



# **‘Sometimes We See Ourselves as Apart’**

South Sudan’s Response to Violence in Jonglei

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Laura Heaton and Amanda Hsiao    December 2012



**enough**

The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

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**ON THE COVER:** Wany Ruomjiok was visiting his son and his grandson in the cattle camps near Akobo when raiders attacked just after dawn in March 2012. Ruomjiok and his grandson managed to flee while the cattle keeping youth fired back at the raiders, but his son was shot and killed. Ruomjiok said he felt "very hopeless" when he learned of the South Sudanese government's plans to disarm the communities, because without guns his family would have no way to retrieve their stolen cattle or avenge his son's death.

ENOUGH / LAURA HEATON

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## Introduction

Amid the host of challenges the South Sudanese people have faced, intercommunal violence has often been treated by South Sudanese leaders and the international community as a lesser priority for attention. But in recent years clashes over cattle, access to scarce resources, and retaliatory attacks have become more violent, accounting for thousands of deaths since 2009. Bouts of violence have been particularly severe in Jonglei, South Sudan's largest state, accounting for well more than half of all people killed in the country in 2012 and nearly 80 percent of its displaced people.<sup>1</sup> There may be no other region in South Sudan where the interplay between internal failures of good governance and external support for spoiler elements creates a more explosive environment for deadly conflict. The severity of the violence in Jonglei over the past year and the independence of South Sudan have boosted the imperative for Juba and Jonglei's capital, Bor, to respond effectively.

Khartoum's direct prodding of the combustible situation in Jonglei is not a new tactic, and it is one that continues today. The Sudanese regime has a decades-long history of providing arms, ammunition, and cash to spoilers in Jonglei and other areas to exacerbate existing divisions and conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Violence would likely exist in Jonglei without Khartoum's support, but not nearly on the scale and at the scope as that which has unfolded since the mid-1980s. But even as Jonglei remains a theater for external politics to play out between Juba and Khartoum, intercommunal violence in the state is primarily a manifestation of internal issues that must be addressed during South Sudan's state-building process.<sup>3</sup> The need for greater economic and infrastructure development, political inclusion, systems of accountability, and the expansion of county, state, and federal authority through the delivery of basic services and security are among the underlying causes behind the cyclical violence.

Intercommunal violence in Jonglei is a test case of the ability of the South Sudanese government to fulfill its responsibility to protect and govern in a more inclusive and transparent manner. Accordingly, 2012 has seen unmatched high-level attention from the government to the problem of intercommunal violence in Jonglei, both on the

security side and through reconciliation efforts. This report will provide an analysis of government efforts to date to mitigate and prevent conflict in Jonglei following particularly grave violence from December 2011 through February 2012, with a focus on the Lou Nuer and Murle communities. The report is based on research conducted in Juba; Bor, the capital of Jonglei; and Pibor and Akobo, the towns that serve as the centers of the Murle and Lou Nuer communities, respectively.

The focus of the Juba government's security strategy is a comprehensive, simultaneous disarmament campaign throughout the state. While security efforts appear to have created momentary stability in the Lou Nuer areas during the rainy season—a fact that civilians on the ground echo—the abuses committed by the army during the disarmament campaign in Murle areas have directly contributed to renewed insecurity that has the potential to spoil the temporary peace between the communities. It has also stalled the larger Jonglei peace process. Efforts should be made to consolidate the gains made in the Lou Nuer areas and to isolate rebelling forces by gaining the confidence of the Murle civilian population. Increased diplomatic efforts must be made to counter Khartoum's support of militia elements in the region. It is important for the South Sudan army to distinguish between militia members and Murle civilians in its counterinsurgency tactics and to demonstrate greater accountability at the local level over abuses committed. Should the South Sudanese government restart its disarmament campaign in Jonglei, the military should be encouraged to strategically target armed youth, who are the main perpetrators of cattle raiding, and to coordinate with international partners in generating alternative livelihoods for those disarmed youth.

The reconciliation track has been defined by a government-led peace conference convening representatives from across the state and a church-led grassroots process. In March of this year, the government established a Presidential Committee for Community Peace, Reconciliation, and Tolerance in Jonglei State, spearheaded by Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul and President Salva Kiir. The presidential committee has attempted to mitigate conflicts by holding a peace conference in Bor and then traveling widely to hotspots to promote reconciliation. However, these and other ad-hoc efforts to continue the peace process suffer from insufficient engagement with youth, inadequate resources, and a lack of coordination between the many actors who are involved. An individual with sufficient political weight and seniority should be given the role of coordinating and tasking the various government and international actors in order to jump-start the implementation of the May resolutions.

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## Background

Spanning nearly 50,000 square miles and home to six different ethnic groups, Jonglei has long been plagued by ethnic tension, particularly during the dry season from November to April, when communities migrate in search of pastureland and water for cattle. Cattle

rustling and reprisal attacks have a long tradition among pastoralist communities, where cows are the main source of wealth and central to many ethnic customs. Raids to increase the size of one's herd or reclaim stolen livestock were traditionally carried out with spears and other handmade weapons. During the second civil war, which spanned over two decades (1983-2005), Khartoum's materiel and logistical support to spoiler militias in Greater Upper Nile and other regions of South Sudan was part of a long-term strategy to divide and destroy the southern rebel movement, to deadly effect. In the years after the 2005 peace agreement was signed, the continued influx of arms from Khartoum and other sources destined for local militias—such as the late rebel leader George Athor, or most recently, David Yau Yau—have continued to target divisions within South Sudan society, resulting in higher civilian death tolls from intercommunal violence. Additionally, local leaders and elders report the increased targeting of women and children as a new characteristic of intercommunal violence.<sup>4</sup> Cattle raids between Murle and Lou Nuer are now also typically marked by high numbers of abductions of women and children.

A series of large-scale attacks in 2011 heightened awareness about what a powder keg Jonglei had become, prompting reconciliation activities aimed at halting the cycle of retaliation. But those initiatives ultimately proved fruitless in December 2011, when a 6,000- to 8,000-strong group of armed Lou Nuer calling themselves the White Army mobilized and carried out nearly two weeks of highly-organized raids in Murle areas.<sup>5</sup>

Despite early warnings of these attacks, steps taken by a range of responsible actors were inadequate. In particular, the South Sudanese government's failure to respond effectively to violence earlier in the year led to reactive and insufficient military and political interventions that were unable to head off, or mitigate the effects of, the December violence.<sup>6</sup> These raids and subsequent retaliatory attacks continued into January, resulting in nearly 900 civilian casualties, according to U.N. estimates, as well as widespread destruction of civilian property and large-scale civilian displacement.<sup>7</sup>

The overwhelming international chagrin over the December 2011 violence was a factor in pushing the South Sudanese government toward a two-pronged security strategy: 1) a security component seeking to stabilize the state and carry out a disarmament campaign by increasing the number of South Sudanese armed forces, or SPLA, in Jonglei to 15,000, and 2) a civilian component that was initiated through intercommunal meetings and then a larger peace conference in May 2012, which aimed to identify and comprehensively address the causes of intercommunal violence in Jonglei.

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### Disarmament and increased deployment of SPLA

Civilian disarmament campaigns in Jonglei have a checkered history and, far from reducing violence, they have often fueled it. Nevertheless, the South Sudanese government has since 2005 attempted to collect guns from communities in Jonglei through several separate campaigns, often employing force.<sup>8</sup>

One downfall most commonly cited by local leaders and SPLA officials alike is that previous disarmaments have not happened evenly, leaving disarmed communities vulnerable to attack by rival groups in the absence of adequate SPLA presence.<sup>9</sup> Under such threats, disarmed communities often easily and quickly rearm. Not only have past disarmament campaigns proven largely ineffective, they have also undermined trust in the government because SPLA soldiers have been responsible for committing abuses against civilian populations, including women and children.<sup>10</sup> As long as a porous border with Ethiopia exists and supplies of arms and ammunition can be found through militia groups and the SPLA, the comprehensiveness and sustainability of any disarmament campaign will remain in question.

In spite of this record and in the face of strong urging by international actors not to attempt another disarmament amid the heightened tensions after the attacks of late 2011 and early 2012, the South Sudanese government launched a new campaign, “Operation Restore Peace,” in March 2012.<sup>11</sup> Under the command of Lt. Gen. Kuol Deim Kuol, the operation aimed to disarm civilian communities, boost the presence of the SPLA to deter further intercommunal raiding, and track cattle raiders in order to return stolen livestock and apprehend aggressors. Additional battalions were deployed to Jonglei, resulting in a total presence of 15,000 soldiers of mixed ethnicities. According to the SPLA, this deployment is meant to be in place for four to five years, with the specific goal of a continuous disarmament and under the assumption that the arms flow will not be stemmed after just one campaign.<sup>12</sup> The expanded military presence is also meant to create the environment necessary for the delivery of basic services to the population of Jonglei, who have been suffering from record flooding and conflict related displacements.<sup>13</sup>

The decision to additionally mandate the SPLA with intervening in cattle raids is a departure from previous policy, which dictated that addressing intercommunal tensions fell within the realm of the police, not the military.<sup>14</sup> Since the deployment, the number of large-scale cattle raids has distinctly dropped, but this lull can also be attributed to the fact that the rainy season generally hampers movement and thus slows down fighting.<sup>15</sup> The incidents that have taken place have been too few to offer conclusions on the SPLA’s performance in this respect.<sup>16</sup> The real test of the SPLA’s capability to mitigate cattle raids will take place during the upcoming dry season, which takes place from about December to April.

The SPLA reports that it has collected more than 12,000 guns and located 73 abducted women and children who it plans on assisting with return and reintegration in their home communities.<sup>17</sup> According to Kuol Deim, the SPLA have disarmed “most” of the Lou Nuer and the majority Dinka community. However, the Murle have proven more resistant. Though Kuol Deim highlighted the drop in the number of cattle raids since the disarmament campaign began, the commander also said that the “real youth”—who could prove to be spoilers when they take to the battlefield again as mobility improves during the next dry season—have “gone into hiding,” an assessment that the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, or UNMISS, officials echo.<sup>18</sup>

The disarmament in the Lou Nuer and the Murle areas has transpired very differently, contributing to stability in the former and instability in the latter. Few abuses by security forces were reported in Nyirol, Uror, and Akobo counties—the home of the Lou Nuer—while at least 100 cases of beatings, torture, looting, and rape were committed in Murle communities in Pibor County. The subsequent sections will detail Enough’s findings with regards to the disarmament campaign in these different localities.

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## Akobo County

### Approach

While there is a range of views about how long the calm will last, few people the Enough Project spoke to deny that the disarmament campaign has been the primary factor contributing to the relative peace in the Lou Nuer areas in recent months. By and large, residents and local leaders in Akobo say that they support the government’s effort to collect weapons, explaining that the region will never have peace as long as civilians have guns.<sup>19</sup> “The protection in town is provided by the youth,” said a schoolteacher. “But the government had to do disarmament because the youth are difficult to control when they have guns, even for the army.”<sup>20</sup>

In Akobo County, commander of operations Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet engaged elders to inform communities about the disarmament and to convey standardized messages about the role of the government in providing security.<sup>21</sup> “I advised the youth that this responsibility is the government’s. They will go follow the cattle,” said Yien Chuol, the paramount chief of Akobo.<sup>22</sup> Local chiefs and elders were responsible for collecting weapons from their communities and reporting to the SPLA who was left with a gun. In the strongly hierarchical society of the Lou Nuer, securing the buy-in from elders and youth leaders was crucial for facilitating disarmament. “Since [the cattle camp youth] are the leaders of their community, if they say we should not go to the Murle then the community will stay silent. If they say we will attack, everyone of the community will go,” explained a young Akobo resident.<sup>23</sup>

The schoolteacher noted that even if people didn’t believe the campaign would bring peace, they had to give up their guns because they didn’t have an alternative.<sup>24</sup> “No one denied the disarmament because it is [the government’s] intention to harm” those who don’t cooperate, he said.<sup>25</sup> His neighbor was more blunt, saying, “The soldiers will torture those who resist.”<sup>26</sup>

Enough asked those who said they supported the initiative why they felt hopeful that this disarmament would be successful when previous attempts had not been. In interviews, several residents and youth pointed out that this campaign is the first one under-

taken since South Sudan gained its independence, a refrain employed by local leaders as part of the disarmament sensitization campaign.<sup>27</sup> “We tell the youth that this is their real government, so they can’t play [around] with it. ‘If you voted for independence, how can you weaken your government?’” said Mac Chuol, a local administrator who is also a member of the grassroots reconciliation process.<sup>28</sup>

Others expressed confidence that the government would also simultaneously disarm the Murle. “When the soldiers came this time they said that they came peacefully and that they would go to the Murle too and take their guns,” said David Kueth Chol, a youth leader from the cattle camp.<sup>29</sup>

One woman, a mother of four, said that she was “happy that the government took the weapons because now [the men] won’t be able to fight each other,” even as she described her brother-in-law’s attempt—which she said she supported—to join the White Army in its December 2011 offensive to reclaim the family’s stolen cattle.<sup>30</sup> Voicing another line utilized by local leaders, another woman said, “We are now waiting to see if the SPLA will be able to protect us.”<sup>31</sup>

## Impact

There is mounting concern about whether the SPLA and the police will be able to deliver the protection promoted by the public relations side of their campaign. “Local people know about Yau Yau, about how he is fighting the government, so they are worried about him coming here, especially now that they don’t have their guns,” said paramount chief Yien Chuol.<sup>32</sup> One woman, whose son was paralyzed after being shot during a Murle raid in 2010, said that she used to feel safe because the other young men in her compound had their guns and would protect her and her handicapped son. “Now they will just have to run like us women,” she said.<sup>33</sup>

The Enough Project heard varying perspectives on how thorough the disarmament campaign has proven in Lou Nuer areas. Local leaders expressed confidence that the combination of sensitization and threats has effectively compelled Lou Nuer to give up their weapons, with the notable exceptions of Lou Nuer religious leader Dak Kueth, who helped incite the violence in December 2011, operations commander Bor Doang, and a hardcore group of followers from the White Army.<sup>34</sup> That group is thought to have initially fled to Ethiopia; unconfirmed reports place the group’s current whereabouts in the borderlands between Jonglei, Upper Nile state, and Ethiopia. Whether Dak Kueth, known as “the Prophet,” continues to possess the capability and influence to remobilize the Lou Nuer youth is unclear.<sup>35</sup>

Even apart from the residual White Army, Akobo residents and international observers readily said that they are not convinced the disarmament was as successful as the



government indicates, even in the Lou Nuer areas.<sup>36</sup> “Many youth from Akobo went to join the youth in the bush, and the police could do nothing,” said one police official in a candid moment.<sup>37</sup> Others suggested that people gave up one gun but hid or buried others, or that they kept them with family or friends over the border in Ethiopia.<sup>38</sup>

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## Pibor County

### Approach

Local leaders in the Murle stronghold of Pibor unanimously said that the 2012 disarmament has been worse than previous campaigns because the SPLA has used rape and water torture as coercive methods to collect guns. Officially, communities were given three months (from March to June) to voluntarily give up their weapons before the SPLA would begin the forcible disarmament.<sup>39</sup> Disarmament-related abuses did appear to take a turn for the worse in June, when children and women began to be targeted and the type of abuses became more severe. The situation further deteriorated in August, when the number of disarmament-related abuses committed appeared to drastically increase. This was likely spurred by the remobilization of Yau Yau’s forces that month.

Local chiefs and leaders say they initially welcomed and supported the disarmament process. “[We believed] that if guns [were] taken, peace [would] take place,” said a number of chiefs gathered for a meeting with the Enough Project in Pibor.<sup>40</sup> Members of the local administration and traditional authorities would initially travel with the army to sensitize the communities about why disarmament was happening and how. Chiefs themselves were often the ones collecting guns from their village. But since June the SPLA has refused to allow local and traditional leaders to participate. They “do not inform the officials where and when they go,” one chief said.

In early July SPLA arrived at the house of 65-year-old Rebecca Boya.<sup>41</sup> When she told the SPLA that she was not in possession of a gun, the SPLA first beat her with a stick, leaving visible marks on her leg and right eye, which was swollen shut when she spoke with Enough in September. Afterward, she said, the soldiers dragged her outside and shoved her head into a puddle of water until she began vomiting.

“I am fearing too much,” Boya said, motioning her hands in rejection when asked about her views on the SPLA. “Even now I can’t go back home because I am fearing. It is a way of oppressing. No women have guns.” When asked why she thought the SPLA acted so violently, she said, “I cannot explain because I have no gun. Some people have guns, like the youth. They’re supposed to listen to me. Why did they beat me?”

Strong animosity and distrust toward the Murle community is widespread within the government and army, and it is also evident in public rhetoric.<sup>42</sup> The community is often

perceived as the source of all insecurity in Jonglei, shunned as backward, and seen as not being on the “right” side of the civil war.

For the SPLA, unruly Murle youth present a credible threat, especially given incidents in which youth have shot at SPLA soldiers. Some officials believe that the Murle cry of disarmament abuse is simply a means of avoiding disarmament so that the community can continue to steal cattle and abduct children from the other communities.<sup>43</sup> The distrust has only heightened with the arrival of David Yau Yau and his mobilization of Murle youth, further blurring the lines, for the SPLA, between who is a civilian and who is a militia supporter.

## Impact

Abuses committed during the campaign have entrenched the sense among Murle leaders that the government is marginalizing and discriminating against the community, especially following the December 2011 attack, which Murle leaders say the government could have taken more robust steps to prevent and stop.<sup>44</sup>

“Why is the national army acting like this? What is wrong? Sometimes we see ourselves as apart, as not with the rest of South Sudan,” said a chief.<sup>45</sup>

Some leaders also voiced the fear that the national government actually intends to target the Murle, using disarmament and the arrival of David Yau Yau as pretext.<sup>46</sup> “Are they coming really to do disarmament, or are they coming to rape and kill?” said one chief. Maybe the SPLA “purposefully came to the Murle,” speculated another chief.<sup>47</sup>

One factor in the growing distrust among the Murle toward the army is the seeming lack of accountability for alleged abuses at the county level. SPLA officials claim that accused soldiers are being held accountable, but local leaders are skeptical. “Why not visibly show that they are doing all they can in terms of accountability?” said one leader. “Why are the abuses continuing if [the SPLA] are punishing [the soldiers]?”<sup>48</sup>

Mary Majak’s story is particularly illustrative of the sense of injustice simmering at the local level. Enough spoke to her in Pibor in September. According to the young woman, in August three SPLA soldiers raped her twice each, after they reminded her that her husband was gone and that his gun had already been turned in. Upon returning, her husband reported the abuse to the head SPLA official in their village, who then lined up his soldiers so that Majak and her husband could identify the perpetrators of the abuse. The soldiers, Majak, and her husband traveled to Pibor to initiate investigations and court proceedings. As of mid-September the SPLA in Pibor was continuing to refuse to release the soldiers to the police to present them to court.<sup>49</sup> The SPLA told Majak’s husband that they want to judge the accused internally before they release the soldiers

to the police. Majak's husband spoke directly with Brigadier General Peter Ruoch, in charge of disarmament operations in Pibor County, about the matter.

"I want them to go to court to explain why they raped my wife," Majak's husband told Enough. "If you continue hiding those people and don't do something to them, I will think you are here for tribalism, not for nationalism. If you are not taking this seriously, I will know you are not here to protect but to stand on one side." When Enough spoke to them, Majak and her husband were considering returning to their village, convinced that their case would never be heard.<sup>50</sup>

Kuol Deim doesn't deny that abuses have occurred in the Pibor area, but he is quick to emphasize that the abuses aren't policy. Instead, he says, they are the result of indiscipline within the ranks of the SPLA and crimes for which the perpetrators must be held accountable. "My army is a mix of freedom fighters and militia," Kuol Deim said, noting that most were integrated into the SPLA after only having experience fighting in the bush.<sup>51</sup>

According to Kuol Deim, the SPLA has dismissed 36 soldiers for committing crimes such as looting, beatings, and desertion; seven soldiers found guilty of rape, murder, or attempted murder are being held in prison awaiting confirmation of their sentences; and 12 soldiers are awaiting trial.<sup>52</sup>

### David Yau Yau's return

In August 2012 David Yau Yau's forces restarted their rebellion in the Pibor area.<sup>53</sup> The campaign clearly attempts to capitalize on the resentments and feelings of marginalization among the Murle community. In radio broadcasts, Yau Yau's recruitment message refers specifically to the abuses committed by the SPLA against civilians.<sup>54</sup> With an original core of 30 fighters, Yau Yau has now reportedly mobilized an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 youth, believed to be largely Murle.<sup>55</sup> At least 100 SPLA soldiers have been killed during the disarmament campaign and counterinsurgency operations against Yau Yau.<sup>56</sup>

Khartoum's support of Yau Yau is widely believed. In September seven or eight parachutes were seen being dropped from an unlabeled white plane by UNMISS in Likuangole.<sup>57</sup> UNMISS could not verify the contents, but the SPLA said these were airdrops of arms and ammunition to the Yau Yau rebellion from Khartoum.<sup>58</sup>

How the government responds to Yau Yau will determine whether the rebellion derails the Jonglei peace process any further. The response will impact whether the relative calm found in other parts of the state endures into the dry season, when the natural barriers created by the rains are no longer present. An approach that indiscriminately targets the Murle community as a whole will only fan the mistrust and bitterness that has swelled the ranks of Yau Yau and provide Khartoum with an easy target as they sow instability in South Sudan.

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## Responses to abuses and ongoing insecurity

In early August the government began taking a number of steps to address the insecurity posed by the intersection of disarmament grievances and the return of Yau Yau to the area. Brigadier General Kong Gor, originally in charge of disarmament operations in Pibor County, was called back to Juba on leave, in a move meant to demonstrate that the SPLA was responding to issues with the disarmament campaign. Murle Maj. Gen. Stephen Marshall was deployed as the commander of operations against Yau Yau in the Pibor area.<sup>59</sup> Disarmament has effectively been put on hold because soldiers have largely remained stationed in their barracks since the Yau Yau rebellion restarted. The SPLA say that they are waiting both for the rainy season to end and also to give political efforts to end the rebellion a chance before they attack Yau Yau's forces.<sup>60</sup>

Efforts are also underway to isolate Yau Yau's forces from the Murle community, thereby cutting off the rebel group's support base. As of writing, Murle leaders have been dispatched to their communities to convince the population not to join Yau Yau or possess any guns.<sup>61</sup>

"The government is resource-strapped and occupied with fighting David Yau Yau," said a church leader and member of the Sudan Council of Churches committee, noting that guns are still in the hands of youth and that those who have been disarmed feel targeted and vulnerable.<sup>62</sup> Without access to areas of Pibor where armed youth are mobilizing, progress made to disarm other communities and instill some trust in the peace process will likely be short lived. Even once the rebellion is eradicated, it will leave in its wake thousands of rearmed youth who will continue to threaten the larger task of mitigating violence in Jonglei.<sup>63</sup> How the government and SPLA then respond to the proliferation of armed youth will determine whether the cycle of violence is perpetuated.

As the international community considers how to engage with the government going forward, it should take into account perceptions of the process on the ground. Even nonmilitary contacts in South Sudan frequently expressed to Enough a defiance of the criticism of the disarmament campaign and an assertion that the government would not be deterred from removing guns from civilians by force if necessary. Some local leaders even urged harsher punishment against members of their community who were found not to comply with disarmament. In a meeting of local elders with the government's reconciliation committee, one elder said that if the SPLA catches one of the youth from his village with a gun, they should shoot him on the spot.<sup>64</sup>

Some South Sudanese officials criticized and even blamed the human rights community for compelling the government to stop previous disarmaments, leaving the process incomplete and thus making communities that have already been disarmed a target. Some international observers said that while they condemn the atrocities that have occurred during this most recent campaign and urge the SPLA to follow through on holding perpetrators accountable, collecting small arms from civilians is imperative for

the government to ever establish a monopoly of force.<sup>65</sup> Actors involved with the reconciliation process in Bor and Akobo say that it would be very difficult to engage the youth if they remained armed.<sup>66</sup>

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## Reconciliation processes

### Presidential committee

In early May 2012 representatives from across Jonglei gathered in the capital of Bor for a high-level conference aimed at fostering peace, reconciliation, and tolerance between the ethnic communities. The talks were convened by the Presidential Committee for Community Peace, Reconciliation, and Tolerance in Jonglei State and led by Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul and President Salva Kiir, both of whom attended the signing ceremony. Prior to this conference, consultations had taken place in four counties in Jonglei—Akobo, Fangak, Pibor, and Bor South—to survey the challenges and needs of, and to select representatives from, each of the regions. The participants in the main conference in Bor were split between high-level representatives, including national and state-level politicians and traditional authorities, and civil-society representatives, including youth, women, elder, and religious representatives.<sup>67</sup> Although on the Lou Nuer side three out of the six White Army youth leaders were present at the conference, they were not representatives of the frontline Lou Nuer counties that border Murle areas. Representatives of Bor Doang, the top leader of the group, did not participate.<sup>68</sup> Representatives of Murle cattle-camp youth did not appear to be present either.<sup>69</sup>

The participants endorsed a set of resolutions to address the range of issues undermining stability in the state, including the retaliatory cycles of cattle raiding and abductions; intervention by the Sudanese government via local militias; underdevelopment and lack of basic services; high levels of unemployment; residual trauma from years of civil war and intercommunal violence; food insecurity; internal displacement; and border disputes.<sup>70</sup> Notably, the peace agreement established that the beginning of the disarmament campaign is the starting point for considering compensation for grievances. There was broad consensus among representatives at the conference that compensation for past abuses must be set aside in favor of moving forward peacefully, with the exception of the return of abducted people.<sup>71</sup> The length of the resolutions and the lack of specificity in how—and by whom—these issues will be addressed are obstacles to implementation that have yet to be resolved.

Following the conference, members of the committee traveled to each of the state's 11 counties to meet with elders, county authorities, and youth leaders to inform the communities of the results of the conference.<sup>72</sup> These meetings focused on sensitizing residents, especially youth, to cooperate with the disarmament campaign and initiating discussions about alternate livelihoods to cattle keeping.<sup>73</sup>

A five-person monitoring body was created from the presidential committee to monitor the situation in Jonglei. The monitoring body toured all 11 counties in Jonglei in September 2012, when they met with the key actors and beneficiaries of the peace process. The monitoring body produced an assessment report on new sources of tension in the state that had emerged since the May conference. Four subcommittees were created to engage on those issues.<sup>74</sup> A lack of clarity exists over the mandate of the original committee and its subset monitoring committee.<sup>75</sup>

County- and state-level actors, as well as international NGOs and UNMISS, have undertaken various initiatives to implement the May resolutions, but those efforts remain ad-hoc, un-coordinated, and representative of a small sliver of the actions identified in the conference that must be taken.<sup>76</sup> Many of these actions can only be implemented at the national level. A national initiative to develop an implementation strategy and coordinate and direct the various actors involved is missing. As one member of the presidential committee put it, “The document won’t implement itself.”<sup>77</sup>

### “Peace from the Roots” initiative

Separately, the Sudan Council of Churches-led “Peace from the Roots” initiative is a long-term, grassroots track aimed at creating the relationships necessary for sustainable peace and reconciliation among the communities. The Sudan Council of Churches, or SCC, has established eight-person teams in six counties comprised of youth, women, pastors, and civil society representatives and trained them in grassroots organizing.<sup>78</sup> The training curriculum consisted of peacebuilding and dialogue, grounding in the details of the peace agreement, and networking. Now back in their communities to disseminate the resolutions of the May peace conference, the organizers maintain contact with the SCC to report on local developments, serving in part as an early-warning system.

From Enough discussions with members of this grassroots network it is clear that local reconciliation efforts are still in their very early stages. Asked about the substance of their engagement with residents, members of the Akobo reconciliation commission described their role sensitizing the community about the importance of the disarmament campaign and the government’s responsibility to provide security.<sup>79</sup> Only after a series of follow-up questions was their role in mitigating ethnic tensions raised.<sup>80</sup> Beyond those personally involved in the reconciliation initiative, few residents indicated familiarity with the process.<sup>81</sup>

So far the reconciliation process has focused on grassroots engagement in respective communities, with little contact occurring between counterparts from different communities. The next phase, where representatives from across communities will mix, is “risky” but also a necessary step, according to Bishop Ruben Akurdid, the SCC’s subcommittee chairman in Bor.<sup>82</sup> Insecurity in Pibor has prevented this intercommunal

engagement. But even before Yau Yau posed a significant threat, the Murle youth proved the most challenging community to reach. “The Murle are difficult to influence because they don’t always listen to their representatives,” said Bishop Ruben.<sup>83</sup> “But they are also those who need the most help,” he said, adding that engagement was initially going more smoothly than he had seen before because “some accepted the peace message.”<sup>84</sup>

### Investigations and accountability

To complement the disarmament campaign and grassroots reconciliation efforts by ensuring those most responsible for intercommunal violence were held accountable, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir in March 2012 tasked a high-level committee with carrying out investigations into the attacks of December 2011 and early 2012.<sup>85</sup> The Investigation Committee into the Jonglei State Crisis members, however, have yet to be sworn in, and the body has still not received funding to carry out its mandate. The delays in the formation of the committee are reportedly related to the fact that the president must personally swear in the members of this committee.

During research in Akobo, Enough inquired with police and county administrators about any local initiatives to hold the leaders of the White Army accountable for leading the December raid on Likuangole and Pibor. As part of the disarmament campaign, White Army leader Dak Kueth, “the Prophet,” was offered amnesty if he gave up his weapon. Enough was told that the offer still stands if he approaches the government peacefully.<sup>86</sup> With regard to others who participated in the December raid, the Akobo County police inspector expressed the view that there was no need to legally pursue the lower-level fighters who have already given up their weapons because “they weren’t crimes, those committed in Likuangole.”<sup>87</sup> He explained that the men who mobilized with the White Army were seeking to return property stolen from them by the Murle. He added, however, that the cases of abductions should and are being followed up.<sup>88</sup>

### International community involvement

Throughout the reconciliation process, UNMISS has engaged closely with the presidential committee chaired by Archbishop Daniel Deng to facilitate the logistics of the peace process and monitor its implementation. Other international NGOs have also supported the church-led grassroots reconciliation process.<sup>89</sup> A handful of NGOs maintain presence in key remote areas of Jonglei. Coordination around a central Jonglei strategy is needed in order to maximize the potential of international resources and efforts. Such a strategy could center around a more refined version of the May peace conference resolutions. But the national government may need to show increased initiative and leadership to bring together all the necessary actors behind a common Jonglei plan—including internationals—before donors have enough confidence to support such a process.

## Efforts to address underlying causes of violence

With the rainy season soon ending and communities becoming mobile again, the coming months will be a true test of what this unprecedented attention produced. As Duoth Kun, a peace coordinator in the Jonglei capital, put it, “You can’t be at peace with me if you’re not going to my area and I’m not going to yours.”<sup>90</sup> To consolidate the gains made through disarmament and the perennial cooling-down period of the rains, the South Sudanese government needs to quickly demonstrate that it grasps the concerns of the South Sudanese, who have always operated with the understanding that they must depend on their own communities for protection and to fulfill basic needs—and who have accordingly made pragmatic decisions, often oriented toward the short term.

“[There are] no roads, schools, hospitals, or water. These are all causes of conflict in the dry season. The government should provide boreholes. They should provide the youth with loans and training to keep them busy,” said Murle leader Ismail Konyi.<sup>91</sup> “The international community should create youth programs so they are engaged, so they do not raid.”<sup>92</sup>

Several international organizations are funding “quick impact” projects in Jonglei to provide residents with the skills and tools to refine or undertake new vocations. “With the disarmament going on, we need to get [the youth] busy and engage them in meaningful work,” explained a local staff member with a USAID-funded project in Akobo.<sup>93</sup>

Youth leaders from the town have also sought to engage the cattle-camp youth to “try to convince them to come into town life, but they have to have money to live in town,” said Ruach Mading of the Akobo Youth Association.<sup>94</sup> “The problem is that there aren’t enough jobs, and their expectations are very high,” said Mai Gatkuoth, a representative of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture, and Heritage in Akobo.<sup>95</sup> “People will suffer because of lack of support, so I’m not sure what the cattle-camp youth will do,” he added.<sup>96</sup>

In a majority of interviews conducted in rural areas, Enough heard the perspective that the South Sudanese government bears primary responsibility for finding alternate livelihoods for cattle-camp youth, easing them away from the volatile lifestyle of herding livestock, and for providing them with basic supplies. Asked about what they expect the government to deliver to maintain the relative calm, Lou Nuer cattle keepers expressed a fatalistic view of how they would get by without guns, especially because they have far fewer cattle now since the massive raid in March 2012—an attack they had been unable to avenge.<sup>97</sup> The Lou Nuer youth “used to go attack the Jikany [Nuer] and the Murle, but now they’re just home tending their garden[s],” said a cattle camp youth leader.<sup>98</sup>

Invariably, interviewees—from security services, civil society, and surrounding areas who came to Akobo due to flooding—pinpointed the construction of roads as a crucial need to improve security. Construction would boost the mobility of the army and police, increase contact with the outside world, and ease day-to-day circumstances, particularly in the rainy



season.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Pibor County officials in September listed the severe flooding, which rendered key parts of town accessible only by boat, and the lack of food as issues on par with the insecurity posed by the disarmament and the Yau Yau rebellion.<sup>100</sup>

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## Conclusion and recommendations

While the South Sudanese government and the Sudan Council of Churches have been largely commended for committing high-level attention to the reconciliation needs in Jonglei, Enough consistently heard a mix of optimism and cynicism about the potential lasting impact of the effort. The level of killing and the increased targeting of women and children over the past year have made people aware of the dangers of the prevalence of weapons and the severity of the ethnic animosity. As a result, local leaders and residents often said they are more willing to consider ways out of the cycles of violence and more open to allowing the involvement of the new government.

The South Sudanese government's latest disarmament campaign in Jonglei has had very mixed impacts on communities in the state and thus elicits reactions ranging from strong condemnation to begrudging endorsement. Even among the biggest proponents of the process, high-ranking SPLA officials emphasize that disarmament is a first step intended to establish a baseline of security to enable basic service delivery and efforts focused on root causes of violence to take place.

A key challenge for the SPLA, and for the international actors supporting their training, is how to establish a presence in ways that don't leave Jonglei residents feeling violated or vulnerable—either by the army itself or in the security vacuum that remains. The resurgence of David Yau Yau's militia poses both a daily danger to communities in Jonglei and also serves to potentially undo any progress made to establish a modicum of stability in the state, by being an impetus and a source through which youth rearm.

### **Therefore, the South Sudanese government should:**

- Demonstrate that the South Sudan army and senior Juba and Bor-level government officials see local communities in areas impacted by David Yau Yau's militia as crucial partners in thwarting the rebellion. As part of this effort, the government should support and empower the Murle leadership in their efforts to convince civilians to distance themselves from the rebellion. They can do this by deploying top government and military officials to Pibor to campaign with the same message.
- Convene a meeting with key Murle stakeholders to develop a strategy that prioritizes the protection and differentiation of civilians from Yau Yau's rebellion should the SPLA begin its counteroffensives against the militia group. This strategy should take into account the challenges that the seasonal movement of rural youth to grazing areas will raise in distinguishing between armed cattle keepers and Yau Yau supporters.

- Strategically deploy SPLA troops to protect disarmed populations from cattle raids in the dry season and to guard against the spread of Yau Yau's influence.
- Immediately make adjustments in the SPLA's approach to disarmament to demonstrate that the SPLA understands the grievances of communities who have borne the brunt of their abuses. To do so requires taking visible steps toward accountability, especially at county levels, to build confidence in the military and to discourage future human rights abuses. As part of this effort, the government should prioritize directing resources toward establishing county-level civilian courts so that alleged human rights violations committed by soldiers and police can be investigated and appropriately prosecuted.
- Create a security strategy that identifies and concentrates resources toward disarming armed rural youth, the actual perpetrators of violence and cattle raiding in Jonglei, should the South Sudanese government choose to pursue a disarmament campaign going forward. The government should coordinate with international partners to link such a campaign with programs that generate alternative livelihoods for the disarmed youth.
- Swear in and permit the work of the investigations committee to begin so that it can examine the drivers of the intercommunal violence that culminated in late 2011.
- Create a national focal point mandated to coordinate and direct the implementation of the May conference resolutions on Jonglei. The focal point should be a senior member of the national government, preferably from outside of Jonglei, with sufficient political strength and support to coordinate with various levels and departments of government. The Presidential Committee for Community Peace, Reconciliation, and Tolerance in Jonglei or the national Peace and Reconciliation Commission could serve as the supporting body to the focal point, or in an independent, monitoring role, as deemed necessary.
- Working with representatives from each of the implicated communities in Jonglei, the national focal point and their supporting staff should refine the May peace conference resolutions into an actionable peace plan that specifies the necessary actors, timeline, and budget for implementing each issue.
- Create an ombudsman's office with countrywide jurisdiction tasked with hearing and investigating allegations from civilians of abuses committed by South Sudanese security, military, and police forces. This independent office would then issue findings and conclusions and prompt action from the appropriate organs with the power to prosecute grievances and provide reparations for victims.
- Press for reconciliation efforts to penetrate deeper into Jonglei communities by holding trainings and meetings in county capitals rather than in Bor. This would promote more widespread familiarity with the process, with particular attention given to engaging the actual perpetrators of violence, namely armed youth, across communities.

- Appeal to the World Bank and petroleum companies to finance the construction of roads to connect the major population centers in Jonglei.

**As a key partner of the South Sudanese government, the U.S. government, working in concert with other longtime international partners, should:**

- Organize and initiate a new multilateral diplomatic push to reinforce to the governments of Sudan and South Sudan their obligations to (a) cease its support to all proxy forces in each other's territory and (b) implement the security agreements signed in September 2012, including the establishment of a Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, which would result in the monitoring of the Sudan-South Sudan border for illegal crossing and transportation of individuals, weapons, and other materials.
- Boost efforts focused on training the SPLA and South Sudan Police Service in human rights, civilian protection, and accountability.
- Bolster initiatives aimed at improving accountability and justice mechanisms in both the military and civilian realms by furthering assistance to the South Sudan military justice directorate, deepening involvement in county-level civilian courts, and assisting with the creation of an ombudsman's office focused on addressing abuses committed by South Sudanese security, military, and police forces.
- Convene a meeting of donors, U.N. agencies, NGOs, and UNMISS to consider tasking an international coordinator to review and oversee implementation among international actors of the May peace conference resolutions.
- Pilot community-based projects that generate livelihoods related to the cattle industry alongside continued support of projects that generate alternative livelihoods, especially for cattle-camp youth and pastoralist groups, to further the concept of "peace dividends" as compelling, tangible examples of the advantages to tackling the root causes of intercommunal tension. Initiatives should also tackle other needs expressed by communities by, for example, training youth to build infrastructure or address food insecurity. Humanitarian programming in Jonglei should be prioritized despite insecurity concerns.
- Call on UNMISS to heighten the visibility and presence of peacekeepers in Pibor, Akobo, Uror, and Nyirol counties by increasing long patrols and air reconnaissance missions during the dry season. These patrols and air reconnaissance missions should focus on traditional grazing areas and areas where adversarial communities come in contact with each other; this will act as a means of providing early warning of insecurity, deterring attacks and civilian abuses, and deepening the mission's understanding of the conflict dynamics.

- Encourage UNMISS to begin advising the South Sudanese government and military in their formulation of disarmament and counterinsurgency strategies both at the policy level in Juba and the operational level with commanders on the ground—and to closely monitor any such campaigns—as a part of fulfilling the mission’s Chapter VII protection of civilians mandate.

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Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, South Sudan, eastern Congo, and areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Enough conducts intensive field research, develops practical policies to address these crises, and shares sensible tools to empower citizens and groups working for change. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to [www.enoughproject.org](http://www.enoughproject.org).

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