

International Engagement in South Sudan

Research Repository Guide

This Research Repository has been compiled by the CSRF to assist donors and aid workers in South Sudan to better understand the context in which they work. The repository is searchable by key words, and is also organised into eight categories to enable easier exploration of specific topics. The CSRF has conducted a meta-analysis for each of the eight categories, analysing a selection of relevant, key literature and extracting some of the most salient questions for donor-funded programming.

Understanding the Literature

The literature on international engagement in South Sudan has a tendency to focus on the role of Western actors and only to a limited extent explores the multi-layered role of other countries including China, India, Malaysia, Turkey and Russia. Publications focusing on the pre-2005 context mostly explore international engagement in terms of humanitarian aid and the peace process leading to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and to a lesser extent on oil exploration and related human rights violations. After 2005, researchers have explored international engagement in relation to recovery, peace building and state building endeavours. Literature after the 2013 crisis attempts to understand the failures of the pre-2013 engagement and is written with an eye to policy recommendations for international actors engaging in the ongoing humanitarian response, civilian protection, and supporting the peace process. The questions below were developed with the aim of providing insights into the trajectories of international engagement in South Sudan and how those interrelate with the dynamics of the ongoing armed conflict.

Go to the source

All Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan (2016). [Bridging the Gaps: Lessons from Engagement with South Sudan 2011-2014.](#)

Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (2017). [Contextualised Conflict Sensitivity Guidance for South Sudan.](#)

Roque, Paula C. & Miaming, Remember (2017). [Beyond ARCISS: New Fault Lines in South Sudan.](#)

1. **Why have relations between South Sudan and the international community deteriorated so dramatically since 2011?**
2. **Why did the millions of dollars spent on development assistance from 2005 onwards produce so few lasting results?**
3. **Protection of Civilians: Can international actors really protect civilians in South Sudan?**
4. **Which challenges is UNMISS facing in South Sudan?**
5. **What can we learn from Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) (late 1980s to 2005)?**
6. **What is China's role in South Sudan?**

1. **Why have relations between South Sudan and the international community deteriorated so dramatically since 2011?**

While many countries voiced support for newly independent South Sudan in 2011, relations quickly deteriorated. In a dispute with Sudan, South Sudan halted oil production in January 2012, surprising

international partners. Armed clashes at the border with Sudan a few months later demonstrated the international community's limited leverage over Juba. South Sudan expected international support for its actions, but this was not forthcoming in either case. International actors saw these moves as reckless.

Go to the source

Awolich, Abraham A. (2014). [Diplomacy: A Key to Ending the Worsening Crisis in South Sudan.](#)

Anonymous (2017). [A Rock and Hard Place: Operating Challenges for Aid Organizations in South Sudan.](#)

Pax Christi (2017). [Shrinking Civil Society Space in the Horn of Africa.](#)

Both issues were only resolved by extensive international mediation. The interruption to oil production lasted 15 months and deprived the South Sudanese state of most of its revenue. The spread between the official and parallel exchange rates increased as a result, devaluing foreign development assistance and creating greater incentives for corruption by the leakage of foreign exchange from government reserves, in what was a time of austerity and lesser tolerance for mass corruption. Critical voices complaining of authoritarian tendencies became more prevalent after 2011, pointing, for

instance, at the transitional constitution that provided the executive with further powers. Freedom of the media and the space for civil society to operate also shrank. In fighting in Jonglei, the SPLA was accused of committing atrocities against civilians.

South Sudan's international relations dramatically worsened after the outbreak of armed violence in December 2013. The government was perceived by international actors as resisting the peace process and spending oil revenues on warfare rather than development or service delivery. This further strained relations and led to public criticism of Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) by international actors. At the same time, South Sudanese officials complained that international actors' actions undermined sovereignty. Aid organisations have been facing challenges accessing beneficiaries in areas controlled by the government and armed groups, due to increasing administrative obstacles, attacks on aid infrastructure, harassment, and the arrest and in some cases killing of staff. Aid has been manipulated, diverted and looted.

2. Why did the millions of dollars spent on development assistance from 2005 onwards produce so few lasting results?

After the signing of the CPA in 2005, the international donor community provided large sums of aid to South Sudan. It was anticipated that support to peacebuilding, recovery, development, state building, and service and infrastructure provision would foster peace, stability and state legitimacy. However, certain interventions remained limited. Given that the official logic of the CPA was to work for a united Sudan, rather than two independent states; some activities that might have better prepared South Sudan for independence were avoided in the early years of the CPA implementation period.

The impact of international support was limited by severe logistical constraints and the absence of almost any services and infrastructure in 2005. This made it difficult to meaningfully improve state capacity and access to services. International engagement has been criticised for a number of shortcomings

Go to the source

Bennett, Jon et al. (2010). [Aiding the Peace: A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005–2010.](#)

Van Veen, Erwin et al. (2016). [Hitting the Target, But Missing the Point? Assessing Donor Support for inclusive and legitimate Politics in fragile Societies.](#)

Pendle, Naomi & Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (2018). [Famine, Access and Conflict Sensitivity: What Opportunities do Livestock offer in South Sudan?](#)

including following a top down, technical, apolitical, state-centric approach rather than one more grounded in the specific context. Criticism has also been levelled at the piecemeal nature of support with short-term projects being implemented across different sectors without sufficient durability or sustainability. International funds were disproportionately funnelled into capacity building training of government staff in Juba, at the expense of support to more peripheral areas, in a more dynamic range of capacity building exercises. The nature of support for livelihoods often did not adequately consider and incorporate local realities, practices and norms. For example, international support was often designed for sedentarised populations rather than for pastoralists; livestock support in some areas diminished after 2005. Land tenure reforms policies pursued with the support of international actors were rife with potential for sowing further conflict and discord. Nor did state building endeavours sufficiently consider the politics of development and state-building, or take into account informal authorities playing pivotal roles in politics and governance. Nation building and reconciliation were neglected by the international community.

3. What can we learn from Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) (late 1980s to 2005)?

Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) began as a large scale humanitarian response to the Bahr el-Ghazal famine of 1989. Based on a tripartite arrangement between the UN, the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), OLS provided a system of humanitarian access that varied depending on whether areas were under GoS or SPLM/A control. One lesson from OLS is that negotiated access to beneficiaries requires creative modalities and ongoing coordination. Another lesson is to take criticism and adapt interventions accordingly: OLS recognised a need for more sustainable support to livelihoods, and progressed from providing emergency food aid to veterinary services and to agricultural support, with the goal of increasing resilience.

Go to the source

Duffield, Mark et al. (2000). [Sudan: Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Assistance – Field Evaluation Study.](#)

Maxwell, Daniel et al. (2014). [Looking back to look ahead? Reviewing key lessons from Operation Lifeline Sudan and past humanitarian operations in South Sudan.](#)

Minear, Larry (1991). [Humanitarianism under siege: a critical review of Operation Lifeline Sudan.](#)

Access to humanitarian aid became part of the strategy of conflict parties and, arguably even served to prolong the war. The substantial aid OLS offered altered local political economies and proved not to be as neutral or impartial as intended. Aid operations became partially motivated by political considerations and were sometimes forced to compromise the aim of serving those most in need.

Much research was conducted to better understand the context, the unintended consequences of aid and local norms and mechanisms, such as local support mechanisms, but despite this knowledge, moving from research to policy and practice was a challenge in those years, as it is now. In the

ongoing humanitarian response, political economy dimensions of the impact of aid on current conflict dynamics should be better understood and considered, including the question of whether humanitarian aid is prolonging and fostering the armed conflict today.

4. Protection of Civilians: Can international actors adequately protect civilians in South Sudan?

Over the last four years, hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled fighting and sought refuge at United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) bases leading to the establishment of the so-called Protection

of Civilian (PoC) sites. International actors are not able to protect the large majority of South Sudanese civilians living in South Sudan who in most cases are outside these sites. Less than 10% of the 2 million people displaced within South Sudan are housed in PoCs, raising the question of whether UNMISS's focus on PoCs is disproportionate, and whether the unevenness of protection is itself a pull factor leading to an increase in civilians seeking refuge at such sites. A considerable number of UNMISS troops are needed to protect the PoCs, which limits the ability of UNMISS to project force beyond its bases.

Tensions continue to exist within the international community regarding the role and responsibilities and performance of UNMISS, humanitarian actors, and the donor community. Conditions in the PoCs has improved since early 2014, though the debates regarding the future of the sites and the likelihood and necessary conditions for IDP returns are ongoing.

Go to the source

Arnsen, Michael (2016). [If We Leave We Are Killed: Lessons Learned from South Sudan Protection of Civilian Sites 2013-2016.](#)

Briggs, Caelin (2017). [Protection of Civilians Sites: Lessons from South Sudan for future Operations.](#)

5. What challenges does UNMISS face in South Sudan?

UNMISS faces different limitations in protecting civilians that stem from an inability to swiftly deploy troops to areas affected by violence due to constraints in personnel, security and access. Although guaranteed freedom of movement, the GRSS has routinely limited the access of UNMISS forces during active military operations.

Go to the source

Hutton, Lauren (2014). [Prolonging the Agony of UNMISS: The Implementation Challenges of a New Mandate During a Civil War.](#)

Kindersley, Nicki and & Rolandsen, Øystein H. (2016). [Prospects for Peace and the UN Regional Protection Force in South Sudan.](#)

The size of the UNMISS force has been increased twice since December 2013. UNMISS now has a mandated strength of 17,000, with a Chapter VII mandate to use all means necessary in its implementation. However, most troops are concentrated in major cities and towns, and UNMISS has been called on to vastly increase its engagement with communities outside of Juba and state capitals.

As a response to the July 2016 clashes in Juba, the UN Security Council mandated a Regional Protection Force (RPF) of 4000 soldiers, to provide security in Juba. The arrival of this special force has, however, been delayed a number of times, and, the first elements of the force only started to arrive in Mid-2017. While the RPF's deployment frees up other troops to be redeployed elsewhere in the country, the basic limitations of UNMISS persist.

6. What is China's role in South Sudan?

The CPA interim period saw a rebalancing of relations between China and South Sudan. China had historically aided Sudan, particularly in the development of the oil industry, at the expense of the South. Chinese interests now span a new international border, and the old policy has presented itself as inadequate. As elsewhere in Africa, China has played an important role in (re)construction and development of infrastructure, although the scale of its projects outside of the oil sector remains relatively modest. The current civil war has affected plans to expand investments in South Sudan, but China

continues to support existing infrastructure projects. China is also a major supplier of arms to South Sudan.

China has deployed 700 troops to UNMISS, its largest international peacekeeping commitment. Two peacekeepers were killed during the July 2016 violence in Juba. At the Security Council, China has followed the lead of other African states, particularly that of Ethiopia, and has abstained rather than opposed recent calls for an arm (MEC), and has also provided humanitarian assistance, including food aid.

Go to the source

Large, Daniel & Patey, Luke (2014).

[Riding the Sudanese Storm: China, India, Russia, Brazil and the two Sudans.](#)

Saferworld (2015). [From Conflict](#)

[Resolution to Conflict Prevention: China in South Sudan.](#)

[Further publications on international engagement in South Sudan are available in the CSRF repository](#)