



Workshop Report on Dialogue Session on Enhanced Civic Engagement during the Extended Transition Period

Theme: “Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local
Engagement in the Transition period” (SCALE)

29th March 2023

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Executive summary

The training program kicked off with the Civil Society Facility (CSF) project director, who gave a brief background of CSF's mandate in South Sudan. Currently funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the project has substantially strengthened the capacity of South Sudanese civil society organizations (CSOs) since its inception in 2016. This support has been translated into mobilizing communities for collective action, articulating local needs and priorities, and offering a platform for voicing such concerns at local and national levels. Given the prevailing political landscape and the looming post-transitional period, and the fact that the country is preparing for its first ever general elections, the dialogue session on enhanced civic engagement during the extended transition period workshop aimed at exploring the following:

- The concept of Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement in the transition period (SCALE)
- Findings of the political economy analysis (PEA)
- Challenges and opportunities for CSO participation in transitional justice and security arrangements
- Challenges and opportunities for CSO participation in the constitutional making process
- Potential challenges and prospective CSO roles in the upcoming general elections
- Donor perspective on CSO participation on the roadmap

The workshop provided an opportunity for CSOs to talk about the common challenges they are facing and how they can help each other during the transition period, particularly through sustained collaboration involving the CSF, donor group, CSOs, and local communities. The workshop results are detailed below.

1 First part of the workshop

1.1 Introduction

Civil Society Facility (CSF) South Sudan organized a half day workshop entitled "Dialogue session on Enhanced Civic Engagement during the Extended Transition Period." The workshop took place at the Palm Africa Hotel in Juba on 29th March, 2023. The workshop was attended by 33 participants (27 men and 6 women) drawn from the donor community, i.e., the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Canadian High Commission, and the European Union; civil society organizations, i.e., the South Sudan Law Society (SSLS), the Community Engagement for Progress Organization (CEPO), and the South Sudan Network for Democracy and Elections (SSuNDE); other representatives of civil society and the media community.

1.2 Methodology

The approach adopted during the dialogue session on enhanced civic engagement during the extended transition period training comprised of a mixture of PowerPoint presentations from the CSF project team, speeches from invited members of the donor group, analysis of research findings from a PEA consultant, presentations from key CSO partners that includes; CEPO, SSLS, and SSuNDE, and interactive sessions between workshop facilitators and participants, which mainly featured questions and answers on the key talking points after conclusion of each presentation. This inclusive approach allowed maximum participation of all the stakeholders that were involved in the workshop, as participants were provided with the platform to discuss key issues of concern to the CSO actors in South Sudan.

1.3 Overall Expectations of Participants

- Establishment of a civic engagement act in South Sudan's permanent constitution
- Sustainability/contingency plan either after the funding period elapses or during the funding shortfall
- Formulation of practical solutions to local problems
- Taking urgent civic action
- More rigorous coordination synergies among donor groups and civil society organizations
- Expounding on the role of media in facilitation of civic engagement throughout the country
- Greater involvement of more civil society actors
- CSOs should improve their influence on policy formulation, particularly given that CSOs have weak capacity for shaping local and national policies.

1.4 CSF Opening Remarks

A formal introduction to the workshop program was undertaken by the CSF project team, led by the project director. In his opening remarks, he offered a brief overview of the key talking points that the training would focus on.

1.4.1 Overview of Grant Windows – CSF Phase I & II

- Outreach partners
- National Intermediary Organizations (NIOs)
- Yes We Can
- Small beginnings
- Local civil society networks
- Partnership facility

1.4.2 Context of CSOs – Capacity Gaps

Civil society organizations often have more direct interaction with citizens at the grassroots level. Therefore, they have a better grasp of local needs and problems. In the case of South Sudan, a country that is undergoing a major transition, CSO intervention has a vital role in ensuring a healthy socio-political and socio-economic environment. In that regard, CSF identified the following capacity gaps:

- Lack of centralized leadership among CSOs
- Weak organizational structures
- Insufficient and underqualified staff
- Lack of deeper, meaningful CSO connection with local communities -- and therefore questionable public legitimacy
- Weak engagement with authorities
- Lack of collaboration among CSOs

To resolve those capacity challenges, CSF's main strategy encompasses catalysing CSO's organisational development activities and enabling them to be more effective at supporting communities to engage constructively with authorities/decision makers on their needs and priorities.

1.4.3 Capacity Development Approach

- Best Fit: participatory Organisation Capacity Assessment (OCA) and a tailored Capacity Development Plan (CDP)
- Non-linear: mixture of capacity development interventions (strategic partnership, resource mobilisation and financial management.)

- Mix of capacity development methods: informed by their CDPs - a blend of workshop-based training, on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring and short-term technical assistance
- Do No Harm: CSOs able to operate and engage constructively in a restricted space
- Agile and flexible: changing political, security and health contexts: e.g. reprioritise and respond timely to the COVID-19 crisis and adapt to changes on the ground.

1.4.4 Technical assistance and support to enhance capacities of national CSOs

The main CSF project activities include grants to civil society organisations; providing technical assistance and support to enhance capacities of local CSOs; and offering learning and knowledge management opportunities, which is, amongst others, accomplished via publication of learning brief, workshop, M&E, website. To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, CSF focuses on provision of demand driven technical support; development of contextually relevant training courses; development of online training platform and e-learning courses and conduct an OCA (which is undertaken twice during every phase). The OCA provides for a baseline performance across key organisational functions: governance, financial management and administration, human resources, logistics, programme management, organisational management and institutional set up, organisational culture, publicity, advocacy & lobbying, and external relations & networking.

1.4.5 Selected Results from External Evaluation – areas of support (received and requested)

- Financial management
- Organizational leadership and governance
- Fundraising and resource mobilization
- Project planning and management
- Human resource management
- Logistics
- Legal representation
- Research studies
- Advocacy/lobbying
- Monitoring and evaluation

During the evaluation, the assessment team studied the main risks that threaten CSO's capacity to influence community and key decision-makers and came up with the following results:

- Forfeiture of CSO funding
- Losing CSO staff who have acquired technical capacities
- Violence and socio-political conflict
- Change of current decision-makers and appearance of new, uncooperative successors

1.4.6 Way Forward

- Continue ongoing CSF2 activities – M&E, CSO capacity support on resource mobilisation, networking, governance, etc.
- Close out CSF by August 2023
- Assess potential opportunities for continuing supporting civil society organisations during the transition phase (and beyond) – e.g. through implementation of CSF3 and SCALE

1.5 Presentation of the Political Economy Analysis (PEA).

The methodology for the PEA included both closed-ended questions and focus group discussions. The sample size was determined using criteria based on mapping of the most densely populated and least conflict-affected areas. The consultant referred to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) aerial/graphic household density. This was done to ensure that the data was representative. One of the key research questions asked participants whether they thought South Sudan was at peace. According to the findings, a slim majority of respondents believe South Sudan is at peace. Those who believed the country was at peace increased from a minority to a majority between 2021 and 2022. However, there was a significant difference between respondents from internally displaced people's camps and the rest of the population, with the former believing the country was not at peace. Furthermore, from 2021-22, there has been small but statistically significant improvements in perceived safety. However, it is important to note that this was before the security situation deteriorated.

Another research question was on the economic constraints that are facing South Sudanese. The main challenges established were uncertainty about continued donor commitment, inflation in food prices, and fluctuation in the dollar exchange rate. The PEA consultant then asked participants about their perception of the risk of violence in relation to elections, and the following were the results:

- Risk of violence (range from high/somewhat high). This is even after roadmap
- Extension of transitional period
- When should elections be conducted in South Sudan?
- CSOs should consolidate their approaches
- People earnestly want to vote

It is imperative to note that respondents expressed concerns about outstanding tasks following the extension of the transition period, and a significant proportion was skeptical about whether elections would in fact happen. On party dynamics at the subnational level and whether the SPLM/IG and opposition party appointees work effectively, most respondents expressed disagreements, with only those in Aweil and Rumbek Center Counties having majority approval of the cooperation between state officials. Most respondents confessed that this is their first experience with multiparty governance.

The final research question was which party the respondents think has the best vision for South Sudan, and the party popularity ranking showed that the most popular parties in the country are the following: Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Government (SPLM/IG); Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/IO); South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA); and SPLM-FDs. However, the proportion of respondents who did not identify with any of those parties and those who opted not to answer was greater than that of all the other parties combined, except SPLM/IG.

1.6 Proposed Elections Framework

The PEA consultant provided an overview of citizen's perspective/proposed electoral framework as follows:

- 'First-past-the-post' for President and governors
- Combination of proportional representation for legislative assembly at national and state levels
- High bar for registering political party in political parties' act
- How to accommodate election losers

1.7 Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement in the Transition period (SCALE)

The overall goal of SCALE is to contribute to a smooth transition by advocating for citizen rights and effectively facilitating broad-based and inclusive citizen and civil society participation in key political processes during the transition period. SCALE aims at mobilizing civil society and working collectively to advocate for stronger mechanisms that protect citizens' fundamental freedoms and advance their access to information. This will help create an environment in which meaningful citizen participation can take place. Participation in political processes cannot be effective unless a wide range of rights are respected: freedom of expression and opinion; freedom of peaceful assembly; freedom of association; freedom of movement; freedom from discrimination; and freedom from fear and intimidation.

Only a well-informed citizenry will be able to meaningfully participate in and feed into key political processes such as the making of a permanent constitution and electoral processes. Through SCALE, we will therefore develop and implement accessible, robust mechanisms for civic education as a means of facilitating broad-based and inclusive public participation. Proposed implementation partners will be Mott MacDonald, the South Sudan Law Society (SSLS), the Community Engagement for Progress Organization (CEPO), and the South Sudan Network for Democracy and Elections (SUNDE). Targeted beneficiaries are the citizens of South Sudan, with special focus on: youth—female and male youth, urban and rural youth; women; persons with disabilities; hard-to-reach individuals and marginalized communities; IDPs and refugees. The proposed project period for SCALE is May 2023–April 2025.

1.7.1 Significance of December 2024 Elections

A transitional moment in the history of South Sudan is the moment that citizens are hoping to elect legitimate political leaders but also to consolidate peace. The moment represents a fork in the road, as it will either usher in the transition to a democratic, stable South Sudan or plunge the country into deeper conflict. To get it right, elections must be delivered in a manner that meets the technical threshold and be conducted in an environment that fosters trust and acceptance of election results and that enables citizens to participate in a meaningful way. The political environment preceding and following the election must provide for free and fair participation by ensuring that South Sudanese men and women can freely express their political views without fear of arrest and an informed and engaged citizenry.

1.7.2 Four interrelated strategic objectives of SCALE

- South Sudanese men, women and youth, including those from marginalised and hard to reach communities have adequate access to participation opportunities and have their voices heard in the permanent constitution making process.
- All constituents, including women, men and youth and those living in hard-to-reach communities understand their civic rights and responsibilities, the country's political system and are sufficiently knowledgeable to participate meaningfully in the voting process.
- Victims of human rights violations and affected communities have the agency and opportunities to participate at each stage of the transitional justice processes.
- CSOs and civil society networks have increased capacity to work collectively to advocate for a political and civic environment that provides for free and fair participation, with transparent and enforceable rules of the game and widespread access for all groups within society.

1.7.3 Overarching Delivery Approaches

- Educating CSOs on legal frameworks governing citizen/public participation in key political processes
- Continuous Civic Education
- Promoting inclusive participation
- Focused strategies for enhancing participation of women and youth
- Focused strategies for enhancing participation of people living with disability
- Focused strategies for IDPs
- Focused strategies for marginalised and hard-to-reach communities
- An agile and effective grants mechanism

1.7.4 Added Value of SCALE

- Scale and reach: The consortium will combine delivery capacity across the entire country and across more diverse groups of under-included and marginalised communities.
- Complementarity of skills and areas of expertise: The consortium convenes a holistic range of organisations across traditional silos for more workable, context-appropriate, multi-faceted approaches that is likely to increase impact.
- Synergy and holism: Combining complementary approaches to deliver more holistic solutions. Consortium members will align approaches (including of existing programmes), timing and cooperating to maximise desired outputs and outcomes.
- SCALE consortium offers donors with a vehicle for one contract, managed through a lead organisation, that replaces the complexity and cost of managing multiple single projects.

Through SCALE, the CSOs have confidence that they are ready to move, supported by the fact that they have the required expertise; familiarity with the local context; the fact that the country now has adequate strong infrastructure and a satisfactory CSO network.

1.8 Summary of Donor Perspectives on CSO Participation on the Roadmap

The following is a summary of key talking points from the donor group

- At government level, the Kingdom of Netherlands offers support to the roadmap
- The Kingdom of Netherlands commended Mott McDonald and CSOs for the work done so far via CSF project
- Due implementation and compliance to agreed agenda
- Provision of technical support to CSOs
- Continued direct support to civil society organizations via Mott McDonald is vital for CSOs activities across the country
- Creating enabling environment for CSO activities, e.g., encourage increased civic space for human rights defenders
- Facilitate discussions e.g., via South Sudan Council of Churches
- Supporting capacities of local CBOs/activists
- Representative of Canadian government said they are supporting small beginnings, that are involved in creating synergies and constitutional making processes
- Inclusive approach to enhance capturing views/inputs from marginalized groups
- To consolidate respect for universal suffrage
- To ensure commitment of government of South Sudan to R-ARCISS and roadmap

2 Presentations from CSOs

2.1 The presentation was made by SSUnDE

SSUnDE mobilizes citizens to participate in peacebuilding and political processes and provides the South Sudanese public with impartial and expert reports and recommendations regarding these processes. In 2011, the network recruited, trained, and deployed more than 7,000 domestic election observers in 76 of South Sudan's 79 counties and 16 of Sudan's 16 states. SSUnDE collaborates with national and international partners to contribute to peace and stability in South Sudan and to strengthen democratic governance institutions and practices. SSUnDE has engaged in the following activities:

- Conducted focus group discussions on issues of democracy and good governance.
- Trained over 200 women as ToTs on promotion of women participation in political processes.
- Conducted civic and voter education among the local populace.
- Observed Sudan General Elections of April 2010 in the former ten states of South Sudan covering 76 counties out of 79.
- Facilitated Political Parties round table discussions prior to the Sudan General Elections in former Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Jonglei and Lakes States, in 2010.
- Facilitated domestic and international observer coordination meetings on the Southern Sudan Referendum.
- Conducted voter education and observation on the Southern Sudan Referendum processes in 2011 in collaboration with Sudanese Group for Democracy and Elections (SuGDE).
- Issued several press releases and organized press conferences on Sudan General Elections 2010 and Southern Sudan Referendum 2011 processes.
- Conducted advocacy and policy meetings with the government institutions, civil society and international community representatives and influential Grassroots Leaders on the Sudan General Elections and Southern Sudan Referendum.

2.1.1 Foreseen Challenges on Elections in South Sudan

- The consequences of elections and the culture of elections in South Sudan
- The slow implementation of R-ARCSS and the roadmap
- Security challenges
- Natural disasters and the deteriorating humanitarian situation
- Transitional justice mechanisms
- Permanent constitution making process
- Reconstitution of National Elections Commission (NEC)

- CSO and media civic space
- Lack of funds and donor fatigue
- Lack of political space for political parties and individuals to conduct civic awareness about their manifestos
- CSOs in South Sudan and weak and lack unity of purpose

2.1.2 Opportunities for CSOs and Citizens to Participate in Elections

The conduct of elections in South Sudan is considered by many citizens as the most appropriate and legitimate means of acquiring power. Secondly, given that South Sudan considers herself to be a member of democratic nations across the planet, donors, the international community, and friends of South Sudan regard the conduct of elections as a legitimate way of acquiring power, good governance, and democratic transformation.

Through capacity building, CSOs and the media are expected to be eager to participate in elections in South Sudan through the conduct of civic and voter education for the public to make informed choices in elections. And also observing the electoral process to ensure the outcome of the elections reflects the will of the citizens of South Sudan. It is therefore expected that the conduct of elections in South Sudan will give rise to several domestic observation networks necessary to ensure the credibility and fairness of the elections.

Specifically, the following were identified as opportunities for citizen participation in the upcoming general elections:

- Support the establishment of an enabling legal framework for free, fair, and inclusive elections (the Permanent Constitution).
- Support and strengthen the institutional capacities of the Election Management Body (EMB—National Elections Commission) for professional, transparent, and accountable election management.
- Foster inclusive participation through enhanced rights and access to information amplified by the use of media. Promoting and protecting human rights in elections; strengthening the capacities of the media to provide access to accurate and impartial information; supporting broad and inclusive civic and voter education; strengthening civic engagement in promoting electoral standards and good practices, etc.
- Maintaining security through an enhanced environment for elections (through training of the security institutions on their role in the electoral processes). Strengthening the role of the police in maintaining security for elections and promoting engagement to prevent conflict during elections.
- Participate and strengthen effective planning and implementation in electoral processes for all citizens. Strengthening operational planning for elections. Providing technical

assistance to support the NEC's implementation of electoral operations, facilitating the review of electoral processes, and supporting out-of-country election operations.

- Conduct civic and voter education and domestic observation of the electoral process, and issue statements on the conduct and outcome of the electoral processes.

2.1.3 Lessons and Challenges for Engagement in the On-going Constitution Making Processes

- Learning visits (South Africa, Ghana and Kenya)
- Engagement strategy developed
- Civic education and public consultation materials developed
- Civic education conducted through community outreach and media
- Public consultations in all the ten states of South Sudan conducted
- Citizens' thematic views and recommendations consolidated
- Validation meetings held in all the ten states of South Sudan and at the national level
- Citizens views and recommendation consolidated into Civil Society Model Constitution
- Citizens' views and recommendations submitted to the NCRC
- Good collaboration between the Resource Team and NCRC
- The Resource Team was represented by 5 Delegates in the NCRC
- Effective coordination amongst the civil society

2.2 Presentation by SSSL

2.2.1 Challenges for Engagement in the On-going Constitution Making Processes

- Limited Funds (Open Society, Justice Africa and PAX with Funding EU)
- Consultations limited within South Sudan
- Limited number of people consulted
- Consultations were only conducted physically
- Limited Funding for the NCRC
- Out-break of conflict
- Poor working relationship between the Chair of the NCRC and his Deputy
- Some of the members of the NCRC had limited capacity

2.3 Presentation by CEPO

2.3.1 Challenges and Opportunities for CSO Participation in Transitional Justice and Security Arrangements

This presentation was made by CEPO and they mapped out relevant activities that they have carried out so far as detailed below

1. Established Six Transitional Justice Centres with support from UNMISS Human Rights Division

2. Developed Transitional Justice Messages Sheets
3. Carried numerous Transitional Justice Advocacy and Lobby
4. Advocating for SSR process (influencing the drafting of the White Paper for defence and security)
5. Engaging ministry of Justice for holding National Transitional Justice Roundtable

2.3.2 The timelines for the elections

In the absence of a permanent constitution and the Elections Act, it is debatable whether or not elections should be held. However, during his visit to the Bahr el Ghazal region, the president stated:

“I want all of you to be ready for the elections, and every party has its prepared fighting bull, and I am one of them. And the contestants must expose themselves so that they can be seen clearer, and when the time comes, we will meet in the field.” - President Salva Kiir, Aweil, March 2023

2.3.3 Key Lessons Learned

- Civic Space for engagement is considerably restricted
- Political leadership is reserved in public engagement
- Limited funding for CSO activities
- During the PEA, a dangerous trend emerged, where tribalism determined people’s political opinions, especially in Yambio and reportedly in Malakal (Malakal was not surveyed by PEA consultant, but was cited by CEPO’s executive director)
- CEPO is involved in an initiative to bring on board people with disabilities
- Poor infrastructure hampers reaching out to rural communities
- Amendment of the NGO Act and Withdrawal of NSS power for not arresting without warrant of arrest is a step in the right direction
- State security apparatus control state capitals, which limits the power of opposition parties
- Some places have more political space (e.g., Yambio), others have less (e.g., Aweil)
- Implications and tension caused by recent disagreement between gov’t and IO
- Ministry of Justice acceptance for the holding of the Transitional Justice Roundtable

2.4 Recommendations

- Develop consensus on strategies/benchmarks/milestones for elections
- Engage more closely with state legislative assemblies
- Strengthen relationships among civil society networks at national, state and local levels
- Issue clear directives to state authorities to allow people to meet and discuss elections
- Sustained technical support to CSOs
- Ensure opposition parties have space to meet, organize and campaign
- Remove excessive regulations on civil society

- Sustained donor support is central to CSO activities
- Support cross-learning to discuss elections
- Involve CSOs in constructive discussion on rethinking aid
- Structure funding for multi-partner initiatives to require CSO participation

2.5 Conclusions

The dialogue session on enhanced civic engagement during the extended transition period provided participants with opportunities to reflect on lessons learned and key challenges that are expected during both the transition period and the upcoming elections. Proactive engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in political transitional processes (Constitution Making, Elections, and Transitional Justice) is critical. It is critical to empower stakeholders (women, youth, people with disabilities, and faith-based leaders) to hold the government accountable for genuine political transition. Finally, consultative domestic pressure on the government regarding the R-ARCSS-roadmap and the Rome Peace Talks is required.

