaken (Soni & Magidu 2012).

In the short-term, the RCPI program had a strong, positive impact on improving governance at both state and national level. In the longer term, the ability and will of the local staff to carry the work forward after the departure of the UNVs, is being tested through periods of renewed conflict and insecurity (Soni & Magidu 2012).

## *Democracy and governance*

The main objective of USAID's National Democratic Institute (NDI) project (MSI 2015) was to promote the development of a sound political and legal framework that would support civic participation pre- and post-independence. The three original objectives for the 2000–2012 period were geared towards providing support in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and conduct of the 2010 elections and the 2011 Referendum. After July 2011, the project's objectives shifted towards support for the democratic construction of South Sudan.

Although the CPA had not been fully implemented, the CPA's, and also NDI's, most important milestones were achieved, namely the holding of the 2010 elections and the 2011 Referendum. The NDI project had both intended and unintended outcomes (MSI 2015).

One of the main pillars of the NDI project was civic education. In an effort to ensure widespread knowledge of the CPA and its importance for the future of Southern Sudan, the NDI project made significant efforts to educate and inform citizens about the political process and about democratic principles and electoral and constitutional initiatives within the framework of the CPA. Following independence, widespread participation of citizens in the CPA's implementation was facilitated by the NDI. Besides creating enthusiasm and momentum for their participation, the NDI provided key support in soliciting and compiling public opinion about what a new constitution should look like and assisted in the establishment of the National Constitutional Review Committee (MSI 2015).

The NDI's contributions to the organization and founding of the South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections (SSUNDE), including the formation of a team of domestic electoral observers, were important for ensuring the successful outcome of the referendum and election. By facilitating citizens' involvement in the electoral process, the NDI laid the foundation for their longer-term involvement in the country's democratic process. Focus groups established by the NDI were key in facilitating citizen participation, designing civic and voter education strategies, and providing inputs to the development of the constitutional and legal framework (MSI 2015).

The project also addressed the relationship between political and elected leaders with citizens by establishing links and mechanisms through which citizens and political leaders could interact. These created direct channels of communication through which citizens could express their opinions to their elected officials, and elected officials could listen to grassroots concerns and better understand their role in advocating for their constituents (MSI 2015).

Unintended results included polarization of the various political factions who all claimed to represent the real interests of the new country. Internal power struggles among the factions and within the government only served to radicalize their positions, making peace more difficult to attain. Non-SPLM/A leaders and actors who represented significant portions of the population were completely marginalized and shut out of the political discourse. The NDI's uninterrupted presence in South Sudan since 2004 was vital in building confidence and trust among political actors. These close relationships also enabled the NDI to gain first-hand knowledge that would enable it to be more effective in formulating future strategies (MSI 2015).

The SPLM/A government moved to systematically close democratic spaces in the country so that opposition political parties found it increasingly difficult to operate. At the time of the evaluation, they were facing the newly mandated political party registration process. CSOs also found it difficult to work due to harassment and intimidation by government. Similarly, journalists and independent media organizations were subject to constant intimidation from government security agents. After the creation of very high expectations for peace and prosperity following years of conflict and violence, the expectations quickly turned into disillusionment (MSI 2015).

The implementation of the CPA relied heavily on the assistance of the international community. The focus of the NDI was on the successful conduct of CPA-mandated events and there was only limited opportunity for institutional strengthening and organizational capacity development. As a result, local actors, including the government and CSOs, became dependent on the international community (MSI 2015).

Since the NDI and other international organizations themselves undertook many of the activities concerned with the development of political structures and processes, any knowledge and skills gained by South Sudanese officials were short-lived through lack of practical experience. The NDI, together with other international bodies, was therefore responsible for the growth of dependency amongst local officials and for their resulting incapacity to function, and hence the project's negative impact in this important area (MSI 2015). This impact could have been foreseen and measures taken to increase local involvement and capacity development. A more positive impact was created though the NDI's focus on citizen education and participation. As a result of the NDI's civic education activities, citizens participated widely in the CPA's implementation and electoral processes and as a result became more demanding of their leaders.

For ten years from 2004 to 2014, the International Republican Institute (IRI) (MSI, 2016) provided ongoing technical assistance and support to political parties in Southern Sudan. Its objectives were to improve the organization and professional development of political parties and develop their capacity to develop issue-based platforms and engage in policymaking, and to increase the effectiveness of party representation in national and state legislatures.

The years from 2004 to 2014 saw major political changes. IRI's strategy and project design had assumed a set of conditions would be established that would be conducive to the implementation of USAID's Political Parties as Institutions of Democratic Governance in South Sudan (PPIDG) project. Unfortunately, despite numerous modifications, the IRI project's approach did not allow for the quick adjustments needed to address the rapidly changing political environment. Multiple political parties were active in the country and many were represented in the NLA. The IRI's, and PPIDG's, planned activities were based on the assumption that the political situation would progress democratically and the projects were geared towards a long-term impact. As the operating environment became more complex the interventions were seen to be less appropriate (MSI 2016).

The PPIDG's budget was inadequate for IRI's ambitious scope of work in all ten of the country's state legislatures, as well as the NLA. As the only international organization working in the area of political party development and legislative strengthening, the IRI attempted to fill all the gaps

and over-reached itself. Its strategy became disjointed and focused on stop-gap measures that did not build the longer-term capacity of counterparts or other beneficiaries (MSI 2016).

Direct assistance to political parties supported the development of foundational documents, including their constitution, bylaws, and codes of conduct. The IRI also played a central role in designing the processes by which several parties were to elect their authorities. As part of its broader support for the political construction of South Sudan, the IRI also provided training to national and state legislative assemblies. Although the IRI provided a significant amount of training and technical assistance, both to political parties and to state legislatures, interviewees told evaluators that many of the training activities were stand-alone events with little follow-up. They thought greater effort should have been made to provide uniformity of training, or at least coordination with their parties (MSI 2016).

IRI's efforts in support of political parties and legislative strengthening contributed to the development of a pluralistic and democratic system. However, in the new South Sudan, the SPLM/A wanted to consolidate its power, whilst the other parties wanted to share it. According to several former members of the IRI team, given IRI's historic relationship with the SPLM/A, IRI was perceived as favouring the ruling party. Due to the limitations of the trainings, they had received from IRI and other projects, most of South Sudan's other parties showed that they were fundamentally unprepared to operate in the new environment. Most were unable to meet the requirements to register as a political party and some failed to establish an office, thus reducing the number of potential opposition parties. Although the SPLM/A benefitted from IRI's assistance, IRI did also support other parties but they, by comparison, lacked the absorptive capacity to benefit from training and support. Hence, post-independence, the gap between the SPLM/A and other parties widened (MSI 2016).

The IRI's initiatives contributed to increased awareness by citizens of the importance of democratic principles and practices. During its work pre-2012, the IRI, like the NDI, supported citizen participation in the CPA process and in the 2010 elections and 2011 Referendum, and continued post-independence. The IRI introduced targeted interventions to increase the participation of women and youth and set up youth leadership academies which have had a lasting impact on participants who considered their attendance as a key milestone in their career. Support for the development of Women's Leagues in some parties and the organization of Women's Caucuses in the NLA and in several state legislatures have also had a long-term impact. IRI introduced public opinion polling in South Sudan in 2011 and subsequently conducted three additional surveys. Public opinion surveys provided citizens, CSOs, media, political parties, and the government with valuable information regarding citizens' perceptions (MSI 2016).

Like the NDI project, the IRI project had several unintended outcomes. The IRI's activities also created a culture of dependency among political parties. It stepped in to address the parties' needs for formalization but without a strategy for their ongoing training and development. The capacity gap between the SPLM/A and other parties widened, and the opposition grew weaker. In a group meeting with opposition party officials, the evaluation team was told of their expectations of potential benefits that the IRI's support would provide. The IRI was known to be

the only organization working with political parties, so there was an assumption that its support would address all their needs and challenges (MSI 2016).

With so many potential beneficiaries with complex needs and a small budget, not all expectations could be met. Although the project attempted to address the need, it lacked the time and financial resources, and adequately prepared counterparts, to do so in a way that was effective and likely to have a long-term impact .

#### *Peacebuilding and human rights education*

The Freedom from Fear (FFF) alliance, aimed to contribute to transformative change in fragile and conflict-affected situations through five thematic programs: Community-Based Security & Citizens' Rights (CBS&CR); Dealing with the Past (DwtP); Protection of Civilians (PoC); Natural Resources, Conflict, & Human Rights (NRC&HR); and Humanitarian Disarmament (HumDis). The evaluation covers several countries and does not discuss all the interventions in each country.

The evaluation by MacLeod et al. (2020) discussed in detail one project in each of the Dealing with the Past (DwtP) and Protection of Civilians (PoC) thematic programs in South Sudan and two in the Community-Based Security and Citizens' Rights (CBS&CR) theme, with brief reference to several others. Unfortunately, the DwtP and PoC projects selected for analysis did not score well in the evaluation. Hopes that Independence for South Sudan in 2011 would lead to a lasting peace had been dashed as cycles of armed conflict have erupted, resulting in a huge need for transitional justice. Yet transitional justice barely featured in Southern and South Sudan until 2015 when it was included in Chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG), a coalition of South Sudanese CSOs, still exists and continues to push for transitional justice, which is itself an achievement in the context. It succeeded in raising awareness with MPs and the Human Rights' Commission but had less traction in the Ministry of Justice. Therefore, real progress on promoting transitional justice to date is limited. The support of PAX enabled the TJWG to continue and was crucial after withdrawal of other donors (Macleod et al. 2020).

The PoC intervention, by contrast, was a new advocacy project to improve human security in peacekeeping and FFF (PAX) engaged with the Department of Peace Operations and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (Macleod et al. 2020).

One CBS&CR project addressed conflicts in Eastern Equatoria state through promoting local interactions, peace dialogues, and the role of women in addressing issues, and it made a more positive contribution to change which had a chance of being sustainable. The second CBS&CR project was much more experimental and tried to introduce new ways of thinking to address recurrent conflict through a set of scenarios. The scenarios served to collect people's thoughts on possible long-term developments, stimulate debate and act as a catalyst for 'policy thinking'. The outcomes of the NRC&HR and HumDis interventions in South Sudan were not presented in the report. Overall, several of the interventions were small, and whilst in some cases there has been an impact in the short term, it may not be sustainable in the longer term (Macleod et al. 2020).

### *The free press*

The final proposal for the Radio Tamazuj project (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018) was written after the outbreak of ethnic-based civil war in December 2013, after which freedom of expression became even more repressed. Media stations were censored, and journalists harassed. Achieving the project objectives as designed became a huge challenge. Radio Tamazuj operations had to be relocated in August 2015, with the risk of a strong negative impact. The project component to strengthen national media in South Sudan through initiatives such as building journalists' capacity and networks between media outlets was to a large extent no longer practical. Stringers who provided information for the news and programming of Radio Tamazuj had to start working undercover, and other media houses, having already been censored, were no longer able to openly collaborate with Radio Tamazuj (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

Despite all the setbacks, Radio Tamazuj continued broadcasting and providing independent news and programs uninterrupted from exile, in accordance with project objectives. It increased its reach in South Sudan, expanding from the contested northern border areas towards the Equatoria states in the south. It expanded its content from conflict reporting to other topics relevant to its audience, such as culture, sports, and governance. It also focused on developing its social media accounts to reach a variety of target audiences through different platforms (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

The theory of change summarized the logic underlying the project: if people are informed with unbiased, uncensored information, then they will be able to make informed decisions. The assumption was that people had a desire to express themselves and wanted to receive information that they could trust. Access restrictions and other limitations of the evaluation made it difficult to verify the effects of radio and access to information on the process of decision making. Related to the ability to make decisions is people's level of knowledge and education. Radio Tamazuj initially underestimated the effect of illiteracy on the project. Audience surveys indicated that large numbers of the target groups in South Sudan were illiterate and often did not understand the language in which their radios broadcast information. Listeners also needed skills in problem recognition and critical thinking, and education was subsequently included in Radio Tamazuj's vision and mission. The editorial team was aware of the language barrier and had experimented with a weekly Dinka and Nuer magazine but stopped after complaints from listeners and due to the increased politicization of languages being identified with tribal identities after the outbreak of the war in 2013. Radio Tamazuj therefore deliberately chose to broadcast in Arabic and later on added simple Juba Arabic (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

The assumption that people had access to shortwave radio was informed by prior experience of radio programs in Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. The audience survey baseline of 2015 stated that the majority of respondents had access to radios (61%) and mobile phones (62%). The extent to which people had access to shortwave radios was not specified but, in general, people faced challenges in accessing radio. The endline audience survey found that the most frequent reasons for not listening to radio were related to the device itself. The fact that electricity was scarce and batteries were expensive and often unavailable meant that owning a



radio was not a priority. However, it is estimated that about 8.25% (36,625 to 37,615 people) of the population across the five counties included in the audience survey listened to Radio Tamazuj (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

There was an assumption in the proposal of an expected increase in the usage of the internet by the target groups. 11% of audience survey respondents in 2015 and 12% in 2017, the majority of whom were in Juba, indicated that they had access to the internet. However, only 5–6% of the 2015 and 2017 survey respondents reported owning or having access to a laptop or computer. Mobile phone ownership increased from 38% in 2015 to 59% in 2017, but it is not clear if these were smartphones with internet access. Nevertheless, Radio Tamazuj's online statistics showed that their follower base was growing. The Radio Tamazuj team found it surprising that 50% of respondents to the online survey said they were living in South Sudan, as it was assumed that the online platforms would mainly attract members of the diaspora and the international community. The online platforms potentially also reach the same people who listen to the radio (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

Radio Tamazuj had built up a relationship with a number of stringers and worked with 15 to 18 national journalists. Female journalists worked mostly in the studio due to cultural restrictions and safety and security issues. The overall assumption was that journalists had some freedom of movement despite the security situation (De Rijck & Gathigi, 2018).

The project design had positive prospects of achieving enhanced freedom of expression but in light of the political developments in South Sudan could not achieve its ambition. It was difficult to verify the effect of radio and access to information on people's decision-making process but the project was able to provoke a reaction from its audience and had an influence on the media landscape in South Sudan. There is anecdotal evidence that Radio Tamazuj was contributing to increasing political and human rights awareness and that its coverage managed to spur action at community and government levels. While Radio Tamazuj was short-lived it achieved a level of success and had an impact on its radio and online audiences. Unfortunately, political circumstances prevented it from achieving its full potential and making a more substantial and longer term impact (Rijck & Gathigi 2018).

## Sustainability

Cox & Robson (2013) state that sustainability is a difficult standard to apply to studies such as theirs related to good governance and public financial management. The results described in their report, for example, are still emerging and it is premature to draw conclusions as to sustainability. Furthermore, BSI supports fragile states during their early transition phase, helping them to deal with challenges that are characteristic of that period. Often, the problems that BSI seeks to address will be short term in nature. In complex transitions, the mark of progress is that today's problems are resolved so that tomorrow's problems can be tackled. If BSI is successful, the country will develop budgetary systems and processes. Sustainability is observed indirectly when the foundations are able to be built on.

Cox & Robson (2013) also believed that BSI could develop a more explicit focus on the sustainability of the systems and processes it helps to introduce. When designing new initiatives, it should put more emphasis on planning the implementation process, assigning clear roles and responsibilities, identifying capacity gaps, and developing a strategy for filling them. Staff would also benefit from an understanding of how their individual role contributes to the system as a whole. While it may not be BSI's role to deliver training programs, it should work with others to make sure that the necessary skills development occurs.

The sustainability of the Public Financial Management project was formally rated *Satisfactory* (Foon 2020). The place of SRAs in the PFM system of the country is already assured by the SRA Acts, the PRM Act, and the national Constitution and is likely to remain a priority for the government. SRAs have already raised non-oil revenue and have budget lines in state budgets for their operations. However, the levels remain low and fail to take account of the fact that higher investment and spending by revenue authorities result in a high amount of revenue collected. Accountability in the management of public resources is the key factor in attaining good governance in public and financial management in South Sudan, as elsewhere, and it is fraught with risk.

In capacity-building programs, only a small group of staff can be trained. The final evaluation of the AWEPA program (AWEPA 2016) notes that training of trainers (ToT) is an important strategy in terms of sustainability. It is the perceived usefulness and value of the skills acquired under a ToT program that guarantees they are passed on to others by the new trainers. The program's resource of 26 trainers supported continued capacity building and transfer of knowledge to a new pool of councillors. Furthermore, through becoming trainers the former trainees are more likely to retain the skills that they were taught. Sustainability was also enhanced through provision of literature, including training manuals and legal instruments such as bylaws, resolutions, and public orders that were produced and passed by local councils and which will remain in use after program closure. These materials promote a culture of good governance, democratic accountability, and service delivery. They also increase knowledge and awareness, and contribute to sustaining peace and reconciliation, protection of human rights and property, gender empowerment, girl child education, rule of law, and protection of natural resources.

The evaluation of UNDP South Sudan's Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI) (Soni & Magidu 2012), through which United Nations Volunteers were embedded in government departments, did not specifically mention sustainability. However, the presence of the UNVs in post for two years risked creating dependency. Local staff, even if well trained by the UNVs would have become used to their guidance and could have found it difficult to take the initiative or make decisions after their departure. Only if the local staff were able to take the reins and manage the department themselves could the program be said to be sustainable.

The risk of dependency in hindering sustainability was also observed in the USAID National Democratic Institute (NDI) project (MSI 2015). In this case, the NDI and other international organizations themselves undertook the development of political structures and processes, rather than training South Sudanese officials and subsequently guiding and monitoring their

work. The knowledge and skills gained by the local officials were not well embedded because they did not gain the experience of doing the work. The NDI was, therefore, responsible for the local staff's lack of capacity and inability to function alone, and for the project's negative impact in this important area. This impact could have been foreseen and measures taken to increase local involvement and capacity development.

The impact of USAID's IRI project was said to be short-lived, with a diminishing rate of return (MSI 2016). In this case, sustainability was adversely affected by the project's decision to work with all political parties and legislatures. This limited the amount of time that could be spent with any one party or group. Participants themselves were critical of the stand-alone and uncoordinated events and the lack of follow-up that would have reinforced their learning. Lack of adequate training was compounded by the limited absorption capacity of beneficiaries, further reducing the likelihood of sustainability.

The impacts and sustainability of peacebuilding and human rights development activities are unpredictable. By deliberately choosing to work in some of the most fragile and vulnerable countries in the world, the FFF Alliance (Macleod et al. 2020) is operating where stability and sustainability are highly uncertain and any progress can be quickly undone. In July 2016, during this intervention, fighting broke out in Juba and spread to much of the country, setting back progress. When the fighting is over it is hard for the local population to pick up the threads because fighting tends to be cyclical and people fear it will soon break out again. Sustainability becomes about gaining more momentum in the next phase to advance a little further. Whilst there are forces beyond the control of the FFF, their programs can be designed so as to relay the essence of a topic and build on it with role play or other practical activities so that the ideas are more memorable and maximize the prospects for sustainability

The funding of the Netherlands Government for Radio Tamazuj came to an end in 2017 and the grant was not renewed. The EU funding that Radio Tamazuj was receiving at the time of the evaluation had the requirement of co-funding and so its contract with the EU ended. FPU was then forced to invest its own resources and try to become financially self-sustaining (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018). To cover core funding, it developed a business plan that included the possibility of selling public service announcements, conducting training, and providing advertising space on its website and social media accounts. The fact that other media networks in South Sudan relied to some extent on Radio Tamazuj's news for their own production was a potential opportunity to monetize content. Staff cuts also had to be considered but while the radio station was in exile it was difficult to end contracts.

## Barriers

The BSI intervention (Cox & Robson 2013) was designed to fill the gaps between other programs and deliver strategic advice and technical support to fragile states on the development of their budgetary and financial systems. As well as having wide-ranging reform and capacity development needs, and limited capacity to manage complex institution-building initiatives, fragile and conflict-affected states have severe financial constraints. Faced with a large number of urgent needs, they find the prioritization and sequencing of reforms difficult. In the absence of

strong national coordination mechanisms, an inrush of donor support overwhelms their limited capacity with too many, sometimes contradictory initiatives. Due to weak fiduciary controls, donors are often reluctant to fund programs through a country's budget system; as a result, funding of basic services through non-government channels easily undermines state-building goals. The BSI initiative faced all the same problems and in addition had to operate within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and to try to improve the efficiency and transparency of its business processes and to make it fit for purpose and able to manage donor funding in an acceptable manner.

Socio-political upheaval and unstable security conditions that prompted other donors to truncate PFM interventions in the states were also major impediments to the implementation of UNDP's PMF project (Foon 2020). Project-specific constraints included difficulties in obtaining revenue data from SRAs and the lack of availability of taxpayer data.

The AWEPA capacity building program (AWEPA 2016) encountered challenges from the start, arising from the anticipated transfer of county executives who were expected to be the local trainers in Western Equatoria state. Then, the sudden outbreak of civil war in 2013, particularly in Juba County in Central Equatoria, caused the program to be postponed, impacting negatively on project schedules. Other challenges included delays in building consensus for the signing of MoUs with state governments, poor communications with some project areas, and bad roads coupled with heavy rains that made traveling impossible. The delays translated into higher implementation costs as well as disruption to training activities.

The Rapid Capacity Placement Initiative (RCPI) (Soni & Magidu 2012) suffered from changes within government, particularly transfer of ministers and lack of stability among the technical staff, and, in some cases, the restructuring of state ministries. This is all par for the course, but nevertheless affected the target group of personnel undergoing training, coaching, and mentoring and compromised the effectiveness and sustainability of the capacity development initiatives. The lack of a coherent framework and plan for institutional development in the country was considered to be a major impediment to capacity building. There were weak sectoral linkages between the centre and the states, and between states, which meant that the program could not be implemented consistently across the target beneficiaries.

Before 2013, the conflict had not had any notable impacts on the NDI project (MSI 2015). After 2013, it had four significant effects on all parties, including the NDI, which were difficult to overcome. First of all, long-term conflict caused psychological instability in some groups of the population and a guerrilla mindset among the elites. Second, infrastructure deterioration impacted on the project's mobility. Third, during the final year of the project, the migration of qualified workers made it more difficult to recruit and keep qualified personnel. Finally, acts of violence in December 2013 culminated in the evacuation of all donor agency staff. For the NDI, this meant a complicated closure procedure and a no-cost extension for the remaining months until September 2014.

The IRI project (MSI 2016) also suffered from the outbreak of war and an increasingly difficult operating environment.

The FFF alliance (MacLeod et al. 2020), operating later, between 2016 and 2020, found turnover of trained staff a barrier to progress.

Conflict forced the Radio Tamazuj team into exile. Media houses had to close and journalists and stringers operated with difficulty. Due to the challenges of data collection in remote areas of South Sudan and whilst in exile it was not possible to monitor audience perceptions and measure impact. The evaluation team for the Radio Tamazuj project witnessed some of the constraints firsthand (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018). For safety reasons, it was not possible for Radio Tamazuj producers and journalists to consult members of the stringers network during their visit. Furthermore, visiting communities who listened to the shortwave radio broadcasts, who were located in isolated and marginalized communities with little or no access to mobile networks, sometimes in opposition-held areas, was not possible. As a consequence, the evaluation was not able to include data from the rural audiences or stringers, which limited its findings.

## Summary

Some of the hallmarks of good governance, such as accountability, transparency, and responsiveness, are not easy to measure. This is partly due to the need for them to become embedded in everyday practice compared to the relatively short period between project implementation and evaluation, and also partly because it is not easy to find an appropriate means of assessment. The BSI project, for example, relied on “stories of change” rather than statistics (Cox & Robson 2013). An alternative, less subjective approach would be to measure outcomes against a custom set of indicators or against benchmarks, provided that these approaches took account of the short elapsed time and the local context. The impact of the PFM project (Foon 2020) could be measured more precisely, by the difference in amount of tax revenue collected and by the expansion of the tax base.

Both of the projects dealing with public financial management (Cox & Robson 2013; Foon 2020) covered a lot of ground and, at the time of their evaluation, were successful and seen to be having an impact. Whether the new processes and procedures were sufficiently embedded in the system and able to withstand intermittent conflict and changes in personnel to have a lasting impact after the departure of the project team was not clear.

The Budget Strengthening Initiative (BSI) (Cox & Robson 2013) restructured and strengthened the annual budget processes and supported Sector Working Groups in the preparation of their budgets and sector plans. More importantly, the BSI team also assisted staff across MoFEP in gaining an understanding of the new processes and their functions and showed them how they should be implemented. Counterparts praised the team members for the way they worked, particularly their willingness to facilitate a process without needing to take credit. When staff actually work through the processes and are involved in preparing the budget this gives them a degree of ownership and the experience to take forward for the next year when they do not have advisors on hand to support them. Without this experience, some of the benefits of the BSI team’s support would have been lost. Cox & Robson (2013) did, however, comment that individual skills development occurred only incidentally and that the BSI team should think more systematically about the capacity development dimension of their initiatives to support their

sustainability. It is key to find the right balance between getting the job done and building capacity in local counterparts, and in the longer term the latter is more important.

Cox & Robson (2013) report that there was a high rate of adoption of BSI-supported initiatives, which indicates that they were well tailored to the country's needs, and also those of the counterparts. The new budget processes proved resilient in the face of a severe fiscal crisis. Overall, the BSI intervention was said to have made good progress towards the goal of introducing more effective, transparent, and accountable planning and budgeting processes.

BSI addressed problems that are characteristic of early-stage transitions, managing the establishment of budgetary processes in a low-capacity environment, but also helping the Ministry to cope with the inrush of poorly aligned and uncoordinated aid and integrate it into the budgetary system. BSI's presence had played an important role in minimizing the disruption and had not exacerbated it – it had caused no harm.

The public financial management (PFM) project (Foon 2020) dealt with another key area – taxation. The project developed enabling legislation for establishing SRAs, and trained tax officers, legislators, and other stakeholders across six states, as well as supporting tax infrastructure development. The preparation and enactment of the SRA Acts by the SLAs and ratification of the laws by State Governors led to establishment of functional State Revenue. The project followed up on infrastructure and process development by providing institutional capacity building of the SRAs and SLAs to try to ensure the systems continued to be implemented and the impact on revenue collection was long term. Capacity building was a key feature of this project and it had a major impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the counterparts and fostered accountability in public finance governance and management at the state level.

The greatly increased revenues and broader tax base achieved following reform of the tax system permitted increased spending on social services and local infrastructure development and were key to fulfilling the project's main objective, to increase the country's non-oil revenues so as to better address the many development challenges. A lack of IT equipment affected productivity, and the project might have been even more successful had it been able to automate the tax collection and reporting processes. The project also attempted to increase the participation of women in public finance through mainstreaming and capacity building, although there was no immediate impact on state budgets. Improved service delivery through enhanced governance and public financial management was identified as having potential to mitigate the impact of the conflict in the communities and to facilitate socio-economic recovery and stabilisation in the country (Foon 2020).

Another positive but unintended impact was a more strategic role for the states in the country's governance, enhancing participation, another sign of good governance, and strengthening the social contract between government and citizens (Foon 2020).

Two projects dealt specifically with capacity building. UNDP's project dealing with capacity *placement* (Soni & Magidu 2012) was in sharp contrast to that involving capacity *building* (AWEPA 2016). The former placed UN volunteers with a moderately high level of expertise as resident technical assistants in institutions across the country to enhance service delivery. This

gap-filling exercise may have solved the immediate lack of capacity but risked excluding counterpart staff. The local staff spoke very highly of the UNVs, of how they were on hand to address policy issues and technical problems. As well as developing policies and systems, fostering inter-departmental linkages and servicing and scoping donor-funded programs, they also provided some capacity building and mentorship. The balance that they achieved between doing the work themselves and supporting their counterparts to do it is not clear, and nor is the amount of capacity building provided. Learning by watching is less effective than learning by doing as it does not instil confidence. The project's approach risked creating a culture of dependency on external support. The counterparts said they could not envisage how they would have coped without the volunteers, but it is not known whether they felt capable and confident to take the work forward by themselves. The project developed systems, but less so the effectiveness of the people who would need to operate them.

The AWEPA (2016) intervention focused on capacity building in local councils and in the National Legislative Assembly and state legislatures. Its objectives were capacity building for the purpose of improving human security, strengthening the law, and decreasing structural poverty through participatory leadership, governance, accountability, and improved service delivery. Hence, it took the opposite approach to the task of improving governance in South Sudan – it aimed to use capacity building as the means to fulfil its institutional objectives rather than carrying out reforms itself and providing training as an adjunct.

AWEPA offered training and capacity building to councillors and to women MPs and tailored it specifically to their needs to enable them to execute their mandates. Capacity building helped to improve the competence of MPs and councils in preparing and enacting legislation, whilst outreach visits by MPs to local communities gave them an appreciation of the issues faced by citizens and highlighted the MPs' accountability to them. Councillors also became more aware of their various roles and responsibilities to their community. A key feature of the capacity building program was the 'training of trainers' (ToT) component. Those who received training were soon sought after for higher roles, but the ToT program was intended to ensure that they could be replaced with others equally competent (AWEPA 2016).

Overall, the AWEPA project (AWEPA 2016) seems to have had a more lasting impact than the UNDP program (Soni & Magidu 2012), though measurement of impact in both cases is difficult. The one project (AWEPA) helped to make counterparts more independent; the other (UNDP) risked making them more dependent on external support. The political circumstances in which the two projects took place were different, but, even so, the UNDP project could have had a more sustainable impact by focusing on supporting their counterparts as they did their work rather than taking over from them. The resulting institutional development might have been less successful and have taken longer but it would have provided the counterparts with supervised work experience.

The two USAID-funded projects (MSI 2015, 2016) were both concerned with strengthening the political process, but from different perspectives. The NDI project (MSI 2015) aimed to promote the development of a sound political and legal framework that would support civic participation, and one of its main pillars was to educate citizens about the political process. The IRI project

(MSI 2016) was concerned with legislative strengthening and provided technical assistance in support of political parties.

The NDI (MSI 2015) informed citizens about democratic principles and processes and facilitated citizen participation in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. As citizens became better informed, they became more enthusiastic and their participation in governance gained momentum to the extent that the NDI was able to compile a summary of public opinion about what they thought should be included in the new Constitution. The NDI also enabled citizens to participate in the electoral process in 2010 and in the 2011 Referendum as members of a team of electoral observers. Through these activities, the NDI laid the foundations for more sophisticated and longer-term citizen involvement in South Sudan's democratic processes. The NDI also developed links between citizens and their political representatives, creating direct lines of communication whereby grassroots concerns could be brought to the attention of elected officials who, in turn, could better understand the problems facing the people. Although, after the SPLM/A's election victory, the political space narrowed both for political parties and public participation, citizens remained aware of their rights and still concerned to hold their leaders accountable.

The IRI project (MSI 2016) provided technical assistance and support to political parties, as institutions of democratic governance, to improve their level of organization and their professional development. It strengthened their capacity to develop platform-based issues and to engage in policymaking, thus enhancing their effectiveness in the legislature and, potentially, their appeal to the public. There were numerous political parties active during the ten-year period (2004–2014) of the project's operation and many were represented in the national legislature. The IRI was the only organization supporting their development. The IRI planned to work in all ten state legislatures and tried to help all parties who needed assistance, but ended up spreading itself too thin. As a result, some of its clients were dissatisfied and a number of parties were ill-prepared and unable to survive in the more restrictive environment after the 2010 election. Although it had only limited success, the IRI project, with the NDI project, illustrated the need to build the knowledge, capacity, and awareness of a shared responsibility for good governance among all participants in the democratic process.

The Freedom from Fear (FFF) portfolio of projects in South Sudan was disparate and its outcomes difficult to assess. The evaluation (MacLeod et al. 2020) covered FFF's activities in several countries and was required to focus on project efficiency and effectiveness, particularly on the specific contribution of FFF, on financial accountability, and on learning outcomes rather than on the impact of its interventions on the local population. Hence, interviews and focus group discussions were with members of staff and partners rather than with beneficiaries.

The overarching theme of FFF's activities was to contribute to transformative change in fragile and conflict-affected situations, and through international policy change. Its portfolio was based on peacebuilding and human rights initiatives in five thematic contexts. Due to lack of political traction, the key transitional justice program appeared to be struggling to survive and in need of further support if it was to have any impact. The advocacy intervention under the PoC program had some success at policy level but its implementation appeared to be lacking. The second



CBS&CR project was creative in its adaptation of scenario planning and a means of concentrating people's thoughts, stimulating debate and forming a basis for policy discussion (MacLeod et al. 2020).

The FFF interventions were on a small scale. Some had the potential for a major impact on the group of people affected. Others sought to influence international organizations or government. The individual interventions by themselves were all too small to be of interest to larger aid groups and the FFF alliance filled a gap. In some instances, such as its support for transitional justice, FFF needs to engage with more powerful actors who can move it up the agenda.

Radio Tamazuj (De Rijck & Gathigi 2018) was also a small project but nevertheless important as the only one that supported media freedom. Despite being forced into exile, Radio Tamazuj continued to broadcast, expanded its reach and its audience figures, and increased the number of its online followers. As other media enterprises were being silenced it became the only source of news and information for many. Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are cornerstones of democratic governance, and the project was important in that it attempted to maintain these values in spite of repression. It was unfortunate that the project could not remain viable and continue to expand as it served a need both as a news broadcaster and as a defender of the freedoms that South Sudan sought to enjoy.