

NOW WE ARE ZERO
SOUTH SUDANESE
CHIEFS AND ELDERS
DISCUSS THEIR
ROLES IN PEACE
AND CONFLICT

Now We Are Zero

South Sudanese chiefs and elders discuss their roles in peace and conflict

TARATIZIO WANDU, MBORIBAMU RANZI TAMBURU, MODI ANGELO BASIA, DAVID MALISH JONATHAN, ALEXANDER JUMA BABA, JACOB MADHEL LANG, BAGAT MAKUACH ABIEM, RAMADAN DELENGE AWUDO, JOSEPH KUOL AMET, MANOON ATER GUOT, LOPWON ALPHONSE, BERNARD SUWA, JACOB AKOL, EDUARDO HIIBORO, PARIDE TABAN, THOMAS MUNSCHE, STEPHEN KWENYE LONG, KHAN CHUOL ZUOR, MATHEW YIEN CHOL, MBORIBAMU RANZI TOMBURA



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THE RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE (RVI)

The Rift Valley Institute (www.riftvalley.net) works in Eastern and Central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political and economic development.

SOUTH SUDAN CUSTOMARY AUTHORITIES (SSCA) PROJECT

The SSCA Project examines the history of customary authorities, and explores their role in the country's political future, through the facilitation of conversations among chiefs, elders and their constituencies. In April 2016, traditional leaders met at Kuron Peace Village to discuss the ongoing civil war and the crisis in their communities. The meeting was made possible by the people of Kuron and Emeritus Bishop Paride Taban's invitation to the Holy Trinity Peace Village. The meeting was organized with support from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Switzerland and USAID.

CREDITS

RVI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: John Ryle

RVI ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Philip Winter

RVI DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS: Cedric Barnes

RVI DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES, SUDANS AND GREAT LAKES: John Moore

RVI LEAD RESEARCHER: Michael Arensen

RVI RESEARCHER: John Henry Ali Luka

RVI PROGRAMME MANAGER, PUBLICATIONS: Tymon Kiepe

RVI PROGRAMME MANAGER, SOUTH SUDAN: Ellie Hobhouse

RVI PROGRAMME OFFICER, SOUTH SUDAN: Becu Thomas

RVI PROGRAMME OFFICER, COMMUNICATIONS: Connor Clerke

DESIGN: Lindsay Nash

MAPS: Jillian Luff, *MAPgrafix*

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Map 1. South Sudan, showing the chiefs and elders' places of origin and Kuron Peace Village

1. Introduction

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In April 2016, seventeen chiefs from different parts of South Sudan gathered in Kuron Holy Trinity Peace Village, in Eastern Equatoria, to discuss the role of customary authority in governance—past and present—and their own contribution to peace-making and a future political transition. The event took place at a moment of comparative optimism in South Sudan, the first since the clashes in Juba in December 2013 that initiated the conflict between the Government and the forces of the SPLA-IO (Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army in Opposition). Following lengthy peace talks in Addis Ababa, SPLA-IO leader Riek Machar returned to Juba as the meeting was taking place in Kuron, forming the Transitional Government of National Unity. There was hope that peace might return to the country.

The Chiefs’ meeting at Kuron was the first time that traditional leaders from areas on opposing sides of the conflict had met in South Sudan since 2013. They gathered under the auspices of the Catholic Diocese of Torit in the village of Kuron, the model community established by Emeritus Bishop Paride Taban to provide an example of communal cooperation among the pastoral peoples of Eastern Equatoria. The discussions, led by the chiefs, lasted three days. They covered a wide range of topics, including the changing role of traditional leadership, the effects of war, the politicization of chiefship, customary law, security and peacebuilding.

This report draws on a transcript of the discussions at Kuron to record the words of the chiefs on a number of these subjects. It offers a glimpse of the many hours of deliberation during the meeting. Other highlights of the discussions are presented in a video documentary, *We Are Here for the Sake of the People*, which is available at www.riftvalley.net.

The Kuron meeting was the culmination of many months of interviews and conversations in locations all over South Sudan. This is part of a continuing research initiative, the South Sudan Customary Authorities Project (SSCA) which has supported an ongoing conversation with chiefs and elders, exploring the history of chiefship, the role of chiefs and their wider relationship with their communities and with the state.

The programme has its origin in the dearth of traditional leaders in the consultations and negotiations accompanying earlier phases of the transition process in South Sudan. Peace talks brought together warring factions, former detainees, leaders of political parties, members of the wider South Sudanese political class and representatives of churches and civil society. However, customary authorities—variously referred to as chiefs, kings and traditional leaders—were largely absent. Yet it is these leaders—elected, appointed or hereditary community leaders—who have in many cases the strongest claim to represent the interests and concerns of the majority of South Sudan’s largely rural population. The role customary authorities have occupied in community life has undoubtedly changed. It has been undermined by SPLA administration during the 1983–2005 civil war and by the ubiquitous militarisation of youth. The impact of these changes varies from place to place but chiefs retain an ability to mobilize communities, to settle conflicts, to maintain judicial processes in adverse circumstances and to represent the views of their communities.

The seventeen participants in the SSCA Kuron meeting came from different parts of the country. They came from former Warrap State in greater Bahr el-Ghazal, from former Western Equatoria State, from Akobo County, in former Jonglei State, and from Kuron itself, in former Eastern Equatoria State. All three of the old provinces of South Sudan were thus represented at the meeting: Greater Equatoria, Greater Bahr el-Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile. The facilitators for the meeting were Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro, from the diocese of Tambura-Yambio, Dr Bernard Suwa, formerly of the Committee for National Healing Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR) and Jacob Akol of the Gurtong Trust.

The South Sudan Customary Authorities programme (SSCA) is devised and implemented by the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) and supported by the Swiss Cooperation Office in South Sudan, with additional assistance from the USAID VISTAS programme. The RVI would like to thank the funders and all the participants in the event.

2. The meeting place

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We have been moving through fire

Chief Lopwon Alphonse: I am happy to welcome you here. Kuron is a place where everyone is welcome to come—and leave again. Some of you are from places where there is a lot of conflict. You have nothing to worry about here, it is a place of peace. Everyone is represented here, from all parts of South Sudan. I am looking forward to the discussions, we can learn much from each other.

Bishop Paride: Sometimes people lose their way—people don't know where to go. Sometimes people are blind. We have to carry the hand of the blind and show them the way. That is the importance of the chiefs and the importance of the church. They open the mind of the people. And the Swiss people know a great deal about peace. The school here was built by Switzerland. They have supported us in many ways.

Bishop Eduardo: Here there are no guns, bullets can only chase dust. Even the snakes here do not bite, it is peaceful here. You are safe. I am the Catholic Bishop of Tambura-Yambio Diocese. I come from an area where chiefs are given much authority. And I have come to Kuron with chiefs from the royal family, who bring with them something of the history of what chiefs are.

Elder Taratizio Wandu: I am one of them. I am the son of the King of the Zande and an agricultural consultant in our diocese. Chief Wilson Peni [Paramount Chief of Yambio, Western Equatoria] delegated me to come. My family were chiefs until they learnt to become food cultivators.

Chief Mboribamu Ranzi Tamburo: I am from the Zande royal family of Tambura. Historically, it was the chiefs that welcomed the missionaries for the sake of peace. I did not know that I would meet Bishop Paride Taban here. I went through the school he established and now we are here together, with the same message.

Chief Jacob Madhel Lang: I am the founder and chairman of the Warrap COTAL [Council of Traditional Authority Leaders]. We are still united as a COTAL and committed to work together to bring peace. I know many faces here.

Sometimes people lose their way—people don't know where to go. Sometimes people are blind. We have to carry the hand of the blind and show them the way. That is the importance of the chiefs

We have suffered a lot. What can we do to avoid hatred amongst ourselves?

Jacob Akol: I am the director of the Gurtong Trust. I am the son of Akol Atem and our clan is Pagong. My father was a *bany biith* [a Dinka spiritual leader, meaning spearmaster], but I am the junior in the family, so I could not become a spearmaster myself. I decided to do something else. Gurtong is a website for information about the peoples of South Sudan. It is an Anuak word, which means peace. If you don't have your ethnic community entered there, then call me, we will add it. Gurtong has been long connected with the COTALs. And we have been trying to build peace between the Nuer and the Dinka.

Reverend Modi Angelo Basia: People ask, why are all the chiefs men? But I am here now and I am a woman. I am very glad to be here. I am also from the royal family and now a member of the COTAL. There is one other female chief in my region, Chief Priscilla, who was appointed by her father. In the future, women and men should be together to lead our country. We have suffered a lot. What can we do to avoid hatred amongst ourselves? We have seen so many bad things, so much blood, so much torture. We have been moving up and down the country for peace. We have been moving through fire. There are people who are against peace in our communities. If one leg of yours is paining you, you cannot sleep well. We want our leaders to listen to their people.

Thomas Munsch: The Government of Switzerland has been supporting chiefs in South Sudan for many years. This is because we are keen to promote opportunities for the people of South Sudan to come together to build stable peace. We don't know how this should or can be done, which is why we come to you. As leaders of your communities you know. And bringing you together from across the country, we hope that you might find similarities and maybe tell your countrymen and your leaders. Switzerland, about the size of Central Equatoria, has four languages and twenty-six states—a system that was developed over many hundreds of years. These different groups chose to come together. It was the communities themselves that chose this, and this is more stable than a top-down approach.

Dr Bernard Suwa: It is a privilege to sit among you now. I come from a generation when chiefs carried sticks. The chiefs of my youth were in charge of courts and tax collection. The new generation is much younger. And it is extraordinary to meet a woman chief, one who is also a pastor.

Chief Bagat: I am from the far north of South Sudan, and we have conflict with the Misseriya across the border. While we are here in Kuron we are hoping to learn more how to deal with our communities. We are used to our traditional ways but times have changed. I am looking forward to learning new methods. I hope that we can understand better how to mediate conflicts between communities, which we can apply when we return.

Chief Joseph Kuol Amet: Since 1956, we have been at war in South Sudan. We are traumatised. My job is to advise my communities on changes in society and mediate in cases of conflict. But we really have a lot of obstacles. Most chiefs are not educated and they do not understand their responsibilities and their roles. We need to help them understand how to get a better life.

Chief Jacob Madhel Lang: The role of the chiefs is well known to people like me, and to Bagat, Joseph and others because we went to school. We know something about human development and can understand what can harm a society. Even in this society that is traumatised by war. In our area, we have experience in trying to promote peace amongst the communities. The churches and chiefs have the lead role in this. The 1999 Wunlit Peace Conference¹ would not have happened if it were not initiated by the churches, notably by Reverend Bill Lowrey.

Chief Alexander Juma Baba: We chiefs need to hear from the facilitators as well as other chiefs. In Mundri, we do not have differences between us. We are working together as one community. The only conflict is coming from our neighbours. We do not have conflict between communities within Western Equatoria.

Chief Ramadan Delenge Awudo: Thank you to all the organisers for bringing together these chiefs, from all over. God will help the organizations to continue this work. Because of your support we have made it to Kuron. I was surprised to meet the indigenous people who are living here. It was my first time. I am wondering if the government in Juba knows of these people and the conditions that they are living in. If it were possible to transfer the National Council to this place, it would be good.

Chief Manoon Ater Guot: Why was the national peace mediation held in Addis Ababa? They should have come here to Kuron.

Chief David Malish Jonathan: Our problem is tribalism—people saying this one is not my brother, not my sister. We have come

We are used to our traditional ways but times have changed. I am looking forward to learning new methods.

¹ In 1999, the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) organised the Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference, which brought together customary authorities from the Nuer of Western Upper Nile and the Dinka of Bahr el-Ghazal.

If there is any case or any problem, today or tomorrow, we are the ones to settle it. If anything happens in our communities we cannot sleep. But with chiefs today, we don't have bodyguards, we do not have authority given to us. We have no police to enforce our authority.

here together as chiefs and church leaders to bring peace. If there is any case or any problem, today or tomorrow, we are the ones to settle it. If anything happens in our communities we cannot sleep. But with chiefs today, we don't have bodyguards, we do not have authority given to us. We have no police to enforce our authority.

Chief Mboribamu Ranzi Tamburo: The church and the chiefs both play a key role in peace keeping. When I first came to be a chief, I was asking, why is there no national forum for the tribal leaders to come together to help build peace and help building understanding between communities. We should be able to do this without the help of international partners.

Jacob Akol: We who attend international meetings grow a protective shield that protects us from what we really are, and what we really experience. Very shortly after the killings happened in Bor, in Bentiu, in Juba, in Malakal, people had meetings as if nothing had happened, as if thousands had not been buried weeks before. But we are all traumatized. There is a religious aspect to the present meeting, which is being facilitated by the church. I hope this means that you will be able to bare your soul. If you want to cry, cry here, with us.

3. The past and present of chiefship

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Grey hair does not make you an elder

Dr Bernard Suwa: We want to look into the past, understanding that you are not the first chiefs, knowing that there have been many past chiefs, with their own successes and failures. This should help us to understand what should be done better, in the future.

Elder Taratizio Wandu: As I mentioned, I am here as a representative of Chief Wilson Peni, the heir to the Zande Kingdom. I am also a member of the royal family. It is not the first time I have been given this role, I have travelled with Chief Wilson, even during the time of John Garang, I recognise many of the faces here.

The role of the chiefs during the British Colonial period was to be fathers of the people, representatives of the local communities. Under the British, the chiefs were respected. They had the power to settle disputes amongst their communities. The sub-chiefs would come together and cultivate for the chiefs. They would gather produce for the chiefs. If there was a meeting in town, the chief would be informed in advance. Cars would be sent for him and his wives. Wherever he moved, people stood and removed their hats, and put their hands in his pockets to give money.

Today, chiefs have no honour, their honour is at zero. Once, without a letter of approval from your court chief, you could not take the case higher. Now it does not matter if a chief orders the arrest of someone, that person is still moving around. The power of the chiefs has been eroded. The chiefs are no longer protected because they are being paid by the government. They have lost their dignity. They were co-opted by local militia during the war and they have lost their power.

Today we are still asked to solve cases but most of the cases go to the town. In the past, in the village, there was more respect for the chiefs than for the government. Now, the government uses the chiefs to execute their programmes. This has diminished their authority.

Historically the King of the Zande was the government. Now the Government of South Sudan is copying the ruling methods of the King. The state governor uses the same horn that the King used

Wherever he moved, people stood and removed their hats, and put their hands in his pockets to give money. Today, chiefs have no honour, their honour is at zero.

to use to call the people. The warriors of the Zande, who defended the people against foreign invaders, had a drum and a song. Now the major-general of the national army uses this same drum, this same song.

There is no area of our lives that has not been touched by the civil war.

Chief Jacob Madhel Lang: I am from Twic state, we neighbour Aweil East and Unity. When the British came, they created native administration and assigned to it people who were respected and feared, especially amongst the Dinka. For the Dinka, the most respected and feared people were the spiritual leaders called spearmasters. This respect came from their role in settling disputes. The spear-master would persuade individuals to settle by threatening them with a curse. Communities also used to organize their administration by appointing a clan leader. His characteristics were fairness and sympathy. He needed to be a good mediator and willing to serve. The bulk of his work was to rule the families related to him. The work of the clan leader was to register young men to pay poll tax and record the names of those who died or became too old to pay taxes. He managed disputes between husbands and wives and looked after widows, orphans and vulnerable people. The clan leader collected social service tax, and his salary was a percentage of this. He was also responsible for distribution of blood price.²

The sub-chief brokered minor disputes between communities, and was in charge of the clan leaders. Chiefs were either elected or they inherited their titles. I inherited from my father in the 1980s, my father inherited from his elder brother who was nominated by the British in the 1920s. The chief had dual functions: administrative and judicial. His administrative duties included collection of social service tax, making of local roads, schools and health centres, execution of government policy and representation of community needs to the government, and settling cases according to customary law. His judicial functions included mediation in marriage and divorce and inheritance, and the distribution of land.

When it comes to inheritance of chiefship the people also have a say. They endorse the inheritance by staying quiet. If they object then there can also be another candidate. If there is an appointment by the government and it is fair then it will be accepted by the people. If not, the people will protest and go to the Commissioner, who will call for elections.

There is no area of our lives that has not been touched by the civil war. The war divided the chiefs into groups. Some left the country, some went to the towns and were under the rule of the

² Blood price is compensation paid to the kin group of a victim by the kin group of his/her killer.

government and some stayed in their localities. In these places customary authorities were expected to administer people. After the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Agreement] in 2005, most of those in the cities went back to their localities, though some were not able to. The 2009 Local Government Act has brought great change. All the powers of the chiefs have been taken. Cases that used to be taken by the local chiefs are now seen as criminal cases, which cannot be settled at the customary level. But lawyers cannot reach many of these people. And the people are tired.

Chief Ramadan Delenge Awudo: There are differences between the previous and the current role of chiefs. In the time of my grandfather, the British came to Tonj, when there was no government there. They came and asked him, who is around you, who are your neighbours? He told them that there were other people here but they could not speak the same language. They were Dinka. The British united them, saying the Bongo and Dinka must live together. Chiefs before were having powers like my grandfather, if somebody killed an elephant, one tusk was given to the chief. There was a conference in Tonj at that time, this meant there were very good relations between the chiefs but now, after what happened in 2013, the relations have deteriorated.

Chief Lupwon Alphonse: I am the Paramount Chief for Toposaland, where we are. We border three countries. We have no kings, though I also inherited my position from my father. Here, if you have good character you can be a chief. If not, someone has to be appointed. When I was a youth, the elders saw potential in me, in the way that I herded cattle and could plan and so forth. Your father and his performance as chief may determine your appointment. If he leads badly, you may not inherit. My father was a good chief so I inherited. I work with the communities to help protect this peace village. When there is a meeting, I am responsible for feeding visitors.

The role of chiefs with the Dinka is much the same as here. If you are a bad leader amongst the Toposa, you will be removed. You must follow the rules set by the community and by the government. But the chiefs here have no support from the government. Our children know there are no police to arrest them, so they are more stubborn. It is my role to tell the children that they must respect the rules of society. They must not move with guns, especially near this peace village. I have a mark on my finger, where I had to punish young men for raiding cows and bringing them past

the peace village. But now they have learnt. When you see people moving with guns, they are on their way to the cattle camps or for hunting.

The chief in the past was listened to by everyone. Now it is different.

Chief David Malish Jonathan: I am from the Avokaya. In the past, in our place, chiefs were really respected. When the chiefs were moving, everybody would stop until the Chiefs had passed. The chief in the past was listened to by everyone. Before anybody crossed to another community, you would ask permission from the chief. There was taxation. This was helping the chiefs with their bodyguards and compensation. But now all those things are not there. Formerly the commissioner sat with the chief and discussed policy. Now it is different, none of these things exist.

The chiefship was hereditary. For my case, it was a bit different, as I had many older brothers but when I was still studying my father made arrangements so that I could be given this authority to rule. When I heard, I was not pleased at this responsibility. I was still very young, and I had plans for my education and I disagreed with them. We argued from 8am to 2am. At that time my father began to cry and asked me if I was planning to kill all the family. My father said, this is really what I was planning for and that all the family had chosen the right person. So I accepted the role.

I myself, have never encountered a challenge to my authority. I have very good relations with my community, and with the government.

Chief Manoon Ater Guot: I am sixth in the chiefship, starting from my grandfather, the spearmaster. My uncle, who was the chief, has almost 14 wives. My father had 20 wives, with over 80 children. And I have older brothers. In 2010 my father was sick and called all the members of the clan to the hospital, to choose who would inherit the chiefship. By then I was studying economics at the University of Juba. I was chosen and I asked why? And the answer was that the chiefship has to be inherited by someone in the family. I never thought of becoming a chief and sitting in the village. I tried to refuse and my father would not allow it. When my father died, I returned to the village and accepted the role. The family came together and they all confirmed my chiefship and told me to free myself of other responsibilities. Sometimes you become more than yourself. I told them that if I was to be a good chief I would have to finish my education, which I did. I myself, have never encountered a challenge to my authority. I have very good relations with my community, and with the government. We are not isolated. The only challenge is that you will be in remote areas. But the SPLA policy of taking towns to the people is good for the chiefs.

Chief Mboribamu Ranzi Tamburo: The Zande have a saying, 'grey hair does not make you an elder'. I also did not choose to take the position myself. There are many challenges.

Former Chief Stephen Kwenye Long: We chiefs don't receive a salary. I used to receive a salary. It was 600 Sudanese Pounds. I was last paid in 1983. I was first elected in 1945 and I was competing with my father-in-law. When I won, he said the election was rigged. I was dismissed five times before I finally took my position. Now we have a peace. We have to leave our conflict and focus on the future.

We have to leave our conflict and focus on the future.

4. The effects of war

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Chiefs used to be strong. Now we are chiefs in name, nothing more

Almost all the chiefs here have problems of local militia youth. We all say we want peace and yet we have these militias. What are you doing about it as chiefs?

Jacob Akol: We have different traditions. We have heard about the former Zande kingdom. Chief Taratizio was very open, he described how a Zande king enforced his power brutally. Then we moved to the Dinka, who have not had centralized authority like that. There is a confederation of what we call Dinka tribes based on kinship, on clans. You expand from the family to the region and then to the tribe and then to other tribes within the Dinka tribe. Then we had our brother from the Bongo, which is a small ethnic community compared to some. I can very well understand why they have tried to form alliances and relationships with other tribes, with the Dinka and the Azande. This is not unique to South Sudan. This is not unique to human kind. The Zande Kingdom could have made many tribes their subjects, could have kept expanding if the British had not arrested this.

When we were talking about history certain things came out about the present time. One of them was the question of interference by the attorney-general's office in the work of the chiefs. Another was the issue of militias. Almost all the chiefs here have problems of local militia youth. The Arrow Boys in Equatoria and the *gelweng* in Gogrial, who were created to protect Dinka cattle. And in Akobo, the White Army. We all say we want peace and yet we have these militias. What are you doing about it as chiefs?

Chief Khan Choul Zuor: We have to take action, to stop youth killing each other and raiding cattle. We have to find a way to control them, beginning from our own homes. If you have a son you have to advise him not to do this. But your son is the only one who can protect you and the community. If there is a hyena around your house it is your son who will protect you.

Chief Matthew Yien Chol: In Akobo we have a lot of challenges. Since the beginning of our problem in 2013 conflict has increased between the youth. Everyone has a gun. The reason is because the youth have been involved in the conflict. Leaders use sectional identity as a means of mobilization and this divides the youth. Chiefs from let the youth involve themselves. They did not stop the

youth from what they were doing. The youth went to fight. Since then, they have not come back together to listen to the chiefs and elders.

The conflict between Jikany Nuer and Lou Nuer comes when youth go to cattle camps. The youth have a misunderstanding and start a conflict between themselves. As we are neighbours we solve the issues by talking. But when the Murle come and steal and vice versa the chiefs have no power to tell them to return the cattle. So the problem with the Murle is not simple. Politicians mobilize the youth to take part in conflict. The politicians have their own plan. We all fought against the Arabs, and that is what we need to do. The youth should not participate in political issues. We need to cool ourselves.

We have ethnic conflicts within our state and outside our state. We also have conflict over grazing land and water points during the dry season. There are uncontrolled militias. We know it. And these are limiting our development plans. Some people are against the peace agreement because they are left out and we don't know if the government will be able to bring them in so that the peace will be general. All these things contribute to the hunger threat that always exists throughout South Sudan. It has been mentioned before that our communities are illiterate and not educated. If they are approached by the politicians their minds are confused. I want to advise our leaders to be committed to peace. Not just as a slogan.

What is the role of chiefs in peace implementation? We are responsible for young people, but they are being controlled by politicians. The youth get ammunition and guns from the politicians. A politician loses his position and starts a war. He does not mind if his people suffer. But our people have suffered for a long time. We should be serious this time. Start with our own households and then spread to others.

Chief Lopwon Alphonse: My father was a youth leader and was involved in cattle raids. He was a good leader so the people said you could then be our chief. He became chief in 1992. The first peace meeting between the Toposa and Jiye was initiated by him. Here we have many, many challenges but no big conflict. Many people have married from other tribes. The chiefs don't care much about the government as they get no support from them. But respect for elders is still there. In this country you get your rights from the gun.

I would not encourage people to go to the bush. It is better to use the weapon of the mouth.

If the government decides this is the way then we chiefs can go to the bush to get our rights. But I would not encourage people to go to the bush. It is better to use the weapon of the mouth.

5. Chiefs, family, culture and courts

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*If we destroy women and children,
who are we going to rule?*

Chief Alexander Juma Baba: In the past, you would not marry without the advice of your father but not today. New ways have been brought in from abroad. Telephones, films, television, they have spoiled our country and our traditions.

Elder Taratizio Wandu: Today, commonly, divorce is caused by wives. A wife who has spent 12 to 15 years with their husband, with their children, goes and tells her husband, 'I am divorcing you'. With the traditional chiefs, they would investigate first. But people's wives today divorce them and go wherever they want.

Chief Manoon Ater: Women are encouraged to bypass the chief and to go directly to the attorney-general to divorce. They go to the judge and the judge orders the collection of cattle. Women want the divorce to go quickly so they don't come to the chief. But traditionally there are stages to be observed. If we let things go like that, the culture and traditions will go away and the chiefs will be blamed.

Reverend Modi Angelo Basia: There are people who have been married for decades but when the love becomes bad they go to the chiefs for advice how to make peace in the house by advising the husband if he is doing bad things. After one or two months they will come with the same problems, such as the husband beating or torturing the woman and doing many bad things against her. The chiefs will say according to our laws we are giving you warning not to repeat it again. After this happens three to four times, the man may kill the wife. That thing happened in Western Equatoria. Now our chiefs are saying this is an old marriage and we cannot allow divorce. But they are changing their minds. Because they say if we continue to return abused women back to their husbands this will continue, so we need a new law. On our side it is good for us women to respect our husbands and to do what they want so there is no conflict in our homes. But if they are always getting drunk and beating their wives, then the youth will not learn and will do what they want.

On our side it is good for us women to respect our husbands and to do what they want so there is no conflict in our homes. But if they are always getting drunk and beating their wives, then the youth will not learn and will do what they want.

Women and children
are victims in every
conflict. If we
destroy them who
are we going to
rule? Who will bring
another generation
for us?

Let me say something more about what has been facing chiefs and what has been facing us women and mothers in South Sudan. People have been talking about respect, and it is true, there is no respect for the chiefs. I grew up in their homes and I know how chiefs were before. Chiefs need to be respected by our government so the community will also follow that respect. There is no training for our chiefs. Another thing is there is no transport like before, they used to have bicycles, but some now have to go by foot or their own way. The chiefs are the right hand of the government and they should have transport.

And there is no punishment for those who are raping women or pregnant mothers. We want to see judgement on those people who are raping women. Before when there was war people used to run for shelter to the churches and hospitals. But now there is no respect for churches or hospitals. People are killed there too. And if they come across a chief they can shoot them. If there is a road to heaven they will even follow you there. Women and children are victims in every conflict. If we destroy them who are we going to rule? Who will bring another generation for us?

Jacob Akol: The rights of woman in modern law are very different from those in our traditional law. There was a case in Lakes state. Many chiefs were killed in revenge killings. They brought in judges from other communities so they would be neutral. A woman brought a divorce case to one of the modern judges who was brought in. The judge said the woman has a right to divorce. The man said fine, but where are my cattle? He wanted the cattle of his bride price returned. The judge said your cattle will be returned when she remarries. As all the Dinka know, this was a mess. You cannot say you have to wait for your wife to remarry before getting the cattle back. The issue in this case in Lakes state was how do you bring together traditional law and modern law to dispense justice? How do we liberate ourselves and change the system we have known so long? You cannot say you want change but also that you don't want change.

Chief David Malish Jonathan: If someone beats his wife they run straight to the police—when it used to be settled by the chiefs. Modern music is affecting our young people. They hear music and run to it without telling their parents, and the next day you see that your daughter is pregnant or your son got a girl pregnant. They prefer going to parties to being in school. Before we used to have a traditional dance for when you are above 18 and ready to

marry. You would go to the dance and show yourself, but these days youths go before that age.

Chief Mboribamu Ranzi Tamburo: Before independence, if someone does wrong they can fine you rather than going to the prison. For example, work for the chiefs or you pay a penalty to the person you harmed. It is not money but the power the chiefs had to rule over the court cases that was used to maintain people on the right channel. All that is collected from the court we take and a percentage goes to the chiefs and a percentage goes to the county. But when it is prosecutors they keep the money forever and it doesn't benefit the community or the chiefs.

Chief Joseph Kuol Amet: The money coming in is a source of revenue for the chiefs. The new court system is undermining our system. We have court at boma level, at payam level and at county level.³ The interference of the prosecutor messes up the system we have in place.

Chief Alexander Juma Baba: I will add to what has been said by paramount chief of Tambura. The first is about the boundaries and borders. The chiefs are the ones to know about the borders and where it starts and ends. The sub-chiefs and executive chief and headman are managed by the paramount chief. What has confused things are the politicians. Our work in the court is not as it was before. Back then even your father would get for you a wife, you would not do it yourself, now people do it differently copying other cultures' ways of doing it. If your elder wants to talk about these things they say this is human rights and they can do what he or she wants. Telephones and televisions also have spoiled all these children and our cultures. This is what I have seen and it demeans our culture.

Dr Bernard Suwa: Some issues can be handled by chiefs, while others may need to go to the government. When I was in Australia I was a counsellor to the South Sudanese communities in Australia. They had high levels of domestic violence due to the culture shock we had in Australia. I was in and out of the police station every day due to family and youth problems within the community. Sometimes I would get a call in the middle of the night due to a fight between a husband and his wife. In that case it was the man who had called me as he wanted reconciliation. But the woman would ring the police as she wants them to throw him out of the house. There was an Egyptian Australian policeman who spoke Arabic.

³ The boma is the lowest administrative division in the South Sudanese state administration, below payam and county.

A number of times we both were called and met at the door. We reached an agreement. If it was just verbal fighting without injuries he would let me reconcile them. If there was physical injury, then it was the government's responsibility and the policeman would take it from there.

6. The chiefs' resolutions

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At the end of the meeting, the chiefs were divided into regional groups and each articulated a list of resolutions. All of the challenges and resolutions raised by the participants during the Kuron meeting fell into five general themes: justice, administrative support, relations with government and politicians, peace and security, and culture. The participants unanimously called for more meetings with greater representation as well as with their government counterparts to discuss the resolutions.

Dr Bernard Suwa: We have spoken about many things. You have discussed the lack of respect towards you as chiefs and your roles. You have raised concerns about the youth. You have also raised concerns about bad politics and lamented the breakdown of cultural values. Some of you raised the issue of a national council of chiefs so you can discuss what some chiefs learned when they travelled out of the country. You have also raised concerns about the rights of minorities. We discussed customary laws and conflict between the different ethnic groups.

Many times you have mentioned the clash between customary laws and national judiciary laws and human rights, which restrict your ability to implement your system. You raise your concerns about uniforms and helping identify the chiefs. Another serious issue is cattle raiding and child abductions, the confrontation between pastoralists and agriculturalists and violence within families. We have discussed the rights of women and how they are not protected. And the question of salaries, which are either very little or not at all. And now we will hear your resolutions.

Kuron Chiefs

Justice:

1. Customary laws that unite the communities should be respected and maintained by the government.

2. Police who have learned the laws of the country should be responsible for handling both customary and modern laws.
3. There should be rights for minorities, for example the equal sharing of services.
4. Women should be respected and their rights given.

Administration:

1. The role of the chiefs and local administration should be respected by the government and the locals.
2. All chiefs should be given uniforms for identity.
3. Paramount chiefs, chiefs and sub-chiefs should be given a good salary that helps sustain them to support their administrative work.
4. Paramount chiefs should be given Land Cruisers, chiefs motorbikes and sub-chiefs bicycles.

Relations with government and politicians:

1. The commissioners should work hand in hand with the chiefs.
2. The chiefs should be consulted before any decrees are given because the government is for the people.
3. Politicians should work for the benefit of the people, not for the division of the community.
4. The national government should give power and mandate to the chiefs.

Security:

1. Community policing should be established in communities so they can solve their own problems and have ownership of the process.
2. Disarmament should be done among all the ethnic groups.
3. The people abducting children should be hanged to death, the chief from that area should go to prison and the

children should be returned to their parents. The government should be responsible for this process.

4. The chiefs, government and the peace committees in communities should solve inter-clan conflicts, while early warning committees should be established within communities to monitor security issues.

Culture:

1. Children who do not want to go to school or look after their parents' livestock should be put in prison because they turn into street children.
2. Children found in music halls or functions under age, or those found abusing drugs, should be punished by the government.
3. There should be a special consideration for orphans by the government because if there is none they turn to street children.

The Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) should implement these resolutions if they want this country to move forward.

We the undersigned are:

Chief Lopwon Alphonse, Kuron
Translator Elia Lokii, Kuron

Akobo Chiefs

Justice:

1. The traditional customary law is very important as we had respect for it in the past but not in the moment due to adaptations. It is very important to discuss with the community how to get respect for customary laws back. International law is also good as it brings change, but we should find means of supporting customary laws.
2. Sometimes our customary laws violate international human rights. We need to integrate them so that we include women's rights and have respect for women.

Administration:

1. Chiefs should be given uniforms to help identify them. If you walk in the community and don't have a uniform you are not different from a civilian. The community has to see that you are a leader and the community is under you.
2. Chiefs should be given salaries to help them focus on their work.
3. Chiefs should be responsible for many cases, such as inter-marriage, cattle raids, thefts and other issues that are affecting the community.
4. Chiefs should work with the government in terms of cooperation in controlling youths to change them. If the chiefs work without the support of the government, or the government works without support of the chiefs they will be very weak and will face many challenges.

Relations with government and politicians:

1. Government is responsible for everyone in the community, including chiefs and should work together with them.
2. The government should be careful with politicians when they want to do campaigns within their communities as this can leave the communities divided when the politicians leave.
3. The government needs to consult the community before they make decrees or put appoint officials (such as commissioner). The community should be involved in the selection.

Security:

1. On the issue of security, youth are good when you tell them what is right and their rights. You have to start from your home, if your son doesn't listen to you cannot have the right to expect others to listen to you. We elders also support our youth. If you just accept your youth go commit raiding and you accept it you are a bad leader and commit a crime and you should tell the to return the cattle to where they took them.

2. The issue of raiding is very easy to control if the government consults with the chiefs and uses the chiefs as their hands and the chiefs can talk with the youth and they can put an order for every clan to put their guns in one place, as this will also unite them as a community.
3. The government should do disarmament as soon as possible after the peace implementation. They have to do it all at the same time in all communities.

Culture:

1. We chiefs have to teach our people our traditional culture and values. Youth should know our customs, traditions and culture.
2. We must send our children to school as if they are educated they will then learn what is right and wrong.

The solution for all our activities that we are doing is to unite ourselves as one family and one nation and to leave discrimination and to be one people. For us to implement this meeting and all the recommendations all the chiefs which go back to their county need to go advertise and advocate with what has been said. You need to mobilise your people that there is peace and to invite other chiefs who are not at this meeting and the members of the government so they can then hear how the chiefs are suffering as all the chiefs in South Sudan. Lastly they also encourage those chiefs who participate in the meeting, don't hide anything in your heart. Just be frank and open and interact with each other before we leave this place.

We the undersigned are:

Paramount Chief Matthew Yien Chuol
Former Paramount Chief Stephen Kwenye Long
Executive Chief Khan Chuol Zuor
Executive Chief Ret Mun Kem
Executive Chief Kher Ruach Puk

Western Equatoria Chiefs

1. We call upon the empowerment of chiefs in South Sudan. An example is supporting the chiefs with guards, or providing materials like books and office materials for keeping records of their activities.
2. Secondly we call for a chief's conference at both the state and national levels. This conference will raise issues that cannot be managed by the chiefs themselves through the COTAL (Council of Traditional Authorities and Leaders). If they fail to be solved by the COTAL level they should be raised an annual conference at the national level.
3. We call upon the government to construct courts and offices for the chiefs at their localities. This will recognise and retain the respect of the chiefs when or if visitor and the community realise they are settled in one place.
4. We also call upon training or workshops on the court procedures and some of the laws that exist with South Sudan which chiefs are not informed of.
5. We should implement salaries for the sub chiefs and headmen in addition to the paramount chiefs to help motivate them.
6. Provision of transport to chiefs to facilitate their movement in service delivery. If there is a vehicle for the paramount chiefs, other chiefs should also have means of moving around to assist in service delivery.
7. Government should consult chiefs when taking decisions- such as allocation of land for investment, or the creation of counties or payams without clear demarcation of the borders. They should consult the chiefs who know the borders so they do not create issues.
8. Roles and functions of both customary and judiciary courts should be clearly defined so they are harmonised.
9. We also call for inter-state chief and church conferences, especially in the most conflict affected areas. This will help heal the wounds and pave the way towards peace.

10. We call upon government and NGOs to provide funds to chiefs and community leaders to carry on trauma healing and reconciliation.
11. We call upon the government and NGOs to support and fund the community through the chiefs at the grassroots, in order to create awareness and to manage community development projects.
12. The national army should be informed of their roles. For example, when there is a crisis our own army is involved in raping, looting, killing of people, etc. They are there for the defence of the community so they should be taught their roles so we don't lose innocent lives and abuses should be punished.
13. Modern music should be examined to promote peace and educational messages. Some music is sending bad messages and promoting bad practices. The Ministry of Culture should examine if the music could be promoting bad practices before they let it be played.
14. Government and the judiciary should strengthen and enforce the laws on forced marriage which leads to early teen pregnancy.
15. We call upon chiefs and government to encourage intensive farming in the areas that keep cattle so that unnecessary movement of cattle rather during the rainy season will help reduce fighting- they should stay in one place and only freely move in the dry season.
16. For the sake of peace, unity and reconciliation we call upon chiefs and government to create activities such as music, football and drama to unite the youth with peace. It should be both from county, state and national to bring together everybody. This will keep the youth involved and active.
17. Government and politicians should cooperate with chiefs. For example during election so when it is over they don't they divide the community. Also when they demarcate land without talking to chiefs they create lots of problems.
18. Government should implement the Local Government Act. All commissioners should be elected - the reason the chiefs

complain is the governors appoint commissioners instead and ignore the people and the chiefs and the law.

19. Government should establish a South Sudan Traditional Council Board (SSTCB) at the national level to coordinate the chiefs across the country. The chiefs can elect someone to represent them at the national level.
20. Finally we call upon our partners, RVI, and others, to have another forum which will bring all South Sudan chiefs to participate. We have learned those who are here, but those who are not have yet to learn. At the same time what you have time has shown unity. I didn't know the chiefs from Warrap or the other side, so if you can unite us to fight using our voice.

We the undersigned are:

Paramount Chief Mboribamu Renzi Tombura, Tambura County
Head Chief David Malish Jonathan, Maridi County, Maridi State
Head Chief Alexander Juma Baba, Mundri West County, Amadi State

Elder Taratizio Wandu, Gbudue State (representing Paramount Chief Wilson Peni)

Rev. Mama Modi Angelo Basia, Gbudue State

Former Warrap State Chiefs

We the chiefs from greater Warrap and Bahr el-Ghazal region as a whole do here by recognize the role played by traditional authorities and faith based groups in bringing peace in South Sudan. We are therefore determined to continue to promoting peace throughout the country and appeal to the government of the Republic of South Sudan and partners to continue with the same spirit to support peace initiatives all over South Sudan, especially community-to-community efforts or dialogues. We therefore resolve the following:

1. We urge the national government through the local government board with support from partners of peace and friends of South Sudan to organize a national peace conference as soon as possible. Without dialogue all matters of

peace and others will not be tackled. Through the peace conference the following issues will be discussed:

- a. Chief powers and interference of prosecutor general in local courts, including clerks and chiefs retainers (local police) to support chiefs in their courts.
 - b. Interference of politicians in community affairs.
2. We urge the national government to implement the formation of a national Council of Traditional Authorities and Leaders (COTAL) with support from partners and more especially from Swiss government. This council will deal with the following:
- a. Promote peaceful co-existence and harmony among South Sudanese communities.
 - b. Flourish diversity of ethnic groups and especially the rights of minorities in matters of benefits for communities of South Sudan.
 - c. Work as a stabilizer in matters affecting the communities.
 - d. Promote affective norms, cultures and customs of the communities.
 - e. Advise the Government of South Sudan in fair allocation, distribution and delivery of services between various areas of communities.
 - f. Settle issues concerning salaries, uniforms, identity cards (IDs), etc. for chiefs.
 - g. Review customary laws in each community in South Sudan; such that the rights of women, children, orphans and people with disabilities, the inheritance of wealth, as well as underage and forced marriage are rectified.
3. It is obvious and clear to everyone that the main cause of insecurity in South Sudan is the proliferation of small arms in the hands of civilians without control; whereby each community arms itself on pretext of self protection and the communities, especially the youth, turn it opposite by exposing indiscriminate killings, raiding of cattle, etc. These

lead to severe lawlessness which has been felt by everyone. Therefore we ask the Transitional Government of National Unity and the state governments to do the following,

- a. Carry out one time general disarmament all over South Sudan.
- b. To enact laws related to prohibition of unauthorised firearms in the community.
- c. Create job opportunities for the idle youth, which will involve our peace partners and developmental organisations in South Sudan, to engage youth to developing their areas and refrain from inter-ethnic violence.

We the undersigned are:

Paramount Chief Jacob Madhel Lang, Chairperson of COTAL former Warrap State

Paramount Chief Joseph Kuol Amet Kuol, Gogrial State

Paramount Chief Ramadan Delenge Marajan, Bongo tribe, Tonj State

Paramount Chief Bagat Makuac Abiem, Abyei Administrative Area
Chief Manoon Ater Guot, Twic State

Paramount Chief Joseph Kuol Amet

I just felt some two points are missed regarding the dispute between pastoralists and farmers:

1. Government and local administration should demarcate lands. We have land in many communities which is disputed between the farmers and pastoralists. The government, land commission, chiefs and local administration should carry out demarcation of land. There should be some areas that are set as residential, some areas as grazing lands and some as farming lands to reduce disputes.
2. Many of the youth will be idle if disarmament is carried out, so government and NGOs should give them opportunities by putting them in co-operations and give the tools and such as they need for activities.

List of contributors

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Chiefs and elders in attendance at the Kuron Meeting

Elder Taratizio Wandu (Yambio)
Paramount Chief Mboribamu Ranzi Tamburo (Tambura)
Reverend Modi Angelo Basia (Yambio)
Chief David Malish Jonathan (Maridi)
Paramount Chief Alexander Juma Baba (Amadi)
Paramount Chief Jacob Madhel Lang (Twic)
Executive Chief Bagat Makuach Abiem (Abyei)
Paramount Chief Ramadan Delenge Awudo (Tonj)
Paramount Chief Joseph Kuol Amet (Gogrial)
Executive Chief Manoon Ater Guot (Twic)
Paramount Chief Lopwon Alphonse (Kuron)
Former Chief Stephen Kwenye Long (Akobo)
Chief Khan Chuol Zuor (Akobo)
Paramount Chief Mathew Yien Chol (Akobo)

Meeting facilitators

Dr Bernard Suwa
Jacob Akol
Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro
Bishop Paride Taban
Thomas Munsch

Selected RVI publications



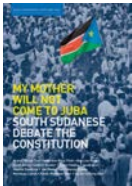
Instruments in Both Peace and War: South Sudanese discuss civil society actors and their role

A series of public debates on the role of civil society that took place in June 2016 at the Catholic University in Juba.



We Have Lived Too Long to Be Deceived: South Sudanese discuss the lessons of historic peace agreements

A record of a series of public lectures on historic peace agreements that took place at Juba University in December 2014.



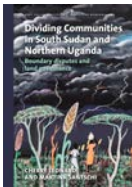
My Mother Will Not Come to Juba: South Sudanese debate the making of the constitution

Debates at Juba University on the new constitution, examining challenges, reasons for delay, and questions of public participation in constitution-making.



The Sudan Handbook

A guide to Sudan and South Sudan and the historical processes that shaped them, written by leading specialists and edited by John Ryle, Justin Willis, Suliman Baldo and Jok Madut Jok.



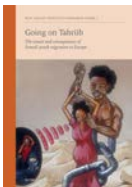
Dividing Communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda: Boundary disputes and land governance

This report argues that boundary disputes must be understood in the context of changing land values, patterns of decentralization and local hybrid systems of land governance.



Stabilization, Extraversion and Political Settlements in Somalia

This report analyses the role of international aid and the interplay between local and foreign elites in policies and practices which have frequently undermined state-building efforts in Somalia.



Going on Tahriib: The causes and consequences of Somali youth migration to Europe

This report examines the causes and consequences of tahriib, why young people decide to go on tahriib, and the often serious effects on the families left behind.



Un microcosme de militarisation: Conflit, gouvernance et mobilisation armée en territoire d'Uvira

Ce rapport analyse la militarisation en territoire d'Uvira et la manière dont celle-ci façonne les rapports entre conflits locaux, gouvernance et mobilisation armée. *Also in English.*



Carrada Ayaan Dhunkanny: Waa socdaalkii tahriibka ee Somaliland ilaa badda Medhiteerneyanka

Sheekadani waa waraysigii ugu horreeyay ee ku saabsan waayo aragnimadii wiil dhallinyaro ah oo reer Somaliland oo taahriibay. *Also in English.*

'CHIEFS USED TO BE EVERYTHING. NOW WE ARE ZERO.'

In April 2016, seventeen chiefs from different parts of South Sudan gathered in Kuron Holy Trinity Peace Village, in Eastern Equatoria, to discuss the role of customary authority in governance—past and present—and their own contribution to peace-making and a future political transition. The Chiefs' meeting at Kuron was the first time that traditional leaders from areas on opposing sides of the conflict had met in South Sudan since 2013. The discussions, led by the chiefs, lasted three days and covered a wide range of topics including the changing role of traditional leadership, the effects of war, the politicization of chiefship, customary law, security and peacebuilding. This report draws on a transcript of the discussions at Kuron to record the words of the chiefs on a number of these subjects.



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Confédération suisse
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Rift Valley Institute
Taasisi ya Bonde Kuu
معهد الإخود العظيم
Machadka Dooxada Rift
የሰሜን ሸለቆ የጥናት ተቋም
Instituto do Vale do Rift
东非大裂谷研究院
Institut de la Vallée du Rift

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