Case Study Series No. 5

Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Lower Strata:

Building Resilience in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan

Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Lower Strata: Building Resilience in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan. Case Study Series No. 5.

March 2022

This case study was developed and published by Faith to Action Network in the context of the Communities Richer in Diversity project (CRID), implemented by a consortium of four partners – Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, Faith to Action Network, African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace and All Africa Conference of Churches.

This publication is published with the financial support from the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Faith to Action Network, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Authors: Abraham Kuol Nyuon and Patrick K. Mbugua (Faith to Action Network)

Faith to Action Network mobilizes faith organizations' support for family health and wellbeing. As a global interfaith network of more than 110 Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Muslim faith organisations, it focuses on issues that faith actors are grappling with, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning; gender equality and women's rights; peaceful coexistence and understanding.

How to cite this *Case Study Series No. 5*:

Nyuon, A.K and and Mbugua, P.K. (2022) 'Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Lower Strata: Building Resilience in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan', Case Study Series No. 5. Nairobi: Faith to Action Network.

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Acknowledgment

Writing a research paper is a strenuous task that requires a lot of support. We are, therefore, indebted to all the people who supported us while researching and writing this case study. We are grateful to the Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan (EASS) led by Bishop (Dr) Arkanjelo Wani Lemi and Pan-African Christian Women Alliance -South Sudan (PACWA-SS) led by Ms Elizabeth Gadia and Ms Lona Loduro. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the research participants in Juba, Yei, and Bor who, despite enormous challenges, found time to share their experiences in face-to-face interviews, telephone calls, key informants' interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs. Special gratitude goes to Mr Mathias Brucker of the Faith to Action Network Europe office for reading the draft and providing detailed comments and editorial support. Also, we owe gratitude to the CRID technical team in Nairobi for supporting us and the CRID Steering Committee members, Venerable J.W. Kofi de-Graft-Johnson, Mr Peter Munene, and Dr Francis Kuria for providing oversight. We owe additional thanks to the European Union (EU) for funding the Case Studies Series through the CRID project. Lastly, we offer a blanket thank you to every person who supported us in every phase of authoring this paper.

About the Author

Dr Abraham Kuol Nyuon

Dr. Abraham Kuol Nyuon is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Dean of the School of Social and Economic Studies at the University of Juba. He holds a Ph.D. in international relations from the University of Juba, an MA degree in international relations from the Catholic University of East Africa (Kenya), an MA degree in international studies from King's College, London, and a Bachelor's degree in Christian Education from Kabarak University in Kenya. Previously, he was the Head of the Department of Political Science and Director for Strategic Research and Analysis at South Sudan's Ministry of Defence. He has published in the areas of international politics, foreign policy, conflict management, and security studies. His research interests include international politics, foreign policy, political economy, strategic planning, peace, and Security.

Dr Patrick K. Mbugua

Dr Patrick Mbugua is the Knowledge Management Adviser at Faith to Action Network in Nairobi, Kenya. He holds a PhD in Peace & Conflict Studies from the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, and a Master's Degree in Peace & Conflict Studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. He has published in the areas of conflict transformation, peace processes and peace agreements, the social construction of conflict and violence, terrorism and violent extremism, and human security and human rights. His research interests include peace processes, peace agreements, the transformation of conflict discourses, the social construction of conflict and violence, peacebuilding, and critical terrorism studies.

Communities Richer in Diversity (CRID)

The four-year Communities Richer in Diversity project (CRID) aims at leveraging the influence of faith leaders and institutions to promote cultural diversity and respect for equal dignity in six African countries, namely, Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania. It was initiated by a consortium of faith-based organisations and networks, including Faith to Action Network (F2A), Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), African Council of Religious Leaders-Religion for Peace (ACRL-RfP), and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) with financial support from the European Union (EU). The project started in April 2018, and by 31 January 2022, 12-country partners had reached at least 25,000 young men and women with interfaith and intercultural interventions. Such interventions enhanced the understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural and religious diversity among the project participants and beneficiaries in the six countries. The activities can be categorised into four broad areas: edutainment and performance arts, peer education and capacity enhancement, community peacebuilding, and shaping of public discourse.

Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan (EASS)

The Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan (EASS) started in the 1990s, but it operated in Kenya and Uganda because of the civil war in the then larger Sudan. It started operating in South Sudan in Yei town in 2003 where it was hosted by the Anglican Diocese of Yei. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, EASS transferred its offices to Juba and applied to the Bureau of Religious Affairs in the Office of the President in 2007 for registration. Currently, EASS is the umbrella body of all Evangelical Churches in South Sudan and a member of the Association of the Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). The organisation implements activities through three commissions: Peace, Justice & Reconciliation; Theology & Education; and Evangelisation. The Pan-African Christian Women Alliance-South Sudan (PACWA-SS) is affiliated to EASS as one of its commissions for operational reasons. As the name implies, the Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission has been involved in interfaith peacebuilding and reconciliation activities in different regions of South Sudan, among them Central Equatoria and Jonglei. Therefore, EASS used funding from the CRID project to advance its grassroots peacebuilding and reconciliation interventions in Juba, Bor, and Yei.

Pan-African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA)

The Pan-African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) joined the CRID consortium to continue its peacebuilding and reconciliation work in South Sudan as one of the EASS's Commissions. However, its historical trajectory is different from that of EASS because it was started by women of South Sudan who were living as refugees in Nairobi in 1998. PACWA's founders intended to support each other cope with the effects of the civil war and the challenges of displacement and refugee status. They affiliated PACWA-South Sudan as a project of PACWA-Kenya for registration reasons in Nairobi but transferred it to Juba following the independence of South Sudan in July 2011. It was formally affiliated as an EASS Commission in May 2017. PACWA's focus areas are community peacebuilding and trauma healing at the grassroots. As an EASS commission, PACWA-SS joined CRID to continue its interventions in community peacebuilding through interfaith collaborations.

Acronyms

AU	African Union
CC	Catholic Church
CBC	Christian Brotherhood Church
CRID	Communities Richer in Diversity
EASS	Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan
ECSS	Episcopal Church of South Sudan
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HLCPCs	High-level County Peace Committees
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KII	Key Informant Interview
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NSCC	New Sudan Council of Churches
NSF	National Salvation Front
PACWA	Pan-African Women Alliance
PBCSS	Pentecostal Brethren Church of South Sudan
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCSS	Reformed Church of South Sudan
RFPMC	Revival Fire & Prayer Ministries Church
SSPC	South Sudan Pentecostal Church
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement – In the Opposition
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UN	United Nations

Abstract

This case study explores the impacts of interfaith peacebuilding activities in South Sudan that the Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan (EASS) and Pan-African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) implemented in Juba, Yei, and Bor. It assesses the impacts by exploring three themes that emerge from analysis of secondary and primary evidence, namely, changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing individual resilience, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups. Combining analyses of the EASS/PACWA project reports with primary empirical data collected from the three locations, the study examines EASS/PACWA interventions within the broader conflict resolution and peace processes in South Sudan. Overall, the underlying thinking is that national peace agreements, which the elite sign in mediated negotiations, do not lead to durable peace unless the implementers consider the agency of the grassroots communities. Since faith communities are rooted in these grassroots communities, they can promote post-agreement tolerance, reconciliation, and peace. The research reviewed 17 EASS/PACWA project documents and collected empirical data from 92 project participants and beneficiaries. It finds that EASS/PACWA contributed to improving individual and community relations by triggering a process of 'opening-up' which challenged the participants' stereotypes and prejudices towards the 'Other' and broadened their perceptions and worldviews. Such bottom-up peacebuilding work complements elite peace agreements at the national level.

Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Lower Strata: Building Resilience in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan

1. Introduction

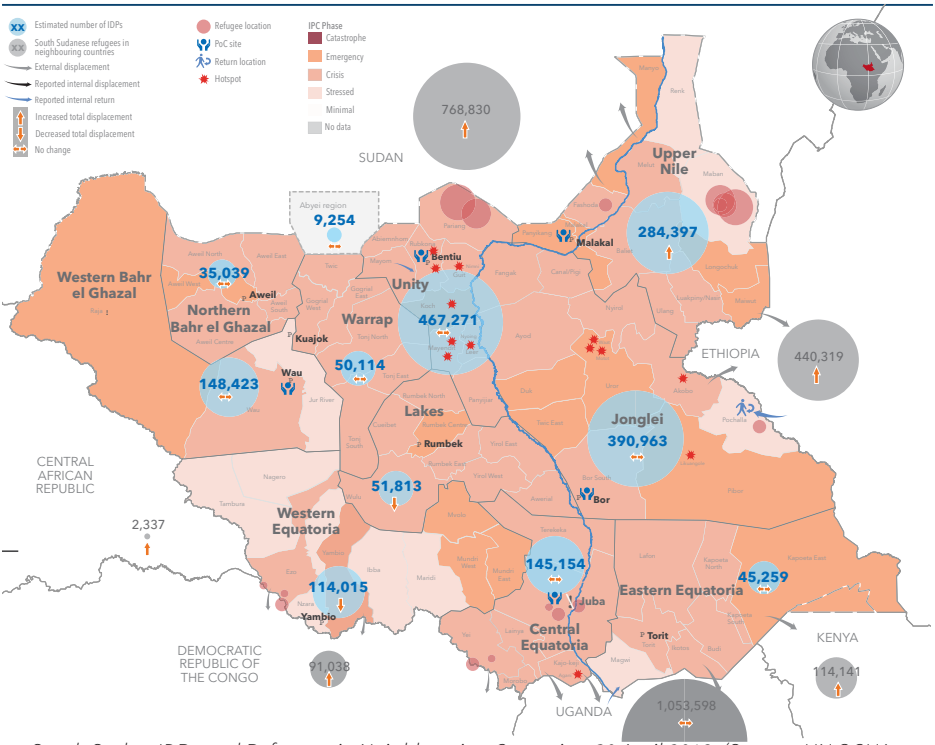
This case study analyses interfaith grassroots peacebuilding activities in South Sudan that the Evangelical Alliance of South Sudan and Pan African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) implemented in Juba, Bor, and Yei from December 2018 to February 2020. Its objective is to explore the contribution of EASS and PACWA to changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing the resilience of individuals, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups. Understanding PACWA and EASS interventions as an aspect of bottom-up or grassroots peacebuilding, the study applies that framework, as it is conceptualised in the broader peacebuilding and conflict resolution literature. Overall, the examined evidence from secondary and primary sources demonstrates that EASS and PACWA contributed to changing women and youth perceptions and resilience, assisted with the building of grassroots peace structures, supported the promotion of tolerance, and strengthened peaceful coexistence. Further, analysis suggests that the two organisations utilised diverse activities to build bridges between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups and enhance networks and coordination at the grassroots and, thus, contributed to laying the ground for peaceful coexistence.

The second section provides a brief background of the South Sudan context and the three project locations which include the challenges of the nested armed conflicts and their consequences on ethnic and religious communities. The third section espouses bottom-up peacebuilding as a conceptual framework which the study applies to evaluate primary and secondary evidence. Subsequently, the fourth section discusses EASS and PACWA's pathway for change. It espouses the concept of resilience and how resilience shifts the focus of peacebuilding interventions from the national policy, structural, and relational interventions to the individuals and groups at the micro-level. Therefore, it fits into the EASS/PACWA model. Section five expresses the methodology, which includes analysis of EASS/PACWA project documents and collection of empirical evidence from 92 project participants in the three locations of Bor, Juba, and Yei. Section six presents and discusses empirical evidence from both primary and secondary sources, section seven discusses the collected data using postulates of the grassroots peacebuilding approach and EASS and PACWA pathway for change, while section eight concludes the study.

2. Background

The Republic of South Sudan separated from the then larger Republic of Sudan in July 2011 following a prolonged civil war, which killed more than 2 million people and displaced more than 6 million others.[1] In December 2013, two years after independence, a power struggle within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) quickly escalated into a civil war.[2] Between December 2013 and April 2016, combatants concentrated the war in the northern regions, especially the Greater Upper Nile. There is no reliable death toll for this phase of the war, but UNHCR reports show that it left 1.5 million as internally displaced persons (IDPs), while 730,000 had fled to neighbouring countries by April 2016.[3] Among the locations that the war devastated were the capital city Juba, and Bor, Bentiu, and Malakal in the Greater Upper Nile.

In June 2016, however, the epicentre of the civil war shifted to Central and Western Equatoria, devastating these previously peaceful areas. A Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) report claims that the shift of the epicentre increased the number of IDPs to 1.87 million and South Sudan refugees in the neighbouring countries to 2.2 million.[4] Yei River State was among those locations that were worst affected by this shift because one of the armed groups, the National Salvation Front (NAS), operated there.[5] Though national leaders have engaged in various mediated negotiations and signed a ceasefire and substantive peace agreements,[6] the country has generally been in a state of no war and no peace since 2018.[7] According to UN OCHA, 1.74 million South Sudanese were internally displaced, and 2.47 million were refugees in the neighbouring countries by 30 April 2018, as shown in the map below. Nonetheless, on-off conflicts have occurred at different locations in the country. One example is a fight between forces loyal to the First Vice-President, Dr. Riek Machar, and those supporting a splinter group led by First Lieutenant General Simon Gatwech Dual at the Magenis area in Upper Nile from August to December 2021.[8] Another example is the fight between the National Salvation Front (NSF), led by General Thomas Cirillo, and the government forces since March 2017 in Central Equatoria, including the locations around Yei town.[9]



South Sudan IDPs and Refugees in Neighbouring Countries, 30 April 2018. (Source: UN OCHA https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SS_20180510_Humanitarian_Snapshot_April_Final.pdf.

Consequences of the protracted armed and nested conflicts at the grassroots in the three locations of Juba, Bor, and Yei include cycles of killings, displacement of the population, breakdown in community relations, destruction of communities, mistrust between ethnic and cultural groups, and destruction of economic institutions. Indeed, various reports by the UN agencies and international human rights organisations document clearly the effects of the widespread violence at the lower levels of society.[10] It is these consequences which prompted EASS and PACWA to implement peacebuilding interventions targeting the grassroots communities in Juba, Bor, and Yei. EASS is the umbrella body of the Evangelical Churches in South Sudan, which uses Christian values, holy text, and narratives to advocate for peace, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence, while PACWA is affiliated to EASS as one of its commissions which promotes peace, trauma healing, and reconciliation using women and gender perspective. In their interventions at the local levels, the two faith organisations contribute to community peacebuilding, which incorporates healing, forgiveness, rebuilding of peace structures, and strengthening of intra-faith and inter-faith relations. In brief, this study examines EASS and PACWA's contributions and documents some of their achievements in Bor, Juba, and Yei, which it locates within the broader bottom-up peacebuilding theory and practice.

3. Bottom-up Peacebuilding: A Conceptual Framework

Reviewing academic literature on community (bottom-up) peacebuilding was instrumental to the research mainly because the EASS and PACWA project at the grassroots fall under this category of peacebuilding. The review located the research within contemporary peacebuilding theory and practice, provided indicators for understanding and evaluating bottom-up peacebuilding, and contextualised EASS/PACWA interventions within the broader inter-faith approaches to peacebuilding. This approach was critical to the research as it helped the paper draw contributions from the specific implementation context in South Sudan and understand, in broad terms, the contributions of faith actors to the bottom-up peacebuilding.

Literature on peacebuilding variously explains bottom-up (or community) peacebuilding as initiatives that local communities pursue following their local context. Among the key proponents of the bottom-up peacebuilding is John Paul Lederach, who has argued that long-term grassroots peacebuilding is the starting point when the elite leaders are stuck in intransigent peace negotiations.[11] According to peacebuilding literature, actors who promote bottom-up peacebuilding include civil society organisations, community-based organisations, faith organisations, and grassroots communities. As derived from the literature, figure 2 illustrates the process for initiating grassroots peacebuilding.

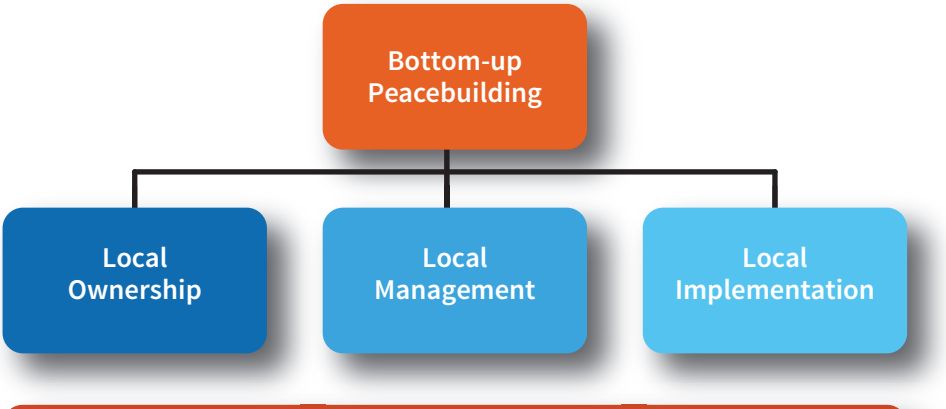


Figure 2: Conceptual framework of people-to-people peacebuilding

The key pillars of bottom-up peacebuilding, according to the framework, are local ownership, local management, and local implementation. Essentially, bottom-up peacebuilding engages with specific grassroots groups, including women, youth, and faith-based organisations. All activities are initiated, led, and implemented by people at the grassroots. Therefore, local knowledge and networks allow peacebuilding actors to mobilise leadership, resources, and capabilities that exist at the grassroots. As Lederach notes, "long-time antagonists who not merely lay down their arms but achieve profound reconciliation that will endure and sustained by a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms for promoting justice to address the root causes of enmity before they can regenerate destabilizing tensions."[12]

The point here is that grassroots peacebuilding promotes sustainable peace because it encourages the inclusion of all levels in the society in peace interventions as argued by Autesserre (2014) and Kingston (2012). Simply, peacebuilding from below is an inclusive approach because it emphasises the agency of the grassroots actors in the attainment of sustainable peace. Ripsman (2016) emphasises the same viewpoint regarding the bottom-up approach. herefore, bottom-up peacebuilding is sustainable because it incorporates inclusivity, and builds individual and community relationships at the grassroots.

However, that literature approaches bottom-up peacebuilding from what Powers refers to as the secularist paradigm. Powers argues that the secularist paradigm ignores the soft power of religious movements at the lower levels, yet religious influences are strong in those levels. While Lederach may disagree with this viewpoint because his studies recognise religious actors at the grassroots, the peacebuilding thinkers generally agree that faith actors play a significant role in peacebuilding at the grassroots. According to Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, for example, faith actors employ "religious values, rituals, traditions, texts and narratives… to promote peace and coexistence, (and) advocate human rights and democracy."[17]

Faith Leaders follows an EASS/PACWA Training in Juba, February 2019

Additionally, scholars of religious peacebuilding emphasise that interventions by faith actors are distinct from the secularist paradigm because they explicitly emphasise spirituality and/or religious identity, use religious texts, use religious values and vocabulary, and utilise religious or spiritual rituals.[18] In the words of Dubois, "religious peacebuilding works within, rather than adjacent to or opposed to, spiritual elements of culture."[19] Dubois adds that peacebuilding by faith actors is mostly community-oriented, relationship-centred, and participatory. She maintains that peacebuilding interventions by faith actors do not involve a distinct set of activities. Instead, they consider religious contexts and add religious tools such as spiritual guidance, prayers, meditation, imagination in envisioning new possibilities, and empathy.[20] Such thinking might concur with Lederach's notion of moral imagination and Brueggemann's concept of prophetic imagination, but they are essentially religious tools.[21] Moreover, reconciliation literature recognises that concepts such as healing, forgiveness, and restorative justice originate from religions. In essence, therefore, it is within this area of religious bottom-up peacebuilding that this study locates EASS and PACWA's project and pathway for change.

4. EASS/PACWA Pathway for Change

EASS and PACWA are Christian organisations, as implied by their names and foundation, and consider South Sudan's religious context, including the dominance of certain sects in some geographical locations, in their peacebuilding interventions. According to the 2012 Pew Research Report on world religions, 60.5% of South Sudanese are Christians, 32.9% follow African spiritualities, 6.2% are Muslims, while all the faiths constitute less than 0.5% of the population.[23] The two partners also consider other aspects of South Sudan, including effects of the civil war such as displacement and prevalence of armed groups, underdevelopment, and challenges of reaching the countryside.

In their pathway for change, therefore, they prioritised changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing individual resilience, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic and/or cultural groups in Juba, Bor, and Yei. Peacebuilding literature explains resilience as "the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks."[24] This implies that resilience in a context such as South Sudan means the ability of individuals, families, and communities to adapt, mitigate, and respond to the consequences of the armed conflict and displacement. As Juncos and Joseph notes, community resilience links to 'social capital and the abilities of individuals to form social networks that enhance access to resources, build social trust, and facilitate better collective action."[25] Because of the uncertainty of the civil war in South Sudan, building individual and group resilience might require implementing bottom-up, informal, and routinised coping mechanisms which constitute 'everyday peace'.[26] McGinty explains everyday peace as "the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter-and intragroup levels."[27]

Community Dialogue Meeting Under a tree in Bor, South Sudan

Resilience, as understood from this perspective, shifts the focus of peacebuilding interventions from the national policy, structural, and relational interventions to the individuals and groups at the micro-level where everyday peace is needed. Such understanding emphasises the change of individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancement of individuals' abilities to cope with a situation of conflict and displacement, and improvement of individuals' abilities to relate with those from the 'Other' groups in their localities in the face of long-term uncertainties. Relating with those from the 'Other' groups means accepting them in the neighbourhoods, tolerating their diverse worldviews and perceptions, sharing public spaces, emphasizing commonalities rather than differences, forming social networks, and doing collective activities at the micro-environments. In essence, EASS and PACWA adopted a pathway for change that focused on changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing individual resilience, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups.

In this approach, changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing individual resilience to cope with their situations, and improving group relations at the lower strata was the required foundation before other interventions could be implemented. The thinking was in line with the findings of the baseline survey, which found that at least 40% of Bor residents and 35% of Yei residents rarely engaged with neighbours from another ethnic group. Indeed, because of the cycles of ethnic killings that had occurred in the three regions since the start of the civil war in December 2013,

people in these locations prefer to live in mono-ethnic neighbourhoods and villages, supposedly for defence reasons. “Even people from the same Christian denomination, say Catholics, for example, could not attend the same church because of ethnic differences,” PACWA Adviser explained at the start of the project.[28]

Therefore, EASS and PACWA started their activities with training sessions on trauma healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The trained individuals then became the focal points in the regions and organizers of dialogue forums and convenors of local peace committees, which provided early warning interventions, promoted group dialogues and encouraged reconciliation. Subsequently, the two partners supported these activities with radio presentations and a peace concert that reinforced the messages of change and tolerance. This pathway of change promoted interaction between individuals from different groups to reduce hostilities and change enemy images and encourage individuals to form social networks which would undertake common activities in the neighbourhoods. In brief, this pathway for change, as informed by bottom-up peacebuilding theory and practice, enabled the two partners to implement activities which sought to change individual perceptions towards the ‘Other’, enhance individual resilience, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups. In practice, collecting empirical data followed a specific line of inquiry.

5. Research Methodology

Research for this study employed a qualitative data collection method, which involved the review of secondary data sources such as the EASS/PACWA project documents and the collection of primary evidence. The secondary data sources that the research scrutinised are the original EASS and PACWA project proposal, monthly and quarterly reports, baseline survey, and the end-of-the-project report. In turn, the collection of primary evidence targeted project participants and beneficiaries and employed key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) that used semi-structured questionnaires. The data collection process involved the following stages.

1.1 Review of the Project Documents

Scrutiny of the original EASS/PACWA project proposal focused on the problem the two faith organisations sought to address, justification for addressing that problem, and the activities they intended to implement. The documents that the research examined are 12 monthly reports, 4 quarterly reports, 1 baseline survey, 1 end-of-the-project report, 2 radio recordings (Juba and Yei), and 1 video that documented proceedings of a peace concert.

1.2 Collection of Primary Data

The collection of primary evidence involved key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and one-on-one telephone interviews with project participants and beneficiaries in Bor, Juba, and Yei. Overall, the research reached 15 key informants through face-to-face interviews, 50 respondents through FGDs, and 27 key informants through one-on-one telephone interviews. Each region had 5 face-to-face key respondents for KIIs and 9 informants for telephone interviews. The research enumerators held 2 FGD sessions in each location. 17 of the FGDs participants were from Juba, 17 were from Bor, and 16 were from Yei. Cumulatively, the research collected primary data from 92 respondents. All the interviews and FGDs relied on semi-structured guidelines. Table 1 below summarises the distribution of the respondents in the three locations.

	Juba	Bor	Yei	Total
KIIs	5	5	5	15
Telephone interviews	9	9	9	27
FGDs	17	17	16	50
Total	31	31	30	92

Table 1: Research respondents in each region.

Further, the research disaggregated respondents from the three locations according to gender and age for three reasons. First, it wanted to find out how similarities and differences between gender and age affected responses to the EASS and PACWA activities. Second, there are reports from human rights organisations that reveal how the post-2013 civil war has been characterised by mass rapes and unprecedented sexual violence.[29] It was necessary, therefore, to assess women's perspectives on the project. Third, age disaggregation was critical to the study because diverse reports indicate recruitment of young men into ethnic and regional militias. A March 2021 Report by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), for example, informs that local leaders and traditional chiefs supported the mobilisation of youth militias from their ethnic groups.[30]

The report specifically mentions those in the greater Upper Nile from all ethnic groups, including Dinka, Nuer, and Murle. Among those mentioned in various reports are the Nuer's *Dec in bor* (means white army), *Dinka's Tit baai* (means defenders of the community), and Shilluk's *Agwelek*.[31] The UNMISS Report further notes that the number of youth recruited into the ethnic militias "illustrate the capacity of local and national actors to draw upon community and social structures to mobilize and organize militias."[32] Noting that young men join these militias voluntarily, the report states that "once there is a call for mobilization, youths of fighting age feel compelled to take part and at risk of being stigmatized by their peers if they decline. There were also reports of youths under the age of 18 taking part in the attacks."[33] Therefore, age disaggregation was a central component of the research to evaluate the impact of EASS/PACWA interventions on youth perceptions. Table 2 disaggregates data in gender, while Table 3 provides age disaggregation.

Table 2: Gender representation among the respondents

Locations/ Respondents	Juba	Bor	Yei	Total
Male	16 (51.6%)	12 (38.7%)	19 (63.3%)	47 (51%)
Females	15 (49.4%)	19 (61.3%)	11 (36.7%)	45 (49%)
Total	31 (100%)	31(100%)	30(100%)	
Grand Total				**92 (100%)**

Table 3: Age Disaggregation

Age range	Juba	Bor	Yei	Total
18 – 25	5	4	4	13
26 – 35	8	9	9	26
35 – 40	11	11	10	32
40 – above	7	7	7	21
Total	31	31	30	92

As table 3 shows, age disaggregation considered 4 age brackets: 18-25, 26-35, 36-40, and above 40, while 77% of the respondents were below 40, and thus could be considered to be in the age brackets that were being recruited in the ethnic militias.

6. Data Presentation and Discussion

This section presents and discusses empirical evidence collected from EASS and PACWA project documents as well as the primary data that the research collected from project participants and beneficiaries in Juba, Bor, and Yei in August, September, and October 2021. A review of the EASS and PACWA project documents shows that they implemented various activities which sought to change individual perceptions tgowards the 'Other', enhance the resilience of individuals, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups in Juba, Bor, and Yei. After coding and analysing secondary data from the project reports and comparing it with primary empirical evidence from 92 respondents, the research produced Table 4, which summarises the EASS/PACWA theory of change, activities, the planned outcomes, and the expected impacts.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Theory of change:
• If EASS and PACWA enhance individual and group resilience through interfaith interventions, THEN
• They will improve interactions between individuals from different ethnic and religious groups, THEN
Those individuals will change their views towards the 'Other', THEN
• The changed individuals will start working together and develop collective social actions,
• Leading to tolerance and everyday peace at the intra- and inter-group levels.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Process: Implementing interfaith activities in the three project locations: training, community dialogues, local peace committees, radio presentations, and a peace concert.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Participants: 24 trained focal persons, 882 participants, and more than 3,000 beneficiaries.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Activity</td><td>Intended outcome</td><td>Intended outcome</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Training of focal points -
• A trained team of focal persons who would promote the project objectives.</td><td>• Increased knowledge
• Focal points would be convenors of the other activities
• Enhanced individual resilience</td><td>• Improved interactions
• Focal points would continue with peacebuilding work after the end of the project.</td></tr>
</table>

Community dialogues	• Peaceful resolution of disputes • Tolerance and development of collective social actions • Understanding of common humanity. • Demystification of negative stereotypes and prejudices. • Improved interactions	• Reduced hostility • Enhanced resilience • Transformed view of the 'Other' • Stop recruitment of youth into ethnic militias • Continuous communication
Local peace committees	• Formation of social networks • Peaceful resolution of conflicts • Understanding of common humanity. • Development of violence prevention mechanisms. • Improved interactions	• Reduced hostility • Transformed view of the 'Other'. • Tolerance and respect for religious and ethnic diversity. • Stop recruitment of youth into ethnic militias • Collective actions • Continuous communication • Enhanced leadership
Radio presentations, mass outreach & edutainment	• Reinforced messages of resilience. • Support for transformed individual views towards the 'Other'.	• Enhanced public narratives • Reduced stereotypes and prejudices • Transformed view of the 'Other'.
Peace concert, mass outreach & edutainment	• Enhanced access to positive messages • Reinforced messages of resilience. • Support for transformed individual views towards the 'Other'. • Formation of social networks	• Enhanced public narratives • Reduced stereotypes and prejudices • Transformed view of the 'Other'. • Collective actions & everyday peace.

Several themes emerge from the above table. However, the following sections emphasise three themes following the above EASS/PACWA theory of change: change of individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancement of the resilience of individuals, and improvement of relations between individuals from different ethnic groups.

6.1. Changing Individual Perceptions

The cycles of civil wars in South Sudan, both at the national and local levels, displaced the local population, shattered families and communities, traumatised individuals and groups, destroyed relations between ethnic groups, and devastated social, cultural, and economic institutions in the three regions. Because of the magnitude of the challenge, EASS and PACWA found it necessary to start their interventions with activities that would change individual perceptions towards the 'Other', build the resilience of individuals, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic groups.

That was in line with three findings of the baseline survey. The first was that 81% of Juba residents, 100% of Yei dwellers, and 88% of Bor inhabitants believed ethnic violence was the most widespread form of violence in South Sudan. A second finding was that 81% of the people in Juba, 90% of the people in Yei, and 88% of the people in Bor knew others who had suffered political violence. The third one stated that 75% of the Yei dwellers, 63% of the Juba residents, and 65% of the Bor community believed that their ethnic groups had grievances that were not addressed. In such a context, where group and individual grievances dominated and incessant fear of the unknown prevailed, it was logical for EASS and PACWA to start with interventions that targeted individual perceptions and resilience. In particular, PACWA insisted on attention to women and youth. As PACWA South Sudan Adviser explained,

> "The civil war reduced many women of South Sudan to IDPs, some went to Kenya and Uganda as refugees, while those who remained at home lived in perpetual fear. I was a refugee in Kenya, and I knew we were nursing multiple pains: loss of husbands and sons, the trauma of rape of women and girls, destruction of our homes and families, and problems of refugee life such as lack of jobs and money to support our families. As refugee women in Kenya, we started meeting once a week to pray as a group, share our pain, and support each other to cope with our situation. Healing women's trauma and building their abilities to cope with effects of the war was a prerequisite to rebuilding the local communities and promoting coexistence."[34]

This evidence highlights three points: the need for individual healing, the need for group healing, and the resilience of individuals to cope with their situation of conflict and displacement. The adviser explicitly and implicitly mentions some of the tools of religious peacebuilding approaches, which the literature section mentioned, such as

spiritual guidance, prayers, meditation, empathy, and envisioning of new possibilities. During the prayer forums, the women were not just supporting each other, but also meditating and empathising with each other and envisioning a better future for their families. These religious tools were central to healing, forgiveness, and change of individual perceptions when applied to the training sessions and community dialogue forums.

Women from Yei in a Group Photo During PACWA Forum in Yei Town in 2019

When targeting women, PACWA drew inspiration from three sources.[35] First, the team recognised that all ethnic and cultural groups in South Sudan held women as the pillars of families and communities and the carriers of an ethnic group's future. From a cultural perspective, therefore, combatants never killed women. Indeed, according to Sharon Hutchingson, the practice of mass killings and mass rapes was never a part of South Sudan's war practices until recent decades; it entered into South Sudan as an 'ideological' change during the second civil war from 1983 to 2005. As she writes,

> "elite competition within the Southern military… combined with the political machinations of the National Islamic government in Khartoum created a wave of inter- and intra-ethnic factional fighting so intense and intractable that many Nuer civilians [started defining] it as 'a curse from God.'"[36]

Second, the changed warfare in South Sudan saw the civil wars devastate women, including mass killings and mass rapes as documented by human rights groups.[37] The UN and other international organisations have referred to these killings and rapes as

war crimes.[38] Third, women had played a prominent role in the past peacemaking interventions, including the Church-led Wunlit Conference in 1999.[39] Also, women organisations had increasingly initiated grassroots interventions since December 2013. An example of these interventions was the Kabarize women's group that had initiated grassroots reconciliation interventions in Pibor County.

In essence, the EASS/PACWA project deliberately targeted the change of perceptions of individual women and youth as the first step in a long process of healing and tolerance. Starting with the training of trainers' sessions, which aimed at addressing individual and group trauma, and imparting basic conflict resolution skills, the interventions gradually expanded to community dialogue forums, local peace committees, and a peace concert, which involved members of different ethnic groups. Having members of various ethnic groups in the same events, especially young men, was crucial for individual perception change because the activities provided space for individuals to open up on their views towards others. According to PACWA South Sudan Coordinator, juxtaposing individual experiences with discussions on narratives of violence assisted individuals see each other as survivors of the same violence and displacement. In her words,

> "We targeted women and youth from different communities. Members of the peace committees and women brought good reports. There is no longer fighting, especially in Yei…. We are now working with the government and church leaders …. We tell youth from all tribes to see each other as one."[40]

Some of the women choirs during the peace concert in Juba, February 2020

This study infers two points from this evidence. The first one is that the reduction in violence is an indicator that the project participants and beneficiaries responded to the faith tools of change which EASS and PACWA employed. The second one is that the participating youth had started viewing each other positively and learning from each other. Views of a woman participant in the peace concert confirm this deduction. As she narrated her individual change,

> "I am an evangelist and a leader in Akel-Roho Church, which is one of the local churches within the Sudan Pentecostal Church. I am grateful to the Pan African Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) for involving me in their activities and for organising a great concert. The concert was the most wonderful event that I have ever attended in Juba because it encouraged women to support each other and learn from each other. It encouraged me to improve my skills. I hope to participate in such concerts in the future in other countries in Africa. Also, I hope PACWA will continue supporting the women of South Sudan.""[41]

The respondent highlights her interaction with others in different forums and support and learning from others. The EASS/PACWA pathway for change and the bottom-up peacebuilding literature argued that such interactions provided spaces for individuals to reduce their prejudice and hostilities and encouraged them to form social networks and engage in collective actions. This particular respondent concedes that they supported and learned from each other regardless of their ethnic identities, and she was hoping that they would continue with collective actions such as the peace concert. As the EASS/PACWA pathway for change presents, such support and learning, especially when it is from the 'Other', that is, those from different ethnic groups and religious denominations, is central to healing, forgiveness, and change of individual perceptions. This study infers that participating in EASS/PACWA interventions changed her views towards 'others', reduced her hostility, probably changed her enemy images, and encouraged her to be in a social network. Another lady from Bor shared such a change.,

> "In January 2019, I was not interested in the activities because I had attended many workshops and seminars. I am a single mother who has been affected by the cycles of war in Bor; I have suffered so much that I have been psychologically unstable for a long time. I changed after attending the forums on reconciliation and trauma healing. Since the first EASS/PACWA inception meeting, I have participated in these activities; I have invited many people to different forums; I am a member of the Bor peacebuilding committee; I serve in a local church. I have become an advocate of tolerance and peace, and I encourage all to live peacefully with each other."

As a survivor of the cycles of deadly violence that devastated Bor between 2013 and 2018, the respondent admits that the civil war affected her person and family. She further concedes that the sessions on trauma healing and community dialogues changed her views towards the 'Other' because such forums involved people from different ethnic groups, some of who may have supported ethnic violence in Bor. Her evidence implies that she probably knew others who participated in those cycles of violence in Bor, yet invited them to the forums, regardless of their ethnic identities, which indicates that she had changed her perceptions towards the 'Other'.

Faith Leaders During an EASS/APCWA Awareness Forum in Bor, February 2019

As a member of the local peacebuilding committee and a local church, she may have used those spaces to change the views of other participants. The fact of inviting others to those activities indicates that she was building trust and enhancing the abilities of individuals to form networks and undertake collective actions towards everyday peace, as the EASS/PACWA pathway for change postulated. This paper infers that she contributed to the improvement of group relations through these invitations and participation in the community dialogue forums and the local peace committee. A similar change of individual perceptions was observed in Yei where a young man, who participated in EASS/PACWA training and dialogue sessions, shared his experience.

> "I want to thank EASS/PACWA for training us in Yei because I am a young man who found it difficult to forgive all the atrocities that happened since the war came to Yei in June 2016. The fighters killed my parents and relatives and burned our home and properties, while many other people and I were displaced. The killings and displacement pained me, and I have always wanted revenge. EASS and PACWA gave me a chance to speak publicly about my pain, encouraged me to forgive, and connected me with other youth with similar pain and problems. Although I am still traumatised, I am now able to share my problems with fellow youth."[42]

This piece of evidence interweaves weighty issues with tools of religious peacebuilding such as prayers and spiritual guidance, which EASS and PACWA employed in the interventions. The pain and trauma of witnessing his parents' killing, destruction of his home, and displacement is such a profound issue that it probably affected his mental health and worldviews. In fact, research by Amnesty International on the effects of the civil war on survivors, which was rightly titled Our hearts have gone dark, cited similar cases and revealed an upsurge in mental health problems.[43] Probably, the young man had Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) when EASS and PACWA invited him to their forums. The religious tools which EASS and PACWA used, such as prayers, meditation, spiritual guidance, and envisioning an alternative future, when combined with the secular tools of trauma healing and peacebuilding, changed his perceptions towards others in his neighbourhood. His signs of change include improved relations and trust with others, forgiveness and discarding thoughts for revenge, and joining a social network that gave him space to share his pain and trauma with others, who encouraged him and supported him. These changes agree with EASS and PACWA's path of change and the postulates of the bottom-up peacebuilding approach.

Another young man, also from Yei River County, had a similar journey of change. He narrated his experience as follows.

> "When they brought the war to Yei River County in June 2016, they burned homes and properties, killed some of my family members, and displaced others, who went to neighbouring countries as refugees. I am the only one who was left here; I was depressed and used to cry every day. When PACWA came, I joined their training because I was traumatised, and depressed. The trainers encouraged us to read the bible, and I started reading it after the training. I thank PACWA for changing the way I see those who attacked us; I am ready to forgive and move on with my life."[44]

The young man had witnessed a traumatic event: displacement of his parents and the killing of his relatives by armed groups. He probably had PTSD; that is why he was always depressed and crying. EASS and PACWA forums combined tools of secular peacebuilding with religious approaches, including prayers, spiritual guidance, and meditation, and encouraged him to read the Bible. The use of religious values, vocabulary, texts, and narratives, as the literature and EASS/PACWA pathway for change posits, appears to have changed his self-image and perceptions and views towards others. Participating in EASS/PACWA activities started his healing journey, and he embraced forgiveness and discarded thoughts for revenge. These changes support the postulates of the reconciliation theory that forgiveness is freedom from vengeful actions. In essence, embracing forgiveness indicates that he had changed his views towards others from different ethnic groups and was ready to interact with them in various spaces and possibly join them in collective actions.

A Muslim Local Peace Committee Member Presents in a Dialogue Forum in Juba.

Such evidence indicates that EASS and PACWA interventions in Juba, Bor, and Yei contributed to changing participants' perceptions and attitudes towards others. Some of the participants had witnessed traumatic events and were probably suffering from PTSD, but combining religious tools, vocabulary, and narratives with secular tools of peacebuilding resonated with the participants, as confirmed by a resident of Gurei, a Juba neighbourhood, who listened to PACWA's radio presentation.

> "I listened to the radio program on reconciliation and forgiveness. The peace message from the PACWA coordinator touched me…. I went into the house to cry to release my stress. Then I opened my bible and read the book of Psalm 21: 28 which deals with forgiveness. Then I read 1 John 3:3 which says if you do not forgive you cannot enter the kingdom of God. Let us forgive each other."[45]

In essence, combining elements of the bottom-up peacebuilding approach with tools of religion motivated individuals to change their perceptions towards others, embrace forgiveness, start interacting, form social networks, support each other, and perform collective actions. Such changes affirm the postulates of the EASS/PACWA pathway for change and arguments in the bottom-up peacebuilding literature. As a participant at the peace concert in Juba summarised,

> "I am very happy about this PACWA program…. It is one of the programs that unite our people. It is a program that brings all religions, all churches, and all tribes together. It brings women from all churches and all tribes together. All of us here have war scars and PACWA encourages us, as women, to support each other…. I urge the leaders of PACWA to continue bringing women, churches, and tribes together so that there can be peace in our neighbourhoods and the country."[46]

In summary, the challenges of the civil war in South Sudan informed PACWA and EASS bottom-up peacebuilding interventions in Bor, Juba, and Yei. In line with their proposed pathway for change, the two faith organisations adopted a practical approach that started with changing perceptions of individuals towards the 'Other', as illustrated by data from their reports and primary evidence. This study infers that mass edutainment activities, such as the peace concert in Juba and radio presentations in the Yei-based Spirit FM, the Juba-based Bakhita FM, and the Bor-based Jonglei FM, were designed to support and reinforce changes in individual perceptions. In turn, such changes formed the basis of enhancing individual resilience.

6.2. Enhancing the Resilience of Individuals

The conceptual framework posits that enhancing the resilience of individuals means improving individuals' abilities to cope with their situation of conflict and displacement. Possible indicators of such improvements include acceptance, tolerance, sharing of public spaces such as neighbourhoods, emphasising commonalities rather than differences, forming social networks, and doing collective activities at the micro-environments. The evidence adduced in the previous section illustrates that changes in individual perceptions towards the 'Other' occurred concurrently with the enhancement of the resilience of individuals. The evangelist from the Akel-Roho Church, for example, survived the episodes of killings in Juba, but participating in EASS and PACWA activities contributed to her healing and enhanced her resilience to the extent that she mooted plans to improve her skills and participate in international forums.

Participants take a Group Photo During an Awareness Forum in Juba, June 2019

Similarly, the woman from Bor enhanced her resilience to the extent that she became one of the leaders of the local peace committee, and she invited others to join EASS and PACWA activities. The two young men from Yei had similar stories of witnessing traumatic events but the EASS and PACWA approach of combing peacebuilding tools with religious tools such as prayers, texts, and narratives changed their views towards the 'Other'. Accepting forgiveness and sharing their life stories with others indicates that participants had improved their coping mechanisms. An additional piece of evidence from Bor supports this argument.

> "I am a pastor from Lang Bar in Bor; I suffered so much because the war made our lives unbearable. I was reluctant to attend EASS/PACWA activities at Malik School in Madinaqpur, but I started changing towards my family and members of other tribes after attending the sessions. I improved relations in my family and between my community and other tribes. I know others who were traumatised and attended the same forums, and they started changing after the training. Neighbours from all tribes came together after training and assisted each other when floods destroyed our village and armed bandits from the neighbouring Madinj Bor area attacked our neighbourhood… Now I have a close relationship with the coordinator though I did not know her before the activities. We need encouragement to continue with the current path of peaceful coexistence."[47]

The pastor explicitly cites indicators of perceptual change as the relationship with family and members of the 'other tribes.' His decision to improve relations with members of the other ethnic groups and participate in joint humanitarian activities indicates enhanced resilience. While he does not specify whether he and the EASS coordinator are from the same ethnic group, his choice of words implies that they are from different ethnic groups. Yet, he continued with the established family ties. Such changes are consistent with the conceptual framework and the EASS-PACWA theory-of-change that engaging in continuous communication and joint collective actions leads to reduced hostility, improved relations, and tolerance for diversity. A piece of different evidence from Yei addresses the same issue of the resilience of individuals. Just like in Bor, the respondent is a survivor of the cycles of war that engulfed Yei from June 2016.

> "When the war came to Yei River County in 2016, I escaped death by a whisker because the fighters killed my husband and two sons. I was so shocked and did not know what to do. I started having nightmares and weird dreams; I could not sleep at night, so I turned to local beer. One day, I was in a drinking den when I received information that a group known as PACWA would train women in our area; a friend encouraged me to attend. I found the session on trauma healing very interesting; I, therefore, requested PACWA to allow me to attend other forums. One of the PACWA leaders advised me to stop drinking and invited me to join their local peace committee and participate in their activities. I found it difficult to change because I had suffered so much, but the PACWA leader encouraged me to read the Holy Bible and gave me hope for the future. Now I am a member of the local peace committee in Yei River County. I will never forgive those who killed my husband and my sons, but I can stand in front of women from all tribes and testify about my pain. I can talk about women and

> relations between neighbours and tribes in Yei River County."[48]

Like the two young men from Yei, the respondent experienced a traumatic event – the killing of her husband and two sons – and was probably suffering from PTSD when EASS/PACWA team met her. The PACWA team combined peacebuilding tools with prayers, spiritual guidance, religious values, and narratives and encouraged her to read the Holy Bible. Although it has been difficult for her to forgive the killers of her family, the EASS and PACWA activities empowered her with confidence and ability to narrate her story in women's social networks. These changes indicate that EASS and PACWA activities enhanced her resilience to cope with her situation and the general context of armed conflict around Yei.

Particpants in a Community Dialogue Meeting in Yei

Further, she probably viewed other individuals as representatives of ethnic groups, like other South Sudanese, and, thus, viewed those who killed her husband and sons as representatives of particular ethnic groups. It is conceivable that she harboured hostility towards everybody from those ethnic groups. However, joining a multi-ethnic women group may have reduced her bitterness and hostility towards the 'Other' because it gave her the space to interact with others, acquire knowledge about them, and demystify her stereotypes and prejudice. These changes confirm the arguments in the literature and the postulates in EASS/PACWA pathway for change. Indeed, a member of the PACWA executive summarised these arguments in her presentation on Bhakita Radio in Juba.

> "I am a member of the PACWA executive, and I am here to testify that we do activities that promote peace and reconciliation. We train people, and they train others. We do dialogue forums, and we

> have local peace committees. As mentioned in the Holy Bible, I give you my piece, and you pass it to others. I was traumatised, but the training sessions have healed my past pain; PACWA training sessions have turned me into a new person. I have also realised that conflict is part of humanity, as illustrated in the Holy Bible through the sin of Adam. I have learned that the best way to live in this world is to coexist peacefully with each other. I hope we will heal all trauma so that all people live peacefully with each other."[49]

In summary, the EASS and PACWA model of combing peacebuilding tools with a religious approach work for survivors of civil war and mass violence such as this respondent. Her evidence is clear: she started by changing her perceptions towards others, then enhanced her resilience to cope with her situation, and acquired the courage to speak to the population through radio presentations. She demonstrates three indicators of change: enhanced resilience, including the ability to use stories from the Bible (such as the story of Adam) to express her viewpoint; the courage to appear in a radio presentation; ability to speak to a bigger audience. This study infers that such changes were critical to the improvement of relations between individuals of ethnic groups whom EASS and PACWA reached with their activities.

6.3. Improving Relations Between Individuals from Different Ethnic Groups

The conceptual framework of bottom-up peacebuilding and the EASS and PACWA pathway for change proposes that changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other' should improve relations between members of different ethnic and religious groups. The empirical evidence, which the previous sections have adduced, illustrates that project participants in Bor, Juba, and Yei changed their views towards the 'Other' and enhanced their resilience. Moreover, data from primary research shows that individuals from different ethnic groups improved their relations, as illustrated by the evidence of the pastor from Bor, the woman from Yei, and the two women from Juba. Additional evidence that shows improvement in relations between individuals from different ethnic groups came from a man who participated in EASS and PACWA interventions in Bor.

> "I was deeply hurt when someone from Murle, a neighbouring ethnic group, killed my friend; I planned to revenge. After the EASS coordinator invited me to their awareness forum, I was shocked when I saw young men from Murle ethnic group in the same forum. Because I saw them as enemies, it was difficult for me to talk to them. However, as EASS continued with the training sessions and other activities, I overcame my hatred and desire for revenge. My change

> process was slow, long, and painful, but I changed. During one of the activities, I approached a young man from Murle ethnic group, and we started a conversation. As we became friends, I realised that he and I shared an interest in the livestock trade. Therefore, we started talking about buying and selling sheep. He and I are now friends, and I hope that we will not have revenge attacks in Bor."[50]

The young man is a survivor of the cycles of war that devastated Bor between December 2013 and June 2016, when the armies of the SPLM- in government and SPLM-in opposition fought to control the region.[51] Bor has also been the centre of battles between ethnic militias, including Murle against Dinka, Murle versus Nuer, and Dinka against Nuer.[52] It is conceivable that the young man had not interacted with Murle young men before the killing of his friend. His evidence informs that the killing of his friend intensified his negative attitude towards Murle as an ethnic group because he viewed the killer as a representative of Murle. This viewpoint is consistent with the findings of the baseline survey that people in South Sudan generally see others "as representatives of their communities. It is only in isolated cases that they are considered to act in their

Bishop (Dr) Arkanjelo Addresses the Congregation During the Peace Concert

However, EASS/PACWA activities provided him with space to reflect on his stereotypes and prejudices, engage young Murle men, change his perceptions towards them, improve his relations with them, and start attributing actions to individuals rather than ethnic groups. His change confirms the postulates of the reconciliation theory and the EASS/PACWA theory of change that continuous communication increases knowledge, improves interactions, reduces hostility, changes perceptions towards the 'Other', and demystifies stereotypes and prejudices. As the reconciliation theory posits, these

changes allow individuals to humanise the 'Other' and accept them in their moral frame as people with whom they share a common humanity. In this case, the young man from Bor humanised the Murle young men; he partnered with them in a social network, and they started collective actions (i.e. sheep trade). Similar evidence from another survivor of the cycles of war affirmed these arguments.

> "I come from Malou in Bor, and I joined EASS training on trauma healing and reconciliation in October 2019. The training was good and stimulated my interest in EASS activities, which inspired me to talk about peace in the families and the communities. Then the EASS team requested that I appear in one of the radio presentations on Radio Jonglei; I accepted the request as a golden opportunity to contribute to my society and presented on peace, tolerance, and coexistence between communities in Bor. I have since then changed my life and contributed to the improvement of relations between different ethnic communities in my neighbourhood. Our first motto has become peaceful coexistence regardless of our ethnic and religious differences."[54]

The respondent's piece of evidence highlights three changes: change in his perceptions towards others, enhanced resilience, and improved relations with others from different ethnic groups. It can be argued that indicators for the first two changes are his confidence to talk about peace and coexistence in the families and neighbourhoods. Possibly, EASS and PACWA selected him to appear in Radio Jonglei because they saw he had changed and had the potential to change others. His third change was improving relations between individuals in his neighbourhood, which, in turn, improved relations between members of different ethnic groups. Arguably, his change is consistent with the postulates of the bottom-up peacebuilding and EASS and the PACWA theory of change. The last evidence came from a pastor, who appeared on Radio Bhakita in Juba as a representative of the EASS executive, echoes such improvements in relations between individuals from different ethnic groups.

> "I attended a peacebuilding forum that had 45 other participants, who were Muslims and Christians. It opened my eyes to the fact that one cannot help others unless one respects their rights. This could be done by returning stolen property, apologising, or by forgiving and being forgiven. I learned that I should be a living example in my neighbourhood and community to be an effective peace ambassador. I am now advocating forgiveness to members of my community and urging them to return other people's properties, including land, which they grabbed during the conflict, and work together as one family."[55]

In essence, the respondent's evidence outlines three steps in the path of improving relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. The first step is changing the individual perception towards the 'Other', the second step is building the resilience of individuals to cope with the situation and relate with others, and the third step is improving relations between people from different ethnic groups. These three steps are consistent with the postulates of the EASS/PACWA theory of change and the insights and arguments from the literature on reconciliation and bottom-up peacebuilding. Moreover, the pastor raises fundamental issues such as healing, forgiveness, and reparations which are the building blocks of post-conflict peacebuilding. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, these issues have been at the centre of South Sudan's peace and reconciliation discourses. In conclusion, this paper identifies the principal insight from EASS and PACWA's approach as the combination of bottom-up peacebuilding – community-centred, relationship-centric, and participatory - with an interfaith perspective that utilises religious tools such as prayers and values, rituals, texts, narratives, and vocabulary. EASS and PACWA considered the effects of South Sudan's civil war, so they merged the two perspectives to change individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhance the resilience of individuals, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic groups.

7. Discussion: Changing Individuals and Relations

EASS and PACWA considered the context of South Sudan when designing their interventions under the CRID project. Aspects of that context include 60.5% Christians and 32.9% followers of traditional African spiritualities, a no-war-no-peace situation, consequences of the civil war such as killings and displacement, widespread individual and group trauma, the prevalence of armed groups and ethnic militias, and underdevelopment. Therefore, they developed an intervention model which combined bottom-up peacebuilding, as articulated in the peacebuilding literature, with a religious approach which uses religious texts, values, and vocabulary, and religious tools such as prayers, narratives, and meditation. The underlying theory of change in this model prioritised changes in individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancement of the resilience of individuals to cope with their situations, and improvement of relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. In their thinking, attaining these three changes is the needed foundation for subsequent peacebuilding interventions.

Photo 1: EASS team Presenting at Radio Bhakita in Juba, February 2020

Adduced evidence in the preceding sections illustrates that their interventions provided spaces and opportunities for the project participants to change their perceptions towards the 'Other', enhance the resilience of individuals, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. The approach of addressing these three issues was consistent with the baseline survey findings that the majority of the residents of these three locations believed political and ethnic violence were the main problems. Accordingly, trust across members of different ethnic groups was low. For example, the baseline survey quotes a member of the public saying: "whenever I board a public transport vehicle, and I see people from my ethnic group, we talk and interact freely. But as soon as someone from a different ethnic group enters into the vehicle, everyone keeps quiet, and we remain silent until each disembarks at their destination." [56]

Therefore, EASS and PACWA needed to start with measured, practical activities that involved changing individual mindsets so that those individuals could become agents of change. In the EASS and PACWA framework, changing the views of individuals required those individuals to first change their perception towards the 'Other', enhance their resilience to cope with their situation, and improve their relations with others from different ethnic groups. That is why the two faith organisations opted for training on trauma healing and reconciliation as the first phase, then community dialogues, and, lastly, the establishment of local peace committees. According to EASS/PACWA end-of-the-project report, the two partners held three community dialogue meetings in each location. As the report states,

> "A total of 882 participants attended community dialogue sessions in the three-implementation locations. Juba County had 319 participants (129 male, 190 female), Yei had 252 participants (115 male, 137 female), while Bor County had 311 participants (177 male & 134 female). Nine (9) community interfaith dialogue sessions were conducted, three (3) in each of the locations. They [dialogue sessions] facilitated people-to-people dialogues [and] provided space for the formation of peace committees…."[57]

The report further states that the partners established one peace committee in each location.

> "The peace committees were structured based on the interfaith groups and community leaders. At the County level, High-level County Peace Committees (HLCPC) were formed, comprising of all the interfaith groups and community leaders. In Juba, the HLCPC comprised of 60 members (27male, 33 female) representing Christian Brotherhood Church (CBC), Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS), Catholic Church (CC), Pentecostal Brethren Church of South Sudan (PBCSS), Reformed Church of South Sudan (RCSS), and Revival Fire & Prayer Ministries Church (RFPMC). In Yei, there were 30 members (15male,15 female) in the HLCPC representing ECSS, CA, South Sudan Pentecostal Church (SSPC), Muslims, and community leaders. In Bor, there were 30 members (18 male,12 female) at the HLCPC who are representing ECSS, CAC, PC, and Muslims." [58]

These interventions were in line with the bottom-up peacebuilding framework that emphasises community orientation, relationship-building, and participation of grassroots actors. Thus, EASS and PACWA utilised religious tools such as prayers and religious texts and narratives during activities, especially training sessions on trauma healing and community dialogues, to break social barriers, improve communication

between participants, increase knowledge of each other, demystify pre-existing prejudices, and instil empathy. Such activities speak to the postulates of the religious peacebuilding approach and the EASS/PACWA pathway for change. This study infers that the intent of other activities such as radio presentations and a peace concert was to reinforce changes in individual perception towards the 'Other', enhance the resilience of individuals, and improve relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. Indeed, choosing Radio Jonglei in Bor, Bakhita FM in Juba, and Spirit FM in Yei was consistent with the findings of the baseline survey that 88% of the Juba residents, 94% of the Bor population, and 94% of the Yei dwellers relied on radio as the source of media news. Accordingly, this study concludes that the use of radio and a peace concert for mass outreach provided an opportunity for EASS and PACWA to build bridges across individuals and ethnic groups. As PACWA leader explained,

> "Our project is not for Christians only; it is for all, including Muslims and followers of traditional religions…. We urge those who join our activities to embrace their neighbours regardless of their religion or tribes so that we can have tolerance and peace in our neighbourhoods."[59]

Lastly, the adduced evidence establishes that the EASS and PACWA approach of combining religious tools, vocabulary, and narratives with secular peacebuilding tools broadly resonated with the participants. Consequently, this study concludes that EASS and PACWA peacebuilding activities changed individual worldviews towards the 'Other', enhanced resilience of individuals to cope with the situation of armed conflicts and displacement, and improved relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. Such changes were envisioned in the pathway for change and postulated in the bottom-up peacebuilding conceptual framework.

8. Conclusion

This study has analysed the model that EASS and PACWA used to implement the CRID project in Juba, Bor, and Yei in South Sudan and explored the expected outcomes and how they aligned with South Sudan's context. It has analysed primary and secondary evidence using the conceptual framework of bottom-up peacebuilding and the EASS/PACWA pathway for change. The study has noted the reality of South Sudan, which includes a no-war-no-peace situation, widespread displacement, rampant individual and group traumas, the prevalence of armed groups and ethnic militias. Consequently, the two partners implemented activities that aimed at changing individual perceptions towards the 'Other', enhancing the resilience of individuals, and improving relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. In this pathway for change, the starting point is the individual, who then leads the process of changing relations with others. The EASS and PACWA team then conducted mass outreach through radio programs and a peace concert to reinforce the changes. The power of the radio lay not just in informing, educating, and entertaining but also in its role of privileging certain viewpoints and suppressing some narratives. In conclusion, training forums, dialogue meetings, local peace committees, radio programs, and a peace concert probably changed individual worldviews towards the 'Other', enhanced the resilience of individuals, and improved relations between individuals from different ethnic groups. Such changes are the necessary foundation of the long journey towards durable peace.

9. ENDNOTES

1 Most writings on South Sudan claim that the civil war started in 1955 just before independence. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Government of Sudan and leaders from South Sudan called the 1955 mutiny at Torit barracks and the subsequent civil war that lasted from 1962 to 1972 as the Southern Problem. See Oduho, Joseph, and William Deng, 1963, *The Problem of Southern Sudan*, London: Oxford University Press and Albino, Oliver, 1970, The Sudan: The Southern Viewpoint, London: Oxford University Press. The number of people that died or were displaced is not known. The second civil war started from 1983 to 2005. Writings on the war claim that it killed at least 2 million people and displaced more than 6 million. See, for example, Johnson, Douglas, 2003, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*, Oxford: International African Institute.

2 Estimates by international organisations claim that the war had killed nearly 400,000 people and displaced at least 2.3 million people. See Megan Specia, 26 September 2018, '383,000: Estimated Death Toll in South Sudan's War,' *New York Times*, 26 September 2018;

3 UNHCR (2015), 'More than 2.25 million now displaced in South Sudan and across its borders,' UNHCR Report, 7 July 2015. https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/7/559bdb0e6/225-million-displaced-south-sudan-across-its-borders.html.

4 Médecins Sans Frontières (2021), *South Sudan at 10*: An MSF Record of the Consequences of Violence, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), July 2021. https://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/2021-07/MSF-SS-Report-Web-SinglePages.pdf.

5. Yei River State was one of the 28 states that president Salva Kiir Mayardit created in October 2015. The government dissolved it in February 2020 as it returned the country to the original ten states after signing the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018. See Africa News (2020), 'South Sudan's president agrees to have 10 states,' Africa News, 15 February 2020. https://www.africanews.com/2020/02/15/south-sudan-s-president-agrees-to-have-10-states//

6 The substantive agreements are: Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), which the warring parties signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2015, and the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) which the warring parties signed in Addis Ababa in September 2018.

7 Peace Studies refer to a no war no peace situation as cases that continue to be mired in insecurity, on-off armed conflicts at the lower levels, chronic poverty, and the persistence of the factors that sparked and sustained the civil war despite a ceasefire

or peace accord. See McGinty, Roger, 2010, 'No War, No Peace: Why So Many Peace Processes Fail to Deliver Peace,' International Politics, Vol 72, No. 2.

8 Reuters, 7 August 2021, 'Rival South Sudanese factions clash, two sides report dozens of soldiers killed,' Reuters News, 7 August 2021, *https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/clashes-kill-least-30-south-sudanese-soldiers-says-vp-spokesman-2021-08-07/; International Crisis Group, 2021, Tracking Conflict Worldwide, https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/print?page=1&location%5B0%5D=13&da=&t=CrisisWatch+Database+Filter*

9 International Crisis Group, 2021, Tracking Conflict Worldwide, *https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch print?page=1&location%5B0%5D=13&da=&t=CrisisWatch+Database+Filter*

10 Examples include the following reports. (1) A UN report that was released in October 2018 showed the consequences of the war, including violations of human rights and abuses of civilians by armed groups in the Western Equatoria. (2) Another UN report that was released in May 2018 showed violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including killings of civilians and raping of women and girls, by armed militias in the Unity state. (3) A human rights report by Amnesty International that came out in September 2018 showed how civilians were hanged from trees and women gang-raped by militias in the Unity state. All reports show that militias comprising of young men and connected with the main armed groups such as SPLM and SPLM-IO perpetrated those levels of violence in most regions of the country.

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12 Lederach, John Paul (1997), Ibid, page ix.

13 Autesserre, Séverine (2014), Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention, New York: Cambridge University Press.

14 Kingston, P., 2012. The Pitfalls of Peacebuilding from Below: Governance Promotion and Local Political Processes in Post-Conflict Lebanon, *International Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 2, pages 333-350.

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18 Powers, Gerald, F (2010), Ibid; Bercovitch, Jacob, and Kadayifci-Orellana, S.A (2009), Ibid.

19 Dubois, Heather (2008), 'Religion and Peacebuilding: An Ambivalent yet Vital Relationship,' Journal of Religion, Conflict and Peace, Vol 1, No. 2 pages 1-21.

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22 For examples, see Peterson, Rodney (2001), 'A Theology of Forgiveness,' in Helmick, Raymond. and Petersen, Rodney (eds), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*. Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundation Press, pages 3-26; Hamber, Brandon (2007), Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Paradise Lost or Pragmatism? Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 13 (1), pp. 115–125

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25 Juncos, Ana E and Joseph, Jonathan (2020), Ibid.

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27 Mac Ginty, Roger (2014), Ibid.

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33 UNMISS (2021), Ibid, page 8.

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46 Participant from one of the churches. She spoke to the EASS and PACWA documentation team after the peace concert in Juba on 24 February 2020.

47 Face-to-face interview with an enumerator September 2021 in Bor County.

48 Face-to-face interview with an enumerator in Yei River, September 2021.

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59 Radio presentation at Bhakita

This project is co-funded by the European Union

This project is implemented and co-funded by

Faith to Action Network
Hatheru court, Hatheru Road, Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya
Email: info@faithtoactionetwork.org
Tel: +254 20 2731398 / 20 3572302
Website: www.faithtoactionetwork.org
LinkedIn/Facebook: Faith to Action Network
Twitter: @FaithtoActionet
Instagram: @faithtoactionetwork