

Report from the CPWG-CIAN South Sudan Fast Talk

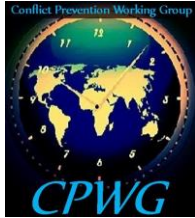
On August 29th, 2014 the Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG) at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and the [Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation](http://www.cian.org) (CIAN) held a Fast Talk on South Sudan.

The aim of the Fast Talk was to produce new and innovative peacebuilding policy options to help prevent further bloodshed and bring a lasting resolution to this ongoing conflict.

The major insights generated by this Fast Talk are listed below.

Background & Context

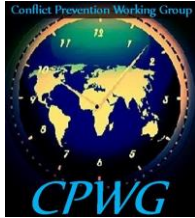
- Sadly, South Sudan is an all too familiar picture in the sense that it is underdeveloped, there is a lack of infrastructure, it is rich in resources (however, oil is very much fueling the war), there is a significant proliferation of small arms throughout the country, the major players are all armed actors, it is not a “trusting” environment, and the government isn’t always acting in the best interests of all the citizens. Moreover, many of the IDP camps are in poor condition and the last few harvests have been very poor resulting in food insecurity. Food insecurity is being compounded by the rainy season and the ongoing violence. Consequently, a humanitarian crisis is being created through a mix of human and natural causes.
- Widespread violence could re-erupt at any minute and in this sense the worst has not yet happened. There are many signs that it could occur, however.
- Nonviolent Peaceforce has a large mission operating in the country with approximately 120 staff. They are setting up weapons-free zones, doing training, running protective presence missions in some communities, and providing accompaniment to at-risk individuals. They are one of the only organizations working at a community level to reduce violence.
- Even though there are some actors trying to avert potential widespread violence, South Sudan is being overshadowed by other conflicts like Syria, Ukraine, Iraq.
- Some of the civil society in South Sudan is very vocal. However, they have a very limited role and influence. Women aren’t adequately represented in the peace talks.



- This is a very complicated conflict with numerous intertwined causes occurring at multiple levels (ie, both interpersonal issues between specific leaders as well as more widespread ethnic identity issues are present). Consequently, the international community seems perplexed as to how best to address this conflict. Nevertheless, the regional actors are best placed for responding, so the international community could play an important support role to them.
- Ethnic tensions fuel the conflict but are not the sole driver of the conflict. However, they facilitated the quick spread of violence throughout the country. Some steps are being taken to reduce ethnic divisions.
- There is a concern that the current negotiations will further legitimize the existing political actors. A political shake-up that introduces new players into the mix might create a positive shift in the conflict dynamics.
- Current open violence needs to stop. With open violence occurring the timing might not be right for reconciliation work to begin. However, important steps to laying the proper groundwork for future reconciliation can occur now. Notably, gaining a better understanding of what reconciliation might look like is an important research task.

Addressing the Peacebuilding Dilemmas in South Sudan

- ✓ Pro-active and systematic genocide prevention work needs to occur. More resources are needed for this because it is a major priority.
- ✓ Create democratic space for multiple voices to be heard. To this end, a transitional government should be formed.
- ✓ Start laying the groundwork for reconciliation now. Structure this work around 2 interrelated parts:
 - 1 - Learn lessons and best practices from other conflicts around the world and share these with local actors.
 - 2 - Hold community consultations to see what different South Sudanese groups think about reconciliation. Translate these various perspectives into tangible ideas on how to move forward.
- ✓ New peace talks need to address all the divisions in the society and be more inclusive.
- ✓ The international community needs to find new leverage points for Kiir and Machar.
- ✓ Targeted, individual-level sanctions aimed at both sides of the conflict should continue.



- ✓ Impose an arms embargo. Find new ways to make it enforceable.
- ✓ Build capacity of South Sudan civil society actors (and media). Civil Society needs strengthening and ongoing support.
- ✓ The international community should be cognizant of and prepared to take advantage of any new political openings or shifts in the conflict dynamics.

Participants

(Listed alphabetically)

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