

**Diminishing Role of the Youth and Civil Society Organizations in the Process of Peace-Building in Central Equatoria State and beyond in South Sudan Post-2005**

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**Abstract**

*The youth and civil society organizations have important roles to play in the process of peace-building, but they have not been fully engaged in South Sudan. Their role in the nine functions to help prevent reoccurrence of conflict was neglected. This study investigated the reason why such negligence occurred. The youth became vulnerable to recruitment to fight for politicians to gain recognition for position in the national government, making conflicts sources of employment. Civil society organizations, which should have been responsible for the signing of legitimate contracts with the national government and the business sector, and as an intermediary between the government and the society, were weak to negotiate effective social contracts. Stratified purposive interviews were conducted in Juba and Kajokeji counties, including two focus group discussions. Workshops were attended to fill in information gaps from the other states. Primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews with key informants: civil society organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, government officials, and former fighters. Secondary sources were gathered from the University of Juba. The data was analyzed using the process of ethnography and discourse analysis, interpretation and observation. The findings of the study show that the national government adopted a centralized system of administration, and youth and civil society organizations did not play an effective role in preventing the reoccurrence of conflicts. Practices of good governance became difficult to establish a democratic state, leading to neglect of the role of the youth and civil society organizations in the process of peace-building, Inclusivity, good policies and appropriate conditions for further research would be needed.*

**Keywords:** Civil-society, democracy, governance, peace-building, youth

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## **1. Introduction**

The study was conducted in Central Equatoria State, Juba and Kajokeji, South Sudan. Youth and civil society organizations are the driving force for state formation and building. They have played vital roles in the process for peace in Central Equatoria State in the pre-Comprehensive Peace Agreement period in South Sudan. During the civil war (1983-2004), youth and civil society organizations were effective as a driving force for the revolution but not during the process of peace-building. The politicians knew the youth have played an important role in articulating the National Liberation Agenda, notably the role of educated youth in the mobilization of both urban and rural youth as active combatants including child soldiers. The national and state governments have clear views for the reason why the youth have been engaged as active combatants, and hence the view that the youth and civil society organizations can play an active role in the process of peace-building when they are given a chance to participate. According to Nyout-Yot (2016), the issue of unemployment of the youth was not clearly articulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005), and that has resulted in the missing out of the youth in, for example, education which is crucial in enabling young people to develop their respective states through a unified agenda in education curriculum, to promote the vision of the people and their states (Nyout-Yot, 2016: 3). This paper will have the first section on youth, followed by the role of civil society organizations. This paper aims to investigate how the politicians view the role of the youth and civil society organizations in activities for peace-building such as the process of reconciliation, and community cohesion in Central Equatoria State and beyond.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Design, data collection, sample, analysis and limitation**

Qualitative method was applied for data collection and analysis. This paper analyzed primary and secondary data obtained from Central Equatoria State. Data display and presentation was used for analysis. Notes were taken from observed and encountered situations. Other data was collected by recording events through conversation and meetings, and written information (documents, product and artifacts) in line with the suggestion by Miles and Huberman (1994 6-10) and Alexander et al. (2014 7-9). Primary sources included interview with government administrators, peace-building actors such as the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugee (HNNHCR) and South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) in Juba. Other interviews were conducted with members of local and international organizations with experience in activities of peace-building. These included members of women unions, youths and civil society organizations, and community leaders. For security reasons, documents and artifacts have been withheld.

The literature was reviewed using the available centers such as the University of Juba library, electronic libraries, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and in Agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Dispute (Accord) in Juba. The process also involved making comparisons and asking questions throughout the sampling process (Berg, 2001 30-35). The secondary literature was aimed at supplementing primary data. The interviews have helped the researcher to get first-hand information, and to have insight from the key informants directly engaged in the issues being studied, and in the processes for decision-making in the national government. Prior to data gathering, letters of introduction and approval were obtained from the University of Hawassa and the University of Juba for easy undertaking of the study for academic purposes. The approvals from the universities were used for legal and ethical purposes and contact for conducting the interviews.

The interviewees included different age groups (18 and above). Included among them were academics, community leaders, members of organizations of civil society, church members, women and youth associations, and staff in peace and reconciliation commission (9). Data was also generated and triangulated for reliability and validity by one focus group discussion in Juba County (11 participants) and one in Kajokeji County (7 participants). Workshops have also been held to serve as a means of triangulation for reliability and validity of the collected data, and for filling information gaps from the other states of South Sudan (9 workshops were held).

The main limitations to this study were due to denial of access to interviewees and the fear to provide information by interviewees, because of the national security prevention of freedom of expression. More data would have been obtained in a secure environment which was conducive.

### **3. Results**

This result showed that the youths have not played an active role in the process of peace-building in Central Equatoria State and beyond. This is because of the lack of transparent information sharing mechanism for activities for youths (Interview with a member of youth, 2017, Juba). The few community leaders and youths who were available only played a minimal role, which was geared to fulfil the interest of the elites in the national and state governments – the few community youths were not elected to their posts but nominated by their friends and relatives who were working in the national government. Most voices of the communities were not considered important in issues of peace-building despite their hard work in raising community awareness, and in voting during general elections (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba).

In South Sudan at large, the majority of youth have grown up under war and were greatly influenced by other conflict conditions. The youth had not generally contributed effectively in the process of peace-building because of tribalism. In some communities, children were told not to associate with people from other communities, a process that led to structural violence, and the root cause can be traced to the tradition of cattle raiding (Interview with a member of youth, 2016, Juba).

There has been a gap in the need to harmonize value of returnee youth from refugee camps abroad, to have unified voice with category of other youth, making it difficult for the youth to work cohesively to develop South Sudan. This is unlike the youth cohesion during the war (1983-2004) when most of them worked cohesively in developing the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army and Movement (SPLA/M). The researcher consent that the community in Central Equatoria State did not play much positive role in practicing measures for accountability and transparency in the process to transform political institutions from conflict to peace, because their governor did not listen to some of them (community) as he (governor) was mostly not accountable to many of them (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba). Once the community tried to ask the state government for accountability, some of them were sometimes threatened with an arrest. Thus, the role of the youth in the process of transformation of political institutions remained insignificant. The community in Central Equatoria State was not satisfied with the role played by the state government in the

implementation practices for good governance and for transforming political institutions (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba).

Civil society organization was not effective enough to sign social contract with the National government for legitimacy to govern. As such, there has not been any good quality reform system in almost all the administration units in political institutions. This is because of lack of effective coordination and participatory activities, where the youth play greater role, in process for transforming political institution (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba).

### **3.1. The role of the youth in the process of peace-building**

The National Government of South Sudan defines youths as a person between the ages 18-40, but there has been an on-going debate to reduce the age to between 18-35 years old (Workshop on youths dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, 16-17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2016, Juba). The other aspects relate to the cultural context and political setting of an environment where a person becomes a youth in society. These contexts may affect the likelihood of the role of a person. Youth is defined widely as a category of a person with the age range 18-29 years (UN resolution 2250, UNSC 2015, 1) and between 18-35 years in South Sudan (Workshop on youth dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, 16-17<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2016). According to Mubashir and Grizelj (2018: 8), it is necessary to realise the categories of youth in the first place as biological-onset of puberty and reproductive capacity and second, youth as a socio-cultural construct such as norms and expectations in terms of roles, rituals and relationships.

Third, psychological – it involves autonomy, identity, independence, and responsibility. Fourth, political – it involves leadership, rights, participation, justice, policies, and regulations on education, voting, driving and working. Fifth, it is a sociological contract of identity that varies through cultures, countries, social groups and organizations that are based on culture. Finally, economic – it involves employment, entrepreneurship and taxation. A good part of what the youth in South Sudan can contribute in the process of peace-building was rooted in their life experiences. These experiences are beneficial to process of peace-building. The experience of youths in South Sudan strongly relates to taking further learning, meaning and practicing what they have learned. The processes of peace-building can therefore benefit from the experience of

youth, through their participation in activities for peace-building and development (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba; Mubashir & Grizali, 2018: 8). Raising the age limit of youth to between 18-40 years old is a politicised idea so that elites in the national government get included in activities for youth. It will affect youth to work effectively in activities for peace-building because the elites are politicians who use youth to fight for them to gain high positions in government. Secondly, the ineffective elites with 35-40 years old will take places of active youth of 19-35 years old.

There are three categories of youth in South Sudan. First, the youth league of South Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This is an influential group of youth that is backed by the machinery of national government. It mainly supports the policies of the national government. The second group is of the educated youth who are not associated with the SPLM. These are the groups of youth who seek positions of leadership. They socially aim to be high ranking group of influential youth in society. Finally, the third group constitutes the ordinary youth. They are mostly unemployed and illiterate. This is the group of youth that is easily manipulated by the politicians, and leaders of the national government youth movement, and this third group of youth are under the control of the government youth (Yakani, in Juba lecture series, 2016: 12). Such a division makes the youth weak to contribute effectively to the process of peace-building.

The youth can play a crucial role in stabilizing the government of South Sudan by fostering activities for peace-building such as the process of reconciliation and community cohesion, but under a political environment of peace, where there is freedom of expression and of association. As observed by Ajawin (2016) the policy-makers in South Sudan did not seem to understand the perspectives of youths in the process of peace-building, reconciliation and in community cohesion. The national government, as a policy maker, have failed to encourage the involvement of youth in opportunities for employment based on merit, and in assisting the participation of youth in areas of development because of undemocratic systems (Ajawin, 2016: 4-8).

### **3.2. The role of media and access to information**

Access to independent and realistic information has been rare in Central Equatoria State and South Sudan at large, particularly on issues of insecurity, corruption or things that are perceived

critical of the administration system of the national government. Despite many increasing private media houses in the capital Juba such as radio stations, newspapers and online news sites, organizations for Human Rights have frequently written on increasing attacks, intimidation and detention of journalists by the national government security agents, and the process has created growing self-censorship by the local media houses. The killing, for example, of the prominent newspaper columnist and critic of the national government in December 2012, has created domestic and international concern, but so far, no murder charges have been brought forward and attacks on journalists have continued. As such, the national government's intolerance of critics, and suppression of independent media houses, appears to undermine claims the national government makes of being accountable to South Sudanese citizens, which in fact, seriously damages its quest for legitimacy to govern (Interview with a member of civil society, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Juba: Gai, 2019)

Trustworthy and independent information is vital for mitigating conflicts, counter corruption and other abuses by the national government through a process of checks and balances. Freedom of information helps increase awareness in communities of their rights and duties. The researcher observed from the field work that most people view free speech a fundamental right, an important demonstration of the principles of democracy and an essential way for holding the national government elites accountable for what they are doing. It will be difficult to establish cohesive national identity without having a genuine public debate on what it means to be a South Sudanese citizen, a conversation that should consist of both rural and urban communities. In doing so, more independent media houses that provide greater access to information would need to be considered, particularly in local languages on radio stations to represent an indispensable information lifeline to South Sudanese communities in general, and in particular those who live in the remote rural areas of South Sudan. The function of the media to spread information is limited because the national security forces do not permit freedom of information and this has made the work of youth process for peace-building difficult.

### **3.3. The role of civil society organizations in the process of peace-building**

This section discusses the role of civil society in peace-building in South Sudan. Concepts of civil society vary. For this paper, it is a composition of voluntary activities within an institution (Croissant et al., 2000 175). Its activities are distinct from the state, family and market, with a



complex and blurred boundary between its actors (Croissant, *ibid*). Civil society organization consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations, usually competing with one another, and oriented to specific interests (Croissant, *ibid*). It comprises of non-state actors and associations, which are not purely driven by private or economic interests.

A civil society organization is autonomously organized and it interacts with public environment, and it is independent from state government. It is oriented towards and interacts closely with the state government and within a political environment. There is understanding between the civil society organization and the state government, and businesses in a sense that a civil society organization does not replace these other sectors (state government and business) and its political actors, but it aims to ensure they have effective and responsive activities in communities (Croissant et al., *Opp., Cit.*, 175: Merkel & Lauth, 1998, 7, In Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). The role of a civil society organization is diverse, complex and contentious. Politicians and thinkers in all perspectives consider activities of a positive organization of civil society a solution to social, economic and political problems in a given state government (Edward, 2004, 2).

The issue in Central Equatoria State and beyond is, how best is the civil society organization empowered to promote the practice of good governance? Is the civil society organization vibrantly participating in advocating for policies that are people centered, and that will effectively revamp the market forces to contribute additional incomes through, for example, income-tax collection, to enhance the capacity of the government to effectively deliver basic services to communities? The answer to these questions would be that, it is not. In an interactive process of policy-making, civil society organizations are supposed to contribute in the process to make laws, which are then legislated by the legislators and enacted upon by the executive, before the judiciary force it to a law. This has not been the case in the national and state governments in Juba because the executive sometimes rejects decisions that the legislative has agreed upon. Civil society organizations in Central Equatoria State appear divided in opinion and are weak in decision-making to promote efforts for effective practices of good governance (Samsadin, 2007, 103). Both the national and state governments in Juba lack practices of good governance in counties, districts and in villages, partly because there has been poor representation of civil society organizations in the process to transform political institutions (Interview with a member of civil society organization, 2018, Juba).



Communities and civil society organizations need a space to develop initiatives of their own to determine if, and when, the national government involvement in activities for peace-building is appropriate, and to what extent (Initiatives that are aimed to mobilize actors for peace-building outside of the mainstream, where no one is on the top, bottom or at the centre). Hence, the need for ideas to embrace middle-out approach to defuse polarity in the process of top-down versus bottom-up. Some actors, the middle-level leaders or insiders, have skills and influence to connect higher and lower levels, and they can cut across the opposing site of conflict.

### **3.4. The disclaimed functions of civil society organization**

There are three major roles that civil society organizations can play. First, a civil society organization is an associational life. A civil society organization is a composition of voluntary associations that is a ‘gene carrier’ for values of development such as tolerance and cooperation. Second, a good civil society organization fosters specific positive norms and values in society. The activities of the government, for example, should be geared towards specific social and political goals.

Finally, a civil society organization as a public sphere provides a public sphere when citizens argue with one another on great issues of the day, and when they are to negotiate for common and public interest. This role of a civil society organization is central in trying to find proper solution and proper decision-making in society. It is central to success in the work of civil society organization and it is crucial for the process of good democracy to fairly interact in the public sphere. This comprises the willingness to shade some territory to others, to develop shared interests and to democratically deliberate on issues that concern the communities (compromise). It is important that these roles of a civil society organization are to integrate in order for it to effectively work to produce comprehensive results. Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the links of the role of a civil society organization as a sector, and as an intermediate actor within a government (Edward, 2004).

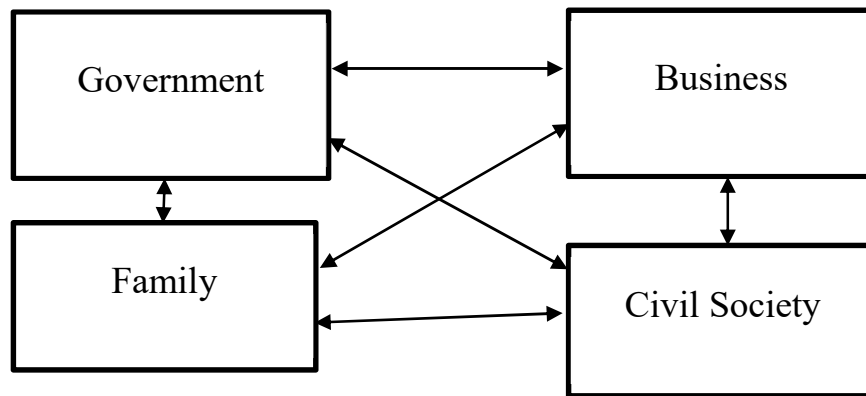


Figure 2: The role of a civil society organization as a sector

Source: Paffenholz and Spurk (2006)

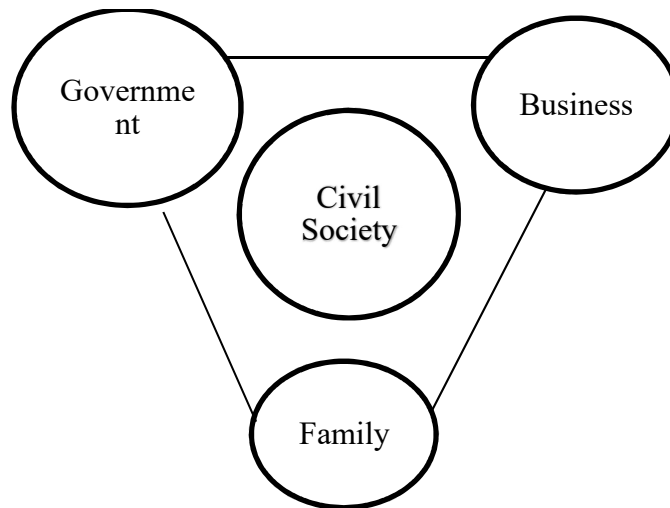


Figure 3: The role of civil society organization as an intermediate sphere

Source: Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006

A civil society organization is a non-profit, voluntary and independent organ. It operates outside the confine of the state government and the market, and it mostly functions out of state government control, or beyond profit orientation. For Alexander de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in Putnam (2000), a civil society organization is a school of democracy where democratic thinking, views, attitudes and behaviour are learned, with the aim to protect and to defend the rights of individuals against the potentially authoritarian regimes, and potentially tyrannical majorities in

society. The functions of a civil society organization are to be at all levels of the administration in governments (local, national and regional), a process that leads to civic virtues such as tolerance, acceptance, honesty and trust. The process adds up to trust and confidence or social capital (Putnam, 2000, 19-26).

The function of a constructive civil society organization is not exclusively provided by the actors of civil society. They can and are at the same time provided by other protections. For example, it should be provided by the government in question (South Sudan or Central Equatoria State) and the judiciary and the law enforcement sector, because democratic attitudes are not only learned in voluntary associations but also in schools, family and community. These are the areas for the function of civil society organizations (Tocqueville in Putnam, 2000),

The empirical literature (Tocqueville in Putnam, 2000) shows that the functions of civil society organizations can be divided into two – five main and eight basic, including the bad civil society organizations. The five main functions are the following:

(a) Protection: The social aspect of a civil society organization is beyond the government control where citizens are endowed with their rights; they are supposed to be free to organize their ways of lives without the interference, for example, from the national government. The government is to ensure protection of their private areas of activities. A civil society organization in reality is tasked to remind / advise the government in question, and if needed, to compel the government to do things that the civil society organization identified on behalf of the citizens not acceptable.

(b) Civil society organization is meant to ensure a balance between the control authority and social-network: A balance which is considered a pre-condition for effective practices of the rule of law, and a function that focuses on the permanent exchange of self-organized organization with the government, for effective system of control, limit, and to influence the activities of the government.

(c) Participatory socialization: These are the functions the government of South Sudan and the state governments are to consider as a schools of democracy, where people learn how to exercise democratic rights, even on a basic level. People will be able to gain the capacity to be citizens, participate in public life, develop trust, confidence, tolerance and acceptance of the work of their government. It is also a process to support decentralization of power and the creation of

solidarity among citizens, which will act as defence mechanism against any possible attacks on their freedom.

(d) Building of community integration: Civil society organization is considered a catalyst for civil virtue, or an antidote to individualism and a retreat to family and government system. Hence, participation in social organizations helps to bridge societal cleavage and it creates civil virtue, fosters social cohesion, which will satisfy the needs of individuals to develop bonds and attachment to themselves and to their government. A pre-condition is that the self-civil society organization has no place which is purely based on the premises of ethnicity, religion and nepotism.

(e) Communication: Public communication is vital for the function of a civil society organization in deliberative democracy. It stresses the importance of a free public environment, separated from government and economy where people have room for debate, participation and democratic decision-making and building of capacity. Thus, a civil society organization will have a major role, apart from political parties and parliament, to establish a democratic public, and to act as a watchdog for government. Actors of spontaneous groups, organizations, and social movements are all to be able to articulate their problems, and to transfer them from private to political agenda

The functions of a civil society organization thus complement one another in the effort to have democratic government. The contingent in the context of Central Equatoria and South Sudan at large, would be first more basic, for example, protection will be essential in the immediate phases of changes in a democratic system, followed by others such as integration, gaining more of consolidation of the practice for democracy (Croissant et al., 2000, 37-41). Second, the internal democratic organization of civil society groups is to determine whether they are able to perform all their functions, not only in the immediate system change, but also in a manner that consolidates a democratic society. This is a stage where the process of integration and of community building plays a decisive role, including public communication on common issues (Lauth, 2003).

It is essential that the civil society organization is to be civil, and is able to exclude groups that show uncivil behaviours. This places more emphasis on norms and values of civility, a need for

distinction between good and bad social capital. Good social capital is built when the organization develops strong bridging ties, for example, with members from other ethnic groups, or social groupings, while bad social capital only reflects bonding ties or strong inward social capital, including only the bonding of members from the same ethnic or social grouping, and they are more inclined to act violently against others compared to organizations that have strong bridging ties (Putnam, *Opp. Cit.*, 2000, 22-23).

### **3.5. The limited role of civil society organizations in the provision of services to communities**

Civil society organizations can promote a widely perceived way of life, as an organized way of making laws by engaging further stakeholders and state administrators in institutions to ensure specific laws are legislated and enacted upon. Such a process demands the willingness of the political elite to allow for allocation of government resources that can meet the expectations of the citizens, and are accepted by civil society organizations. Social contract in a legitimate government can help reduce disagreements between government and communities, which sometimes leads to insecurity in communities - citizens can claim and obtain their rights through processes of negotiation from public authorities and other citizens (Banggol, 2007 in Shamsadin, 2007, 103).

A democratic government, whose political institutions are transformed from conflict to peace, enables popular sovereignty through regular multiparty election. This is where democratic practices hold government accountable to its citizens. It separate powers to monitor behaviour of each other, and have free press or information flow. It will also have the ability of civil society organizations outside the formal political system, to monitor and check performance of the government for accuracy. A good democratic system limits discretion in a state, and forces a state to reflect on the will of at least some important sections of its society (Levy & Fukuyama, 2010, 6).

A civil society organization can contribute effectively to reform processes for political institutions in Central Equatorial State and beyond, but they also require first to design a program for systematic and consistent implementation of a peace agreement such as the 2005-Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Second, they are to establish an active community to enhance social capital. In so doing, the process doesn't involve only its members, but a network that links

its members in a dynamic process that creates energy to engage in the agenda of reforms. Civil society organizations in Central Equatoria State and beyond are supposed to create an active society by enhancing the development of social capital, they are to foster conflict management, and they are to engage in activities to advocate for social justice, as the necessary components for sustainable peace, but they appeared disorganised to reflect on such requirements because they have been disinclined from the process of peace-building (Discussion with members of civil society organizations, 2016, Juba).

#### **4. Discussion**

Readers of this paper will understand the importance of the work of the youth and civil society organizations, which were disinclined by the national government of South Sudan in the process of peace-building. Youth and civil society organizations can significantly contribute to the process of peace-building.

(a) The empirical literature (Mubashir & Grizeli, 2018) (Interview with youth, 2016, Juba) from field work shows that there is a link and practical engagement of youth and civil society organizations in everyday activities for peace-building. This is possible to do by engaging in dialogue and in mediation which socially relate to everyday process of peace-building.

(b) The way to prevent control of youth and members of civil society organizations by politicians, and to synergise efforts for the whole of society in South Sudan in activities for peace-building, is an important process for lasting peace. This can be possible by applying a comprehensive approach through training, empowerment, and building the capacity of youth and civil society organizations rather than being kept in the dark in South Sudan. Their activities in the process of peace-building should not be considered as a separate category but in the context of the whole of society. As such, the process of peace-building would require synergism from the interaction of whole resources and efforts of society in the country. This also includes framework for communication, partnership, collaboration, and coordination, networking and of policy-making (Workshop on multi-stakeholder's forum on peace implementation). There is no one-size-fits-all framework in a network of effective actions and collaboration support. A process of multi-track diplomacy would be an approach that emphasises systematic interconnection among the various actors and their resources, where actions of the youth and of civil society

organizations, are to be embedded in the context of economic development, provision of humanitarian assistance, practices of good governance, reform in the security sector / disarmament and demobilization and reintegration (Mubashir & Grizeli, *Opp. Cit.*, 42)

(c) The question to ask is how can the national and state governments, and the youth and civil society organizations in South Sudan work together in pursuit of long-term peace? The answer is that the youth are capable of both listening down and speaking up to distinct social constituencies that cut across the diverse levels of societies such as women, youth, victims, or potential platforms of social institution, which is necessary for building peace and reconciliation that operates across all levels of society (Mubashir & Grizeli, *ibid*).

(d) The effective contribution of youth in the process of peace-building and inclusion and participation of youth are vital in the process of bottom-top in peace-building. The paradigm shift in the process of peace-building by the youth in South Sudan has been that the effective role of the youth often ends up in symbolic term, by being put into points of agenda for discussion, and later checked out by the national government in the list for activities on peace-building, or certain parts of their ideas for peace-building are only applied (Workshop on youth dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, *Opp. Cit.*). The paradigm shift in the process of inclusion and participation in activities for peace-building is misleading and frustrating; it leads to a loss of opportunities to benefit from the youth and civil society organizations, as part of human resources. Even those who ended up participating in formal process of peace-building sometimes are not necessarily the representatives of the group they are selected for, as a broad social category. As such, the process leads to exclusion of marginalised members of social groups (Workshop on youth dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, *ibid*).

It is possible that the problems can be minimised by the inclusion of youths in the following activities (a) in the processes to design activities for peace-building (b) in mediating terms at mediating / negotiating table (c) in being informants, experts and advisors to a mediation team (d) in being observers, and (e) in being witnesses, and signatories to peace agreements. The youth and civil society organizations are supposed to be involved in mechanisms for implementing post conflict agreements, and to be members of formal and informal forums for consultation. A more sustainable modality of inclusion and participation by the youth and the organization of civil society would be the formal process of interaction with young people in



every dialogue and mediation in activities for youths, both at national and at the local levels (Mubashir & Greizeli, Opp., *Cit.*, 44)

(e) Empowerment: The process to reimagine empowerment of youths and civil society organization would require initiatives for empowerment through processes of participation, which is geared to development of skills in prevention and in corrective measures for long-term peace, and to help in exercising dialogue and capacity of mediation to bring antagonistic stakeholders together. The youth can be part of civil society organizations to cooperate with other external actors in the process of peace-building, to constructively engage with the national government to ensure a safe and conducive environment for effective processes of participation in politics, social and economic activities. In short, it will be a process of ‘give voice to the voiceless’. Therefore, youths in Central Equatoria State and in South Sudan at large, need to be given a chance to explore their roles and capacities in activities for peace-building, and to determine how they can contribute, and what further support they would require to make South Sudan at large a peaceful country ( Mubashir & Grizali, *ibid*, 45). From the discussions in the field work, it became clear that the issue of involving the youth was contentious. Elders in general did not want to give up their power and positions to the youth and the youth are striving to get the same powers. The complex aspect in this kind of struggle for position is that some elders are favoured by the national government, and they are appointed based on personal interests. The youth may not be appointed to such positions if they would not be able to fulfil the interest of the appointee in the government (Interest to recruit youth and members of civil society to militia forces and to fulfil other undemocratic interests of the national government) (Workshop on youth dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, 2016, Juba). Where there is disagreement between the youth and elders, it leads to one side losing power (Bell, 2008). Achievement of this power should not mean power over someone or something. According to Bell (2008), power is distinguishable from force, coercion and control. It is instead associated with characteristic of ability, capacity, competence and potentiality to successfully do things. Power is a relational phenomenon that cannot be singly exercised without the involvement of others.

Power, defined as ‘power to’ is communal than individual attribute. As a result, power is a product of cooperation but not control. It is energy to do things. For example, non-cooperation,

withdrawal of consent, and other forms of resistance to domination, cannot only be responses to power but they are, in and of themselves, alternative forms of power, i.e. 'The power of the weak society or the power to disbelieve'. There is also a power to organise and work collectively to achieve social change. Hence, a program for empowerment which is neglecting the role of the youth and civil society organizations in the wake of conflict may generate tensions and tense power dynamics that create unprecedented authority in community, or it makes elders to position themselves as conceptual gatekeepers of the policies of the national government, whose influence on issues of justice or conflict resolution, have enabled them to have relationship with the outside interveners or non-governmental organizations (Bell, 2008).

(f) Investment on the youth and civil society organization is urgently needed in order to recognise their (youth) present potentials. The youth are in continuous progress of learning and of exploration. What they learn and explore today influences what they will contribute to the Central Equatoria State community and beyond tomorrow. They are willing to learn the techniques, tools and format for peace-building from the experiences of the older generation, and to learn by doing (Workshop on youth dialogue on conflict in South Sudan, 16-17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2016). Therefore, the older generation of actors in peace-building today has the responsibility to create opportunities for the youth and civil society to learn and to practice, and to experiment what they have learned. However, this has not been the case in Central Equatoria State at present (Interview with a member of youth, 2016, Juba). All the youth and members of civil society organizations in Central Equatoria State and in South Sudan at large can become resourceful as they have been resourceful during the war of liberation (1983-2004), if their sense and situation can be transformed by offering to them opportunities to become aware of their own potential resources, and to have positive agenda for peace-building. In doing so, there is a need to have processes and strategies for determining the best approach to apply, to engage all youth and members of civil society organizations in activities for peace-building. It also requires framework and approaches that are within the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250). The pillars of disengagement / reintegration and participation of youths (Mubashir & Grizali, *Opp. Cit.*, 47).

(g) Involvement of youth and civil society organizations in activities for peace-building: It is crucial to involve the youth who are not yet active in the process of peace-building, and there is

also a need to reach out to them. Considering the diversity of youths in the fragile environment of Central Equatoria State, it is a risk, trouble-making and disadvantage for young people, including the internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and children / young armed people (Interview with a member of youth, 2016, Juba). These groups of youth and members of civil society organizations are resourceful actors in activities for peace-building. They need guidelines and strategies to determine which approach to use for effective activities in the process of peace-building

(h) Sustaining peace through transformation of political institutions with the involvement of youth and civil society organization: The process of effective peace-building could benefit from a broad-based, open-ended form of sustained dialogue, an on-going and socially embedded process that brings together participants from different groups of youth, and to build upon the transformative qualities that are needed in activities for peace-building. Repeated efforts have to be made to transform conflicted relationship, so that conflict is constructively resolved. The deep-rooted source of conflict needs to be addressed and resolved so that conflict behaviour is no longer violent, attitude is no longer hostile and the structure of conflict has been changed (conflict resolution). The process need not require spying by the national security of the government for it to effectively work, because the national security would only permit activities that do not contradict policies of the national government (Miall et al., 2016).

(i) Making the role of the youth and civil society organizations in the process of peace-building self-sustainable: Youths in Central Equatoria State and beyond have experienced difficulties in obtaining funding for programs in capacity building because of lack of time, and the resources available to stimulate self-sustaining processes and structures to obtain funds. The youth have difficulty in getting funding for their projects, and those who are students have expressed having dilemma of balancing passion-driven volunteering, working to provide for their families or sustaining themselves and completing their studies. A student commented during the interview in Juba that he was the family source for income, yet he was to pay for his studies, it caused stress and lack of concentration at school. It is a situation that discourages the youth from effectively becoming good scholars. As such, the youth are the potential recruits into militia forces (Interview with a student, 2016, Juba: Mubashir & Grizeli, *Opp. Cit.*). In theory, the youth and

members of civil society organizations did not contribute effectively to the process of peace-building to prevent reoccurrence of conflict in South Sudan.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper elaborates the roles of the youth and civil society organizations in the process of peace-building in Central Equatoria State and beyond. They are the driving force for nation building. The youth greatly contributed during the civil war. They can as well greatly contribute to the process of peace-building when they are given opportunity. Although the youth are divided into three categories: youth league-supporters of the SPLM party, educated youth, and ordinary youth. Such a division is a result of frustration caused by a government that does not seek legitimacy to govern from its society. The disinclined roles and functions of the youth and civil society organizations in the process of peace-building have contributed to continuous conflicts in Central Equatoria State and South Sudan at large.

The national and state governments did not consider practices of good governance important. Consequently, the youth and civil society organizations dissatisfied with the system have effectively become powerless and unable to contribute to the process of peace-building to prevent reoccurrence of conflicts. The civil society organizations are powerless to act as a sector and intermediary between the government, businesses and the society at large in the process for sustainable peace and development. Inclusivity and good policies are required, and appropriate conditions would be required for further research. A democratic system will enhance an effective contribution of the youth and civil society organizations in the process of peace-building.

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