Guidance framework for understanding different forms of violence and their implications in South Sudan

What is the purpose?

This guidance framework is the output of discussions involving representatives from operational aid agencies and groups in South Sudan. The purpose of this guidance framework is:

1. To facilitate **more nuanced understanding** of organised violence in South Sudan and address potentially misleading use of catch-all terms (e.g. 'inter-communal violence' or 'cattle raiding')
2. To facilitate more constructive **inter-agency dialogue and planning** through a more consistent use of key terms used to describe organised violence in South Sudan
3. To summarise **key considerations** from a programming (rather than security/legal) perspective in relation to conflict sensitivity, livelihoods/services and protection.

How is it structured?

The guidance framework is structured around four 'levels' of violence. While the first three levels deal with more explicitly organised forms of violence – 'national', 'sub-national' and 'localised' – the last level deals with 'grassroots' violence that tends to be more loosely organised. The framework summarises the common triggers, the structural drivers, main actors, linkages, and programming considerations for each level.

These terms are intended to guide and facilitate reflection rather than provide fixed and mutually exclusive categories. The framework avoids characterising violence uniquely in terms of the actors involved (e.g. 'inter-communal violence') or the tactics used (e.g. 'cattle raiding'), since these terms can perpetuate an incorrect assumption that such incidences are less organised, disconnected from wider political developments or the inevitable result of livelihood patterns or longstanding tensions between identity groups. Users should engage critically with the questions presented in the framework as a means to grapple with the complexity of labelling, discussing and considering violence and its programming implications.

How does it align with other documents?

The guidance framework is intended to align with and complement a separate paper, '*Adjusting Terminology for Organized Violence in South Sudan*'. The *Adjusting Terminology* paper provides a more detailed exploration of the different dimensions of 'organised' violence in South Sudan and explanation for how these differ from other forms of violence (including 'grassroots' violence). In this respect, its primary audiences are conflict/security analysts and other roles responsible for communicating violent conflict in South Sudan.

By contrast, this guidance framework summarises some of the differences between these terms and presents major programming considerations at different levels. In this sense, the framework provides both a bridge between conflict/security analysts and decision makers in programming roles, and a tool to enable users to reconcile the categories included in the WFP paper with organisations' own frameworks.

By using this framework decision makers and planners will be able to develop a more nuanced understanding of the context and to identify entry points where response plans can address drivers of conflict and make more intentional contributions to peace.
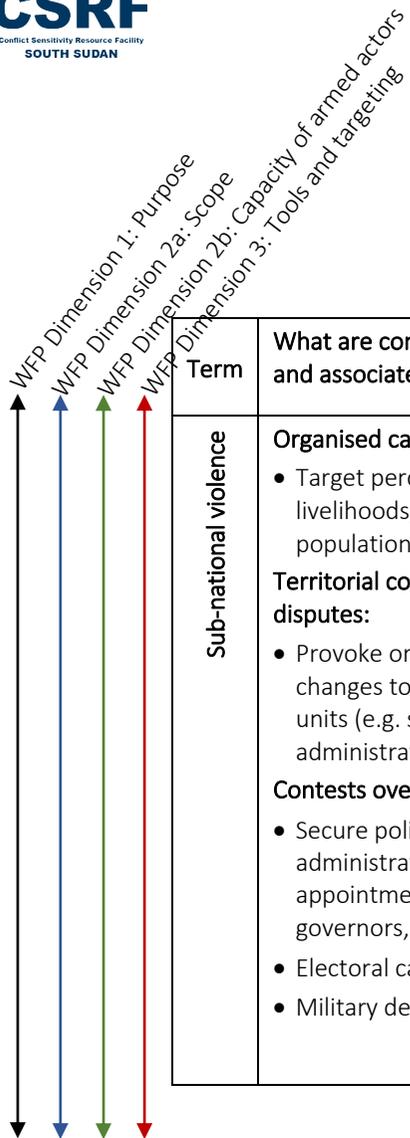
This will be a 'living' document and if you have further ideas on how to use this framework or suggestions on processes this could feed into and would like further support, please do get in touch with the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) at info@csrf-southsudan.org.

Diagonal axis labels (top-left):
WFP Dimension 1: Purpose
WFP Dimension 2a: Scope
WFP Dimension 2b: Capacity of armed actors
WFP Dimension 3: Tools and targeting

Vertical axis labels (left):
…tends to pursue more national objectives
…tends to have a wider geographic and temporal scope
…tends to involve combatants with a higher capacity for violence
…tends to involve more holistic targeting

Term	What are common triggers and associated 'purpose'?	What are common structural drivers and influencing factors?	Who is usually involved?	How might this link to other forms of violence?	What are major programming considerations?
National violence	**Organised campaigns:** • Coordinated attacks to diminish perceived rivals' armed forces • Targeting of perceived rival constituencies' livelihoods, assets and populations • Disruption of supply chains **Contests over authority:** • Political or administrative appointments (e.g. governors, ministers) • Electoral campaigns • Military defections	**Political factors:** • No shared 'rules of the game' (e.g. disagreement over basic constitutional issues) **Security factors:** • No integrated military hierarchies within armed groups And all of the below…[1]	• Main fighting is between formal armed groups (incl. R-ARCISS signatories) • All of the actors referenced below in lower levels of violence are in practice mobilised either as combatants or as part of community defence *Community members may be deliberately targeted as a tactic of war (e.g. displacement, killings, SGBV and destruction of assets and services)*	**Downward linkages:** • Insecurity prompted by civil war can provide cover for settlement of local disputes and therefore both drive and be driven by localised/subnational violence. • Localised/subnational violence can have direct implications for national calculations (e.g. in efforts to shore up constituency).	**Conflict sensitivity:** • How can the aid and diplomatic community coordinate more effectively to avoid reinforcing structural drivers of conflict and prevent escalation of violence? **Livelihoods and services:** • What are the dilemmas associated with delivery of livelihoods assistance and services through public bodies where government is a main actor in the civil war? **Protection:** • How can aid actors support monitoring of IHL violations by armed actors, and how can these be used to inform assessments of impact? And all of the below…[2]

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[1] Higher levels of violence often build on structural drivers of violence at lower levels. For example, those involved in national violence will tend to be driven by national-level objectives, but couldwill leverage more sub-national, localised or grassroots forms of violence in order to mobilise combatants and resources in pursuit of these objectives. The accumulation of these multiple drivers of violence is partly what explains the complexity and perceived intractability of higher levels of violence.

[2] Given the multiple linkages between levels and drivers of violence, programming considerations at higher levels of violence should also consider those at lower levels in order to identify entry points and address the full range of structural drivers.

WFP Dimension 1: Purpose
WFP Dimension 2a: Scope
WFP Dimension 2b: Capacity of armed actors
WFP Dimension 3: Tools and targeting

Term	What are common triggers and associated 'purpose'?	What are common structural drivers and influencing factors?	Who is usually involved?	How might this link to other forms of violence?	What are major programming considerations?
Sub-national violence	**Organised campaigns:** • Target perceived rivals' livelihoods, assets and populations **Territorial control and border disputes:** • Provoke or contest changes to administrative units (e.g. state/ administrative areas) **Contests over authority:** • Secure political or administrative appointments (e.g. governors, ministers) • Electoral campaigns • Military defections	*Political:* • Political norms (e.g. use of 'violent spoiler' and 'defection' tactics to obtain a seat at the table or access to resources) *Socio-economic:* • Perceived marginalisation of certain identity groups from economic opportunities and political positions *And all of the below...[2]*	• Community defence groups organised **at county/state level** (e.g. White Armies, *Mathiang Anyoor*, Arrow Boys) • **Formal armed groups** (incl. R-ARCISS signatories) can be pulled into these disputes *Community members and assets are deliberately targeted (e.g. SGBV, displacement, killings and destruction of assets and services)*	**Upward linkages:** • Sub-national violence suggests existence of large constituencies with significant grievances that can form part of a contest over national authority, thereby potential for escalation into national violence **Downward linkages:** • May be difficult to distinguish from grassroots violence given ownership of large cattle herds by leaders involved in sub-national violence	**Conflict sensitivity:** • How can more coordinated aid community responses and negotiations help to communicate the negative impact of violence on communities and disincentivise patterns of sub-national violence? **Livelihoods and services:** • How can aid agencies negotiate access more effectively and mitigate the impact of deliberate targeting of infrastructure necessary for livelihoods and services? **Protection:** • What are the implications of deliberate targeting of community members and essential infrastructure? *And all of the below...[3]*

WFP Dimension 1: Purpose
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Term	What are common triggers and associated 'purpose'?	What are common structural drivers and influencing factors?	Who is usually involved?	How might this link to other forms of violence?	What are major programming considerations?
Localised violence	**Ad hoc territorial control and border disputes:** • Provoke or contest changes to administrative units (e.g. payams, county HQs) • Control strategic points (e.g. road junctions, waterways) • Claim taxation rights **Contests over authority:** • Secure political or administrative appointments (e.g. county commissioners, customary authorities) • Electoral campaigns	*Political:* • Different understandings of boundaries and access rights *Political/Economic:* • Desire to influence ethnic composition of populations to support political or economic objectives of a specific group *Political/Social:* • Marginalisation of youth from customary authorities and conflict resolution mechanisms • Erosion of inter-communal agreements and community-based conflict resolution structures by civil war. *And all of the below…[2]*	• Community defence groups organised **at payam/county level** (e.g. White Armies, *Mathiang Anyoor*, Arrow Boys) • **Local formal or informal authorities** *Community members and assets are deliberately targeted (e.g. SGBV, displacement, killings and destruction of homes/services)*	Upward linkages: • Localised grievances may escalate into neighbouring geographic areas Downwards linkages: • May be difficult to distinguish from grassroots violence, given that local leaders can instrumentalise violence typically associated with the grassroots level (e.g. so-called 'cattle raiding' or kidnap / SGBV) to reach political objectives associated with localised violence.	Conflict sensitivity: • How can placement/distribution of aid be more sensitive to potential boundary disputes in order to avoid partial assistance and facilitate dialogue over disputes? Livelihoods and services: • Given deliberate targeting of infrastructure necessary for livelihoods and services, how can aid both mitigate impact and respond to this? Protection: • Who counts as 'civilian' in these cases and how does this affect what support is available? *And all of the below…[3]*

Vertical axis labels (left margin, bottom to top):
- tends to pursue more local objectives
- tends to have a narrower geographic and temporal scope
- tends to involve combatants with a lower capacity for violence
- tends to involve more selective targeting

Term	What are common triggers and associated 'purpose'?	What are common structural drivers and influencing factors?	Who is usually involved?	How might this link to other forms of violence?	What are major programming considerations?
Grassroots violence	**Movement of cattle:** • (Re)acquisition of cattle[3] • Prevent or punish cattle trampling agriculturalists' crops • Deter perceived mistreatment of cattle by agriculturalists • Prevent perceived spread of livestock diseases **Other:** • Settlement of disputes relating to elopement and 'bride price' • Settlement of blood feuds (i.e. revenge killing)	*Economic:* • Seasonal movement of cattle-keeping communities • Availability of clean water (due to climate change, pollution) and pastures • Fluctuations in food security and purchasing power *Security:* • Insecurity causing displacement of pastoralist communities or changes in livestock migration • Widespread availability of small arms and light weapons *Social:* • Gender norms (associated with prestige, honour and rites of passage) *Political/Social:* • Different understandings of boundaries and access rights • Youth marginalised from customary authorities and conflict resolution mechanisms	• **Age-sets** (esp. young men self-organising in cattle camps) • Community defence groups organised **at village/boma level** *Community members are usually not targeted except as part of 'settlement' of disputes or feuds.*	Upwards linkages: • Movements of people and cattle are affected by patterns of broader insecurity • May be difficult to distinguish from higher levels of violence given ownership of large cattle herds by leaders involved in localised/ sub-national/national violence • Local political leaders and formal armed groups can play both positive and negative roles in escalation or mitigation (e.g. arms transfers, military escorts, partial intervention, deterrence, protection of communities) • Can escalate rapidly, especially along segmentary lineage lines.	Conflict sensitivity: • How can more integrated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding strategies contribute to addressing structural drivers of violence in a specific context (e.g. availability of clean water, gender norms, marginalisation of youth, non-violent conflict resolution and accountability mechanisms)? Livelihoods and services: • What is the collateral damage on infrastructure and markets necessary for livelihoods/services, and how can aid mitigate and respond to this (especially where there are seasonal patterns)? Protection: • Who counts as 'community' in these cases and how does this affect what support is available? How are boys/men/women/girls affected differently?

Other forms of violence that are not covered in this framework include:
- Violent crime (although organised crime may have links to the violence described in the framework above)
- Riots/protests
- Sexual/gender-based violence
- International or cross-border incidents

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[3] 'Cattle raiding' is a tactic that can be used at any level of violence. This can make 'cattle raiding' difficult to distinguish and disentangle from both other forms of grassroots violence and more organised forms of violence. For these reasons, the use of the term 'cattle raiding' is discouraged *except* where analysts are confident it is not driven by broader forms of localised, sub-national or national violence.