

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT:

Project “Strengthening Young Women’s Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan”

OCTOBER 2021



Executive Summary

This report presents and discusses the findings from the final external evaluation of the “Strengthening Young Women’s Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan” project (January 2020-September 2021), which was founded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPF).

Search for Common Ground (Search) South Sudan, in partnership with Ana-Taban, Crown the Woman (CTW), National Women’s Empowerment & Rehabilitation Organization (NWERO), Catholic Radio Network (CRN), and Eye Radio with funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) have been implementing the project aimed to equip and empower young South Sudanese women with knowledge, skills and opportunities to contribute to the peace process at the local and national level, reinforce their collective power, and challenge the social stereotypes and barriers that hinder their equal participation.

This final evaluation was carried out by the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) with the support of Search’s South Sudan team. This study used a mixed approach that combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Overall, the project was conducted in a context of massive needs and upheaval: the COVID-19 pandemic, multi-layered violent conflicts, floods in 2020 and 2021, and severe food insecurity in different regions of the country. In spite of the challenging situation in South Sudan, however, Search and its partners were able to adapt the project to the changing environment and achieve impressive results.

In terms of relevance, as widely presented the intervention’s objectives and design fully responded to the young women’s needs and priorities in terms of their role in peace and security matters in the country. This result was also possible because the activities were designed according to the needs collected in the baseline. Furthermore, NWERO, CRN, Eye Radio and other organizations were able to involve young women from different contexts and areas, also from remote ones and among IDPs. The activities remain relevant despite the COVID-19 challenges due to the ability of the project’s partners to adapt and to transform constraints into opportunities.

Regarding effectiveness, the project’s expected results have been achieved against almost all the ambitious indicators. The project’s most positive results are represented by activities related to strengthening the ability of young women leaders and groups to collaboratively lead local and national-level peace efforts and young women-led mediation and peacebuilding initiatives. The increase in confidence experienced by participants attending training and mentorship activities is very clear and the follow-up local peacebuilding activities show increased self-confidence, knowledge and skills. The main challenges were represented by transforming attitudes and behaviors about women and youth and their role in peace and security, especially on a large scale and at the national level. Changing perceptions has emerged from this evaluation as a slow process that deserves specific programming and close attention to cultural dynamics and constraints.

Concerning impact, the project achieved several intended changes, as presented in this report. These changes were present mainly at the local level, while achieving changes at the national level was more challenging, also due to mobility limitations. Some stories of change, partially reported in this document, deserve close attention and are to be shared in future activities. Young women-led mediation and peacebuilding initiatives had a significant impact because brave young women were able to implement initiatives rapidly in different locations, also involving men in their communities. Yet, the collaboration between young and older women is improved only in some locations and needs more nuanced and specific attention in the future. Significant examples of collaboration between young and older women were observed in Bor and Aweil. The intergenerational nature of the listeners’ group demonstrates improved interactions between young and older women.

In terms of efficiency, the collaboration between project partners worked very well and involved new local organizations and informal groups. In some cases, CSOs are able to collaboratively work with the young women networks/ youth groups to ensure equal participation in the peace processes in some locations, while in others the collaboration was limited or absent. The project was not fully able to create adequate advocacy platform(s). This was due to external conditions – especially due to COVID-19 limitations – but also because advocacy at the national level needs more specific attention and programming in the complex South Sudanese political landscape. Due to the fact that achieving advocacy objectives needs several follow-up activities, the project could be considered as a first step that needs several others to have an impact at the national level.

The overall sustainability of the project presents some limitations. While acquired skills and publications will last beyond the project itself, the monitoring of activities already captured that “though 80% of the respondents see added value when collaborating with young women in peacebuilding initiatives, only 62% still believe CSOs have plans to carry on and sustain the young women programs beyond the end of the project.” Sustainability could also have been better built during the project. For instance, some participants were involved in a single activity, sometimes lasting just one day, without specific follow-up activities. Beyond these two components, the enmeshment of project activities within interventions of partner organizations could only materialize if they manage to mobilize external funding. It should be said that, while financial resource constraints appear to limit the overall sustainability of interventions beyond the lifespan of the project, the interventions were implemented in a context of massive needs and extreme economic vulnerabilities experienced by young women.

Based on these findings and analysis, we suggest further action in the following areas:

- Target men specifically (young, but also fathers, local chiefs, etc.) to transform social attitudes and behaviors about young women.
- Dedicate more specific attention to local cultural norms shaped under patriarchy that impede women participation in peacebuilding.
- Involve traditional authorities to understand the project's aspirations and objective of ensuring that women are also participating in the affairs of their country.
- Dedicate more attention to strengthening the local partners at the state levels with the needed capacity on peacebuilding initiatives so they would continue to engage and create awareness on the local community members.
- Capitalize the work done in this project with specific advocacy activities at the national level.
- Help women groups to develop their small economic activities so they can continue to finance their peacebuilding.
- Consider translating some radio shows into the major native languages.
- Avoid one-off activities and plan continuous engagement of youth women and other target groups.
- Consider engaging people with special needs, so they equally participate in different peace initiatives in their respective communities and/or at the national level.
- Conduct specific analysis to inform future actions on intergenerational dialogue among women.
- Reconsider the validity and modality of listener groups.
- Target networking and/or coordination between CSOs as a direct objective with specific resources.
- Continue to reflect and connect GBV, early marriages and domestic violence to a broader picture of women exclusion and broader conflicts.