



Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

# Livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance: An analysis of Uror and Nyirol counties, South Sudan

Report 3  
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SLRC reports present information, analysis and key policy recommendations on issues relating to livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations. This and other SLRC reports are available from [www.securelivelihoods.org](http://www.securelivelihoods.org). Funded by DFID, Irish Aid and EC.

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# About us



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The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six-year project funded by DFID, Irish Aid and EC. SLRC aims to bridge the gaps in knowledge about:

- When it is appropriate to build secure livelihoods in conflict-affected situations (CAS) in addition to meeting immediate acute needs;
- What building blocks (e.g. humanitarian assistance, social protection, agriculture and basic services) are required in different contexts;
- Who can best deliver building blocks to secure livelihoods in different contexts; and
- How key investments can be better and more predictably supported by effective financing mechanisms.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation with 7 core partners; Focus1000, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Feinstein International Centre (Tufts University), The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction based at Wageningen University (WUR) and the Nepal Center for Contemporary Research (NCCR).

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# Acronyms and glossary



<b>CPA</b>	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	<b>boma</b>	a village or group of villages, the lowest administrative unit
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<b>bunam</b>	cattle camp leader
<b>GAM</b>	Global Acute Malnutrition	<b>county</b>	the highest administrative unit of local government structures followed by <i>payam</i> and <i>boma</i> <sup>1</sup>
<b>GoSS</b>	Government of the Republic of South Sudan	<b>Gol leaders</b>	village headmen
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person	<b>hafirs</b>	surface water catchment structures
<b>MSF</b>	Médecins Sans Frontières	<b>kala-azar</b>	Visceral leishmaniasis
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation	<b>khour muon</b>	earth priest, Nuer spiritual leader
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute	<b>lalop</b>	the desert date tree ( <i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i> )
<b>OLS</b>	Operation Lifeline Sudan	<b>lwak</b>	stable or livestock barn
<b>PHCC</b>	Primary Health Care Centre	<b>payam</b>	the intermediate administrative unit between county and <i>boma</i>
<b>SAM</b>	Severe Acute Malnutrition	<b>tukul</b>	mud-walled hut
<b>SLRC</b>	Secure Livelihood Research Consortium	<b>toich</b>	swamps
<b>SPLM</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Movement		
<b>SPLA</b>	Sudan People's Liberation Army		
<b>SSRRC</b>	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission		
<b>SSP</b>	South Sudanese Pound		
<b>SSPS</b>	South Sudan Police Service		
<b>UN</b>	United Nations		
<b>UNICEF</b>	UN Children's Fund		
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme		

<sup>1</sup> Administrative units introduced in the mid-1990s by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in areas under its control as part of the Civil Authority of the New Sudan. See the Annex 1 for additional information.

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## Executive summary



This report is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted by the **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)** South Sudan team in Uror and Nyirol Counties, Jonglei State, South Sudan in January and February 2013. This follows on a household survey conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and SLRC in 2012. Together these studies comprise a baseline analysis of livelihoods, access to social services and people's perceptions of participation and governance. Because this work was completed in early 2013, it does not address issues that have arisen since the outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan in December 2013.

The SLRC programme has **three main research questions**:

- 1 Internal state-building processes.** How do people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state in conflict-affected situations affect state legitimacy, state ability to provide social protection and services, and under what circumstances does this lead to state-building?
- 2 International engagement with the state.** How do international actors interact with the state and attempt to build the capacity of state institutions to deliver social protection and basic services?
- 3 Livelihoods and response.** What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

This work focused mostly on questions 1 and 3.

Government institutions at the local level are mostly unable to carry out activities and provide services. Boreholes for water exist, but many are not functioning and there is no one to fix them. Schools and clinics have been built, but they are not able to provide adequate services. Most people have only limited expectations of service delivery from the government and do not blame the government for the lack of services. United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are, more often than government, the institutions associated with service delivery (or the lack thereof) in the view of most people interviewed. Numerous respondents explained that South Sudan only recently emerged from war and that government institutions are 'young'. The government's inability to provide services did not negatively affect many respondents' overall view of the government or its legitimacy – in fact,



most respondents appeared to sympathise with the government's lack of capacity. **In general, the provision of social services does not appear to particularly influence people's perceptions of the state and state legitimacy.** These perceptions are largely formed by other factors.

There was widespread agreement among both male and female respondents of all ages of that security should be the first priority of the government for Uror and Nyirol, and for Jonglei state as a whole. Cattle raiding was the predominant form of violence in northern Jonglei in early 2013, although 'raiding' is very now different to its traditional form. There were also armed insurrections, including David Yau Yau's rebel movement, and counter-insurgency operations going on in the state at the time of the fieldwork. **Security was the primary demand directed at the government by respondents.** Security was described as the key condition for improved livelihoods and service delivery. It is an absolute necessity for livelihood security in a pastoral area such as Jonglei with vast areas of uninhabited land through which raiders and other violent actors might move.

A long-standing narrative blames much of the conflict in pastoral areas on competition for dry season grazing and water resources. While respondents acknowledged that such competition occasionally leads to violent confrontations, it does not explain the levels of violence witnessed in Uror and Nyirol counties in early 2013. That was explained almost entirely in terms of cattle raiding and the lack of law enforcement or security mechanisms.

The failure of the South Sudanese government and army to prevent raiding and rebel attacks has caused discontent within Lou Nuer communities. Numerous respondents, including local government employees, blamed the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GoSS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) for having disarmed the Lou Nuer, leaving them with no means to protect themselves, while not equally disarming their adversaries. Though none of the respondents described this problem in terms of state 'legitimacy', it certainly affects their view of the state and of particular actors in power at the local and national levels.

To understand how other factors shape perceptions of state legitimacy we must look at different levels of government separately. Most respondents, for example, perceive local chiefs as legitimate, as they can mediate between their communities and higher

levels of government. We found three sources of chiefs' legitimacy: traditional legitimacy, performance-based legitimacy and process-oriented legitimacy (Wild et al., 2013).

Both basic social services and livelihood support services in South Sudan are funded mainly from external sources. Some UN agency or international NGOs programmes are implemented through local government for the purposes of building government capacity. Our data does not support the hypothesis that having services delivered by international agencies and NGOs undermines people's perceptions of state legitimacy. The fact that international actors play a significant role in service delivery does not seem to negatively impact perceptions of the government; some even suggested that the role of international actors in service delivery had been curtailed too quickly. Respondents noted that NGOs who implement programmes themselves provide better services in the short run, but they do not directly help to build the capacity of government institutions.

Livelihood systems – and the services that support them – were extremely stressed in both counties at the time of the research. Many people in early 2013 were surviving on little more than the seeds and leaves of the *lalop* tree – even though this research took place well before the onset of the usual hunger season. Previous studies of livelihoods in this area report that consumption of 'naturally occurring uncultivated foods' (wild foods) is common, but that sole reliance on these foods is a sign of severe stress (Save the Children, 1998; SSCCE, 2006). While there is no more recent baseline than these previous studies against which to measure livelihood change (indeed, this study is intended to be part of an effort – combined with the results of the household survey – to provide such a baseline), respondents in most locations reported declines in agricultural production and herd sizes and showed signs of barely coping with the current poor harvests and limited income or access to food from livestock. Due to a very high level of cattle raiding, few households reported owning any cattle, though most said they had in the past. Previous assessments in the area show that even poorer households had some cattle and goats. While there is no overall livestock survey for Jonglei – and therefore no immediate evidence on overall livestock numbers – in all places where the research was conducted there was a palpable fear of cattle raiding, and widespread reports of severe livestock losses to raiding and, to a lesser extent, diseases. This means that the most prized asset in a pastoral community and pastoral livelihood system

is also the source of a great deal of vulnerability under the current circumstances. At least partially as a result, the prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition (only qualitatively assessed in this study) is very high (FAO/WFP, 2013).

The need for improved security was made clear in all the research sites, and underlined by government officials everywhere. **The degree of insecurity, and the perceived lack of fairness in the means of providing for security, are the two main factors affecting people's perceptions of the state in the two counties.** This has short-term ramifications in terms of preventing raiding – and it should be noted that while communities in Uror and Nyirol have suffered a high level of raiding, there are similar reports from throughout Jonglei (as well as other states). But a large proportion of the population of Uror and Nyirol that previously had livestock now do not, and the question of how to enable these people to equitably regain livestock assets is not easily addressed. There has been a corresponding breakdown in the livelihoods services that existed before. This is most notably exemplified in the demise of the network of community animal health workers developed during the Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) period in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It is clear that providing security is a major key to improving livelihoods and perhaps the key – at least currently – to improving people's perceptions of and relationship to the state. It is also clear that there is a need for improved delivery of basic services and social protection in the visited areas, though the prevalent insecurity meant that these issues, and their impact on perceptions of governance, were not at the centre of most respondents' attention. It is not clear, however, exactly how any of these necessary improvements can be accomplished. The national political crisis and subsequent violent clashes that began in December 2013 have only further complicated the situation; how these clashes have affected Uror and Nyirol is not yet clear.

In this context, several issues arise and demand further exploration. These include an analysis of the dynamics between the other major groups in Jonglei (Murle, Dinka), which are addressed in a recent SLRC working paper (Gordon, 2014). There is a particular need to better understand livelihoods, service delivery, and state perceptions in the context of Pibor County (which is the focus of a forthcoming SLRC report). There are pertinent questions about which social and livelihoods services

it is most appropriate and feasible to provide. And of course, there are major questions about the impacts of the political violence that began in Juba in December 2013, on-going at the time of writing.

The hope of the research team is that this work, together with other SLRC reports in Jonglei, will serve as a useful reference for future work during the current crisis and after its resolution.

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 SLRC study background and objectives

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six-year global research programme exploring livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict-affected situations. Funded by the UK Department for International Development and Irish Aid, SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict. SLRC is undertaking research in seven focus countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. The South Sudan research programme is being led by the Feinstein International Center, based at Tufts University, in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the University of Juba and the South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics.

At the time of fieldwork in early 2013, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) enjoyed a great deal of popularity in many parts of the country owing to the success of the long struggle for political autonomy which culminated in independence on 9 July 2011. However, experience from other newly independent countries suggests that this political goodwill and sense of state legitimacy might ebb away over time if political independence is not followed by stable state building and economic progress that translate into practical improvements in income and livelihoods at the local (household and community) level. This paper reports on research conducted 11 months prior to the political upheaval that occurred in late 2013 and early 2014, and does not comment directly on that – as yet unresolved – situation. Even before the events of December 2013, the challenges to improving incomes and livelihoods were enormous. The SLRC South Sudan study explores these challenges by rigorously investigating the research questions given below. We hope that through regular engagement with key stakeholders and the strategic dissemination of research outputs this research will ultimately feed into policy discussions among South Sudanese government officials, international aid organisations, local government and customary institutions, and local actors in livelihoods promotion and state building.

## 1.2 Research questions and methodology

This qualitative study explores livelihoods, access to social services and people's perceptions of participation and governance in northern Jonglei state. A household

survey in parts of Jonglei and Upper Nile states preceded the qualitative fieldwork, although the analysis of the survey data was not completed prior to the fieldwork, nor were the survey and qualitative fieldwork samples designed to directly overlap.

The following three areas of inquiry drove the fieldwork, although this report deals almost exclusively with questions 1 and 3:

**1 Internal state-building processes. ‘Building new South Sudan: Internal dimensions of state building and state-formation with reference to delivery of basic services and social protection in South Sudan’**

Research question: How does the delivery of basic services and social protection in South Sudan affect the internal dimensions of state building and state formation?

**2 International engagement with the state. ‘Finding the balance: Interactions between international aid organisations and the state in the delivery of basic services and social protection in South Sudan’**

Research question: How do, and how should, international aid organisations engage with the South Sudanese state in order to improve state capacity to deliver social protection and basic services?

**3 Livelihoods and response. ‘Post-conflict livelihood recovery in South Sudan’**

Research question: What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

A qualitative protocol was developed in order to address these questions. In January and February 2013, a team of five researchers undertook the fieldwork, which included interviews with government policy makers, donors, and representatives of international agencies in Juba, followed by three weeks of interviews about these three general areas of inquiry in Uror and Nyirol counties with local government officials, chiefs and other local leaders, male and female adults and youths selected through purposive sampling, and other key informants. In total, the team conducted 109 interviews with 213 people. Of these, 70 interviews (156 people) were with community members. Some of these were with individual men and women, some were with groups of men or women, and some were with mixed groups. Forty-five interviews were with men, twenty-one with women, the

remainder mixed groups. Thirty-nine interviews were with officials, donors, NGO staff and other key informants. Research took place in five locations in Uror and three in Nyirol. Table 1 contains the list of *payams* and *bomas* visited in the course of the field research.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Locations of field research in Uror and Nyirol counties**

County	Payam	Boma
Uror	Tiam	Wek
	Yuai	Yuai
	Motot	Goak Goak
	Pathai	Riang
Nyirol	Lankien	Pagor, Lankien
	Pultruk	Bariak

It was not possible to collect reliable data on age from respondents, as many people do not know their birth date or age. Furthermore, the category of ‘youth’ in South Sudan is often used to describe anyone under the age of approximately 35. We used the descriptor ‘youth’ to denote young – usually unmarried – adults, and an ‘other’ category to describe those somewhere between youth and elder status. In some cases respondents described themselves with these labels, though most were applied subjectively by the research team according to the given respondent, context, and interview responses. According to these descriptors, we conducted 12 interviews with elders, 5 with youths, and 26 with ‘other’ adults. Imprecise as these age categories are, they were the best available option for capturing ambiguous age dynamics, though they do make age-disaggregated analysis relatively inconclusive.

Interview notes were entered on computer the same day or as soon as possible after interviews were completed. Qualitative analysis was conducted with the help of Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software package enabling coding and comparison of interview excerpts. Three research team members used the software to code the interviews, resulting in 1,392 excerpts, which were then examined more closely using the software’s search and analysis functions in light of the research questions and the themes by which this report is organised as well as those emerging from the interviews themselves. This process helped us to identify patterns across different interviews and categories of respondents, including disaggregation by sex and (general) age group as much

<sup>2</sup> Beyond national and state-level government, there are the following three local government levels: county, *payam* (district) and *boma* (several villages).

### Map of Jonglei State showing counties

Source: Conflict Dynamics International



as possible. For some of the more complex comparisons, analysts also returned to the original interview notes where necessary in order to be able to put certain trends or findings into the broader context of the interview.

### 1.3 Study limitations

Discussions with respondents regarding livelihoods in Uror and Nyirol were often subject to two problems that were easily recognised but which required some time to overcome. The first was referred to by the team as a ‘needs assessment narrative’, in which it seemed that respondents would initially presume that the reason for the research was to conduct an aid-related needs assessment, and emphasise how bad things were in the community, how many livestock had been raided, how malnourished the children were, and so forth. This presumption about the reason for the visit of the research team could be overcome, but it often required the first half hour of an interview – and repeating several times both the initial questions and our insistence that the study was not linked to any tangible benefits – before respondents were convinced that the team was not, in fact, conducting a needs assessment.

The second problem was a particular recurrent narrative around the discussion of raiding, which conveyed a strong sense among respondents of having been victimised by a government disarmament programme that left people in Lou Nuer areas without weapons and therefore more vulnerable to attack while failing to similarly disarm the Murle. While there is some evidence of this uneven disarmament, there was little interest in discussing raiding parties from Lou Nuer areas attacking Murle areas (whether current or in the past). Overall, Lou Nuer raiding was mostly explained – where admitted – in terms of ‘revenge’ and Murle raiding as ‘aggression’.

A third problem was physical access. Although fieldwork was conducted towards the end of the dry season, one of the locations could not be reached by vehicle and would have required several days to visit on foot – time the field team simply did not have.

A fourth problem was that the household survey had many problems (mainly missing data), making it difficult to put quantitative estimates on any of the phenomena explored in depth here.



## 2 Livelihoods in Uror and Nyirol counties

### 2.1 Livelihood systems

Livelihoods in Uror and Nyirol are dominated by livestock, particularly by cattle. It is difficult to overstate the importance of cattle to both the livelihoods and the culture of the Lou Nuer. But the pastoral livelihood system is currently facing major challenges, including incidents of raiding and insecurity, disease, and limited access to water and grazing sites. Cultivation is traditionally practised by nearly all households in rural areas, but remains limited to two staple grain crops (sorghum and maize) and a handful of other crops (beans, okra, ground nuts, pumpkins). Almost all farming is done by hand; there is little mechanisation or use of animals. In general, plot sizes are small and productivity is low, limited by labour, access to markets, and access to tools and inputs. Although land is plentiful, its quality is variable and it is often prone to flooding. Insecurity is also an issue of increasing concern.

Fishing is a seasonal activity that can provide both dietary protein and supplemental income to poor households and can also be an important coping strategy for people who have lost livestock. However, fishing resources are overburdened, and opportunities for selling fish are limited and subject to significant competition (55). Fish are widely available during the rainy season and into the early dry season, but fishing as a livelihood option rapidly dwindles as rivers and ponds dry up and fish stocks decline, which was reportedly already happening by early February 2013 (the middle of the dry season) (55).

There are very limited opportunities for wage labour or petty trade. There are some opportunities for casual labour in towns, but towns in Nyirol and Uror are small and labour opportunities appear to be available only in more populated areas farther afield. Some people reported having a family member working in Bor or Malakal and remitting money, but there were only a few instances of people finding casual labour opportunities in Yuai, Waat, or Lankien, the three biggest towns in the study area. Petty trade opportunities also appeared limited in the sites visited.

Aside from these, the other major livelihood activities mentioned by respondents were reported more often as coping mechanisms than as regular means of making a livelihood. These activities include multiple forms of natural resource extraction, either as a subsistence strategy or for sale. Many people reported relying solely on harvesting and eating the fruit and leaves of the lalop tree, which is a normal dry season activity, but reportedly

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more heavily relied upon in the 2013 dry season than in other years (71, 84). Another commonly mentioned activity was the cutting and sale of firewood or thatch grass. Both displaced and non-displaced households reported heavy reliance on these latter activities.<sup>3</sup> There is limited livelihood diversification. Under ideal conditions, livestock keeping and agriculture are complementary activities. In past years, if there was a surplus from agricultural production, grain was sold and the money used to buy additional animals (31). If there was a poor harvest, the sale of animals was the usual means of obtaining cash with which to meet the shortfall (37, 62). Thus, the interaction between farming and livestock keeping provided more than just supplemental sources of food or income; it was a highly integrated system that spread the risks of shortfalls.

Both male and female respondents reported that livestock keeping and agricultural production were under increasing stress. Households across the spectrum of (previous) wealth categories, gender of household head, and education level reported having lost their livestock in recent years to raiding, disease, or both. Disaggregated by geographical location, we found that communities on the eastern and southern flanks of populated areas (i.e. closer to Pibor County and the relatively empty territory through which raiders from Pibor would travel) reported greater vulnerability to raiding. Both men and women across the two counties also reported declining cultivation opportunities due to various environmental, security, and other constraints. These stresses have led both displaced and non-displaced resident to rely more in the short term on the coping mechanisms mentioned above. Reliance on these activities might seem to represent greater diversification of livelihood activities, but in fact they suggest a livelihoods crisis, resulting from underlying climatic and environmental constraints, insecurity, and limited access to markets, inputs and services. This point has implications for the interpretation of livelihood diversification elsewhere: more activities do not necessarily imply greater resilience – they can also indicate greater levels of livelihoods stress.

Unless stated otherwise, household descriptions here generally refer to male-headed households. It is important to note, however, that official figures describe approximately one-fourth of all households in South

Sudan as female-headed (*ibid.*), although figures vary widely by state: the figure for Jonglei is 39% (WFP, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Female-headed households are known to cultivate less than male-headed counterparts (CIAT et al., 2011), and they are, on average, 9% poorer (Oxfam Canada, 2013). Though women's right to own land is recognised in the South Sudan 2009 Land Act, customary law restricts it and requires most land issues to be mediated through male relatives even in cases of female ownership (Forojalla and Galla, 2010).

Additionally, no official count exists of female-managed households, of which there are likely a significant number given current social and economic conditions. A female-managed household is distinguished as one that may nominally have a male head but is managed and maintained by a female in the absence of the male household head, who may have migrated for work or other reasons (van Vuuren, 2003). The death of a male household head typically results in the responsibility for supporting his household falling to other male family members. If the male head is alive but absent, however, then his wife or wives may have no way to compel him to help. For example, a female internally displaced person (IDP) in Uror described hoping for, but little expecting, financial support from her husband, a soldier who now lives in Malakal with his other wife. He had sent 100 South Sudanese Pounds and SSP 300<sup>5</sup> on separate occasions in the previous year after some community members travelling to Malakal told him of the displacement of the community due to a raid, but had provided no further support (79). Traditionally, relatives of absent husbands are expected to support their female in-laws, and unattended individuals can call upon elders, community leaders and chiefs to enforce support. However, assistance cannot be claimed when the potential supporters are themselves impoverished.

In general, gender roles in South Sudan are well defined and fairly rigid. Despite the disruption of life and livelihoods during the civil war, respondents said that such upheaval did not particularly influence or change expectations of men's and women's roles and activities in the longer term (36). Social structures are built around households, with the male household head serving as decision-maker for the household and as the household representative in the community. Numerous families are

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3 People are displaced for many reasons, but the most prominent is raiding. Displaced people tend to be dispersed and staying with relatives, not in displaced persons' camps.

4 The SLRC South Sudan quantitative survey report notes about 35% female-headed households in the area covered by this study (d'Errico et al., 2014).

5 South Sudanese Pounds were formally pegged at 2.6 to one US dollar, but trading on the street markets for a bit over four to one US dollar at the time of the research.



polygamous since men may marry more than one wife if they are in an economic position to do so. When a wife dies, whether due to raiding, disease or other causes, responsibilities for household care usually shift entirely on to the other woman or women in the household, although the implications vary depending on whether the deceased woman's children remain in the household or go to live with relatives (30, 95).

The activities that men are expected to carry out in northern Jonglei include livestock management, specific tasks in cultivation, decision-making for the household, representation of the household in community meetings, and protection and security. Given the current security and environmental situation in Jonglei, there are significant challenges and constraints to some of the activities that are fundamental to male roles.

Women's roles include household management, child rearing, providing care for elderly and infirm family members (33, 60), cultivation and harvesting of crops (41, 55), and helping with cattle and other livestock, including all milking.<sup>6</sup> Women are also involved in natural resource extraction including harvesting thatch grass and collecting firewood for sale in the market (63), though one woman noted that she and other women in her community were afraid to collect firewood due to fear of Murle hiding in the forest and shooting them (17). Women are also responsible for feeding the household, including pounding grain, gathering wild foods, cooking, cleaning, and fetching and carrying water (28, 39, 61, 65, 67, 80, 82, 88, 95).

### 2.1.1 A 'livelihoods calendar'

In order to compare the current situation with more 'normal' times, we asked focus groups to construct a livelihoods calendar (Figure 1). The annual cycle begins with land preparation in April, in anticipation of rains, which often begin in late April or May. The period from April to June is characterised by a heavy labour requirement in agriculture, including land preparation, planting, and weeding. Rainfall is usually heaviest from June to August, and there are few social activities during these months.

As the rains become heavy and insect infestation becomes a more serious problem, cattle are put into *lwaks* – grass-thatched sheds specially constructed to house cattle in the rainy season. Milk production

increases, and child nutrition generally improves. The rains begin to slacken in late August/September, and some green crops are harvested, signalling the onset of improved food availability and improved dietary diversity. By October, the harvest is usually in full swing, food is available, and milk is still plentiful. This is the beginning of the season for festivals, weddings and funerals. Also during this time, work is begun on new houses or *lwaks*.

As the rainy season ends, livestock grazing and water sources become rapidly depleted near populated villages, so people begin to move farther with their livestock in search of grass and water. This movement of livestock generally triggers the onset of raiding. By January and February, grazing and water access have become limited; people and animals begin moving to the cattle camps in the *toich* (swamps) along the major rivers (Nile and Sobat) or some of the minor rivers that provide both security and access to grazing and water. The risk of raiding is perceived to be greatest, however, while en route to the camps (86).

For those who do not go to the cattle camps – particularly women and the elderly – this is a period of hardship, with little access to water or milk. People are reliant on food reserves in good years and on wild foods in lean years, as 2013 was. Those who go to the camps have ready access to milk, and fish are often available as well; for this reason, the elderly, young children, and women sometimes accompany the herds to the *toich*. Those who go to the camps remain there until April, at which time they return to their villages to begin land preparation for another rainy season. Access to certain services – particularly schools – is limited to the periods when the household is present in the residential village (i.e. in the rainy season), although this may present other difficulties where the rains and flooding prevent people from reaching those services.

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6 One respondent noted that Nuer men do not do any milking: 'only Murle men milk' (63).

**Livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance:  
An analysis of Uror and Nyirol counties, South Sudan**

**Figure 1: Annual calendar of major activities: Uror and Nyirol**

Month	Main agricultural activities	Main social activities	Main livestock activities
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Land preparation</li> <li>■ Burning stalks and crop residue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy labour requirements – little social activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle begin returning from the camps</li> <li>■ Most cattle still in camps</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Planting sorghum, maize, okra, pumpkins, beans</li> <li>■ Begin weeding almost immediately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy labour requirements – little social activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle come back from camps</li> <li>■ Cattle still kept outside of the <i>lwaks</i></li> </ul>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Weeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy labour requirements – little social activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle kept outside of the <i>lwaks</i></li> <li>■ Prepare <i>lwaks</i> for cattle</li> </ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Weeding</li> <li>■ Protect crops from birds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Heavy rainfall – little social activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Too many mosquitoes and bugs – move cattle inside the <i>lwak</i> at night</li> <li>■ Burn neem leaves to protect against bugs</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ If good production, you begin to get some green harvest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Prepare for feasts and weddings later on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle still in <i>lwak</i> at night</li> <li>■ Lots of milk</li> <li>■ Bad time for waterborne diseases</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preparation for harvest</li> <li>■ Now green maize is certainly available</li> <li>■ Hunger season ends</li> <li>■ Cut down trees – making grain drying bed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Still raining, but past flooding season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle still in <i>lwak</i></li> <li>■ Lots of milk</li> </ul>
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cut grain stalks for harvest. Put them on drying beds to dry out the grain heads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Young people involved in ceremonies and weddings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Start bringing cattle outside of <i>lwak</i> at night</li> </ul>
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Harvest is full swing</li> <li>■ As soon as harvest ends, begin cutting trees for new houses and <i>lwaks</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Funeral observations begin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle outside of <i>lwaks</i> now but still at home. Milk supply is still good – plenty of grass and water</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Begin work on new houses and <i>lwaks</i></li> <li>■ Making wine for celebrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ceremonies and funerals</li> <li>■ Making wine for celebrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dry season begins – cattle have to begin going farther to find grazing</li> <li>■ Raiding usually begins</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Building houses and <i>lwaks</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ceremonies and funerals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ People begin moving: lack of water/ grazing</li> <li>■ Raiding is a big problem again</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Building houses and <i>lwaks</i></li> <li>■ Grass now optimal for cutting for thatch so grass cutting and roofing activities</li> <li>■ Clearing land for new fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Movement to cattle camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ People moving to cattle camps in big numbers</li> <li>■ Fear of raiding along the way</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ General rehabilitation of houses and <i>lwaks</i> at home, but few people remain</li> <li>■ Firewood cutting, etc. as coping strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Much of the population is now with the cattle in the camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cattle in camps</li> <li>■ Camps are harder to raid than villages – hidden far in the swamps</li> </ul>

Many of the activities noted in the calendar are shared by men and women, as well as people of all ages to the extent that they are physically able. Movement to the cattle camps is primarily an activity for younger (under approximately age 45) males, though children, young women and elderly men and women have lately been more likely to accompany them, for the nutritional reasons noted above as well as security.

This calendar has not changed much since the previous attempts to map the annual livelihood cycle in the area (Save the Children, 1998; SSCCSE, 2006; WFP, 2013). The following sub-sections further explore livestock ownership and agriculture – the two central components of the livelihood system – and the constraints facing each.

### 2.1.2 Livestock ownership

Wealth ranking exercises suggested that nearly every household in most communities owned livestock in years past. ‘Poor’ households commonly had only one or two head of cattle, but many had modest herds – perhaps twenty head of cattle on average – and a few wealthy people had more than fifty (17, 19, 48). The majority of people interviewed in nearly all locations in early 2013, however, reported having lost most or all of their cattle to raiding or disease; only a few interviewees reported owning larger herds. The last major livelihoods profiling effort undertaken in South Sudan (SSCCSE, 2006) notes that a typical poorer household in the eastern flood plains livelihood zone (which includes the study area, but is much broader) would own 3-5 cattle and a similar number of goats. The middle wealth group would typically have 5-10 cattle and the wealthy group would have more. Female-headed households had some livestock as well. While some households still have cattle in 2013, it is evident that many do not. This study did not quantify the losses, but on the southern and eastern edges of the populated areas of Lou Nuer country, the story repeatedly told is that virtually everyone has lost their cattle to raiding. Raiding and other factors constraining livestock-dependent livelihoods are briefly outlined below.

### 2.1.3 Cattle raiding

In all locations visited, there was a sense that local livelihoods systems are under great stress, and the biggest single hazard identified was cattle raiding. This raiding has been going on for long time – virtually all previous investigations of livelihoods and risks in Jonglei make mention of it (OLS, 1993; SCF, 1998; SSCCSE, 2006). But according to nearly everyone interviewed, the

raiding has taken on new intensity and severity in recent years. Everyone believes that virtually all the raiding is by Murle people from neighbouring Pibor County in southern Jonglei. Several factors have converged to make raiding a bigger threat than in the past. Traditionally, raiding was primarily for the purposes of restocking or for acquiring cattle for the payment of bride price and it involved a raiding party taking only *some* of the cattle in a village and only rarely killing people. In more recent, large-scale raids, thousands of cattle have been taken at once, and raiders have indiscriminately killed livestock, which also rarely happened in the past. Furthermore, large numbers of women and children have reportedly been abducted or killed in these raids. Respondents also noted an increase in sales of animals across the border to Ethiopia and Kenya, suggesting the increasing commercialisation of raiding. Reports suggest that raiding is a much bigger source of losses to current livestock owners than disease, though raiding losses are difficult to track and verify. There are no records of how many cattle have been raided *from* Murle areas or elsewhere, and hence no idea of the net gain or loss from raiding. Such a calculation could give an idea of changes in overall livestock numbers, but it would be relatively meaningless at the household level – the gains from raiding rarely if ever accrue to households that suffer raiding losses. Other recent reports (FAO/WFP, 2013) show no net difference in the numbers of livestock in Jonglei as a whole, but these reports do not have a breakdown by location.

When people lose livestock, the traditional method of restocking is to borrow some animals from a relative or neighbouring household, raising the offspring and eventually returning some of them to the original animal owner as a form of payment, and keeping the remainder (36). This pattern of resource sharing (which has the additional advantage of providing access to milk in the short term while replenishing assets in the medium term) typically follows lineage lines and constitutes a form of reciprocity that may take a generation or longer to be repaid. In the case of villages where most cattle had been stolen, those households that still had some livestock had mostly engaged in this kind of ‘borrowing’ arrangement. A few examples were noted where people had been ‘hired’ to look after animals for a period of time, which yields the short-term benefit of access to milk but not the longer term replenishment of livestock assets (19). Raiding is also a form of ‘restocking’ in that it redistributes livestock ownership, but it is not the mechanism that it might have been traditionally. There is an element of ethnic competition over cattle (raiding between the Lou Nuer and the Murle in this case), but also elements of

generational conflict: young men stealing from older men (see section below on 'Armed conflict in Jonglei').

Because cattle are the most significant source of both financial and social capital for males and their households, the impact of livestock raiding on male identity is significant. The loss of cattle means significant loss of financial and social assets, and therefore social stature. Success in raiding, on the other hand, is a source of pride and assets. One of the most important effects of raiding is the impact on marriage prospects. Bride price, which is enumerated in cattle, has risen swiftly and substantially in Jonglei in recent years (Sommers and Schwartz, 2011), and the loss of cattle means an inability to pay a high (or even any) bride price, and therefore an inability to marry. Because marriage is a key aspect of the transition from youth to adulthood and to participation in community life, cattle theft deals a double blow: it deprives men of wealth and status in the immediate sense as well as the means by which to secure more social stature and to solidify their household and community roles and livelihoods prospects in the future.

#### **2.1.4 Livestock disease**

In addition to raids, diseases also take a heavy toll on cattle stock as well as goats. The Nyirol County livestock officer reported livestock deaths due to disease in the county in 2012 (including haemorrhagic septicaemia, contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia trypanosomiasis, East Coast Fever, and a variety of others), and had records of cattle losses, but noted that data collection limitations meant the figures he had been able to collect badly under-estimated the total numbers of animals lost. The county does not keep track of numbers of cattle raided but is generally aware of major attacks and thefts. The numbers raided appears to be many times that of losses to disease. The county did not have figures on how many cattle were raided *from* Murle areas or elsewhere, and hence no idea of the net gain/loss from raiding. The FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (FAO/WFP, 2013) notes that Jonglei in general is one of the least well served states in terms of animal health or veterinary services.

#### **2.1.5 Cattle camps**

Members of cattle camps we interviewed mostly moved in groups of patrilineal male kin (88, 89). Cattle camps are led by camp leaders (*bunam*) who are usually young men in their twenties, and are selected in a meeting before the group leaves with the cattle (89). The *bunam*'s

tasks are to organise the youth, take care of the cattle, send out scouts to check for places where the cattle camp can move (usually generally the same places year to year), organise migration movement, and resolve conflicts (86, 89). Before migrating to a new location, the *bunam* calls a short meeting to inform the group about the journey. 'Everyone has to move at once, so it requires organisation and strict following of orders to make the cattle camp work,' a respondent noted (89).

As noted above, younger men and women, in addition to older children, commonly migrate with the cattle (65). Elders, married women, and small children traditionally do not join cattle camps (61, 65). A headman noted that during the civil war, whole families moved together with the cattle lest they be vulnerable to attack in the home village. While that practice had changed since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005, lack of water, food, and physical security were forcing entire households to migrate with the camps once again.

#### **2.1.6 Movement of livestock**

Mobility is vitally important for pastoral livelihoods, both for security reasons and to maintain access to grazing and water, though such access itself can be a significant cause of conflict with neighbouring groups. Uror, in particular, has no direct access to the major rivers where the cattle camps are situated in the dry season, making the movement of animals out of the county an annual necessity. While migratory patterns vary from year to year depending on location-specific factors, people generally move with their livestock from Uror to the west (toward Puktap and Duk Padiet areas on the east bank of the Nile), to the north (to the Sobat river corridor) or, in a few cases, to the north-east (to the swamps in Akobo East). From Nyirol County, almost all movement is toward the north or north-east (the Sobat River corridor). These general movements are much the same as they were 15 years ago (SCF, 1998).

As most current raiding is reportedly (according to respondents in Lou Nuer areas) carried out by Murle people from Pibor County (to the south), avoiding contact with the Murle is a major consideration in choosing the direction in which to take the animals. There is no dry season movement from Lou Nuer into or even in the direction of Murle areas, and there has not been since the mid-1990s: the insecurity in that area has been too great, in addition to the fact that there are minimal dry season resources in the border area to begin with. Movement to

the west (Puktap or Duk Padiet) requires crossing areas traditionally inhabited by Dinka cattle herders, which has been a source of conflict in the past but has not led to any major confrontations in recent years (42, 53). These observations suggest that – contrary to much available analysis – competition for natural resources, and particularly access to dry season grazing and water, does not explain the current wave of insecurity and conflict. There is resource competition to be sure, but the degree of conflict over dry season grazing and water resources pales in comparison to the levels of violence associated with raiding, and the raiding is not motivated by competition for dry season grazing and water resources. Instead it is motivated by competition for cattle, and is significantly fuelled by easy access to small arms. Much of the raiding is explained – particularly by young men – in economic terms or simply in terms of revenge. For further analysis of the conflict situation, see below, as well as Gordon (2014).

### **2.1.7 Livestock as livelihood assets?**

Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2006) note that in complex emergency situations, livelihood assets may become liabilities, and Deng (2008) makes a similar observation specifically with regard to South Sudan. While people in Lou Nuer areas would still describe cattle as an asset, it is clear that livestock ownership was making people very vulnerable in the situation prevailing in early 2013. One respondent with cattle had to be interviewed on the move, because he was too nervous about the security situation to stop and talk. He had been without cattle for several years, but his daughter had just been married and so he had got cattle as the bride price. He was very worried about losing them to raiding parties as quickly as he had acquired them (69).

Results of the FAO-SLRC quantitative survey regarding asset ownership were very mixed, with the majority of people reporting no livestock owned (d’Errico et al., 2014). While there are reasons for under-reporting livestock ownership, this research suggests that livestock ownership is in great flux – under the current conditions, someone can be wealthy one day and relatively destitute the next. As the above example shows, it is not impossible to reverse this trend, but it is difficult and fraught with danger. This phenomenon is very difficult to capture quantitatively, and impossible to quantify using the methods of this study. But it is important to note that livestock, and especially cattle, remain critically important to livelihoods and cultural identity, and livestock-based livelihoods are under increasing stress. The Lou Nuer

keep small ruminants and chickens as well, but cattle are the major economic – and especially cultural – asset. Animal health and the lack of veterinary services is one element of this increasing stress, but raiding and insecurity are by far the bigger problem.

In the absence of quantitative data on raiding losses (and indeed on raiding gains made by some individuals at the expense of neighbouring communities) it is impossible to make judgments about the overall resilience of livestock-based livelihoods systems. All the evidence presented here would suggest the system is under severe stress, and has collapsed for communities that have been heavily raided. Security and improved animal health services are needed to protect what remains of the livestock economy. How to restore livestock-based livelihoods for whole communities who have lost their animals will be a major challenge if and when some degree of security is achieved. Traditional mechanisms of restocking have been noted, but it is unclear whether these mechanisms are equal to the task of restoring losses in the current conditions. The knock-on implications are also unclear: for example, if fewer families have cattle, what becomes of marriage institutions? These are clearly questions to address in future research when the implications of current raiding have become clearer.

## **2.2 Agriculture**

Respondents described historically adequate levels of subsistence agricultural production in northern Jonglei. Agriculture was usually secondary to livestock keeping, but the two complemented one another. Crops were grown mainly for subsistence consumption, partly because of the distance from major markets, limited transportation and poor road infrastructure, but people reported having small surpluses to sell in good years.

Agricultural production has reportedly been poor since 2008, and generally declining over the longer term (92, 93). Respondents in focus groups and some interviews were asked to compare recent years in terms of agricultural production: they reported that recent years have been comparatively bad, particularly the 2011 and 2012 production years, meaning 2012 and 2013 were years of food deficit.

Drought and flooding both constitute significant hazards to agro-pastoral livelihoods in the counties we visited. Flooding is common during the rainy season and agricultural patterns have adapted accordingly, but



unusually heavy flooding in August of both 2011 and 2012 led to the widespread destruction of maize and sorghum crops. During the dry season, rivers stop flowing, surface water catchments dry up and people have to move away from villages in search of water (even if they are not going to the cattle camps). This is, of course, a long-standing pattern, but some respondents noted that recent flooding and dry season lack of water had become more severe. Other major constraints in recent years included an insect infestation during the pre-harvest season in 2012, and general insecurity and the fear of raiders attacking those working in isolated fields.

The flooding resulted in many harvests being reduced in the 2012 growing season, with obvious repercussions for household food access during the time of the field research in early 2013. Even though it was six months before the next harvest would (hopefully) be available for consumption, people were already reporting relying on a small handful of coping mechanisms to access food in the short term. The combination of these factors not only undermined the availability of food at both the household level and in local markets, it also severely depleted seed stocks (44).

In addition to the flooding losses, the FAO/SLRC survey in the area conducted in March 2012 found that a surprisingly large proportion – more than 50% – of respondents reported not planting at all in 2012. They therefore had nothing to harvest late that year and no own-production to consume in early 2013 when the fieldwork was conducted. This made for very poor food security conditions in early 2013, since other options were limited.

### **2.3 Livelihood outcomes: Food access and coping**

While the food access situation changes from season to season and from one year to the next, poor food access, loss of livestock, and localised displacement (either due to raiding or to poor access to water) were the most visible and widely reported outcomes of the stress on livelihoods in the two counties. Given the lack of a comparison year, it is difficult to know exactly how serious a situation this observation implies, but it appears that livelihoods and nutrition were under significant strain in early 2013, with few coping strategies available.

As previously noted, many people – both men and women – reported utilising coping strategies such as eating leaves and *lalop* seeds to supplement whatever food they were

able to grow or purchase. A nutrition survey in Nyirol County in March 2012 found the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) to be 23.9% of children under the age of five years, and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) to be 4.7%. In late March and early April 2013, a similar study found that the prevalence had increased to 26.9% and 7.1% respectively (Save the Children 2013). Health problems related to malnutrition and digestive illnesses are also commonplace, particularly among children. A WFP study on food security in Jonglei in 2012 found that 79% of the children in surveyed households had been ill in the previous two weeks, mostly with fever and/or diarrhoea (WFP, 2012). The FAO-SLRC survey found a very high prevalence of food insecurity in 2012 (d'Errico et al., 2014). Earlier reports note that consumption of 'naturally occurring uncultivated foods' (wild foods) is common, especially in certain parts of the year (SSCCSE, 2006). But near total reliance on wild foods is a sign of severe stress; and, according to an earlier food consumption calendar, the time of the fieldwork would not have been the worst time of year, which would come several months later (May/June to September).

### **2.4 Livelihood services**

In theory, according to GoSS officials and documents, there are livelihoods-related support services, including veterinary services and agricultural extension, available in most areas of Uror and Nyirol. In interviews, however, few people reported receiving any such services. A livestock keeper in Bariak noted that 'there is no service for animal health in Bariak ... If livestock get sick, either they get well on their own or they die – there is nothing we can do' (92). Respondents noted that during the war, OLS offered a number of services that protected against livestock diseases, including a network of community-based animal health workers, and the maintenance of a network to provide vaccines and drugs for treatment of disease (Maxwell et al., 2012; Catley et al., 2005). However, the provision of such services stalled because of the same factors constraining other services: lack of financing, training, coordination and supply networks (48), among other things. There was only one NGO in northern Jonglei working in this field in early 2013, based outside of Uror and Nyirol (at Ayod).

FAO is working on the provision of water resources for livestock use in the area, and four *hafirs* (surface water catchment structures) were being planned or constructed during the fieldwork period. Part of the rationale for the *hafirs* is to reduce competition over dry season water resources, and thus reduce conflict. The project also aims

to improve nutrition of women and children who do not go to the cattle camps in the dry season by enabling them to keep some milking cows at the homestead during that period. The latter objective seems feasible if the security of animals (and people) can be guaranteed; this issue is further discussed below.

Agricultural extension services are limited, although the FAO is starting a pilot Farmer Field School programme in the area. In addition, credit plays only a small role in the livelihood system in Uror and Nyirol; where it exists, it has more to do with borrowing for consumption than with supporting production.

## 2.5 Summary

Livelihoods have remained relatively unchanged in Uror and Nyirol for decades, but the livelihood system is currently in decline in terms of both livestock and agriculture. In general, there has been little post-war 'recovery' in the aftermath of the CPA. This is, in part, due to on-going raiding and other conflict in Jonglei. Ironically, though, it is also because some livelihood services were – or at least are perceived to have been – better supported during the civil war than they are now.

In the short term, improving both security and livelihoods are stated high priorities for both the government and local communities, although it is unclear how those priorities are to be translated into action (and unclear how this situation may have changed since December 2013). In the medium term, some degree of restocking and redistribution of livestock is likely to be necessary to reinvigorate livelihoods in Uror and Nyirol. With so many people having lost livestock in recent times to both raiding and disease, livelihoods will remain constrained until this issue is addressed. However, there is no point in any kind of redistribution or restocking programmes (the latter being notoriously expensive and not always successful) until security measures have improved. Even then, broader factors may limit the extent to which livestock and agricultural production can return to 'normal' or satisfactory levels over the long term. In the meantime, livestock-based livelihoods are under a great deal of stress, and in a certain sense livestock ownership contributes to vulnerability. Yet given the isolation of the area and poor road access, agriculture and livestock will continue to be the basis of livelihoods for some time to come, and improvements to these modes of livelihood will be crucial to improved food security and other important outcomes.

Major risk factors beyond livestock raiding are mainly climatic. Both flooding and drought are commonly mentioned threats, in addition to crop pests and livestock disease. However, even if surplus production were possible, there is very limited access to markets due to isolation and very limited roads and transportation infrastructure. This serves as a deterrent to increasing production. While externally funded projects are addressing some of these constraints, they remain limited in scope.



### 3 Services and social protection

Social services, like livelihoods, remain severely neglected throughout much of South Sudan, including Jonglei. Marginalisation in terms of infrastructure and service delivery throughout the colonial period as well as the civil war and pre-independence years left much of the population without any access to services whatsoever. President Salva Kiir Mayardit noted in 2010 that there has been no development in South Sudan: ‘We have no roads, no bridges, no water, no power, nothing at all, no hospitals, and no schools – everything is at zero’ (Brenthurst Foundation, 2010: 6). While that overstated the situation, it remains true that few South Sudanese have consistent access to even very basic services, particularly in rural areas. Over 80% of overall funding for basic services in South Sudan today comes from international donors (Watkins, 2013), mostly in the form of bilateral and multilateral aid – a statistic illustrating how far GoSS has to go before it is able to fulfil the role of service provider for its population. This despite the fact that the ‘regulation, provision and maintenance of services to the people’ are among the major functions of local government institutions (Government of Southern Sudan, 2009, section 24). State ministries and local government institutions face a number of challenges: ‘Administrative institutions at state and local levels remain weak, under-staffed and under-resourced, resulting in an inability to provide basic social services’ (Government of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011: 8). An interviewee working in the public sector noted that the state government had hardly any financial resources for services and infrastructure, especially with the austerity measures in place in early 2013 (16).<sup>7</sup> Additionally, most oil revenues are utilised at the national level, with only limited amounts reaching state level and very little reaching the local level (06) (Mayai, 2012).

Information regarding service provision in much of the country is vague because the few surveys that have been undertaken in rural areas of South Sudan have focused on the existence of physical infrastructure – for example, the number of school or health clinic buildings – rather than the availability or quality of the services for which those buildings were constructed. Such infrastructure-based data, and the dearth of reliable information overall,

<sup>7</sup> Since 2005, when the CPA was signed, South Sudan has been heavily depending on oil revenues. Up to 2012 approximately 98% of South Sudan’s revenues were generated from oil (HPN, 2013). In January 2012, when the negotiations with Sudan over oil transit fees came to a deadlock, GoSS shut down oil production (IRIN News, 2012), which had a major impact on budgetary planning. GoSS introduced austerity measures a month later (UNDP, 2012). It was only in April 2013 – after the field research in Jonglei – that oil production was resumed (BBC, 2013). Even before the austerity measures were implemented only a fraction of the GoSS revenues were spent on services and development. In the 2013/2014 GoSS budget, almost 70% was allocated to salaries, particularly for the military (Wudu, 2013).

give an impression of greater progress on service delivery than has actually been achieved, particularly in Jonglei. Where services are available in Jonglei, they are often inadequate, piecemeal, and unreliable. Earlier reports note this dearth of services – particularly for health, education and water – but only in general terms (SSCCSE, 2006). This section presents findings from early 2013 on services related to water, health, education, IDP services, social protection, and people’s expectations around service delivery in northern Jonglei.

### 3.1 Water

Perhaps the most widely available ‘service’ is water, although provision of that service frequently implies the one-time construction of access points whose maintenance often later falters. Most communities visited had an improved water source, usually a borehole, and no one interviewed knew with certainty whether the government or NGOs had constructed the borehole, nor who was responsible for its upkeep. In approximately half of the communities visited in February 2013 (the middle of the dry season), boreholes were not functioning.

While the presence of a functional borehole is tremendously important to communities that would otherwise have no water source, it is also distinct from truly reliable and safe water access. While some villages are relatively compact, others are spread out over a wide area, requiring travel over significant distances to reach the nearest borehole or stream. The responsibility for carrying water falls on women and children, who may spend hours every day walking to a water source and carrying full jerry cans back to their homes. Some households described walking one or two hours (27, 61) and sometimes much longer if the first water source visited was overcrowded or dry. In some cases, they might still return empty-handed if boreholes were overcrowded, pumps were broken, or other common problems were experienced (67). The work of carrying water itself is intense physical labour: a standard five-gallon jerry can weighs approximately 18 kilograms (or 40 pounds) when full. In several communities, chiefs and sub-chiefs reported managing, mediating and even scheduling borehole access so that community members received a fair chance (80), though none of the women interviewed reported encountering such management in their descriptions of their water carrying responsibilities or chiefs’ activities in their communities.

In one community, respondents reported organising to collect funds from community members to repair a

broken borehole, which they reported having built with community funding in the first place (97). Community members said that they had initially collected the money and then approached the county commissioner, who contacted the (unidentified) people capable of constructing the borehole; the same process would be followed for repairs (97).

### 3.2 Health

Access to health services is minimal in most villages, except for those closest to a *payam* or county headquarters. Even there, the quality of health facilities remains poor. In some communities (Wek, Bariak) a trip to the clinic required at least four hours of walking to a health facility, often only to find minimal or no staff or supplies, and almost certainly no doctors unless they travelled to the larger Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) clinics in Lankien or in Nasir (in neighbouring Upper Nile state). Other villages (Riang, Goakgoak, Thol) were closer – less than one hour’s walk – from a clinic, but only in one case (from Thol to the clinic in Lankien) did that result in access to a staffed and supplied facility.

A county health officer in Uror County reported that there are 14 health facilities in Uror: eight primary care centres (PHCCs), which he described as ‘small hospitals’; five primary care units, which are smaller than PHCCs and usually staffed only by a community health worker; and one larger clinic which is designated as a PHCC but run by MSF (47). In many cases, there exists a building referred to as a clinic or health centre, but it often lacks qualified staff, medicines, electricity, beds, and other basics. Some improvements are underway, according to county officials, including the installation of solar refrigerators to health centres in Uror (47). Of the NGOs working in the health sector, MSF operates its own clinics (offering free services) and maintains its own supply chains, while others work through the government for the two-fold purpose of increasing service provision in the short term and cultivating the government’s capacity to do the same over the long term. While only time will tell the success of the latter approach, it had not prevented a general perception among respondents that government health care services were of lower quality than those provided by NGOs.

Common health problems in Uror and Nyirol include malaria, *kala-azar* (visceral leishmaniasis), illnesses related to poor water and sanitation (giardia, guinea worm, hookworm, etc.) and tuberculosis, among others (47, 79, 80, 96, 98, 99). Injuries related to cattle raids, such

as gunshot wounds, are also becoming more common, which is a significant challenge given the distances to health facilities and the lack of even basic antiseptic and bandages in many clinics, much less specialised skills for treating such wounds (47).

There were no official statistics available regarding disease prevalence or mortality, although even official statistics would be questionable due to the lack of infrastructure for testing and reporting. Periodic *kala-azar* outbreaks pose a significant public health threat, with trends worsening since 2009 (WHO, 2011; Gurtong, 2013). 2012 was a bad year for malaria because of heavy flooding, according to health workers in both counties (47, 94). There was some malaria treatment available in both counties, but 'people aren't tested, they're just given pills' for malaria, according to a man in Nyriol and other respondents (40, 96, 97). Malaria may be even more common in cattle camps, as the swamps of the *toich* that provide water for cattle and people in the dry season are also fertile mosquito breeding grounds. The remoteness and mobility of the camps in general often mean that any health problems suffered there simply go untreated (47).

Both women and men in northern Jonglei reported a serious dearth of maternal and child health care in particular (17, 24, 30, 33, 40, 50, 59, 60, 67, 80, 96). For complicated pregnancies and births, women sometimes go to the county headquarters, or in Nyirol County to the MSF clinic. They might also travel to another county (17, 33, 67). Maternal mortality rates in South Sudan are among the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2013b).

There have been some childhood vaccination campaigns undertaken in the counties (47, 80), including one that began in Uror during our visit. A county health worker said that vaccination coverage of children in the county stood at 45% prior to the campaign, and that the target was 75% of all children under five vaccinated (using vaccines provided by UNICEF to the Ministry of Health) for measles, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, and other illnesses (80). It should be noted, however, that none of the households interviewed mentioned such programmes, so the extent of their reach is unclear.

### **3.3 Education**

The literacy rate in South Sudan is 27% (16% for females), and 70% of children between the ages of 6 and 17 have never set foot in a classroom (UNICEF, 2013a). In Jonglei,

only 27% of the population over 6 years of age has ever attended school (NBS, 2011), and 16% of the state's total population aged 15 and above is literate; the rate for females is approximately 8% (Maxwell et al., 2012). The literacy rate is 25% among 15-24 year-olds, indicating that education opportunities have increased in recent decades. That said, in 2009 there were on average 84 students per teacher and 169 students per classroom (ibid.). School buildings may exist, but few, if any, are sufficiently staffed and equipped. An education official in Uror county counted six functioning primary schools (in Pathai, Karam, Motot, Pieri, Mayai, and Pulchor) in the county, with 45 trained and 69 untrained teachers (21).<sup>8</sup> Insecurity has also taken its toll as communities that have been displaced by raiding have lost access to whatever school they may have had, or teachers have fled after raids and not returned.

Even normally functional schools in the *bomas* shut down temporarily for lack of students as people move with cattle during the dry season. The inclusion of the cattle camps in any service delivery scheme is minimal. The rainy season offers further challenges, as only those children who are tall enough to walk safely through the flooded paths and fields are able to attend, which excludes younger (or merely shorter) school-age children (67).

The only school that was reported to be functioning well was a unique facility in Bariak village where a wealthy businessman from the area had contributed money to build a school, purchase supplies, and hire teachers from Uganda. A fee of 100 SSP per student was charged, and although such a figure was prohibitively expensive for some families, many in the community and nearby villages were willing to pay. According to the County Commissioner, approximately 400 students attend the school, making it one of the largest in the county and prompting the Jonglei state government to enter into an agreement with the donor to help support teachers' salaries and keep the school running (92).

Other than the Bariak school, the only functional and reportedly satisfactory schools reported to the researchers were those in Bor, Malakal, Juba, and Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Families with both financial and social means will often send their children to live with relatives in those and other places in order to access better schools than are currently available in northern Jonglei or are likely to be constructed in the foreseeable future.

<sup>8</sup> 'Training' in this context denotes a diploma of some kind (most likely secondary school), though quality might range significantly.

Access to education appears significantly different, overall, for girls than boys. A county official in Nyirol estimated that approximately 30% of girls and 70% of boys go to school, which is 'not discrimination, just traditional behaviour' (99). A number of factors may keep girls out of school; the Nyirol official said that far fewer girls than boys are sent to school by their families, mostly due to traditional beliefs about girls' and women's roles and also to the tendency for girls to marry young, in some cases as young as 14 (99). Girls may also be kept out of school because of financial constraints on the household that limit the number of children that can be educated (which nearly always excludes girls), or because they are kept home to assist with childcare, water carrying, and other household tasks. There is also concern about girls' behaviour and exposure to negative influences in a school or town setting. A woman in Uror said that, while she believed there was no difference between boys and girls, she would rather send her sons to school because girls might not be able to sustain their education but would 'do other things' in a town setting (30).

### 3.4 Security

The provision of security, though generally not considered by donors to be a 'service,' was overwhelmingly respondents' greatest concern and demand of the government (12, 22, 23, 35, 36, 41, 50, 53, 54, 59, 68, 71, 80, 84, 88). The reasons for the government's inability to meet security demands are complex. While not lacking in manpower, the SPLA has internal organisational challenges related to the integration of other organised armed groups into the government after the CPA (Rands, 2010; Bennett et al., 2010). The South Sudan Police Service (SSPS) remains poorly trained and under-resourced (Bennett et al., 2010). Furthermore, without a well functioning justice and legal system to back it up, the SPLA and SSPS lack the capacity to respond systematically to raiding or sufficient presence to deter future violence and criminal activity in general.

The lack of security, and particularly the perceived lack of disarmament of the Murle, is considered by many in northern Jonglei to be the major failure of the national and the state government (23, 35, 41). As discussed above, Nuer communities in the area have suffered major losses and displacement due to heavy raiding in recent years. The need for other services has not diminished, but because the security situation has impacted life and livelihoods at such a fundamental level, it is the

most urgent concern for people who told us that, 'if we have security, we forgive the government of everything' – meaning, of course, the limited provision of other services (84). Another noted that, 'only the government can protect us. If we don't live in fear, we can cultivate, but if we have a lot of insecurity, we can't move' (36). An official in Nyirol reported that the military's inability to track and respond to cattle raiders effectively has led some SPLA soldiers to 'loan' their guns to local youth in order to protect themselves, though it was emphasised that such loans were temporary (83). These and other conflict-related issues are discussed further in the 'Armed conflict in Jonglei' section below.

At the same time as security is strongly demanded of the government, the government and in particular the SPLA were also described as a source of coercion and insecurity, particularly in relation to previous disarmament campaigns (see below). Such a dynamic is not new; in the previous colonial and post-colonial periods, the government(s) and armed forces constituted primary sources of insecurity in what is today South Sudan (Johnson, 2003; Leonardi, 2007; Santschi, 2013). This paradoxical situation in which the expected security provider – the state – is also a primary source of insecurity creates a conundrum for international engagement on state capacity-building, as there are few points of leverage leading to clear improvement, and few options for providing security through other sources (such as NGOs in the case of service provision). While the UN mandate in South Sudan includes the protection of civilians, neither its capacity nor its relationship with the GoSS allows it to be effective in this area (Hemmer, 2013).

### 3.5 Roads and transportation

The only needs mentioned with nearly the same frequency and urgency as security were roads and other transportation infrastructure, both of which are either extremely rudimentary or completely non-existent. At the time of independence, there were only 100 kilometres of paved road in all of South Sudan (IMF, 2011), and the situation in Jonglei in particular has not improved since. Jonglei is almost entirely flood plain and a very difficult place to build all-weather roads. In the rainy season many *bomas* become inaccessible for more than half the year, with even 'all-weather' airstrips becoming unlandable during part of the season. This severely constrains transportation and communication.<sup>9</sup> Many respondents noted that roads are an urgent need (17, 20,

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<sup>9</sup> No mobile phone networks existed in either Uror or Nyirol.



23, 24, 40, 42, 45, 46, 53, 59, 65, 72, 78, 99, 100, 104), partly because they are a necessary prerequisite for the provision of other services, including security. Further, many noted that roads would allow for increased trade, including between ethnic groups that are isolated from, if not actively in conflict with, one another (8, 23, 25, 42, 60, 99). That said, security along roads is also a concern, as armed banditry has become a significant hazard to travellers in remote areas.

### **3.6 International engagement at the local level**

In Uror and Nyirol counties, UN agencies and international NGOs engage in a range of activities related to humanitarian aid (including distribution of food aid, non-food items, tools, and seeds), health, education, food security, water and sanitation as well as veterinary and agricultural services and nutrition programmes. International actors support training activities, provide medicines, and support the construction of infrastructure, including local government buildings, schools, clinics and *hafirs*. They do this either through direct project implementation, partnerships with other NGOs, or support to state and local government (44). For example, health officials at the county and local levels noted that the medicines, vaccines, and other supplies provided at government clinics came through NGO channels, despite the government's public messaging suggesting to recipients that it is entirely government-provided (47, 62, 103).

Overall, we found eight UN agencies and a dozen international NGOs (the exact number is difficult to determine due to partnerships and shifting responsibilities among NGOs) active in Uror County. Some of them have a permanent presence, but many engage on an occasional or as-needed basis (45). The WFP provides food aid, the Lutheran World Federation provides non-food items and building materials, the Polish Humanitarian Commission for Action engages in water/sanitation and provides mosquito nets, and Tearfund offers nutrition and health services. Catholic Relief Services engages in agriculture, MSF in the health sector, and Norwegian People's Aid in agricultural rehabilitation (45). CARE has drilled some boreholes in the past but has no permanent presence in the county. BRAC supplies school materials. The World Health Organisation runs a mobile clinic (45), and the Carter Center fights guinea worm and trachoma and offers also capacity building for health staff. The Presbyterian Relief and Development

Agency has local staff on the ground who conduct farmer training and distribute seeds and tools (45). The local NGO *Wut Nuer* ('Nuer Man') builds boreholes and offers services in agriculture. FAO engages in the water and agriculture sectors (45). The same situation largely pertains in Nyirol County.

### **3.7 Social protection**

Extremely little in the way of social protection is available in Jonglei, whether provided by government or agencies. There has been some limited humanitarian assistance reported, such as distributions of food aid, bedding and mosquito nets in response to flooding or raids, though this hardly qualifies as social protection, and in any case is very minimal. The respondents who mentioned such support also noted that they had travelled to Yuai for the distribution but had not received anything (36, 46). Overall, the availability of such aid is minimal.

There is a history dating to the OLS era of support being provided in the form of food aid by WFP and other agencies. In the OLS era village headmen (Gol leaders) were in charge of targeting and distribution according to agency guidelines. Now the GoSS is responsible for food distributions when they occur, discharging this responsibility through the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC)<sup>10</sup> as well as county and local officials, including chiefs. NGOs may also respond to various crises including raiding and flooding. In cases where NGOs are responding to disasters and displacement, SSRRC is the governmental body responsible for tracking and coordinating distribution and other NGO activities, as well as 'verifying' cases requiring response, although limited resources constrain the verification activities it can carry out (14, 45, 50).

International agencies and NGOs that engage in emergency aid in Jonglei are coordinated at the state level, according to an NGO staff person. In the event of an emergency, the inter-agency group in Bor organises a cluster assessment team to assess and respond to the situation (103). IDPs and other respondents noted that the UN and NGOs had conducted assessments after raids and other emergencies (37, 45, 71), though the respondents could not necessarily identify the agencies and NGOs involved (37, 45, 71). Emergency relief from UN agencies and international NGOs takes the form of food aid, nutrition and education programmes and the distribution of non-food items (53, 54, 94, 103). A number

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<sup>10</sup> The SSRRC is an independent commission of the GoSS that has its representatives at the GoSS, state and local level.

of respondents from Uror and Nyirol County noted that in times of crisis, the WFP and international NGOs have distributed food aid and non-food items (19, 32, 40, 53, 79, 81, 92, 99).

Although food aid is distributed by international NGOs with SSRRC oversight (53), it remains broadly the responsibility of GoSS, which distributes aid through SSRRC and county and local officials. This approach can result in highly uneven allocation according to some. Both those who did and did not receive food aid accused the government, and in some cases NGOs, of corrupt or negligent distribution practices ranging from distributing far too little aid overall to failing to ensure that intended food aid actually reaches a particular village or population, to withholding some of the provisions and selling them in the local market (79). 'The government divides the people' through aid distribution that is incomplete or unfair, according to a woman in Nyirol County (96).

Given the perception that food aid is misappropriated (58, 79, 70), two respondents suggested that NGOs should directly distribute food aid and other services without the involvement of local government institutions (58, 70). 'We are not educated, so we don't know, but we trust the NGOs to distribute it. When NGOs distribute it we get some ... It seems like every time the government distributes assistance, we never get any. Now government is directing all the food. NGOs should distribute food, even if it means a delay' (70).

### 3.8 Services for IDPs

SSRRC is responsible for the provision of assistance to IDPs, of which there are many in Jonglei due to violent conflict, physical insecurity and environmental factors such as floods, food insecurity and lack of water. However, there is little assistance specifically targeted at IDPs in either the short or longer term (50), even in cases of displacement due to high-profile cattle raids or rebel militia attacks. A number of IDPs reported that food aid distributions had occurred after their displacement, but that they did not receive any assistance themselves. Respondents usually did not know where the food came from, and they also echoed sentiments that such aid was poorly distributed and did not reach many in need (30, 31, 53, 60, 63, 70, 79, 95).

### 3.9 Expectations of government provision of services

Expectations of service provision are difficult to gauge. On one hand, there is clear demand for the provision of basic services, including water (boreholes), health, education, and roads (17, 41, 54, 58, 59, 68). This is more pronounced among female respondents, who discussed service provision more frequently than males. On the other hand, a number of respondents said they understood that the government's capacity for providing services remained minimal due to its infancy and lack of funds (41, 48, 61). A man in Uror described his specific expectations of services and social protection, ranging from security to food aid, to medical care and education, but noted that 'the government is suffering together with us. It would give things to us if it had anything. But it has nothing to give' (41).

Some respondents, both male and female, viewed the provision of basic services such as water, health and education as the responsibility of NGOs – generally meaning international agencies and organisations (61, 70, 80). Indeed, with the significant precedent for international presence and service provision dating back to the OLS era and before,<sup>11</sup> there is still some belief, expressed for instance by a woman in Uror, that 'only the NGOs can provide [services] because they know our life. The government does not know how we are living' (62). The belief that government resources are simply too scarce for effective service provision contributes to the expectation that it should come from elsewhere, as does past experience with NGO social protection and services, which were often of greater quality and reliability than those that government sources provided.

Many people seem not to care *who* provides services, as long as they are available (41, 58, 65). Others distinguish between the services they expect the government to provide and those expected from NGOs or international agencies (often collectively referred to as 'UN'). The government is generally expected to provide roads and security, while food aid, water (boreholes and *hafirs*), health and education are more often thought to be the responsibility of external providers (53, 54, 56, 61, 70). Among these, only roads were mentioned notably more often by men than women; there was no clear gender dimension to expectations of any other kind of service, except to some degree maternal and child health, which was noted by more women (though that too was

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11 The history of service provision by non-state providers dates back even further. Non-governmental actors were major providers of services in what is now South Sudan as far back as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956), when Christian missionaries ran many of the schools (Sanderson, 1980).

frequently mentioned by men). Several village chiefs' expectations were that the government should provide schools while NGOs should be responsible for providing teachers (81).

The factors driving such expectations were unclear, but might include perceptions of current quality, the history of external service provision dating to the OLS era and before, and other factors. Some services, such as water (boreholes), are expected more from external actors even where they are just a likely to have been provided by government in the past.

The primary function of service delivery is to meet real and urgent needs, of which there is clearly no shortage. There is recognition, however, that service provision plays another role, which is the positive visibility of government itself. A man in Uror said:

***People need to see the government. When there are roads, and people see the government in the villages, then you won't see problems like there are now. Now there are no jobs and nothing to do, the population is just sitting, and when people are just sitting under the tree, they will think bad things. (48).***

A woman in Uror voiced the similar concern that 'we never see or hear government here,' and went on to note the community borehole that had not functioned in five months, despite reports to the payam administrator of the need for repairs (60).

### **3.10 Summary**

There remain significant gaps and challenges to the provision of nearly all services and social protection in northern Jonglei due to budgetary, logistical, and human resource constraints. As a result of these current difficulties as well as the long history of lack of services in most of Jonglei, many communities face food insecurity, lack of access to water, a high burden of disease, and low levels of education. Many of these problems are exacerbated when people move to cattle camps, which are often isolated, mobile and difficult for the GoSS or NGOs to access.

While most people recognise that the 'GoSS is very young' (46) and cannot provide everything needed, there is evidence of increasing demand for services such as water, education and health care. Overwhelmingly, however, the greatest demand is for security in the face on-going raiding and other forms of armed violence. The

next highest priority is for roads and other infrastructure that would allow more effective provision of and access to other services – and which crucially would also allow for the rapid deployment of security forces. There is some support for the funnelling the provision of social services from donors and NGOs through the GoSS, which may be slower but which may build capacity. A few independent service providers are operating in Jonglei, such as an MSF clinic and an independently funded school that now operates in partnership with the GoSS, but private providers are certainly not yet a viable alternative to government service provision.

One clear finding that emerged from the qualitative work is that the means of measuring access to services in the survey was flawed. Access was measured in terms of time required to reach schools, clinics, boreholes and so on, with longer times implying less access. In fact, while schools, clinics and boreholes all existed – and hence a number could be given for the time required to reach these locations – the number said nothing about access to services: in the majority of locations visited there was a school but no teachers and no classes, there was a clinic but no staff and no medicines, and there was a borehole, but roughly half of the boreholes seen were not in working order.



## 4 Armed conflict in Jonglei

Armed conflict constitutes the biggest single constraint to both livelihoods improvement and the provision of social services in Jonglei. Manifest in today's armed conflicts are many layers of past and present hostilities, including those between north and south Sudan, those among various ethnic groups, militia groups, clans and communities, and others. For most communities, the smaller-scale conflicts are the more noticeable ones, even though they are generally less visible to the outside world (08). While large-scale violence, such as the political conflict which broke out in various parts of South Sudan – including Jonglei – beginning in December 2013, is terribly dangerous and disruptive for all involved, the physical insecurity and vulnerability it implies are not necessarily out of the ordinary for many households and communities that have faced physical threats on an on-going basis for years.

Conflict in Jonglei and across South Sudan is often described as 'ethnic', but such descriptions are oversimplified, if not inaccurate. Since 2009, violence in Jonglei has sprung from three main interrelated sources: (1) inter-group violence such as cattle raiding, (2) larger-scale inter-group and anti-government violence including rebel groups, and (3) violence perpetrated by the government or SPLA either as part of an organised campaign, such as disarmament, or because of a lack of command and discipline. The roots of all of these issues lie in the complex legacy of the past civil war, including the shifting allegiances and strategies of many actors, as well as the current 'governance vacuum' and power struggles at local and national levels (Rolandsen and Breidlid, 2012). These dynamics are described and analysed in much greater detail in a conflict analysis paper recently produced by the SLRC South Sudan programme (Gordon, 2014). Here we will provide a brief overview of the actors and drivers of conflict and describe the findings of our qualitative fieldwork on the subject.

### 4.1 Conflict drivers and actors

#### 4.1.1 Cattle raiding

As of February 2013, residents of Uror and Nyirol almost universally pointed to cattle raiding by Murle as the main manifestation of armed conflict and insecurity in their communities and described such insecurity as the greatest challenge to their livelihoods. Raiding was discussed in 70 of 109 interviews, in many cases dominating the conversation. In February 2013, the Uror County Commissioner noted that 84 raids had been reported in the county in the nine months since

the Jonglei Peace Conference of May 2012 (42). The perpetrators and even the impacts of these raids are difficult to verify. Reports of damages and numbers of stolen cattle vary widely, in some cases ranging into the tens of thousands of missing animals in addition to killings, abductions of women and children and burning of property. There is almost no way to determine the accuracy of such reports or to know how many raids go unreported to authorities or the media, though a number of officials from both the government and NGOs confirmed the view that inter-community raiding has been both more frequent and more violent in recent years (83, 94, 107). The level of raiding has been increasing in South Sudan more generally (Small Arms Survey, 2012).

Regardless of the accuracy of reports, perceptions of raiding on all sides contribute to the cycles of revenge that feed continuous violence. In Lou Nuer areas, descriptions of raiding vary widely. Some describe small-scale, localised events involving a few Murle youth hiding in the bush until an opportune moment in which to attack a grazing area or family compound, and steal cattle (69). Other reports describe far more large-scale and violent events involving well-organised raiding parties purposely attacking the most vulnerable communities and individuals (31, 69). An elderly man in Uror described Murle and Nuer grazing their cattle together until 30 or 40 years ago, when a conflict and killing led to retributive attacks that have continued to worsen over time (67).

Cattle raiding has long been part of inter-group dynamics among pastoralists in South Sudan (Hutchinson, 2012). Respondents in Jonglei stated that raiding today is still rooted in the need and desire for cattle (35, 37, 41, 49, 65). Historically, competition for dry season grazing and water resources was a source of conflict as well, but this was not mentioned very much as a cause of violent conflict in 2013, when the predominant explanation centred on raiding. A *payam* administrator noted that raiding provides assets with which to pay bride price: 'When you want 10 wives you move around and you steal cattle' (49). A male Nuer youth distinguished raiding from score settling, saying that the male youths in his community no longer engaged in raiding, but 'in recent years they only engaged in revenges to get their cattle back' (65).

Raiding has not only an inter-communal dimension, but gendered and inter-generational dimensions as well. Elder males typically control the cattle in most communities,

and young men often have no alternative besides raiding to obtain enough cattle to be able to marry (69):

Even if my cows are stolen, and then our youths go and steal them back, and even if I can recognise my own cows among those they bring back, they would never return it to me. If you are an old man like me and your cows are stolen, all you can do is to rely on your relatives, or else maybe you have a daughter who can marry. Otherwise you will never get cattle again. Not even my own relative would return my cows if he stole them back. The youth go to raid only on behalf of themselves, not on behalf of the community. (69)

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Intra-group and inter-generational contestation over raided livestock is an important social dynamic of raiding that must be considered in analysis of violence in Jonglei, particularly as it is related to shifting power dynamics. These dynamics must be better understood if cycles of violence are to be brought to a halt (Gordon, 2014).

Raiding (and related violence) is a highly gendered activity, with significant implications for the perceived masculinity and the social capital of those participating.<sup>12</sup> Hutchinson's work on Nuer masculinity (2000) and Mkutu's work on similar pastoralist communities in Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda (2008), among others, note that raiding and revenge attacks in the name of protecting the family and community are key aspects of proving masculinity and worthiness as an adult male community member. In addition, for at least some ethnic groups in Jonglei, carrying out successful raids leads to social approval, fame if not glorification: young men who return from raids with cattle are met with joy and ululation (106). Respect and veneration, in addition to the financial and physical assets represented by cattle, provide the necessary social capital to marry (perhaps not for the first time), thereby realising greater fulfilment of the

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<sup>12</sup> These issues have been explored in greater depth in regards to the pastoralists of Karamoja region of north-eastern Uganda. See Stites, 2009; Mkutu, 2008.

masculine ideal (Hutchinson, 2000). At the same time, being on the receiving end of raiding signifies a failure on the part of men to provide protection and security to their households and communities. Unfortunately for the prospects for peace in Jonglei and elsewhere in South Sudan, the primary means of regaining the social capital that comes with this aspect of male identity is to engage in revenge attacks.

Raiding also impacts women and girls: first, increased violence toward women and children is often noted as a particularly strong motivation for vengeance (Hutchinson, 2000); and second, families who have lost cattle may rely on the marriage of daughters to regain assets (34, 65), contributing to pressure to marry early and increasing the commodification of women and girls (ibid.).

#### **4.1.2 Beyond raiding**

Raiding between Nuer, Murle, and neighbouring groups is not the only type of conflict long present in Jonglei or other states. Armed actors opposing the government, such as David Yau Yau (in Pibor County) and George Athor (in northern Jonglei, until his death in 2011), have also staged attacks in both Lou Nuer and Murle areas. These attacks are sometimes referred to as 'raids,' and indeed cattle may be taken, but they are under the direction of rebel leaders and therefore somewhat distinct from typical cattle raids. Such actors also serve as conduits for arms, receiving weapons from external sources and contributing to their wider availability in the general population (107; Small Arms Survey, 2013; Craze, 2013).

Other than raiding and political violence, other sources of conflict include disputes between Nuer (men) and with other groups over cattle, wives or pasture, or between families caught in revenge cycles for previous crimes. These disputes may turn violent or be 'resolved' through vigilante justice, but they may also be mediated and resolved peacefully by chiefs and other leaders (80, 100). A youth association leader described organising regular social gatherings of youths from different areas to encourage positive interaction and thereby decrease youth violence (65). He acknowledged the need for disarmament in service of the establishment of government authority: 'When we also have guns it means that there are two governments. I am with the government. I have no power.'

#### **4.1.3 Perceptions of disarmament**

Some respondents credited the government and its

disarmament campaigns with the decrease in Nuer-Dinka and intra-Nuer raiding and armed conflict (51, 66). A payam administrator noted that security in his payam had improved significantly since disarmament in every aspect other than on-going 'Murle disturbances'. He said that the army was present and providing security to the area and intra-Nuer violence had decreased (49). An NGO staff person in Nyirol also noted that disarmament led to a major decrease in raiding and rivalries among Nuer, even as it has made them extremely vulnerable to Murle raiding, which he described as worse in February 2013 than he had ever seen (103).

There persists a narrative of lopsided disarmament in Jonglei in which Nuer were disarmed effectively while Murle were not. This unequal disarmament is generally attributed to government failure, Murle obstinacy, or both. In reality, government disarmament campaigns have often been brutal, particularly in Pibor county where SPLA soldiers were accused of committing serious human rights violations during the 2012 disarmament drive as well as in previous campaigns (HRW, 2013).

People noted in interviews that disarmament was carried out violently in northern Jonglei as well. Respondents in Uror described the use of increasingly abusive and intimidating tactics in several rounds of disarmament carried out by the SPLA after the signing of the CPA in 2005:

***In the disarmament campaign, the government made a meeting with the chiefs and said the chiefs had to collect everyone's guns. Then, before the chiefs could complete that task, the government came back and held and tortured some of the young people and forced people to say where guns might still be kept, and took all those guns. That was in March and April 2012. In the first round of disarmament – six years ago – the community fought it, and argued with the soldiers who came. In the second round – five years ago – the same commander came back, and we still didn't like him. (67)***

Most of the population in Uror and Nyirol had reportedly been disarmed by the end of the most recent campaign. Perhaps surprisingly, we found little lingering resentment about the process of disarmament in northern Jonglei, despite whatever negative feelings may have existed during the campaign itself. There was, however, frustration and impatience with the government for its apparent failure to disarm 'everyone equally' (35) and provide security for disarmed communities (32, 34, 41,

42, 81). Many respondents – all Nuer – said they had disarmed and did not understand why the Murle had not done the same (37, 41, 49, 66, 81). A male IDP in Uror said that Lou Nuer like himself were helpless and ‘just sitting’ after disarmament, while the Murle were able to ‘move everywhere to Akobo, Uror and Nyirol and raid cattle’ because they were no longer afraid of resistance (41). There was intense demand for better security (12, 23, 35, 36, 37, 41, 50, 53, 54, 68, 70, 80, 84, 86, 88), but clear constraints to providing it due to resource and infrastructural constraints.

Disarmament has also dealt a blow to men’s identity as protectors. As one man in Uror said: ‘Our men look like women now because they don’t have guns’ (70). The manner in which disarmament has been carried out across Jonglei has often been violent and humiliating, featuring beatings, rape and torture of civilians, particularly in Pibor County (DDG, 2012; HRW, 2013).

The scale of Nuer disarmament can be called into question, given periodic large-scale armed attacks on Pibor such as those that took place in December 2011 and July 2013 in which the attackers came from ‘disarmed’ areas but clearly possessed weapons. An NGO staff person in Juba who is familiar with both the Nuer and Murle disarmament campaigns described ‘circular’ disarmament in which SPLA soldiers confiscated household weapons and then sold them back in exchange for cows or other assets (107). Weapons are also widely available in Juba and from other markets, and are therefore easily replaceable after disarmament; people simply give up their guns and then purchase more (107; Rands and LeRiche, 2012).

## **4.2 Water sources as conflict mitigation measure**

Our findings on the drivers of conflict and insecurity suggest that water access is not a particularly salient explanation for much of the conflict currently taking place in Jonglei. Competition for resources, particularly dry season water and grazing, is an issue, but does not explain the high levels of violence in Jonglei generally or in Uror and Nyirol in particular. Nearly all respondents’ descriptions of conflict focused on cattle ownership, power struggles and cycles of revenge within and between groups as the overarching drivers. This is notable because of the *hafir* construction projects currently underway in Uror and Nyirol and intended as a

conflict mitigation measure. The *hafirs* will serve many useful purposes, but conflict mitigation is not widely viewed as one of them (23, 35, 37, 81).

## **4.3 Summary**

Armed conflict and insecurity are the most significant concerns in northern Jonglei today, driving displacement, food insecurity and dissatisfaction with the government. Conflict is sometimes the result of competition for water and grazing but is more fundamentally about control of cattle (and therefore wealth, bride price and social status) and power. There were also several armed insurrections on-going in Jonglei at the time of fieldwork in February 2013.

There is undoubtedly mistrust on all sides and poor understanding of different perspectives and cultural contexts. From Nuer perspectives, the disarmament carried out in 2012 was lopsided and discriminatory because they were disarmed and the Murle were not. For the Murle, however, the disarmament process was violent and heightened their vulnerability to attacks by rival ethnic groups or the army. Peace talks are unlikely to succeed as long as they are based on a chief/elder model that does not take into account the non-hierarchical age-set dynamics and lack of authority figures among the Murle.<sup>13</sup> Other factors constrain livelihoods and access to social services, but it is clear that security trumps other concerns – at least in the current context.

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that, as a result of the findings presented in this section, the plan for further research in the next phase is to visit Murle areas, or, if access to Pibor is impossible, to at least interview Murle people who are displaced and somewhere else in South Sudan.

## 5 Governance and participation



One of the hypotheses of the SLRC study is that the nature of the relationship between states and citizens in post-conflict societies is to some degree mediated by the provision – and especially the quality – of social services. Much of the previous section suggested that service provision by the state is minimal, but that this did not particularly explain people’s view of the state. Given that the field evidence did not support the SLRC hypothesis, the question arises: what, and/or who, mediates the state–local or state–citizen relationship?

Much of the evidence from the field study suggested that, to a large degree, administrative chiefs mediate this relationship. The current chief system was introduced by the colonial administration and has served up to the present day as the link between communities and the local government administration, i.e. to *payam* administrators and county commissioners (these being the most visible presence of government institutions at the local level). This section outlines the role of chiefs and other local governance actors, and analyses the perceptions of local community members about the roles those actors play.

In recent years, there have been major changes in institutional structures and systems in South Sudan. Since the CPA in 2005, new executive, legislative, judicial and administrative institutions have been introduced at the national, state and local government levels. A range of legislation, including the currently prevailing Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (2011) as well as the Local Government Act (2009), provides the legal framework for government institutions’ objectives and functions. These are outlined in Annex 1. Despite such laws and new government institutions, however, the activities and responsibilities of chiefs have changed only to a limited degree since 2005.

### 5.1 Chiefs’ roles and responsibilities

Administrative chiefs comprise the lowest level of local government structures, and they fulfil a number of tasks, many of which they have performed since the colonial era. Chiefs are ‘betwixt and between’ the community and the government (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). Chiefs are elected and can be dismissed by their constituents. Consequently, in contrast to administrators and commissioners, community members can – at least in theory – hold them accountable for bad performance. At the same time, chiefs derive part of their authority from the state and enforce decisions and verdicts with the assistance of security sector personnel such as police officers.



A major role of chiefs is to serve as a bridge between their communities and the government (23, 62, 100). A female respondent explained that she has no direct contact with the government, but rather with chiefs who then communicate with (higher levels of) the government (62). Chiefs regularly communicate with *payam* administrators and other local government employees and attend meetings in the *payam* headquarters; senior chiefs may also meet with the county administration and represent their communities to external actors such as representatives of international NGOs and agencies (23, 28, 62, 66).

Chiefs are charged with delivering the demands and suggestions of community members up to the *payam* and county government (30, 33, 97), though several chiefs noted that the administration is not necessarily responsive (97). A female respondent reported that 'recently the chief hasn't [transmitted requests to the government] because they never saw any response to previous reports, and they know government doesn't have anything to give' (59). Chiefs are also the conduits through which information and instructions are passed from the government to communities (59). They also mobilise community members for public works projects and self-help activities, or to collect financial contributions toward those ends (90). Since the colonial era chiefs have been responsible for negotiating and ensuring protection from potentially violent actors, including the state and armed insurgents. They also did so during the civil war when the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) demanded support in form of food and recruits from community members (Leonardi, 2007).

Another important role of chiefs is to settle intra-communal disputes according to customary law in chief courts and informal arenas of justice (80, 99, 61). This is an important judicial and conflict resolution function that may often be the only source of such services. People seek chiefs' help to resolve various types of disputes, including conflicts related to divorce, theft, livestock ownership, adultery, land ownership and contested social obligations (23, 28, 80). Several interviewees described disputes that might be handled by chiefs, emerging in relation to current land and water scarcity and other critical challenges caused by displacement (80). Chiefs might mediate, advise, counsel and arbitrate in their courts. They enforce their judgments where possible with the assistance of police officers or chief courts guards (Leonardi et al., 2010). Litigants can appeal chiefs' judgments either in higher chief courts or in government

courts. Consequently, chiefs act 'as the lower rungs of the overall judicial and appellate hierarchy' (ibid.: 12). Chiefs sometimes also adjudicate homicide cases and assist with the exchange of cattle (as blood compensation) between the victim's and perpetrator's families (80).

Chief courts do not, however, have the capacity to settle inter-communal disputes, such as those related to cattle raids. Inter-communal conflict resolution mechanisms often involve higher-level government authorities and other stakeholders such as the church, politicians, and international agencies. Such conflicts are often tackled in peace conferences, dialogue processes and special courts (53). One chief described chiefs as supposedly 'neutral' in regard to the Lou Nuer attack on Pibor county in December 2011, stating that chiefs neither encouraged nor prevented local youths organising for the attack. He said that he and his colleagues generally try to convince Lou Nuer youths not to attack the Murle, and that the youths have to follow the orders of the government and the chiefs, adding that 'it is very rare for people not to listen to their chief' (100), contradictory as those statements may seem.

Chiefs may play an important role in the provision of social protection to impoverished families and individuals (23, 28, 66, 81), though several respondents observed that recent cattle raids and harvest failures had affected chiefs and community members alike and weakened communal social protection mechanisms (23, 28). Chiefs can ask or, if they deem it necessary, order relatives of deprived households and other more affluent community members to support struggling households (23, 28, 81), the belief underlying such actions being that 'if you have something, you share it' (81). Chiefs may also provide assistance from their own resources and local revenues when possible, though we heard that they themselves may be in need of support as much as their constituents in difficult years (23, 66). They are also consulted by local government officials and NGOs to identify appropriate recipients of assistance.

Although chiefs engage in various activities on behalf or in support of the local government, the support they receive from higher levels of government is limited. A headman underlined that chiefs often rely only on their 'own power' (28) to carry out their activities. They may begin projects and hope that 'later on when the government arrives, the government could take it up' and perhaps also compensate them for the work (28). This is a practical concern: in most cases, chiefs do not have offices or any other kind of infrastructure available to them apart from,

in some cases, a *tukul* built by the community. If they possess a means of transport, it is usually a privately owned item such as a bicycle. They are not paid by the local government (54), though they may supposedly keep part of the court revenues as payment (61).

## 5.2 Perceptions of the role of chiefs

Administrative chiefs are associated both with the government and the community. Several respondents, including chiefs, argued that chiefs are not just a point of liaison with the government, but part of it (61). One respondent noted: ‘they’re all the same institution’ (97). A female respondent suggested that chiefs are part of the government because whatever the chiefs know and do is reported to the county commissioner. The respondent asked: ‘Why would that happen unless the chiefs are part of government?’ (79). Another female respondent suggested that chiefs are more loyal to the government than to the community: ‘The chiefs are not our people, they are with the government’ (96). At the same time, some interviewees were convinced that chiefs belong to the community, though that did not necessarily mean that they were more actively engaged in helping struggling community members (30).

We found a variety of opinions on the performance of chiefs. A number of respondents expressed positive perceptions of chiefs, regardless of the level of support they might provide to community members. A female interviewee stated: ‘It’s a democratic system, and the chief is fair and provides justice. He can’t provide any assistance, though’ (59). Some interviewees explained that they perceive the distribution of the little food assistance available as ‘good’ and ‘fair’ (39, 62). However, critics – including one chief – associated chiefs and local government officials with corruption, appropriation of food aid and unfair channelling of services (64, 70, 58). Several elders stated that services should not be delivered through local government and chiefs, as they allocate services to their kin or friends and not to intended beneficiaries (58). Despite critical voices, chiefs seem to be perceived as legitimate by many respondents.

Overall, we identify three main sources of chiefs’ legitimacy: traditional legitimacy relating to the historicity and the sociocultural and sociopolitical embeddedness of their chiefly offices; performance-based legitimacy from providing a number of important services at the local level and by acting as intermediaries between the government and communities; and process-oriented legitimacy, established through ‘rule of law; checks and

balances’ – in this case reflecting the fact that chiefs are elected and can to some extent be held accountable by their constituencies (Wild et al., 2013).

## 5.3 Participation

The term participation was purposely left undefined during fieldwork in order to explore interviewees’ own understandings of the concept. Respondents described various definitions, including access to information, community consultation, involvement in decision-making processes and participation in communal work.

### 5.3.1 Participation as contribution to communal labour and local revenues

Some respondents mentioned required labour as one form of community participation; one *payam* administrator said that he and his colleagues would call on the community to participate in construction work and provide materials for projects (40b). Interviewees described different types of communal labour such as the construction of community facilities, dykes, schools and health clinics, as well as the clearing and construction of roads (97, 53). Other reported forms of participation included support to indebted community members, orphans and impoverished families, and transporting sick people to health facilities in the county headquarters (40b). In some cases, community members reported being compensated for their labour, often with food during the work period; people working on the road in one county were fed using bulls provided by local officials (42, 53, 96). One respondent stressed that the community ‘has to participate’, suggesting that community members cannot opt out (40b), though several respondents described voluntary labour (42, 96). Others noted frustration with obligatory labour; a female respondent stressed that activities like road building should be the work of the government, and that community members should not be obliged to provide labour (17).

Taxes and other charges are another form of local contribution. Respondents referred to market taxes, taxes collected at roadblocks, livestock contributions, chief court revenues, social service taxes, fees and different other types of contributions. Yet these revenues were hardly mentioned by local government officials. Asked about revenues and service delivery a *payam* administrator downplayed the revenue collected: ‘This is little money. How shall we provide services with that money?’ (40b). Local revenues are often not collected systematically and transparently (Selassie, 2009) and



they are hardly used to finance services, but to cover salaries in some cases instead (54). Respondents in general did not know what the revenues are used for (48, 67, 79). Thus it seems that community members are often not informed about the use of local revenues, let alone be involved in decision-making processes about the allocation of local revenue.<sup>14</sup> Respondents furthermore had been asked to contribute assets, such as handing over bulls to the SPLA. A *payam* administrator explained that his *payam* had sent 100 head of cattle to the SPLA (40b) in April 2012 at the time of border clashes between the SPLA and the Sudan Armed Forces.

Inhabitants of Uror and Nyirol, like all South Sudanese, have a long history of contributing labour, taxes, assets and recruits to government institutions and armed groups including the SPLM/A (23, 48, 66) without receiving substantial services in return.<sup>15</sup> As a result, they do not necessarily expect basic services in return for taxes and other kinds of contributions. Asked what they would do if they continued being taxed and saw nothing coming from it, a respondent stated ‘we have nothing to say, we don’t know what to do. We are not blaming the government, it is young and still has a weak administration’ (54).

### **5.3.2 Information sharing, consultation and participation in community meetings**

As mentioned above, information and decision-making take place in community meetings called by chiefs (64, 65, 61). Several interviewees noted that such meetings do not take place on a regular basis, but are organised only when specific issues arise, such as the construction of a new borehole, the allocation of food aid or the selection of a committee (48, 59, 64). Other topics less related to government are also discussed at such meetings, such as movement to cattle camps and management of fishing rights (55).

While some chiefs reported ‘always’ attempting to gain the support of the community for an activity or project (64), some respondents reported minimal opportunities for participation. A male cattle keeper stated that ‘the big problem of the government is its failure to consult us. They never consult us. If they would consult us there would be fewer problems’ (63). Yet the same respondent said that chiefs consult community members about specific topics such as challenges in relation to access to water, ‘problems with Murle’ and other community

challenges. The last public meeting in his community took place in August 2012 and focused on ‘how to survive cattle raids without any arms’ as well as plans for 2013 (63). Notably, this respondent’s frustration at the perceived lack of government consultation relates to higher levels of government and not the chiefs (63).

Local government institutions provide only selective information to community members. Information about the collection and allocation of local revenues, for instance, are not shared. Furthermore, the *payam* and county administrations involve community members only to a limited degree in decision-making processes, mostly passing down orders and requests. There were a variety of responses regarding women’s participation in public meetings (62, 81). One female interviewee explained that only the few literate women in the community participated in public meetings, but that it was up to women whether to attend meetings – they were not barred (62). Another female respondent underlined that women have a large role in discussions in her community (59). Other respondents noted that women in their communities participated in elections for chiefs and leadership of the women’s associations (17, 62, 81).

Most respondents did not demand more participation. It seems that many citizens of Uror and Nyirol do not expect higher levels of participation, access to information or consultation, particularly from higher levels of government. Their lack of input does not appear to impact their perceptions of government. Accordingly the legitimacy of higher levels of government is in the case of rural population in the case studies apparently not strongly related with access to information, consultation and participation.

Chiefs mediate state–society relations in different ways. They are the major mouthpiece of the government at the local level. At the same time, they convey requests and information about challenges and needs from their communities to higher levels of government. When community members are to be consulted it is usually chiefs who organise public meetings. It is also often the chiefs who collect local contributions (bulls or taxes) and or who mobilise labour and recruits on behalf of the government. In their role as intermediaries chiefs are expected to mediate the conflicting interests of community members and the government. In that sense, it is mostly the chiefs who deal with community

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<sup>14</sup> A female IDP selling twine in the market noted that she has no idea what happens with the market taxes. She stated that she wouldn’t ask or she’d get ‘burned’ (punished) (79).

<sup>15</sup> The resources collected by the SPLM/A were not used for public services but for warfare during the civil war (Rolandsen, 2005).

expectations vis-à-vis the government, and who have the important task of conveying these expectations to the government. The way chiefs pass on information from the government to their communities does seem to impact many community members' perceptions of the government, and so may be an important factor determining whether community members have a positive view of the state or not.

## 5.4 Other non-state institutions and authorities

Besides local government institutions and chiefs, other institutions and authorities, such as the church, women's and youth groups, age sets, and spiritual leaders play an important role in governance and politics at the local level. Few local NGOs are active in Uror and Nyirol counties.

### 5.4.1 Churches

Most community members are said to be Christian (though it should be noted that this claim was made mainly by church leaders) (32), and church elders therefore constitute another kind of respected local leadership. The church constitutes a moral authority at the local level, teaching people 'how to behave and not to do any bad things' (39), and spiritually supporting community members in need (32). Religious leaders also try to resolve disputes between clans, families, and individuals, though one noted that their influence does not extend to inter-group conflict, stating that 'only the government can resolve the conflict with the Murle' (53).

During the colonial era, the church and missionaries were major service providers, running schools and health centres (Santschi, 2013). Today the Catholic Church provides some education and health services in other areas of South Sudan, but it does not provide any basic social services in most of the villages we visited. A church leader noted that his church does not provide services since it does not have the necessary funds and staff (53).

### 5.4.2 Youth and women's associations

Nearly every county, *payam*, and *boma* has a women's association and a youth association. Women's and youth associations serve as means to organise and mobilise women and youth for communal and government work, rather than as vehicles of empowerment and political organising. According to one respondent, such associations are creations of the government. Indeed, youth associations are often closely linked with the SPLM

(*Sudan Tribune*, 2013).

A male youth leader explained that the youth as a social group and age set have long been an organised force (65). The concept of a formal youth association with one leader organising the youth of a *boma* is, however, a recent invention. The respondent reported that the government had ordered the youth to create an association and to select a leader (65). That particular leader believed that he had been selected due to his 'behaviour' and his capacity to persuade and mobilise people for communal self-help activities, including an initiative he spearheaded to construct a water catchment area to maintain community water access during the dry season (65). He noted that one of his tasks was to mobilise youths for communal work such as the construction of guesthouses. Youth associations seem to relate to the settled villages and administrative entities such as *payams* and counties, whereas more traditional bases of youth organisation, such as age sets (discussed below), relate to the cattle camps.

Women's organisations are sometimes connected to the church and sometimes separate (17, 33, 59, 60, 67). A respondent who was a leader in her county's women's association noted that its county-level leadership consisted of nine women representing over 1,000 women in groups in all the *payams*. The association receives no funding, she said, either for its work or for the time commitment of its leaders, who often move to the county seat to work full-time for the association, unless they have small children at home (33). A leader of a county women's association described the group's tasks as receiving guests and taking care of the county commissioner's compound (17). Local women's groups' activities are similarly focused on taking care of chiefs' buildings and other community spaces, and preparing food for community meetings (17, 33, 59). In Yuai, the women's group was participating in road construction, although there was consternation among some of the women that they were pressed into this type of service – which they thought of more as men's or government's responsibility – on top of women's other responsibilities in their households (17).

In terms of 'political' organising, women's organisations may provide a space in which women can discuss their concerns, which can then be taken to chiefs or higher levels of government, but some women said there might be little or no responsiveness from such actors (27, 59). A male youth leader in Uror said that, while younger women

were welcome to join the youth associations, their concerns were addressed by the women's associations (18). In reality it is probably more likely that their concerns are simply not addressed.

## **5.5 'Traditional' sociopolitical entities**

There are various types of 'traditional' sociopolitical entity at the local level. The following paragraphs touch on some that play a role in governance and service delivery, particularly in relation to security and social protection.

### **5.5.1 Youth and age sets**

The Lou Nuer, like other South Sudanese ethnic groups, are stratified according to age and divided into different age sets. Members of different age sets and generations fulfil different societal functions and possess dissimilar levels of political influence and access to assets.

The activities of Lou Nuer youths include agricultural work and cattle management, including the organisation of cattle camps and migration with cattle to areas where water and pasture are available (23, 61, 65, 69). Youths are also engaged in physical work that needs to be done in the community, such as the building of homes and *lwaks*, as well as protection of the community, which may include raids and attacks on enemies (59). An elder noted that 'when Murle come to raid, it is the "White Army" that is responsible for protecting the community from the Murle – the youth of the community' (69).<sup>16</sup> Age sets are not the primary organisational framework of the Nuer, as they are for some ethnic groups, notably the Murle. Nor are they the 'organizational basis for defensive or offensive action. Rather, rural (civilian) Nuer fighters were always organised by village and by tribal section, never by age-sets.' (Hutchinson, 2012: 13).

That said, age sets remain an important form of social organisation among the Nuer. Members of more senior age sets commonly fill leadership posts, including chieftaincies, administrative posts and political posts. In practice, different age sets – and in particular members of adjacent age sets – are involved in competition over power and control of resources. At the community level, contests over political influence may emerge. For instance, in the past, and to some degree

up to the present day, Lou Nuer chiefs and elders have not necessarily been able to control Lou Nuer cattle camp youths – for example to prevent them from raiding other groups. Nevertheless, some respondents argued that Lou Nuer, in contrast to Murle, are in control of their youths (32).

## **5.6 Clan, lineages and families and social protection**

Clans, lineages, and families are important sociopolitical entities with regard to mutual support – a very important mechanism of protection against vulnerability in the absence of formal social protection programmes. Nuer are obliged to assist relatives who face hardship (Otim and Diu, 2005). It appears that social protection provided by relatives, and to a lesser degree by neighbours, is the major source of social security (82). Asked to describe important social assets, a female interviewee stressed that her relatives are the most important social assets during a crisis (82).

Several respondents affected by hunger and other crises explained that they receive support from kin, for instance in the form of food, seeds, milking cows, or money to buy food (29, 36, 40, 46, 63, 82, 71). In a number of cases, IDPs had moved near their relatives in order to get assistance from them (30, 34, 39, 41, 46, 66, 71). A female IDP explained: 'My parents live in [county headquarters], so I came [here] to get help ... My parents and my brother and sister assist me' (46). A chief noted that 'the poorest families might get help from relatives, or will migrate to where they have relatives or others who can assist them. If the situation is better where they migrate, they'll stay there; if it's no better, they'll come back here' (66). However, in a number of cases, respondents noted that their relatives are equally affected by current crises and therefore cannot support them at all or only to a limited degree (30, 39, 62, 71), resulting in breakdown of the system of family social support.

## **5.7 Spiritual leaders**

The Lou Nuer have different types of spiritual leaders. Besides *Khour muon* – translated variously as 'leopard-skin chiefs' (Greuel, 1971) or 'earth priest' (Otim and Diu, 2005) – prophets exist in Lou Nuer areas. Before the introduction of administrative chiefs by colonial rulers, Lou Nuer were led by such spiritual leaders, who also

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<sup>16</sup> The White Army is an oft-mentioned but relatively poorly understood conglomeration of community militias composed of Nuer 'youth' (a category which can include men in their 40s).

settled disputes (100, 104).

Spiritual leaders are associated with the capacity to communicate with divine powers, protect the wellbeing of their communities, resolve armed conflicts, foresee the future, enforce social obligations and societal norms, and advise community members (39, 104, 23, 61, 104). During the past several decades, the influence of spiritual leaders has been decreasing due to Christianisation and societal change (23, 104). One leopard-skin chief noted that spiritual leaders still have power, but fewer people follow their guidance because now 'people are very proud. They are educated, are civilised and have weapons' (104). Yet spiritual leaders still play an influential role in warfare. The alleged prophet Dak Kueth is widely rumoured to have been involved in mobilising Lou Nuer fighters who attacked Pibor in 2011, although no clear link has been established.

## 5.8 Summary

Chiefs act as intermediaries between the community and the local government, and provide important services at the local level, despite numerous constraints. By settling disputes according to customary law, chiefs provide access to justice, foster stability at the local level, and prevent armed clashes to some degree. Chiefs allocate food aid and are consulted by the government and agencies to assign services such as boreholes and schools. Chiefs mobilise communal labour and contributions. They also ensure some degree of social security and the redistribution of wealth at the local level. Social security, based on assistance by relatives and neighbours, seems to be a major source of support in good times as well as during crisis. However, 'traditional' social security mechanisms are negatively affected by major crises such as harvest failures and raids.

A number of respondents accused chiefs of alienating food aid and government resources. These critics believed that chiefs and local government officials unfairly allocate services, and that chiefs defend the interests of the government. Women, in particular, aired critical views about chiefs. However, because chiefs are elected and can be dismissed, they can to some extent be held to account for bad performance, unlike administrators and commissioners and other higher level administrators and officials. Although churches are present at the village level, they provide very little in the way of social services.

At the community level, community members have different opportunities to participate in decision-making

processes, including chiefly elections and dismissals, communal consultations conducted by chiefs, and communal meetings related to societal issues. However, despite these opportunities, local political participation has its limitations. Women and youth do not necessarily participate in public meetings and their influence is limited. Furthermore, decisions, reports, and suggestions addressed to higher government institutions are not necessarily considered and implemented due to a lack of human and financial resources. Participation at the higher levels of government is even more limited. County commissioners are still appointed by governors. County legislative councils seemingly exist in Jonglei, but it is unclear how much community members are involved in the election of members and how much these councils supervise the executive. Members of parliament were depicted as being distant, difficult to reach and uninterested in supporting the community.

Since the colonial era up to the present day, the chief system has proven itself to be a particularly resilient local government institution in South Sudan. During the civil wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005), when higher-level government institutions mostly ceased to work in rural contexts, chiefs continued to engage in their different fields of activity and played an important role in mobilising food and recruits for the SPLM/A and other warring parties. Though affected by politico-military crises, chiefs continued their work self-sufficiently. We found this to remain true during fieldwork in early 2013 in Uror and Nyirol counties, where chiefs were working without formal support from either the county or state government.

Their status as intermediaries between communities and higher-level local government institutions provides chiefs with influence and authority. Yet, at the same time, it makes chiefs vulnerable to discontent among community members and coercion or attacks from government institutions and armed groups. During the civil wars, various parties to the conflict undermined chiefs' authority (Bradbury et al., 2006) and made 'repeated assaults upon, and humiliation of chiefs, often in front of their people' (Leonardi et al., 2005: 9). Although chiefs were often described to us as fair and respected, they do not necessarily represent all community members' interests; some chiefs may instead follow their personal political and economic interests and/or those of local elites. Chiefs are often influential political stakeholders in local political arenas where they contest with other stakeholders over influence and control of local revenues. Chiefs' judicial practices do not fully correspond with international human rights standards or with South

Sudanese legislation.

International agencies, in cooperation with SSRRC and chiefs, provide some food and non-food items to some crisis-affected households. However, respondents described this support as limited and unreliable. Mutual support among relatives and community members constitute the major and most reliable support mechanisms. Chiefs enforce societal obligations of mutual support and they redistribute community wealth at the local level. Yet these support mechanisms are negatively affected by insecurity and major crises such as harvest failures and raids.



## 6 Synthesis: Revisiting the research questions



This study was conducted in early 2013. Because of this, it does not address the outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan in December 2013 and the impacts of this on study questions. That remains a topic for future study. Broadly speaking, this research was aimed at addressing three questions. These are:

- 1 Internal state-building processes. How do people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state in conflict-affected situations affect state legitimacy, state ability to provide social protection and services, and under what circumstances does this lead to state building?
- 2 International engagement with the state. How do international actors interact with the state and attempt to build the capacity of state institutions to deliver social protection and basic services?
- 3 Livelihoods and response. What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

This fieldwork was mostly oriented to questions 1 and 3. This section provides a brief analytical summary of findings on all three questions.

### 6.1 Services and internal state-building processes

Virtually all respondents (including government employees) agreed that government institutions at the local level are largely unable to provide services. Some water, health and education infrastructure exists, but it is clearly inadequate. There is almost nothing in the way of social protection programming, and only rarely any humanitarian assistance for people displaced by raiding or other shocks. While some people expect the government to provide basic services, UN agencies and NGOs are the institutions more generally associated with service delivery and expected to engage in service provision. Yet most people do not blame the government for the lack of services. Many South Sudanese, and in particular inhabitants of rural areas such as Uror and Nyirol Counties, have never really received adequate basic services from government institutions. Consequently, they seem to have only limited expectations of service delivery from the government. The widespread view is that the GoSS is 'young' and therefore should not be expected to deliver more in the way of services than is currently available. The government's inability to provide services did not negatively affect

numerous respondents' view of the government or the government's legitimacy – in fact most respondents sympathise with the government. This suggests that, in this particular instance, the provision of social services *does not* particularly influence people's perception of the state and state legitimacy. Such perceptions are largely formed by other factors.

Some respondents blamed the state and national government for marginalising Lou Nuer communities in Jonglei state and the new nation more broadly. This relates partly to service delivery but also partly to a sense of isolation or neglect and political underrepresentation. A staff member of an international NGO who was been working on Jonglei suggested that many Lou Nuer and Murle believe that they are marginalised by a state and national government that they perceive as favouring the Dinka (a view that has probably hardened since the outbreak of violence in December 2013). This perceived marginalisation has a negative impact on their view of the state and national government.

The provision of security was the main demand made to the government. Security was described as key condition for improved livelihoods and service delivery. It is also an absolute necessity for any livelihood security in a pastoral area with vast areas of uninhabited land. There was widespread agreement that security should be the first priority of the government for Uror and Nyirol – and indeed for Jonglei state as a whole. While there are some local mechanisms that can partially make up for the lack of other services, local mechanisms alone are not able to control the level of raiding in particular, or the level of violent conflict more generally. While raiding was the predominant form of violence in Northern Jonglei in early 2013, there were armed insurrections and counter-insurgency operations occurring nearby as well.

The government's and SPLA's failure to prevent raiding attacks has caused discontent within Lou Nuer communities. Numerous respondents including local government employees blamed the GoSS and the SPLA for having disarmed Lou Nuer, leaving them unprotected and defenceless, while having not equally disarming their adversaries. The inequality of the disarmament – seemingly more than the disarmament itself – is the source of a good deal of grievance vis-à-vis the state. The coercive disarmament of Lou Nuer and the continuing insecurity negatively impact the view of many Lou Nuer of the government. In July 2013 – after fieldwork was completed – armed Lou Nuer took up arms and once more attacked Murle communities in Pibor County.

Though none of the respondents phrased this in terms of the 'legitimacy' of the state, it certainly affects – and perhaps also reflects – their view of the state, and the particular government in power at the state and the national level. Local representatives of the state are keenly aware of these demands, and see the construction of roads, air strips and communications infrastructure as key to being able to deliver security, improve market access, make inputs available and improve labour mobility. But building roads in a flood plain such as Jonglei is a very expensive undertaking. Locally built roads are impassable for much of the year.

Citizens' access to information and participation in the decision-making processes of government institutions are limited. At the village level mostly male community members attend irregular village meetings where they are informed about government policies and demands and where they are to some extent consulted. Exchange with local government is mediated through chiefs. Yet local government institutions hardly involve community members in decision-making processes, but rather mostly pass down orders and requests. A *payam* administrator's interpretation of community participation as communal labour and communal contribution in forms of food and taxes captures this lack of participation in decision-making processes. At the same time, local government institutions themselves are hardly involved in planning and budgeting processes by state-level institutions. Despite the fact that pieces of legislation including the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (2011) stipulate that South Sudan is 'governed on the basis of a decentralised democratic system', decentralisation is only practiced to a limited degree and centralising tendencies and top-down decision-making continue to prevail (Knopf, 2013).

Although respondents noted that they were in most cases barely consulted or informed about decision-making processes, they indicated that they did not expect to be involved. It seems that they are used to the current practice of engaging not community members in decision-making processes. Consequently, limited participation does not necessarily impact on the perception of the government and the government's legitimacy.

Understanding other factors that shape perceptions of the government and government legitimacy necessitates looking at different levels of government separately. Chiefs who have the ability to mediate between society and higher levels of government were, despite some criticism, perceived as legitimate by many

respondents. We identified three sources of chiefs' legitimacy: traditional legitimacy, performance-based legitimacy and process-oriented legitimacy (Wild et al., 2013). Higher levels of government provide only limited services and security in Uror and Nyirol Counties and there are hardly any mechanisms for citizens to hold them to account or to participate in decision-making processes. Some respondents feel that Lou Nuer are politically marginalised. Yet numerous respondents seem to consider the GoSS as legitimate to some degree. One factor that influenced the legitimacy of the state or government at higher levels in the eyes of the communities visited during field research included the recent independence of South Sudan, for which the SPLM/A and GoSS are taking the credit. A further aspect might be the rejection of the Government of Sudan against whom the SPLM/A fought during the civil war, and whom southerners blame for atrocities and decades of political and economic marginalisation (Johnson, 2003). Many southerners felt that in Sudan they had been treated as second-class citizens.

**Box 1: International engagement with the state**

The delivery of basic social services and livelihood support services is mainly funded through external sources in South Sudan. UN agencies and international NGOs play the lead role in delivering basic services in Uror and Nyirol counties. They implement their programmes on their own or with local partners. In the health sector, for instance, NGOs have handed clinics over to the government but continue to support the clinics. Our data does not support the hypothesis that the delivery of services by international agencies and NGOs undermines people's perceptions of the government and the government's legitimacy. Many respondents did not expect the government to provide basic services. Consequently, the fact that international actors play a significant role in service delivery does not negatively impact on the way their perception of the government. Some even suggested that perhaps this role had been curtailed too quickly.

Some agencies and NGOs work with and coordinate with local government institutions, whereas others such as MSF work completely independently. Respondents noted that NGOs who bypass government institutions in the short run provide better services, but they do not help to build the capacity of government institutions. South Sudan officials and local government employees noted that they are informed about and involved in the activities of UN agencies and international NGOs only to a limited degree and they do not have the capacity and the resources to oversee the activities of international NGOs and agencies.

South Sudan is one of the pilot countries for the international community's New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. A senior official expected that the New Deal approach would mean that South Sudanese leadership and ownership over service delivery would increase. Some agencies and NGOs support government institutions at the national, state and local level with capacity building, training, materials and construction. How this might play out in a vast, sparsely populated state like Jonglei with poor road infrastructure and only a limited urban hierarchy is hard to predict. Certainly there is some validity in the direct provision of high quality services, but there is clearly also a need to strengthen the capacity of local government.

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<sup>17</sup> The FAO/SLRC survey carried out in 2012 showed levels of household food insecurity at around 75%, so the malnutrition results reflect trends over a period longer than the timeframe of this study. Save the Children reported roughly the same prevalence of GAM and SAM in 2012.

## 6.2 Livelihoods

Livelihood systems – and the services that support them – are in a state of decline in both counties. Many people in early 2013 were surviving on little more than *lalop* seeds and leaves – even though this research took place long before the onset of the usual ‘hunger season’. While there is no recent baseline against which to measure livelihood change (indeed this study is intended to provide one), respondents in most locations reported declines in farming and showed signs of barely coping with the current poor harvests and limited income or access to food from livestock. Save the Children (2013) reported a prevalence of GAM of 26.9% and SAM of 7.1% in April 2013. These are well above the level of a humanitarian emergency – but there has not been any ‘emergency’ declared, and there has been no specific shock *per se* with the exception of the raids.<sup>17</sup> And there was no evidence in this study that levels of malnutrition or food insecurity were particularly higher in *boma* or *payams* more prone to the risk of raiding.

While there is no overall livestock survey for Jonglei – and therefore no immediate evidence on overall livestock numbers – in all places where the research was conducted there was a palpable fear of cattle raiding and widespread reports of livestock losses to both raiding and to diseases (but especially the former). As long as cattle constitute wealth and power, and as long as the price of cattle and of brides continues to be high, the likelihood of raiding, and cattle-based conflict remains high. Under these conditions, the most prized asset in a pastoral community and pastoral livelihood system is also the source of a great deal of vulnerability. Cattle camps provide a degree of dry season protection, but leave both herds and their owners extremely vulnerable to raiding en route to and from the camps.

The need for improved security was made clear in all the research sites and underlined by county and local government officials everywhere. The degree of security and the perceived fairness in the means of achieving that security are the two main factors affecting people’s perceptions of the state in the areas visited. This has short-term ramifications in terms of preventing raiding – and it should be noted that while communities in Uror and Nyirol have suffered a high level of raiding, they are not alone in this.<sup>18</sup> But it also has longer-term ramifications

in that, even if raiding were stopped immediately, there is now a large proportion of the population who previously had livestock who now do not, and the question of how to enable these people to equitably regain livestock assets is not easily addressed.

There has been a corresponding breakdown in the livelihoods services that existed before. This is most notable with regard to the network of community animal health workers that was developed under OLS in the 1990s and early 2000s. While many of the individuals trained as community-based animal health workers are still around, the network has broken down and there are no longer good supply chains for vaccines and drugs. The intent of the FAO Farmer Field School project is to begin to address some of the demand for livelihood support services – in this case in the form of agricultural extension – but many other services are not available. Restoration of these services and improvement of market linkages will be critical to rebuilding livelihoods in Uror and Nyirol

While security is the major priority of local communities – and the major demand on government – local government leaders view roads as a priority. County-level leaders in both Uror and Nyirol confirmed this, and indeed the efforts of Uror County in this regard have led to a new – albeit tenuous – road link between Yuai and Duk Padiet. This road was constructed with volunteer (unpaid) labour. County-level officials stress the link between roads and both strengthening livelihoods and providing security.

## 6.3 Gender

Gender roles are strictly defined and have not evolved much despite significant changes in family structures wrought by the civil war and the death and displacement of many people. A large proportion of households are female-headed, and even more are probably female-managed. These households often face severe challenges in terms of livelihoods and service access because of the burden of work concentrated on women and children.

Current security and environmental dynamics threatening pastoral livelihoods and the cattle economy are challenging both men’s and women’s gender identities. The need for men to possess cattle to pay bride price and

<sup>18</sup> The next round of qualitative fieldwork was proposed to be in Pibor County among Murle communities in order to get their perceptions of the current conflict, its roots and how it affects people’s livelihoods and perception of the state there. Current conditions of insecurity have prevented the team from being able to visit Pibor, but fieldwork will be undertaken in November 2013 with Murle people displaced from Pibor who are reachable in other parts of the country – mostly Central Equatoria.

prove social stature is a contributing factor to raiding, as is the expectation of retaliatory attacks. Disarmament challenges men's identities in that it diminishes their capacity to engage in such activities. Increasing bride prices also represent greater commodification of women.

## **6.4 Implications**

Some of the implications of this analysis are clear and some are not so clear. It is clear that security is not only key to improving livelihoods but also the key to improving people's perception of and relationship to the state – but it is not clear exactly how this can be done. It was not clear in early 2013, let alone early 2014 in the immediate aftermath of the violent clashes of December 2013 and January 2014. But it is apparent that however the national-level conflict is resolved, controlling local level violence in a way that does not leave any of the parties with the perception that they bore the brunt of the settlement will be a key. Providing adequate human and financial resources and logistical support to police any agreement will be critical. And it is worth reiterating here that the violence witnessed in Uror and Nyirol in 2013 was largely not about a resource conflict, but rather heavily armed raiding.

It is clear that livelihoods are in a state of decline, if not crisis, and also that options for livelihood recovery and diversification are limited under current circumstances. But it is not clear what should be done about this in the short term. Improved animal health services stand out as one possibility once security issues have been addressed. A number of respondents suggested that this could be done by resurrecting the network of community-based animal health workers that previously existed in the area.

Our research clearly illustrated that there is a need for improved delivery of basic services and social security in the visited areas. Given the prevalent insecurity and its impact on livelihood services, issues of governance and the question of who delivers services were not central for most respondents. When we conducted field research, the provision of security rather than service delivery was the main aspect shaping state–society relations and views of the government's legitimacy in Uror and Nyirol Counties.

It is further clear that the political decentralisation processes that started in 2005 have reached the local level in Uror and Nyirol to only a limited degree. Despite the introduction of new government institutions such as the county legislative councils, decentralisation has

not really gained a foothold at the local level. Community members were informed only to a limited and varying degree and had limited opportunities for participation, while decision-making was mostly top-down. Higher government officials and levels were described as distant and hard to reach. It is the chiefs who act as intermediaries between the government and their communities and continue to mediate state–society relations. It remains to be seen how the crisis that started in December 2013 will impact upon institution-building processes. The political crisis and continuing insecurity will almost certainly have slowed or halted whatever processes were in motion in early 2013.

Chieftaincies, local governance based on 'traditional' sociopolitical entities, armed self-defence, communal support mechanisms and migration seem to be major aspects of community resilience in the rural context of Uror and Nyirol. Given the current crisis, communities in Uror and Nyirol County will continue to have to be strongly self-reliant.



## 6.5 On-going questions

A number of pertinent questions arise for further study:

- 1 What are the dynamics between and among the other major groups in Jonglei (Murle, Dinka)? How are they organised, how do different groups benefit or suffer from various government actions, policies, political and social dynamics, and other factors? Who gains and who loses from various scenarios for Jonglei's development? How can some kind of equitable peace deal be struck, and how can it be enforced/policed?
- 2 This research highlighted the extent of raiding in Uror and Nyirol Counties from Pibor County. However, the team learned relatively little about the obverse: raiding in Pibor that is initiated from Uror and Nyirol or other Lou Nuer areas. Further research was planned for Pibor County as a result (SLRC, 2014).
- 3 Though it was beyond the remit of this particular study to investigate the community animal health worker network in detail, the fact that the provision of animal health services has seen such a decline since the CPA suggests the difficulty of post-conflict transition of service provision from humanitarian agencies to a nascent state facing enormous demands and capacity deficits. How this transition can better be navigated is a question for further research.
- 4 Our respondents, who were mostly rural people with limited access to formal education, generally did not blame the government institutions for limited services, lack of infrastructure and development and did often not ask for more participation in decision-making processes. Would individuals with other backgrounds – for instance with higher levels of formal education, or individuals who grew up in the diaspora or in town – express different sentiments?
- 5 If people identify security problems as the main threat to their livelihoods and as the main obstacle to state building or state legitimacy, it is not clear where this leaves external actors, given that security provision remains the exclusive responsibility of the state. This research implies that international actors can only play a relatively limited role in building state legitimacy or positive state-society relations at the local level. This is not so much because service provision by NGOs undermines state legitimacy – although some observers suggest it does (de Waal and Mohamed 2014) – but because security is the primary issue in state-society relations and perceptions.
- 6 How does the current politico-military crisis impact on local government, service delivery and livelihoods in rural contexts including Uror and Nyirol? What happened to service delivery and non-military government activities during the crisis? Will the GoSS revenues be channelled mostly to the SPLA?
- 7 How does the current crisis affect the view and perception of the GoSS in Uror and Nyirol counties? What are the major factors that impact on the GoSS's legitimacy in the current crisis?
- 8 Finally, there is a major question about the impact of the events following the fighting in Juba in December 2013. To date, little is known about the impact of this conflict on the situation deep in the north of Jonglei. People's perceptions of the state may have shifted sharply, but the nature and extent of such shifts are completely unknown at the moment. The hope of the research team is that this work, together with other SLRC reports produced in 2013-2014, will serve as a useful baseline for future work when the current situation is resolved.

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## Annex 1: GoSS and state government structure, organisation and governance

This section provides a brief overview of the GoSS, state and local governance structure as context for the main report.

There are 21 ministries at the national level following the reorganisation of the cabinet by President Kiir in July 2013, which consolidated and eliminated a number of ministries. A number of independent commissions and chambers, including the Local Government Board (responsible for the implementation of the Local Government Act, the Peace Commission and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission) also exist to advise the presidency. The National Legislature of South Sudan consists of two chambers: the National Legislative Assembly and the Council of States.

According to a GoSS official, the 2011 Transitional Constitution has several shortcomings, including too little consideration of women's, youths' and children's rights, and too much concentration of power in the office of the president (08). Legislation and policies are disseminated to the local level very slowly, and are, in many cases, out of sync with local government structures, competencies, and practices (Santschi, 2013). Responsibilities and functions of different government levels are frequently undefined (Local Government Capacity Programme, N.D.). Government institutions face challenges fulfilling the described functions. An expatriate advisor working for a donor agency noted, "core functions" [of government] have been proposed but there are too many' (01). The interviewee suggested that the core functions:

***...need to be consolidated, stripped down, and agreed to (and then actually implemented) – this is an iterative process that will necessarily take time. The problem is that in the meantime there are a lot of urgent problems and huge dependence on donor money that make it hard for everyone to hold out long***

*enough for the process to play out (01).*

### GoSS strategies and plans

Since independence in July 2011, GoSS has released a number of key documents including the South Sudan Development Plan 2011-2013 (GoSS 2011a) and the Health Sector Development Plan 2011-2015. A GoSS official stated that post-conflict livelihood recovery is a major concern of the government (05). Large numbers of South Sudanese were displaced during the war, and even those who were not displaced suffered tremendous livelihood setbacks. Most of the displaced have returned, but how to support these populations in their 'new life' is a major policy concern of the government (05). At the same time, GoSS and its ministries must deal with the budgetary effects of oil-induced austerity and other uncertainties, which severely curtail their ability to carry out any plans. A government official said that, at moment, the directorate in which he is employed is doing a lot of planning, but there are no funds to implement the plans (109).

### The state government in Jonglei

In April 2012, a new state cabinet was approved in Jonglei (*Sudan Tribune*, 2012). The Jonglei state executive branch is headed by a governor and consists of 14 ministries.<sup>19</sup> All counties are represented with at least one minister in the council of ministers. There is also ethnic representation, with the largest ethnic groups in Jonglei – Dinka, Nuer, Anyuak and Murle – all represented in the cabinet. Jonglei also has an elected state legislative assembly. Beginning with the general elections in 2010, members of state legislative assemblies as well as the GoSS legislative assembly and most governors are elected.

Some respondents accused members of parliament at the national and state levels of not representing their constituencies well. One respondent noted that he does not know who the representative of his district is, suggesting that the representative does not have a

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<sup>19</sup> The current state ministries include a ministry of local government, law enforcement, finance and economics development, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, health and environment, cooperative and rural development, physical infrastructure, education, and gender, child and social welfare (*Sudan Tribune*, 2012).

significant presence in the area (54). Another respondent noted that MPs only visited her village during election campaigns in 2010. A chief stated that a (female) parliamentarian is supporting the community by fostering the construction of a school whereas her male colleagues do not care about their communities (64). Although SPLM party structures and government institutions have gradually been disentangled, a strong overlap still exists in terms of personnel between the SPLM, government institutions and the SPLA. Senior government officials are often also senior members of the SPLM and former or current senior SPLA members.

### **National and state government linkages**

GoSS line ministries and some of the GoSS commissions have institutional equivalents at the state level. The GoSS ministry of health, for instance, is linked to the state ministries of health. At both the national and state levels, conflict mitigation is under the purview of the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (16). The Local Government Board, which is an independent GoSS commission, works with Ministries of Local Government at the state level.

State ministries and local government institutions face a number of challenges including lack of resources and qualified staff (GoSS, 2011). An interviewee working in the sector of physical infrastructure noted that the state had almost no budget for roads, especially following the austerity measures in place in early 2013. 'Almost no funds are available for maintenance, let alone building new ones,' the respondent stated (16). The interviewee explained that Jonglei is vast, and that the government cannot cover all of it. As a result infrastructure and the presence of the government are very limited (16). Trained professional staff are lacking at the state level (47, 108). For example, the whole state has only two veterinarians. As a result, state government capacity is a major cause of concern, an official noted (108). A government employee explained that in some cases elderly and unqualified staff members are sent for training and senior but unskilled individuals are hired at the state level. 'So the wrong people are appointed even where there are good persons. As a result, some professionals became discouraged and left employment altogether' (108).

Despite the fact that institutional linkages between GoSS and the states are essential, they are considered poor (108, 109). Reporting from the state to GoSS is limited (108). Furthermore, structures at the GoSS and state level do not correspond with each other and need to be harmonised (109). In one ministry, for instance, at the

headquarters in Juba, there were more directorates than at the state level (109).

### **Local government**

Beyond national and state-level government, there are the following three local government levels: county, *payam* (district) and *boma* (several villages).

The county government commonly consists of an executive headed by the county commissioner. The executive consists of the commissioner, the executive director – who is the most senior administrator – and the heads of various departments. County commissioners are political post holders and, in many cases, SPLM members. While the Local Government Act stipulates that county commissioners are to be elected, thus far they have only been appointed by state governors.

Employees of county administrations explained that the local government's role is the identification of needs in service delivery, delivery of services, and the identification and solution of problems in the respective administrative entities (20, 21). According to the Local Government Act (2009) section 24, 'regulation, provision and maintenance of services to the people' constitute one of the major functions of local government institutions. Functions of county administrations include the formulation of local government policies and programmes (44). However, a respondent working for a county administration noted that, in general, this 'is not happening in a real sense' (21).

The following departments commonly exist at the county level: the health department, water, sanitation and physical infrastructure, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and education. County departments have staff members at the county level, at the *payam* level and sometimes also at the *boma* level (15b, 47). County departments are under the commissioner's management, but at the same time are also linked to the line ministries at the state level (47, 48). According to a county health department staff member, the county commissioner coordinates between the county-level operations and the state Ministry of Health (47). The same respondent noted that he reports to both the county commissioner and the Ministry of Health (47). He argued that these multiple lines of communication and accountability do not pose a challenge (47).

County departments are only minimally engaged in planning and budgeting processes, if at all. An employee of a county health department stated that



he and his colleagues working at the county level do not make any determinations about the budget in their field. 'If there's a shortage in something, they make a request, and the county makes the request up the chain' (47). The Transitional Constitution (2011) and the Local Government Act (2009) stipulate a decentralised governance system in which budgeting and other planning processes are carried out mostly at the local level. However, in practice the devolution of power (financial, political and administrative) to local government is limited (Feiden et al., 2009). 'The regulatory framework does not provide effective political, financial or administrative autonomy to local governments ... Confusing regulations and a lack of technical capacity complicate the understanding and implementation of the regulatory framework ... The system is highly politicised and states are not likely to release their authority on civil service and budgeting to local governments' (Feiden et al., 2009: ii). The United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and other agencies support programmes that foster planning and budgeting processes at the local level.

The line ministries transfer salaries for their employees in the form of conditional grants to the local level. Furthermore, respondents reported that the ministries provide funds for service delivery in addition to material, training and laboratory services (15a, 44, 120).<sup>20</sup> However, in practice, material is not consistently delivered nor salaries regularly transferred (47). Another constraint faced by county departments and local government institutions is a lack of trained and qualified staff. At the *boma* level – the lowest administrative level – 'staff' are often unpaid volunteers who are not well trained (15b, 21, 47, 108). Moreover, the lack of financial resources for programme implementation, limited physical infrastructure, and lack of means of transportation limit the capacity of local government institutions. A county department staff member noted: 'There is no transport and no budget for programmes, so they go on foot, and really have little to offer to the community in terms of services when they are able to reach there' (93). In view of the lack of funding for activities and programmes, local government staff are at times seconded to NGOs (93).

Due to these various constraints, county departments and their staff at the *payam* and *boma* levels are often only monitoring the situation, writing reports and engaging in 'community awareness raising' rather than

carrying out service delivery functions or implementing other programmes (48, 102). According to an official working for a state ministry, the administrative system at the local level is weak, (108). County departments, for instance, are unreliable in reporting. A GoSS ministry employee noted that only three out of 11 counties in Jonglei send regular reports to the state level (108).

According to the Local Government Act, local government should feature legislative bodies with the responsibility to make bylaws within its jurisdiction, to legislate and to supervise and oversee the performance of the Executive Council (Government of Southern Sudan 2009: 17). Accordingly, county legislative councils play the important role, at least in theory, of overseeing the county executive. According to newspaper articles, county legislative assemblies existed in Jonglei state by the end of 2012 (*Sudan Tribune*, 2012). During interviews, however, neither staff of the local government nor community members mentioned county legislative councils. It is unclear whether they exist or are truly functional in their assigned role of holding the county executive to account.

### **Payam level**

*Payam* offices are headed by *payam* administrators who lead a team of staff members. *Payam* administrators are often local government officials who rotate between different administrative posts (40b). At least some *payams* have a clear administrative structure in place. A *payam* administrator noted that he works with a deputy *payam* administrator who is responsible for administration and finance. Other staff members engage in tax collection, sanitation, education, veterinary, health, and agriculture support activities, though the administrator noted a significant dearth of training, capacity and overall services in the *payam* (40b). The same administrator stated that the *payam* is the 'meeting point' between the county and the people, and coordinates services with NGOs (40b). He added that he was sent to the *payam* to deliver services and to improve security, which he described as the first priority: 'As soon as security is improved services will be fostered'. In order to receive funding for services the *payam* administrator and his staff write proposals (40b). He stated that another major goal is to send boys and girls to school (40b).

Resources are limited at the *payam* level. A *payam* administrator stated that GoSS funds sent to the county level do not reach the *payam*, and that the *payam*

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<sup>20</sup> A staff member of a county department working on agriculture, livestock and fisheries noted that the state ministry of agriculture and forestry sent three tractors that are on the way to the county. The government also trains additional extension workers (44). Staff members are trained either in Yei Agricultural Training Centre – where they are taught new agricultural methods to be able 'to change traditional methods of farming' – or as para-vets in Marial Lou in Warrap state (15a, 44).

administration itself has almost no revenue sources. He underlined that ‘there is no money. If there was money, he would have a proper office’ (40b). The situation was even more pressing at the time of the research because of the national austerity measures that had caused salaries for government staff to go unpaid (40b).

The situation in *payams* is also complicated by the fact that *payams* are not static entities, but are subject to government reorganisation – they are sometimes reshaped and new ones created, as happened in 2012 in some parts of northern Jonglei (19).

### **Boma level**

*Boma* administrators and chiefs represent the local government at the community level. A local government employee noted that *boma* administrators did not exist before the CPA in the area where he is working (54). The administrator explained: ‘We had one *boma* administration, then it was dissolved by the County Commissioner, then in 2012 we were sent another one’ (54).

The *boma* administration was theoretically introduced with the Civil Administration of the New Sudan during the civil war, limiting the influence of administrative chiefs, who had previously been the sole local government representatives at that level. There remains some confusion about roles at this level. The Local Government Act does not refer to *boma* administrators, but it stipulates that the *boma* is the sphere of influence and management of chiefs. This example illustrates an on-going disconnect between the content of legislation such as the Local Government Act and the understanding and practice of governance functions at the local level.

### **Administrative chiefs**

Administrative chiefs (*kuaar kuma*) work at the lowest administrative levels in South Sudan. They date back to the colonial era when they were introduced in relation to native administration schemes. While an invention of colonial rule, chief systems partly refer to ‘traditional’ sociopolitical institutions such as lineages (Otim and Diu, 2005). Chiefs and chieftaincies were gradually accepted by community members and are nowadays often labelled as ‘traditional’ authorities. Today, they are key actors in local governance: ‘Although the institution of chiefs is not indigenous to the Nuer, their role in maintaining some form of governance and therefore social order from the introduction of this system in the colonial times through the years of the civil wars in south Sudan cannot be overemphasized’ (Otim and Diu, 2005: 4).

There is legislation in place, particularly the Local Government Act, that defines chief authority structures and, to some degree, the functions they are charged with executing. According to the legislation, chiefs are subject to the county and *payam* administration (80). In practice, however, they usually report to hierarchically higher chiefs or to the *boma* administrator and the *payam* administrator (49a, 80).

The following chiefly hierarchy seems to exist in Uror and Nyirol County. The *thieb* is the paramount chief for all Lou Nuer in Uror, Nyirol and Akobo County. Uror and Nyirol County are predominantly inhabited by Lou Nuer (23, 100). Each county features a head chief, the *kour book* (100). The next lower level of chief the executive chief is responsible for one *payam* (23). The *khaar* constitutes the next level, the sub-chief (23). The lowest-level chief is the *gat tuot* (‘sons of bulls’), the headman who is mostly responsible for his lineage, thus his agnatic kin (23, 40b). In general lower-level chiefs are closer to their communities and engage more in daily activities.

English term	Nuer term	Administrative entity
Paramount chief	<i>Thieb</i>	Uror, Nyirol and Akobo County
Head chief	<i>Kour book</i>	County level
Executive chiefs	—	<i>Payam</i> level
Sub-chief	<i>Khaar</i>	<i>Boma</i> level
Gol leader/ headman	<i>Gat tuot</i>	Agnates



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