

**HOW LOCAL PEACE AGREEMENT CAN WORK IN YEI RIVER COUNTY: A  
STUDY OF THE FACTORS HINDERING THE LOCAL PEACE AGREEMENT  
FROM BRINGING PEACE TO YEI RIVER COUNTY**

**LAZAROUS GEORGE MAWA**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

I, **Mawa George Lazarous** hereby declare that this action research report entitled “*how local peace agreement can work in Yei River County: a study of the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County*” is my original work, is not plagiarized and has not been submitted to any other institution for any award.

Signature:




Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2025

## APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research titled “*How local peace agreement can work in Yei River County: a study of the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County*”, has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission.

Supervisor: Dr Agnes Ssali (PhD)

Signature: 

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this Action Research Report to my wife Roselin Hope Justo and children whose love for education remains my driving force and source of inspiration towards this master's course.

I will also not forget my parents and my entire family of friends whose words of encouragement towards my academic struggle keeps me alive.

Finally, I thank my course facilitator Dr. Sam Dobrotka, whose excellent facilitation, instructions and effective feedback made it easier for me to understand the course. His ability to listen to me whenever I needed fired me to the finish line.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ARCSS	Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
AU	African Union
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECSS	Ecumenical Church of South Sudan
EPC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
FNI	Nationalist and Integrationist Front
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NSS	National Security Service
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement – In Opposition
UN	United Nations
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

## **ABSTRACT**

Peace agreements are meant to bring an end to conflicts. However, where conflicts endure after a peace agreement has been signed as is the case with the local peace agreement in Yei River County, ways to addressing the factors leading to this continuity must be established. Having witnessed the continuity of the conflicts in Yei River County, I set out to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that hinder the peace agreement from bringing peace and tranquility in the area. I used a combination of data collection instruments such as survey questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions. I also capitalized on my presence in the field to undertake observation as I gathered the information. This was meant to gather information from a broader base of respondents, analyze, draw conclusions and recommend ways to improve the peace agreement. The findings confirm that there are factors not met right from the peace negotiation to the implementation stages. For peace agreements to work, the process must be inclusive. However, this wasn't the case with the Yei River County local peace agreement, as per the findings. The action research project report recommends inclusivity and a focus on addressing the root causes of the conflicts as key factors that can make the peace agreement work.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

Successfully reaching a peace agreement is a vital step towards building lasting peace. While research has shown that peace agreements signals end of one process such as cessation of hostilities, it ushers another stage in building peace and can “create premature expectations that the war has ended, with normalcy soon to resume” (Paladini and Molloy, 2019, p.11). This clearly shows that implementing peace agreement is very difficult. For example, UN (2010, p.14) found that “prioritization is essential but difficult” when it come to achieving peace agreement this is because there are “many competing issues and the different groups involved, all with their own recent experience of violent conflict”. Given this reality surrounding peace agreements, it is not clear how locally reached peace agreements actually bring about lasting peace. It is therefore imperative to examine how peace agreements have shaped efforts towards peacebuilding since it is contextually driven. It is within the need to explore how peace agreements work, that this action research sought to explore how local peace agreements can work in Yei River County, with a particular focus on the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County.

#### 1.1 Background

Peace agreement is a fundamental step towards addressing conflicts among warring individuals or groups. It is therefore vital that peace agreements are reached when the interests and values of those in conflict are taken into consideration to avoid the relapse of peace efforts into violence. According to Galtung (1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439-440), peace can be negative and

positive. Negative peace is limited to the “absence of direct violence (e.g., people being killed)”, while positive peace is the absence of “structural violence (e.g., dying as a result of poverty), and cultural violence (e.g., factors that blind people to injustice or allow them to rationalize it).” Therefore, peace agreement content that appeals to positive peace have higher chances of succeeding compared to those that limit content to negative peace aspects.

Peace studies scholar Galtung (1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439-440) describes three approaches to achieving peace, these include peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building. These approaches are vital in guiding and shaping third-party intervention efforts and clarifying the different roles needed (Gawerc, 2006). Peacemaking approach involved “the negotiation process that takes place between decision-makers directed towards reaching an official settlement or resolution to specific conflicts”. Peacekeeping is where third-party is involved in keeping peace by keeping apart the warring groups and ensuring violence does not occur (absence of direct violence (or reduce it). The third approach, peace-building, involved the application of a wide range of activities. It involves provision of social and psychological support and creating an enabling economic environment at the grassroots level (Galtung (1975 cited in Gawerc, 2006, p.439-440). At the heart of peace-building is the creation of structures of peace based on justice, equity, and cooperation (i.e., positive peace), which is aimed at addressing the underlying causes of violent conflict now and in future (peace sustainability). Peace-building is a dynamic approach which influences every phase of a conflict, and changes depending on the conflict situation (how people react to ongoing process), especially during the peacemaking efforts, a stage that informs the nature of peace agreements.

While the term "peace agreement" remains largely contested, it is often referred to as a

“documented agreements between parties to a violent internal conflict to establish a cease-fire together with new political and legal structures” (Bell, 2006, p.374). So, it captures the three approaches to peace building discussed above. Peace agreements are therefore a “formal, publicly available documents, produced after discussion with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed to by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it.”

Two years after gaining her independence in 2011, South Sudan witnessed a violent conflict that led to an estimated 383,000 deaths as reported by the New York Times (Specia 2018). This conflict also led to nearly two and a half million South Sudanese refugees in the region and nearly two million internally displaced persons. Originally triggered by a political conflict in the ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) elite, ethnic divisions soon became a defining feature of the civil war.

The first attempted peaceful settlement, the Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), signed in August 2015 and mediated by the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), collapsed when renewed fighting broke out in the capital Juba in July 2016. This led to the further proliferation of armed groups and political fragmentation. Two years later, another peace accord, the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in September 2018, significantly reduced fighting on the ground. Yet the success of the peace process remains in doubt, as implementation has faced repeated delays, leading to a recent extension beyond its timeframe with several armed actors rejecting it.

However, from the beginning, local dynamics have shaped the agenda of armed actors. The link between local and national conflict dynamics is usually complex (Boswell 2019). For example, the creation of new administrative boundaries further politicized and exacerbated traditional boundary conflicts. Local conflict revolving around cattle grazing is often linked to elites in Juba.

The design of the regional peace process poorly reflects these local-national conflict links. In fact, attempts at conflict resolution at the national level may also fuel new violence as has been the case across the country.

The localized conflict dynamics and the difficulties in reaching a national political settlement frequently raise the question of whether and how conflicts can be resolved or mitigated at the local level. Historically, people-to-people processes, particularly the 1999 Wunlit conference (Johnson, 2011), played a critical role in reducing fighting among South Sudanese. In the current conflict, too, non-state actors have forged intra- and inter-communal peace agreements at the local level. The results of such local peace initiatives in the ongoing South Sudan war vary considerably.

Yei River County which descended into heavy ethnic political violence in 2016 following the collapse of a national peace deal in July 2016 and the escape of Sudan People's Liberation Movement – In Opposition (SPLM-IO) leader Riek Machar through its territories into the Democratic Republic Congo with government forces in hot pursuit, struggles with implementation of a local peace deal.

In April 2017, under the mediation of Bishop Elias Taban Parangi – the Arch Bishop of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in South Sudan, backed by His Voice Global USA headed by Dr. Vernon Burger the President of His Voice Global, the Yei government together with Juba's National Security Service (NSS) signed a local peace agreement in Kampala with a faction of SPLA-IO self-proclaimed local commanders led by Hilary Yakani, a former political operative, civil society, and NGO worker (Pax Peace Agreement 2017).

This agreement among other things, committed the parties to a continuous grassroots process for conflict resolution, provided for presidential amnesty to those engaging in dialogue and

encouraged the voluntary return of those who fled to Uganda and DR Congo. At its core though was the formation of a Joint Military Committee that would oversee the assembly and training of SPLM-IO fighters for the formation of a pro-government militia (Boswell 2019). However, Yakani was only able to bring back a handful of defectors from the thousands he earlier indicated that were under his command. This prompted a heavy “post-peace” recruitment process by Yakani and the Yei government to create a pro-government local militia (Pax Peace Agreement 2017). The local bishop who had been instrumental in the peace talks opened up a training camp in Morobo (a town located 30 miles South of Yei) for Yakani’s force (Radio Tamazuj, 2016). However, some who escaped say the trainees were held involuntarily.

Ugandan border and security officials accused Yakani’s group of recruiting refugees inside Uganda to join the group, with accusations of forced abduction and threats against refugees. Several Yei civil society leaders claimed that a group of youth was deceptively recruited in Yei and also involuntarily sent to the Morobo training camp. The bishop received financial backing for the implementation of the peace deal from a small group of American evangelical organizations (Radio Tamazuj 2016; Boswell 2019). Numerous allegations have been leveled from Yei civil society and SPLA-IO officials that the Bishop used the resources for despicable purposes. An inter-faith council in Yei, which includes the Catholic and the Ecumenical Church of South Sudan (ECSS), denounced Bishop Elias’s activity and distanced itself fully from his peace process, which the government continues to strongly support (Radio Tamazuj 2016; Boswell 2019).

To date, the Yei peace process has not led to any tangible results as the war in the area continues, causing massive suffering to the people. My concern and action question is: how can the local peace agreement hold and bring peace in Yei River County?

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Successfully reaching a peace agreement is a vital step towards building lasting peace. While research has shown that peace agreements signals end of one process such as cessation of hostilities, it ushers another stage in building peace and can “create premature expectations that the war has ended, with normalcy soon to resume” (Paladini and Molloy, 2019, p.11). This clearly shows that implementing a peace agreement is very difficult. For example, UN (2010, p.14) found that “prioritization is essential but difficult” when it comes to achieving peace agreement this is because there are “many competing issues and the different groups involved, all with their own recent experience of violent conflict”. Addressing the dilemma of making decision “between supporting implementation of provisions in a peace agreement and responding to changing realities, especially given that peace processes are not linear processes” (UN, 2010, p.14) remain crucial is achieving peace through such agreements. Molloy and Bell (2019, p.1) found that the reality of sustaining “any peace accord depends on the quality and robustness of how it is implemented” because the implementation not straight forward and is a lengthy but also a “complex process replete with challenges and difficulties). Worst still in the midst of the “complex reality” there is “no magic third party ‘enforcement’ tool for peace agreements” which can hold the parties responsible or ensure the parties honour their commitments (Molloy and Bell, 2019, p.1). It is therefore imperative to examine how peace agreements have shaped efforts towards peacebuilding since it is contextually driven. It is within the need to explore how peace agreements work, that this action research sought to explore how local peace agreements can work in Yei River County, with a particular focus on the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County.

## **1.3 Objective of the study**

The main objective of the study was to assess the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- i) To assess the causes of the conflict, and analyse the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County.
- ii) To analyse the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams.
- iii) To evaluate the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement.
- iv) To investigate what can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution in resolving conflict.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions were as follows:

- i) What are the causes of the conflict, the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County?
- ii) What was the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams?
- iii) What were the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement?
- iv) What can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution in resolving conflict?

#### **1.5 Scope of Study**

##### **1.5.1 Content Scope**

This study focused on exploring how local peace agreements work in context if Yie peace agreement. It assessed the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County. Specifically, the study focused on assessing the causes of the conflict, and analyse the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County. It also analysed the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams, evaluated the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement,

and investigated solutions that can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution in resolving conflict.

### **1.5.2 Time Scope**

The study considered the period when the peace agreement was signed (2017) to 2024. This period was enough to assess the fruit of the agreement (how peace agreement is being practiced in Yie), but it also helped in identifying the challenges to the implementation of the agreement which aided the development of recommendations to enhance the agreement.

### **1.5.3 Geographical Scope**

This study was conducted in Yei River County. The county, which is located at an altitude of 4° 5' 39" N and longitude 30° 40' 35" E, is located in Central Equatoria State. It borders Lainya County to the east, Morobo County to the south, and Western Equatoria State (Maridi and Mundri West counties) to the north. It has a long border with the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. The county is characterised by hills and high levels of tree cover. Various rivers – including the River Yei – flow northwards in the western and eastern parts of the county.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute towards identifying practical solutions to addressing local problems. The finding about the challenges and success of the peace agreement will enable peace and conflict practitioners to come up with solution or pick lessons that can be applied elsewhere. This study is of significance to the academic community by isolating the factors that affect peace agreement, the various ways local peace actors go about using peace agreement to change their locality. It will also further provide a clear view of how the concept peace agreement and its various steps apply in every situation, and document various forms it is applied in localities such as Yie.

## **1.7 Justification of the Study**

Research has shown that implementing peace agreements is complex and yet it remains an important part of the peace process (UN, 2010; Molloy and Bell, 2019). It has also been seen “create premature expectations that the war has ended, with normalcy soon to resume” (Paladini and Molloy, 2019, p.11) even though peace agreements signal the end of one process and the beginning of another stage in building peace. It is therefore vital that interventions through peace agreements be studied well, and solutions found, lest the benefits it brings will be lost. Already, it has been observed that to date, the Yei peace process has not led to any tangible results as the war in the area continues, causing massive suffering to the people. It was therefore the concern of the researcher anchored on the question; how can the local peace agreement hold and bring peace in Yei River County? It was for this reason that the researcher assessed the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County.

## **1.8 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework**

### **1.8.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study employed Lederach’s comprehensive approach of conflict transformation as the theory in this study (Lederach, 1995, p.212). According to Lederach, peacebuilding is about establishing an infrastructure for peace, in which affected people should be involved at all levels (Matijević & Ćorić Erić, 2015). Therefore, active involvement and participation of all affected people is key to attaining sustainable and long-term strategies to conflict. This implies efforts such as peace agreements must be inclusive and participatory in which all affected people agree on the final agreement document. Lederach (1995, p.212) noted that:

*The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which*

*we do not primarily 'see' the setting and the people in it as the 'problem' and the outsider as the 'answer'. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting.*

In a nutshell the transformative approach to peacebuilding underscores three level systems that peacebuilding actors must take into consideration (Lederach, 1995, p.212). At the top, Lederach argues for the application of a “top-down” approach. This level should involve intermediaries or mediators backed by the foreign governments or international organizations with the aim achieving a negotiated settlement. This is often the case of peace agreements, that is, they are the results of negotiated or mediated settlements. The second level is where “problem solving workshops, conflict resolution trainings and the development of peace commissions should take place”. The assumption is that the people involved in peacebuilding engagement such as peace agreement should be communicated and engage with each other. The last level is associated with the grassroots engagement and drive towards peace. That is, it “demands grassroots, bottom-up approaches.”

To Lederach, peacebuilding from below (bottom-up approach) is of decisive importance since only in that way peace can be achieved in accordance with the context and not imposed from the outside (Lederach 1997, p.51). This does not negate the role of the middle-range actors because they have the greatest potential for constructing the foundations of peace due to their impact at both top and bottom levels.

According to Lederach, for successful and sustainable conflict resolution, there must be coordination of the peacebuilding strategies at all three societal levels, and the different types of actors (levels) have to be matched with the different peacebuilding methodologies (Lederach 1997:44-54). This theory enabled the researcher to explore the role of negotiation and mediation

and analysis of those composed. By applying level three, it enabled the assessment of whether the negotiation and mediation teams incorporated interest of the local (bottom-up approach).

### 1.8.2 Conceptual Framework

This study aimed at assessing the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County. In this regard, it is conceptualized that without the external limitations, the local peace agreement in Yei is attainable. In other word local peace agreement depends on the enabling or limiting factors in Yei.

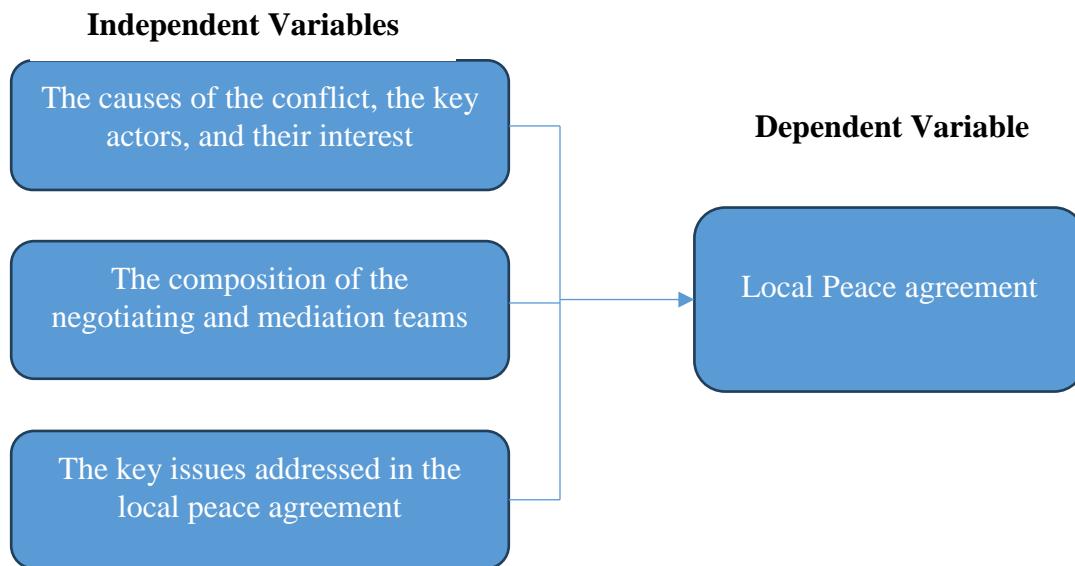


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### 1.9 Summary of Chapters of the Research Report

This chapter provides conceptual grounding for this study. It located the peace agreement from the peacebuilding perspective. Further, it used the conflict transformation theory to situate the study. Beyond this, the background and problem statement located the indicators and provided good grounding to undertake this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This section explores the literature around the causes of conflicts in which the key actors and their interests have been highlighted. It further explores the process involved in bringing about peace agreements and efforts that are needed to ensure lasting peace. In exploring these themes, the researcher reviewed the literature taking into account the global perspectives, regional perspectives and local or national perspectives as structure in reviewing the literature under each of the themes. Before reviewing the themes, the concepts conflict and peace have been discussed to give context and understanding of the literature.

#### 2.2 Understanding Conflict and Peace

Jeong (2010, p.3) once noted that conflict is the manifestation of “adversarial social action, involving two or more actors” who have expressed themselves differently and “often accompanied by intense hostilities.” To some scholars, conflict “is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints” (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2005, p.13). From the two perspectives of conflict, it can be clearly seen that conflict is about disagreement or incompatibility of goals and interests people pursue. Incompatibility may be due to several reasons including resources, different values and beliefs among people. Silvestri & Mayall (2015) argued that conditions of scarcity in the case of Central Africa, that is caused by soil degradation or depletion of water in river basins or lakes and value incompatibility can become a continuing source of contention.

Most times the factors that drive conflicts are visible and sometimes invisible and the way it is

resolved will either make conflict more constructive or destructive (Kriesberg, 2015; Bobić, 2020). It is also for this reason that “protracted conflict arises from the failure to manage antagonistic relationships” (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.9). Evidence from South Africa and other communities shows that communities overcame inter-communal rivalries despite existing economic difficulties and cultural diversity. Consequently, the societies not only addressed their rivalries but also develop various types of institutions that were able to “renegotiate opposing economic and political interests democratically” (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.9)

In the discussion above, the concept conflict when constructively managed may turn into better outcomes. However, it is the negative approach to resolving difference, that is violence, which is the problem to many conflicting societies. The reason behind this assertion is that conflict is “an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change and that the way we deal with conflict” (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.10) matters a lot, not only dealing with the view that it is a matter of habit and choice, aspects of rational choice competing material interests and hard power but focus on the collective good (Kriesberg 2015). This is why this study interrogates the local peace agreements in Yie to understand its dynamics and draw lessons for sustainable peace.

While my view of conflicts aligns with what has been discussed above, that is, conflict entails incompatibility or disagreement between two or more people, it is also important to acknowledge that the concept of conflict must be looked at from its broadest possible sense. That is, it “includes both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts (i.e. involving similar and dissimilar parties) and also Galtung’s (1969, 1975) widely accepted view that violence occurs not only in a direct way (the act of harming or killing) but is also hidden in societal structures (socioeconomic or juridical systems) and culture (the ideas shaping people’s attitudes), and that behaviours, structures and attitudes have

to be addressed simultaneously to achieve peace” (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.10). some of the disagreement discussed earlier on are the result of inequalities related to resource allocation (access, and its unitization).

The oxford Dictionary online on the other hand define the concept peace as freedom from disturbance; tranquillity, and/or a state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended. Treating peace as no war or end of war relates to the definition of negative peace, that is, peace is the absence of war (scholars refer to as negative peace) (Ramsbotham, *et al.* 2005; Chenoweth, 2017; Diehl, 2016). According to Diehl (2016, p.2), the interest in defining peace as the absence of war only makes sense to scholars who want to understand the “conditions that generate war and other forms of violence.”. The concentration on mere absence of war as peace has been widely criticised (Chenoweth, 2017, p.133) and this limits the ability of explaining peace. The goal of negative peace is the “termination or moderation of existing hostile relationships, including the end of wars” (Diehl 2017, p.3). Therefore, interventions such as “disarmament, negotiating agreements that ended or moderated war and rivalries...” constitute negative peace efforts (Diehl 2017, p.3). In this, the meaning of peace has not been limited to negative peace (which emphasizes the need for an agreement to end violence) but also positive peace (sustainable solutions to conflicts). In fact, to achieve lasting peace agreements, the focus should be on positive peace. That is, efforts on addressing root causes of conflicts. Positive peace “focus on personal, community, and national well-being, prosperity, and tranquility, justice, with many scholars and observers pointing to the necessity of equality, fairness, and other root causes of disputes” (Chenoweth, 2017, p.133). This way, positive peace looks at factors that undermine harmonious leaving or causes disagreements and acts of violence including, inequalities, human right abuses, killings, marginalization among others. As put forward by Diehl (2017) positive peace efforts deal with

non-traditional security concerns that do not directly deal with war and violence. Such elements include awards for promoting development, human rights, and the status of women. Both negative and positive peace understanding was vital to this study as Johan Galtung, foremost thinkers on peace noted positive peace' (the absence of indirect and structural violence) and 'negative' peace (the absence of direct violence) is vital in analyzing situations of peace and conflict (Galtung 1964). Having explored the concepts of conflict and peace, in the next section, the causes of conflicts and the key factors are discussed.

### **2.3 The Causes of Conflicts, the key actors and their Interests**

The fluidity of the nature of conflict often makes it hard to disentangle causes and effects of conflicts and draw clear conclusions. Therefore, an approach that takes contextual issues surrounding a conflict if required and must be taken into account. It should however be noted that conflicts have been categorized or grouped in different ways. Some studies look at conflicts as violent acts that happen between individuals. This usually referred to as interpersonal conflict including crimes as murder, assault, rape, and robbery (Mares & Moffetti 2016). Another typology sees conflict as violent acts between groups of individuals or what is also known as intergroup conflict. Intergroup conflict encompasses conflict between states (Devlin & Hendrix 2014); violence against the government [civil war, defined by >1,000 battle-related deaths (Burke et al. 2009), and civil conflict, defined by at least 25 battle-related deaths (Von Uexkull et al. 2016)]; intercommunal violence (conflict between competing groups within a state) (Detges 2016); low-intensity conflict or social conflict, e.g., protests and riots (Bellemare 2015); and political repression (Wood & Wright 2016). Given that the literature does not specify any standard violent reaction to climatic changes, in this review I include all types of conflict (Koubi, 2019, p. 345)

As stated above, conflict is fluid in nature, that is “...there is no single cause of a conflict. Nor is there any sustainable prediction for peace. Different factors vary in importance, and reinforce or neutralize each other” (Dar 2011, p.74) and for this reason, there are innumerable causes of conflict and reasons for their existence. The analysis of the conflict situation must therefore include assessing the relative importance of the different indications and their interrelationship (Dar, 2011). To authors such as Dar (2011) it is not easy to make a complete list of conflicts but there is a consensus on the general types of common sources that are common. In this study, I adopt the dimension of conflict (casual factors) outline by Dar (2011) to structure and guide the discussion of the cause of conflicts. To Dar (2011, p.73), the:

*“Different analysts accord varying importance to the following groups of causal factors: a) Inequality (political, economic, social, ‘grievances’) b) Identity (mobilization of groups with shared ethnic, ideological or religious identities) c) Political factors (crises of state legitimacy, weak state institutions) d) Economic factors (economic motivations for engagement in conflict over natural resources, ‘greed’).”*

### **2.3.1 Inequality (Political, Economic, Social, Grievances)**

Root causes relating to inequality is believed to be one of the main contributors to grievances in armed conflict (Wood & Wright 2016). This comes from the idea that it is not absolute poverty which causes grievances, but the relative deprivation people perceive in relation to others (United Nations; World Bank, 2018). Inequality can be horizontal (horizontal inequalities) that is “inequality among culturally defined (or constructed) groups, in contrast to vertical inequality, which is inequality among households or individuals” (Sida, 2023, p.3) and exclusion are factors that drive violent conflict. Horizontal inequalities is associated with the risk fueling armed conflict when there is a strong group identification (ground identity), and a degree of intergroup

competition and evaluation of the injustices and blame game (othering) (United Nations; World Bank, 2018). According to Cederman *et al.* (2013), when a state of nation fails to address grievances of people and groups and actively excludes them, the risk of violence increases. For instance, the failure to address unequal governance over scarce resources. It is, therefore, vital to note that people's or group perceptions play a powerful role in creating feelings of exclusion and injustice and if such are not addressed, they may be mobilised toward violence. Evidence suggests that "perceptions of exclusion and inequality are at least as important for the mobilisation of violence as objectively measured inequality" (Cederman *et al.* 2013).

There are also qualitative case studies and quantitative evidence that suggest political exclusion as driver of group tensions that can lead to violence (Sida, 2023). The United Nations: World Bank (2018, p.112) study observed that "*politically excluded groups experience violent conflict at a much higher frequency in comparison with the groups included. They also show that the less involved a group is politically, the more likely it is to fight the incumbent government*". This effect is even evident with groups experiencing power change. Further studies show that "political exclusion is more visible than economic disadvantage and, as such, groups can more easily assign blame – which is considered an essential step in stirring grievances to violence" (Jone *et al.* 2012). It is therefore vital to observe that inequality in all its forms is a recipe for violence. Efforts towards building peace and putting forward peace agreements must take perceptions and incorporate the views of the communities.

Another dimension of equality is gender inequality. Researchers have shown that gender inequality has strong link to armed conflict and a gender equal society is often a peaceful one (Bjarnegård, *et al.*, 2015). While earlier studies hypothesised that gender equality promotes peace on the

assumption that women are more peaceful in themselves (Smith, 1984; Conover, 1994), recent studies have shown that it is rather peoples' attitude towards gender equality and gender norms that matters (Bjarnegård & Melander, 2017). Where the society upholds “stereotypic militarized masculinities” there is often a higher acceptance of violence at both the individual and state level in society (Goldstein, 2003). This implies that the gender inequality is reproduced and sustained by “the upholding of stereotypical gender roles, gender unequal societies” and this is likely to experience violence overall (Caprioli, 2003). There is also evidence that gender equal states, tend to prioritize efforts towards promoting equality as opposed to militarized masculinities and thus “less likely to be part of state-based armed conflicts and are less likely to use repression against civilians” (Koch & Fulton, 2011).

### **2.3.2 Identity (Mobilization of Groups with Shared Ethnic, Ideological or Religious Identities)**

Identity has long been an issue of concern, and it may take ideological, ethnic or religious ground (Dar 2011). Religion for example is a driver of conflicts at an individual, societal and at international scenes. In fact, Samuel Huntington (1993; 1997), once claimed that religious and cultural identities would be a key driver of international conflict in the new world order post-Cold War. Huntington (1997) further content that, international conflicts are primarily those between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world, which have shaped the history of conflict for centuries. However, this paper acknowledges the reality that religion creates conflicts but differs in the account that is limited to Muslim and the non-Muslim. While there are conflicts among different religious groups (inter-religious conflicts), there are also several conflicts within a single religious group (intra-religious conflicts). This account is supported by Basedau (2017), a German scholar about conflict in Africa. According to Basedau (2017) two types of religious conflict must be

differentiated. First, in inter-religious conflicts where the conflicting party's religious affiliation differs (for example, Christians and Muslims). This is what Huntington argued about, and it may overlap with ethnic identities, along which heterogeneous societal lines are drawn making it vulnerable in triggering conflicts (Basedau, 2017). This is different from theological conflicts which are mostly about religious ideas. For example, such conflicts may arise in majority Muslim societies, such as Mali, Somalia or Northern Nigeria. But there is evidence where Christian rebel groups are present in sub-Saharan Africa who have theological demands.

Political scientists observed that religion's inherent distinction as an in-group and an out-group, is a ground for breeding structural violence nationally and internationally (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015). Galtung (1969) adds that "religion is often the source of 'cultural violence', a form of violence that is used to legitimise other forms of violence." Consequently, factors such as religion, ideology, language and ethnicity are often intertwined and shape the ways of thinking and behaviours which can cause exclusion, discrimination and eventually also physical violence (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015). Indirectly, the relationship between religion and violence is seen in the inaction of religious groups. Boulding (1986, cited in Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.10), for example, contents that religions have failed to use their power and potential for peacebuilding. For this reason, they (religions) have lent support to states when they are at war. Although religion may not have ignited a conflict, it has been or worked as 'an obstacle to peace' (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015).

It is worthwhile noting that conflict and violence often have a religious dimension, regardless of whether the conflict occurs between "adherents of different faith traditions or rivals within a faith tradition." Best and Rakodi (2011, p.5) summarizes the role of religion in conflicts as follows:

*...religion may play a role as a marker of identity, a mobilizing device, a basis for*

*rationalizing violent behaviour or a source of values on which to base peacebuilding and reconciliation. The relationships between religious and other key actors, especially in the state, are complex. Religious leaders may play important roles in instigating or preventing violence, and in either sustaining bad feelings or attempting to prevent a re-occurrence. The various organizational forms associated with religious traditions may provide a basis for mobilization, give humanitarian assistance during the emergency, assist longer term recovery and build peaceful (or confrontational) relationships in the longer term'.*

In addition to the summary provided by Best and Rakodi (2011, p.5) it is vital to recognize that attitudes can trigger religious and ethnic violence when intertwined with perceptions (Juergensmeyer, 2003; Wolff 2006, cited in Silvestri & Mayall, 2015). Therefore, perceptions are vital when it comes to constructing and perpetuating identities and narratives, both of individuals and of communities. Consequently, “perceptions of prejudice, victimhood, and discrimination are central in the dynamics of structural, physical and cultural violence, whether religion or ethnicity are involved or not” (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.10).

Another cause of conflict is what Huntington (1997) describes as civilization. Just like religion, conflicts can occur both on a local level within a state with groups belonging to different civilisations, or among neighbouring states (fault-line conflicts); and also, on a global level between and among states that belong to different civilisations (core-state conflicts). He argues that civilisations compete on the international scene, and that this competition can turn into violent conflict, most importantly because of the different religions that have formed these civilisations.

Concerns around refugees and their treatment has shown another angle of identity conflict. The current worldwide refugee inflow and the declining refugees support from developed countries has become a sensitive problem to hosting countries (Ali, *et al.* 2017). There is no doubt; hosting

countries are overstrained by refugee “hosting problems that affect not only the economy, but it also affects their political stability” (Ali, *et al.* 2017, p.42). Studies have shown the influence of refugees (Akim, 2014; Ikanda, 2008; Whitaker 2002; Kuhlman, 1991, cited in Ali, *et al.* 2017, p.42). The conflicts between refugees and the host community have been documented and continue to share and influence academic forums and researches. Out of the discussion and research, what is clear is that “most of the discussions are in agreement that refugees in host nations are seen as an economic burden especially during worse economic times and therefore, resulting to tensions and conflicts (Martin, 2005; Akim, 2014). Researchers observe that the challenges of hosting refugees in a country have implications on the security and economic status of that country (Moore and Shellman, 2004; Melander & Oberg, 2007; Akim, 2014). Most tensions and conflicts observed between refugees and their host communities is by larger percentage caused by limited and scarce natural resources that are shared (Kumssa, *et al.* 2009 cited in Ali, *et al.* 2017, p.42). The conflict is further created or worsened by the “equal treatment between the refugees and the host community by both the aid agencies and the government” (Ali, *et al.* 2017, p.42). Reports have shown that most of the time the host communities do not get aid or support through refugee agencies led by UNHCR the same way refugees do, and this implies that refugees get the chance to access better education, health, and basic livelihood which the host do not get (Betts, 2009 cited in Ali, *et al.* 2017, p.42). This often causes conflict between the refugees based on their status as refugees but also has an economic (failure to provide economic resources to host communities prior to refugee hosting), resource (competing for natural resources) and political (gaining political capital) angle to it as well.

### **2.3.3 Political Factors (Crises of State Legitimacy, Weak State Institutions)**

One of the key concerns of politics is the ability to maintain power over a country. As such countries

often work hard to defend their territorial integrity. Research has shown that “territory has long been the most common incompatibility in intrastate armed conflicts” (Sida, 2023, p.2). Evidence shows that in 2020 alone “fifty-five of the recorded armed intrastate conflicts had territory as the main contradiction” (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) 2020). Most of the intrastate conflicts fought over territory are usually characterized by groups pursuing greater autonomy of their country’s borders (Toft, 2014). As a major contradiction in conflict, territory tends to affect conflict dynamics. For instance, a key empirical finding is that wars over territory last longer and are more difficult to resolve than conflicts fought over governance (Toft, 2014).

Political systems and how they are run is a risk to a potential conflict. There is agreement among researchers that the risk for armed conflict is highest in semi-autocracies (Håvard, 2014). That is, a political system with a mix of democratic and autocratic institutions. Therefore, risk of armed conflicts is high when a state moves from autocracy towards democracy, or from democracy towards autocracy (Sida, 2023). Research has also shown that a well-functioning democracy is the most peaceful political system, where risk of intrastate armed conflict is less compared to semi-autocracies and autocracies (Håvard, 2014). Nonetheless, it is important to note that authoritarian regimes are more likely to use repression than are democratic regimes (Davenport & David, 2004) and the lack of intrastate armed conflicts does therefore not reflect a general state of peace.

Miss-appropriation and corruption have a direct impact on the risk of armed conflict. A quantitative study covering the period of 1984-2007 indicates that corruption increases the risk of armed conflict (Neudorfer & Ulrike, 2014). One reason for this is that corruption increases group inequality and grievances (Sida, 2023), particularly among those benefiting from corruption or are seen to benefit from it. Where there is combination of weak rule of law and the institutions charged

with delivering services are politicised or captured, corruption can generate popular “distrust, dissatisfaction, and grievances with the existing political system” (Taydas, *et al.* 2010 cited in United Nations; World Bank. 2018, p.159). Some scholars further “argued that corruption does not systematically increase the risk of armed conflict. Rather, the effect depends on the management of corruption” (United Nations; World Bank, 2018). In support of this assertion, it has been argued that armed conflict arises from changes in the patterns of corruption rather than from corruption itself (Le Billon, 2003; Sida 2023).

#### **2.3.4 Economic Factors (Economic Motivations for Engagement in Conflict over Natural Resources, ‘Greed’)**

In their study, Berman *et al.* (2017, p.1564) found that natural and valuable minerals are to blame for fueling armed fighting. They drew on the case of “the heavy fighting that broke out between the Rizeigat and Bani Hussein, two Arab tribes, for territorial control of the Jebel Amer gold mine in Darfur region.” This reflects on the concept of disagreement and particularly addressing disagreements with violence. As argued earlier on, violence is a destructive way of dealing with violence (Kriesberg, 2015; Bobić, 2020). The conflict whose parties are the Rizeigat and Bani Hussein, two Arab tribes and are interested in territorial control of resource rich Darfur is said to have killed more than “800 people and displaced some 150,000 others since January 2013” (Berman *et al.* (2017, p.1564). Conflicts always attract several parties whose interests may worsen or complicate the conflict. For example, Berman *et al.* (2017, p.1564) found that the “armed groups extract revenues from mines without necessarily directly managing them, and extortion and bribery have been widely documented in mineral-abundant conflict areas.” In this context, providing support can be taken over and mismanaged. In this conflict, the “financial and logistical support provided by the mining company AngloGold Ashanti in 2003–2004” went to the “Nationalist and

Integrationist Front (FNI), a rebel group operating in the gold-rich district of Ituri in eastern DRC.”

The nature of violent events in this kind of conflict are often seen when mineral price spikes fuel both low-level violence (riots, protests) and organized violence (battles) (Berman *et al.* 2017).

## **2.4 The Process Involved in Bringing Peace Agreements, and the Efforts Needed to Ensure Lasting Peace**

There is a growing concern about how peace agreements are faring in ending conflicts. It is indeed common sense that when a peace process has been well taken thereby resulting in a good agreement, the possibilities of having a durable peace are high (UN OCHA 2018). On the contrary, any process that isn't well taken, resulting in bad agreement, possible delays, setbacks, or even the collapse of the peace process. UN OCHA (2018) in its policy note No. 8 indicates that in the UN Peace Agreements Database, 42 per cent of all peace agreements relate to Africa. However, several of these have failed to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. Africa has a history of recurring conflicts, and this is partly attributable to weak political institutions and structures (Aremu, 2010; Kimemia, 2021; Okon, 2023). If parties are coerced to accept an outcome of peace negotiations, this agreement is likely to fail. Agreements may also collapse if the parties involved do not implement them in good faith. The best example of this non-acceptance and non-compliance with peace accords is perhaps best exemplified by the current crisis facing the agreement to end the South Sudanese civil war, signed in August 2015 and 2018 in the face of threatened UN sanctions against both warring sides (UN OCHA, 2018). The foundations of peace and the potential for socio-economic and political transformation depend on vital decisions made at the negotiating table, as well as the dynamics of the peace talks, including their traditionally gendered nature (Adetula *et al.* 2018). The role of moral guarantor of a peace agreement – such as that undertaken by the African Union (AU) and the regional economic communities (RECs) – is important in

supporting peacebuilding and stabilization initiatives across the continent.

The African Union in its handbook: *Managing Peace Process; A handbook for AU Practitioners*. Vol 1 (2013, p. 44) stresses that *“Conflict settlement negotiations can eventually succeed only if they include all major stakeholders in a conflict and peace process. Otherwise, negotiations and peace agreements risk being derailed by spoilers. If some parties reject the inclusion of others or refuse to sit in the same room or at the same table with them, mediators could propose alternative negotiation formats, such as proximity talks, to protect the inclusiveness and integrity of a peace process.”* This indicates the importance of inclusivity in the mediation process.

Ross & Schomerus (2020) draw three key lessons from peace processes. First, they indicate that process design should acknowledge multiple vested interests across the full range of locally, regionally and internationally involved actors. Without doing so, it risks stimulating resurgent instability and undermining the legitimacy of post-agreement states. Secondly, they argue that processes must consider sequencing, flexibility and inclusivity. Trade-offs are necessary in establishing which issues will be brought to the negotiating table, the order in which key issues are considered during negotiations and the extent to which donors are willing to support effective compromise. Whilst ensuring that armed groups are represented in dispute resolution mechanisms, criteria for invitation must be sensitive to the need for outcomes to bear legitimacy. Lastly, they contend that continued support in implementation of the peace agreement is crucial. Support in the form of financing the implementation of a peace agreement and technical support goes a long way in the making peace agreements hold.

More specifically to local peace agreements, Boswell (2019) identifies five key variables that make local peace works in the five case studies examined of recent local peace processes in South Sudan.

First, he indicates that Inclusiveness of main conflict actors is important. Secondly, success as supplement but not substitute or alternative to national peace process. Thirdly, Civil Society mediation with political backing and strong, active monitoring and engagement is paramount. Fourthly, strong processes and follow-up and finally structural solutions to structural problems count.

In conclusion, it is evident that available literature points out to a number of factors that must be considered to ensure that peace agreements are delivered. Among these factors, the inclusion of all parties and stakeholders in the process, taking into consideration the vested interests of parties and avoiding coercion. As Puok Baluand indicated in his most recent interview with Voice of America aired on March 14, 2023 that “Bringing peace in South Sudan is not a one-man show. It is a collective effort of all South Sudanese and parties”

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to the field of study. It is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research is to be undertaken and among other things identifies the methods to be used in it. These methods define the means or modes of data collection or how a specific result is calculated. Therefore, this research plan includes research design, area of study, study population, sampling procedure, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, quality control methods, data management and processing, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations and delimitations of the study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study used a mixed method approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed. According to Cresswell and Plano (2011) mixed methods research designs involve the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in a particular study. One of the reasons for using mixed methods research in this study is because nature of the problem and context is fragile to use one approach (Creswell 2014). Since one type of data may not have been sufficient or obtained, this study used quantitative or qualitative data to sufficiently answer the research question.

According to Sharma *et al.* (2023, p.4) “using both qualitative and quantitative methods in research can offer a more comprehensive understanding of a research phenomenon... It also allows researchers to consolidate data in a purposeful way, enabling them to gain a wider view of their

study.” Therefore, the use of a “combination of closed-ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data” was useful in understanding a research problem. Additionally, since both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed, the researchers easily triangulated the findings where the use multiple sources were used to confirm or clarify their results (Sharma *et al.* 2023). The qualitative part of the study focused on obtaining information through interviews and focus group discussion and it involved obtaining people experiences as they lived it (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative aspect focused on obtaining views through structured questions to obtain their opinions (Creswell, 2014).

### **3.2 Area of study**

The study was carried out in Yei River County, which is located in the Central Equatoria State, lying South-west of the South Sudan capital Juba, close to the international borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Uganda. The indigenous and majority inhabitants of Yei are the Kakwa people. The Avukaya, the Mundu, the Baka, the Adio, the Kaliko and the Pojulu are the other tribes inhabiting Yei River County. Also, war displaced tribes and ethnic groups such as the Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk and the Nubians are also found in Yei River County. Politically, it is made up of five (5) payams namely, Yei Town, Mugwo, Otogo, Lasu and Tore Payams and is headed by a County Commissioner. The major occupation and economic activities of the people of Yei are small business and subsistence farming. Yei is also a crosslink center for two international boundaries. These include the borders with Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. This has also allowed multiple cultural inflows which shaped current youth cultures. This area has been experiencing war since 2016 and despite the local peace agreement signed in 2017, the area hasn't realized peace.

### **3.3 Study Population**

This is the description of the population and its objects/elements from which samples were drawn. The study covered the population of Yei River County which is 181,841 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Population Estimation Survey (PES) was published in April 2023. This population includes the indigenous inhabitants of Yei such as the majority kakwa, the Avukaya, the Mundu, the Baka, the Adio, the Kaliko and the Pojulu and other war displaced persons who have settled within the County. Specifically, the study targeted the Peace Desk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Yei, Yei River County officials, Payam Administrators, staff of Ministry of Peacebuilding in Central Equatoria State, representatives of Civil Society Organisations, intellectuals of Yei River County, youth leaders, women leaders, Ex-combats and the government (SPLA) soldiers. Also, key informants which included Mediators (Evangelical Presbyterian Church), chief negotiators (heads of negotiating teams of SPLM IO and Yei River Government), the Commissioner of Yei River County, Church leaders/Bishops and cultural leaders were targeted.

### **3.4 Sampling Strategy and Sampling Size Determination**

Sampling is the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample the researcher may fairly generalize results back to the population from which they were chosen (William, 2006). In this research, both probability and non-probability sampling strategies were used. This was meant to ensure that the right people were sampled to give the right information the sampling techniques employed include cluster, simple random and purposive sampling which have been discussed in detail in section 3.5.2 below.

#### **3.4.1 Sample Size**

Sample size is the number of observations used for calculating estimates of a given population. A sample size of 45 respondents was used of which 10 respondents were key informants that were targeted through interview, and another 10 were engaged using Focus Group Discussion. While 25 were sampled through cluster and simple random sampling and were administered questionnaire. To arrive at the stated sample size, the research used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) tables for determining the sample size (for quantitative respondents) as described in table 3.1 since the total number in the cluster was known.

**Table 1: Sample Size Determination using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)**

<b>Category of Respondents</b>	<b>Population (N)</b>	<b>Calculated Sample</b>	<b>Sample Size Considered</b>
Peace Desk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Yei	3	2.98	3
County officials	3	2.98	3
Payam Administrators	3	2.98	3
Staff of Ministry of Peacebuilding in Central Equatoria State.	3	2.98	3
representatives of Civil Society Organisations	4	3.97	4
Intellectuals of Yei River County	3	2.98	3
Youth leaders	3	2.98	3
Women leaders	3	2.98	3

The figures above were reached following Krejcie and Morgan (1980) formula (below) for determining sample from a population below 10.

$$: s = \frac{\chi^2 * N * P * (1 - P)}{(N - 1) * D^2 + \chi^2 * P * (1 - P)}, \text{ where:}$$

- $s$  is the required sample size.
- $\chi^2$  is the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (typically 3.841 for 95% confidence).
- $N$  is the population size.
- $P$  is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population.
- $D$  is the margin of error.

For the qualitative sample size, the principle of saturation (when no new information has been obtained) (see Vasileiou *et al.* 2018) applied in determining the samples. That is, sample stops when no new information is obtained from the following respondent. Further Ritchie *et al.* (2003) suggestion that individual interviews should not exceed 50 interviews was equally valuable. This allowed the researchers to manage the complexity of the analytic task.

Table 3.1 provides the total samples size and the corresponding sample techniques, data collection method and approach. The sample helped to reliable information that was used to draw conclusions and make generalization. Also, using two ways of sampling helped in minimizing errors hence increasing the confidence level. This means the findings of this study are valid and reliable.

**Table 2: Sampling, data collection methods and types of samples**

<b>Category of Respondents</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Sample Techniques</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Approach</b>
Peace Desk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Yei	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	Quantitative
County officials	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
Payam Administrators	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
Staff of Ministry of Peacebuilding in Central Equatoria State.	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
representatives of Civil Society Organisations	4	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
intellectuals of Yei River County	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
Youth leaders	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
Women leaders	3	Cluster and sampling random	Questionnaire	
Mediators (Evangelical Presbyterian Church)	2	Purposive sampling	Interview	Qualitative
Chief negotiators (heads of negotiating teams of SPLM IO and Yei River Government)	2	Purposive sampling	Interview	
The Commissioner of Yei River County (1)	1	Purposive sampling	Interview	
Church leaders/Bishops	2	Purposive sampling	Interview	
Cultural leaders	3	Purposive sampling	Interview	
Ex-combatants (FGD)	5	Purposive sampling	Focus Group Discussion	
SPLA soldiers (FGD)	5	Purposive sampling	Focus Group Discussion	

### **3.4.2 Sampling Techniques**

Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano 2011). Purposive sampling was specifically used to select the key informants which included the mediators from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, chief negotiators (heads of negotiating teams of SPLM IO and Yei River Government), the Commissioner of Yei River County, Church leaders/Bishops and cultural leaders because they have better knowledge of the peace agreement. The above respondents were selected because they were the key people involved in peace agreement processes (negotiating and implementing the agreement). In addition to the key informants, the members of the SPLM Soldiers and Ex-combatants who participated in the peace agreements alongside the SPLM IO and Yei River Government were also purposely selected to participate in the Focused Group Discussions. To ensure fruitful discussion five members were selected from each group to participate in the two Focus Group Discussions conducted.

Cluster sampling was also used to divide respondents into clusters of homogeneous units based on their respective groupings. According to Bryman (2016), cluster sampling involves dividing a population into manageable groups called cluster and then selecting randomly from the cluster sample for the study. The following groups formed the clusters from which respondents were selected randomly. Peace desk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Yei, County officials, Payam administrators, staff of Ministry of Peacebuilding in Central Equatoria State, representatives of Civil Society Organisations, intellectuals of Yei River County, youth leaders and women leaders. From the above clusters, respondents were randomly selected to which questionnaire was administered. The clustering and simple random sampling processes helped in drawing representative samples for the homogenous groups (clusters) and also prevented mistrust

or questions of biasness in selecting sample. It also gave a chance for every participant to be selected.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Qualitative data was obtained from interviews with key informants and Focused Group Discussions with selected representatives of the warring parties. Quantitative data was obtained through survey questionnaires. The study also used observation methods especially when conducting interviews, during filling questionnaire in person and facilitating Focused Group Discussions. These methods are further discussed below.

#### **3.5.1 Survey Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a data collection instrument used to gather data over a large sample or number of respondents (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). In each section of the survey questionnaire, the respondents were given clear instructions on how to complete it. These were drawn from the different categories involved in the peace process. The questionnaire was administered to the following category of respondents; Peace desk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Yei, County officials, Payam administrators, staff of Ministry of Peacebuilding in Central Equatoria State, representatives of Civil Society Organisations, intellectuals of Yei River County, youth leaders and women leaders. Most of them were self-administered but others were emailed to the respondents due to uncertainty of means of transport and security reasons.

#### **3.5.2 Interview Method**

An interview guide is a set of questions that the researcher asks during the interview (McNamara, 2009). An interview guide was designed and used to interview 10 key respondents – key

informants included mediators from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, chief negotiators (heads of negotiating teams of SPLM IO and Yei River Government), the Commissioner of Yei River County, Church leaders/Bishops and cultural leaders because they have better knowledge of the peace agreement thus requiring an in-depth discussion. Questions were intended to lead the respondents towards giving data to meet the study objectives. Follow-up questions were also asked to the respondents to provide clarification about the responses provided.

In-depth interviews were useful not only because they show excellent validity in meta-analytic research (Hunter and Schmitt, 1996) but also provided a chance to probe the answers and understand precisely what they mean. Interviewing was useful because it allowed the researcher to have control over the construction of the data. Charmaz (2002) supports this by stating that interview enabled flexibility which is vital in ensuring that issues emerge during dialogue and discussion of the questions asked.

### **3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion**

The researcher also carried out two Focus Group Discussions with the negotiating teams (ex-combatants and SPLA soldiers) in order to capture their views on the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County. Focus Group Discussion was used to ensure verified views are taken into consideration. The respondents were able to supplement each other's views thus making their submissions valid. This method was used because some of the target respondents didn't know how to read and write clearly, thus giving opportunity for them to fully participate in the study. They were grouped into five members each but taking into account their own group affiliations (opposition and government separately) to allow them air out their views freely.

These Focus Group Discussions stimulated in-depth discussions, and complex responses were addressed collectively. Group members stimulated new thoughts among themselves. However, there were arguments and counter arguments but were handled well with the help of the facilitator and the research assistant.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire**

Questionnaires were developed to collect the qualitative data. A questionnaire as a tool consists of a set of questions or prompts to collect data from a set of respondents (Creswell, 2014). In this study the questionnaire consisted of a number primarily open-ended and closed ended questions in order to obtain quantitative data that were analysed using descriptive statistics to draw conclusions and provide more specific explanations. The respondents were required to choose corresponding number provided in Likert scale of five with the following option: 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for Not Sure, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly Agree (see Appendix II).

#### **3.6.2 Interview guide**

In order to facilitate the interview process, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to conduct the interviews. The questions in the guide were open-end with the view of generating vital information from the respondents and to allow for probing for further information. The interview guide helped the researcher to stimulate respondents into detailed discussion of the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County. It served as a reference to ensure key areas of the interview were touched upon and discussed.

### **3.8 Quality Control Methods**

This refers to the reliability and validity of instruments used in data collection. In this study, attention was paid to ensuring that the data collection instruments adequately reflected the focus of the study, that is, factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County.

To ensure content validity, the researcher consulted experts that have vast experience and extensive knowledge of peacebuilding, in particular those concerned with peace agreements, and their management. This is in line with the suggestion that the researchers should consult the experts to evaluate each expression in the developed measuring instrument in terms of the content of the scale or terms of appropriateness and evaluates each expression in line with the opinions of the experts (Bryman 2016).

To ensure face validity, the researcher ensured that the data collection instruments were reviewed and approved by the supervisor. Through the comments that ensured the research aligned the purpose of the study are in line with the instruments developed. The supervisor's support enabled the researcher to ensure instruments developed are in line with the research questions and derived from the literature. This is also guided by Kaplan and Saccuzzo (2017) who argued the statements in the scale are clearly stated to ensure ease of understanding by the participants and making sure the statements are readability and appropriate for the level of the participants.

To ensure reliability, the researcher conducted a pretest by administering questionnaire to a smaller number of participants (7). The researcher observed how the questionnaire was filled and used the feedback from respondents on the questionnaire to improve it before administering it. Adjustments were made based on feedback to improve the questionnaire (Bryman 2016).

### **3.8 Data Management and Processing**

According to Caroline (2016), data management is simply the effective handling of information that is created in the course of research. The data management and processing activities carried out in this study included: designing a data management plan, collecting and capturing data, collaborating and analyze it, manage, store and preserve it, share and publish and finally reuse it in future for discovery and citation.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

This study analyzed data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis involved uncovering structures, extracting important variables, detecting any irregularity and testing any assumptions (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis ensured that triangulation of method was possible and enabled the researcher to come up with appropriate conclusions and recommendations.

#### **3.9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

All the qualitative data collected from open-ended questions and written comments from questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis “is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set; it often leads to new insights and understanding” (Naeem et al., 2023, p.2). In this study, the following steps outlined by Naeem et al. (2023) were followed in the analysis of data. But key to this process was the principles of coding and searching for themes and their meanings. In the first stage of coding, the researcher selected keywords and quotes from the data that was transcribed. This stage enabled the researcher to start identifying categories to enable theme development. In the second stage, the researcher focused on the key words and quotes and grouped them together

under particular themes based on the categories created. It is important to note that the research objectives and questions provided the broad themes under which data was classified. Creswell (2014) calls this deductive coding, that is, identifying themes to guide analysis. In the third stage, the researcher developed themes and conceptualized them by writing the findings. At this stage, the researcher organized categories of codes developed at stage two into meaningful groups according to identified patterns and relationships, such as cause of conflicts, the actors among others. The developed codes offered insights into the research question. It is also at this stage that the researcher transitions from a detailed analysis of codes and categories to a more abstract interpretation by creating themes. Therefore, through the interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes, the researcher then conceptualized the study and wrote the report which involved defining concepts emerging from the data about the experience of peace agreements. Researchers identify social patterns regarding peace agreements and refine them into definitions that align with the research questions.

Content analysis was also carried out in addition to thematic analysis. Content analysis in this study involved interpreting interview transcripts and linking them with information from the literature (Bryman 2016). In other words, it involved comparing literature with the findings to draw meaning and aid the discussion session of the study. It focused in identifying the patterns and making out them. Content analysis helped the researcher in analyzing the data collected to determine the adequacy of the information, credibility, usefulness and consistency (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999) with the data from interviews and FGDs, and existing literature. Data collected was categorized according to emerging variables from each question in the interview guide and discussions. The use of more than one method of collection and analysis described above made triangulation not only possible but increase validity of findings.

### **3.9.2 Quantitative Analysis**

According to Kotronoulas *et al.* (2023, p.3) quantitative data analysis involves the use of statistics to analyze variables in order to make sense of numerical data drawn from a sample. This is where the raw data (numbers) become results or evidence. Creswell (2014) stated that statistical analysis can be descriptive or inferential and their application in a study depends on the nature of data and research questions. In this study, descriptive analysis was used since it did not focus on “exploring links between variables and making inferences” which is found in inferential statistical analysis (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023, p.3).

Quantitative analysis in this study, focused on descriptive statistical analysis not only because of the action-oriented nature of the study but also describe aspects of dataset. The goal was to enable me to understand the details of the data by summarizing it and finding patterns from the specific data sample to people’s views around the nature of peace agreements (Kotronoulas *et al.* 2023, p.3). Therefore, using the Likert scale on the scale of five (5. Strongly agree, 4. Agree, 3. Neutral, 2. Disagree, 1. Strongly disagree) was used to measure respondents’ views on various aspects of study guided by the specific questions. The percentages and means generated helped the researcher describe the state of participant towards peace agreements in Yie. The responses generated were presented in the table and percentages to display and describe views of the respondents in much clearer way.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the study adheres to good ethical practices, the researcher took the following actions. First the researcher obtained an introductory letter from Uganda Christian University and the letter was taken and presented to the Commissioner of Yei River County for approval. A copy of the

approval was later presented to the National Security Service in Yei. This document was also carried along during every process.

Secondly, to ensure respondents are protected and freely participate in the study (voluntary participation), their consent was sought before the conducting the interview or administering questionnaire (informed consent). The researcher briefed the respondents about the study and asked them if they were willing to participate. Those who consented were interviewed or administered questionnaire. Due to the nature of Yie which is still having some conflicts, verbal consent was preferred as they refused to sign for fear of reprisal in case their signature is found.

Thirdly, the respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information and reason for the information and how it will be used was shared with the respondents prior to the interview or administering the questionnaire.

### **3.11 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Some of the respondents found it hard to participate in the study due to their busy work schedules or due to the sensitivity of the issue under study. In order to solve this, the respondents were contacted earlier and appointments and reappointments for data collection were made, and they were assured of good time management, and that safety was guaranteed as there was high degree of confidentiality in the handling of the information.

Insecurity in the area was thought to affect the Focused group discussions and the timing for submission of questionnaires, but this was not the case during the data collection process as everything went well and smoothly.

### **3.12 Minimizing Biasness**

To minimize biasness during the data collection and analyses stages, I ensured that I remained as objective as possible. Being a son of the soil, chances were high for me to take sides based on which side I support and what challenges I experienced from this conflict. However, this was not the case as information was taken as it was and in the event of any detection of bias, further follow-up questions were raised and reading the different responses to the same questions helped in drawing objective conclusions. Following up respondents was done to ensure that results that appear to deviate from the truth, which may cause distorted results and wrong conclusions, is avoided.

Also, the respondents were well selected to selected using cluster and simple random techniques to ensure representation of the population under study is achieved (representative sample) as earlier discussed under 3.4 (Sampling Strategy and Sampling Size Determination). Minimizing biasness using probability sampling techniques was aimed at ensuring information for this study is representative.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. This chapter has been categorized into themes derived from the research questions/objective of the study. These include: What are the causes of the conflict, the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County? What was the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams? What were the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement? What can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution in resolving conflict?

The first part of this chapter captures my experience during the collection process. The second part describes the respondent characteristics using tables and figures. The Frequency tables below are grouped according to the themes as indicated in the data collection tools. These themes represent specific topics being investigated in research and are equally the subsidiary insight questions. This grouping is therefore made for easy analysis and understanding of information gathered. The patterns shown in the frequency tables clearly bring out the answers to subsidiary insight questions in this research. The tables, frequencies and interviewees clearly brought out realities of peace agreement.

#### **4.2 My Personal Experiences During the Data Collection Process.**

This is the first time to interface with Action Research and the experiences and learning is so far great. This is the kind of research that we need in our real work life and I am happy to have been part of this. Having been cleared to proceed with data collection, I started to immediately send out

questionnaires, making appointments and scheduling for interviews as well as organizing the Focus Group Discussions. Initially, I wanted to handle the work by myself and then this changed quickly as there was an opportunity to find almost all respondents at one place as there was a big cultural conference of Kakwa Community organized in Yei. That conference brought nearly 80% of my respondents in one place. I took advantage of that and travelled to Yei to participate in the conference as well as do my data collection. Therefore, to be able to catch up with the respondents amidst the busy schedule of the conference, I had to quickly recruit a research assistant (my colleague who works at our office in Yei). I oriented him with the survey questionnaires and handed them to him so that he could carry that out. This helped me focus on only the Interviews and Focused Group Discussions. In the Focused Group Discussions, he also participated and took notes.

During the data collection, I noticed some people were afraid to respond as they thought the research was too political and would put them into problem. Others open up after my explanations while others shied off completely. Another thing I noticed was that a great number of the respondents actually speak or understand English well (contrary to what I had early thought) and therefore there was only a little translation required especially for questions that looked complex. Also, it was difficult to get the politicians or county leaders. I had to re-arrange interviews to suit them. I also sent some survey questionnaires on email and responses were made and returned to me through the email as well.

For interviews and Focused Group Discussions, I carried my manuscript book for taking notes. I also used observation methods to broaden my data as I was present in Yei. I also noticed I needed some finances to travel, arrange for refreshments for some interviewees and for printing costs. However, the data collection process went well without any disturbances. Below are the findings.

### 4.3 Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents have been discussed using the frequency tables and charts below.

#### 4.3.1 Age of Respondents

The table below shows the age range of the respondents who participated in the study. The results revealed that most of the respondents are between the age of 18-35, followed by those above 50 years and then those between 35-50. No respondent is below 18 years. This means that all respondents reached are adults. In addition, the age range also showed and offered opportunities to get experiences of peace agreements across different age ranges, which is vital for obtaining valid and rich data.

**Table 3: Age of respondents**

Category	18-35	35-50	50 – above
Total No.	12	6	8
Percent	46.2%	23.1%	30.8%

Source: SQ1, N=26

Figure 2 below shows the age representation in Table 3 using a pie chart reflecting the distribution among the three age categories.

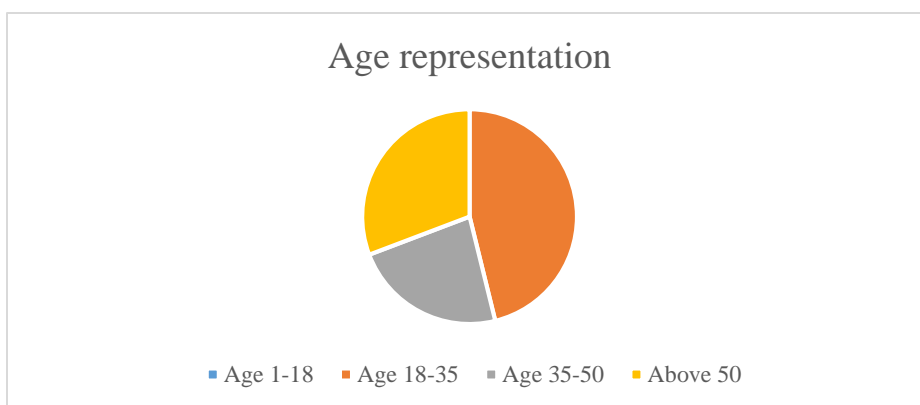


Figure 2: Age of Representation

### 4.3.2 Gender of Respondents

**Table 4: Gender Analysis**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Total	16	10
Percent	61.5%	38.5%

Source: SQ2, N= 26

Table 4 clearly shows that the majority of the respondents are males. However, the participation of women was equally good as 10 out of 26 took part in this survey. This was mainly because those often involved in peace related process are men as opposed to women since majority of the people in Yie are traditional in nature and tend to value men as opposed to women. During the interviews and also reading through the survey questionnaires, it is easy to see the emotional feeling attached to the responses of women. Most expressed that they have borne the greatest effect of the conflict and wanted an end to their misery. While the women were fewer than men, their presence was vital. Conflict affects women and men differently, including their role during peace agreements. Research has shown that achieving sustainable peace requires collaborative effort where all those affected or are engaged in conflict must come together to identify solutions to the problems driving conflicts (Johan *et al.* 2020). Consequently, have views of both men and women (gendered view) was vital is coming up with conclusions.

### 4.3.3 Education Level of Respondents

Table 5 below represents the levels of education of the respondents. As can be seen, majority of the respondents are University graduates (76.9%) while a few are secondary school certificate holders (23.1). There was neither a respondent who hasn't attained any level of education nor one who attained Primary education. The exposure to education contributed to respondents' comprehension and grasp of issues surrounding peace agreements.

**Table 5: Level of education completed**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>University</b>
Total Number	0	6	20
Percent	0.0%	23.1%	76.9%

Source: SQ3, N=26

#### **4.3.4 Religion of Respondents**

Religion plays an important role in fueling and addressing conflicts in many societies. In their study, Silvestri & Mayall (2015, p.1) found that “religious factors and motivations vary in each case” therefore, “understanding their role in situations of conflict” and context is crucial. Table 6 shows the religion of the respondents.

**Table 6: Religion of Respondents**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Christian</b>	<b>Muslim</b>
Total Number	23	3
Percent	88.5%	11.5%

Source: SQ4, N 26

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents were Christians (88.5%) with only a handful of Muslims (11.5%) taking part in the survey. This can be attributed to the fact that South Sudan is predominantly a Christian State. Religion was a key factor surrounding the cessation of South Sudan from the former Sudan, as such religious perspective was vital in situating its place in peace agreements. In the next section, the themes based on the objectives of the study have been explored.

#### **4.4 Cause of Conflict, the Key Actors, and their Interest in Yei River County**

This section addresses the question: What are the causes of the conflict, the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County? The first section discusses the causes and later the actors and their interests are discussed.

#### 4.4.1 The Causes of Conflict in Yei

Table 7 below highlights the dimension of the causes of conflict in Yei. These responses have been derived from the questionnaire administered during the study.

**Table 7: Causes of the Conflicts in Yei.**

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Respondents who witnessed the conflict in Yei	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	2	7.7%	6	23.1%	16	61.5%
The conflict has reduced in Yei River County	1	3.8%	2	7.7%	1	3.8%	17	65.4%	5	19.2%
The causes of the conflicts are not known to the citizens of Yei.	1	3.8%	11	42.3%	3	11.5%	6	23.1%	5	19.2%

Source: SQ6, N=26, SQ7, N=26, SQ8, N=26; TN=78 (more than one answer)

Majority of respondents admit having witnessed the conflicts in Yei as shown in table 5 above with 61.5% (strongly agreeing) and 23.1% (agreeing) of respondents admitting that. Most respondents also agree that the conflict has now reduced in Yei River County as 65.4% of respondents agreed that while 19.2% strongly agreed. In the interviews and focused group discussions, respondents have attributed this reduction to the local peace agreement although they questioned the peace process, noting that it was not inclusive.

Majority of respondents indicate that the causes of the conflicts in Yei are known to the citizens of Yei. However, there is also a great number that say the causes are not known to the people. During interviews, most admit that the causes are known. During the focus group discussions (both with ex-combatants and SPLA Soldiers, several causes of highlighted as stated in the quotes below.

*There are several causes of conflicts here in Yei for example political disagreement within the ruling party, arbitrary arrests and rampant killings... In addition to what*

*my brother said, people also become violent because of rampant corruption, everywhere you hear corruption and yet you lack services. So, there is no accountability at all, and you are compelled to fight or use any means to clear the mess... Let me add my voice to what the two have said. You see there is too much marginalization of the people of Yei and thus unbalanced resource distribution. So, what do you do? (FGD with Ex-combatants, held on 14/6/2023 in Yei Town)*

The argument raised in the FGD above is vital because the issue of misappropriation of resources and corruption have direct link to the risk of armed conflict. With the combination of weak rule of law and the institutions charged with delivering services are politicised or captured (as elaborated by FGD with SPLA Solderies and Respondent 2 and 5 below), corruption can generate popular mistrust and thus conflicts.

*You see, the problem we have in South Sudan is related to tribalism or ethnicity and nepotism. People want to favour their own and leave others, and this causes problems. I would add that this is impunity and when reported, sometimes you are punished. For me, the conflict we see is power struggle and individual interests. Tell me, why are people fighting? Is it not some individuals? There are, so selfish and that is what we must guard against... For me, following the conflict, the lack of unified army is a problem. Solders take orders from several people with interest because we are not harmonized... You see, for us in the army, we also suffer from poor governance and what my colleague said about unification of army is result of poor governance and institutions... on my side, I see there is strong propaganda and misinformation going around by various armies, and interested parties mobilizing people, which is misleading. (FGD with SPLA Solders, held on 15/6/2023 in Yei Town).*

The issue of lack of institution also caused conflicts. This was also confirmed in the causes raised by one of the interview respondents below. Particularly, the call to federalism to address political and governance concerns.

*So, the selective application of justice causes people to fight. This is also linked to a lack of rules of law. I can tell you with certainty that we don't have rule of law, so everyone one has to fight to fit or create a system for themselves. This is where problems come, each person wants to win in establishing the right law or system. Worst is the lack of political will to implement the national peace agreement... this is also where those who demand for a federal system of governance come in and are also fighting for this interest (Respondent 2, Interviewed on 4/6/2023 at Mugwo Payam)*

Despite the concerns raised above, research has also shown that a well-functioning democracy is the most peaceful political system, where risks of conflicts are minimized. This is what this study seeks to expand on but in context of ensuring sustainable peace agreement for better governance. It is equally important to note that the concern relating to lack of political will and national peace agreement highlighted by Respondent 2 above, has implications for people's livelihoods, wellbeing and justice as clearly articulated by Respondent 5 below.

*You see, we have several issues that drive conflict as we talk right now. The issues of unemployment or lack of resources, some people are grabbing land and this couple with poor institutions and governance causes frustration and continues suffering. I tell you people cattle have been destroyed without any effort to trace or bring culprits to book, this is very frustration Those who seek justice are intimidated. So, the only option left is to fight for what is taken away from you, unfortunately sometimes violently, where people have lost and continue to lose life. You see where we are? (Respondent 5, Interviewed on 4/6/2023 at Mugwo)*

From the above findings, the researcher observed that that there are several causes of conflict, and these causes are interconnected requiring a multilateral approach to peace agreements if a lasting solution is to be achieved. The key actors that are behind these are discussed in the following sections.

#### 4.4.2 The Actors Involved in the Conflicts and their Interests

The actors behind the conflicts in Yei have been indicated in Table 8 below. It highlights the extent to which the parties are involved in the conflict.

**Table 8: Actors involved in the Conflicts and their interests**

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The people behind the conflicts in Yei are not only politicians but include local leaders, youth, women, traditional authorities and external allies	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	5	19.2%	18	69.2%
The actors to the conflict in Yei have social, economic and political interests	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	6	23.1%	18	69.2%
All actors to the conflict have vested interests.	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	4	15.4%	20	76.9%

Source: SQ10, N=26 SQ11, N=26 SQ12, N=26; TN=78 (more than one answer)

As shown in Table 8 most respondents indicate that the people behind the conflicts in Yei are not only politicians. During interviews and focused group discussions, they also agree to this saying that other actors such as business people, foreign actors and local leaders have been involved. Respondent 7 clearly confirmed this reality as quoted below:

*When it comes to the actor is this conflict we are experiencing, there are many, very many, Initially it started with a few, but now, there are many. For example, we have not only politicians but the community (cultural) leaders, individual with particular interest, the business community or people, there are also foreigners with vested interests. I can remember all of them... (Interviewed on 10/6/2023 at Otego).*

The view of Respondent 7 clearly shows that there are often multiple actors in single conflict beyond the victims and perpetrators. It is also clear from this case (of Respondent 7) that actors in conflicts are quite many depending on their interest, which has been explored in the following discussions.

69.2% of respondents also indicate that actors to the conflict have interests of political, social and economic nature while 76.9% indicate that all actors have interests. When investigated in interviews and focused group discussions, they indicated that land grabbing, unbalanced development, destruction of crops by stray animals, demand for equal political representation are some of the interests. Below are the quotes from Respondent 9 detailing some of the interest of the actors in the conflicts in Yei.

*I see some actors are interested in capturing political power, others are pursuing fair political representation of the greater Yei and also some are after personal political progress. Quick access to financial resources and control is also another invisible driver of conflict and the war we today (Respondent 9 interviewed on 11/6/2023 in Yei Town).*

More of the interests were also shared by ex-combatants during the FGD. The respondents advanced the following as the reasons for actors' enjoyment in conflicts.

*Some want to take political power... I see it an opportunity for some people to join national army through rebellion which will then be integrated... I also see some*

*actors are after personal political growth this because through politics, one can be appointed to a higher position if they win. In my community, people are fighting to protect their land from land grabbers and protect their most important resources, which is land resources on it such as grass and water for their animals... I also think fighting to achieve balanced development is what people are fighting for. People here sometimes don't get a piece of national development, yet we have revenue generated from oil flowing into the country. Where does it go?... For me, I fought and continues to push restore peace and security in greater Yei area, and fight for equality and dignity of life for the people of Yei (FGD with Ex-combatant, held on 14/6/2023 in Yei Town).*

The point related to achieving equitable development, fighting for equality and dignity of people and secure resources have been highlighted as causes of conflict. Therefore, lack of access to and control of resources causes conflicts. The FGD above also shows that inequality has also been raised as the reason behind actors engaging in a conflict. Inequality with a strong group identification (ground identity), and a degree of intergroup competition and evaluation of the injustices and blame game (othering) are critical drivers of conflicts and this confirms the reasons respondents have advanced in the FGD and interviews. When governments fail to address grievances of people and groups and actively exclude them, the risk of violence increases. Therefore, the feeling of exclusion, injustice and threat to resources in the community of Yei play a powerful role in mobilizing them towards conflicting and use of violence.

#### **4.5 The Composition of the Negotiating and Mediation Teams and the Key Issues Addressed in the Local Peace Agreement.**

In this section discusses the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams and explored the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement. Negotiation and mediation are important strategies for resolving conflict.

#### 4.5.1 The Composition of the Negotiating and Mediation Teams

Tables 9 and 10 described the composition of the negotiating and mediating teams in the local peace agreements and extend to which they were involved.

**Table 9: The Composition of the negotiating teams.**

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I am aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017 between the parties	1	3.8%	2	7.7%	1	3.8%	9	34.6%	13	50.0%
The peace agreement was negotiated between the right actors to the conflict.	1	3.8%	4	15.4%	4	15.4%	15	57.7%	2	7.7%
The negotiating teams were inclusive in the composition	3	11.5%	4	15.4%	8	30.8%	10	38.5%	1	3.8%

Source: SQ14, N=26 SQ15, N=26 SQ16, N=26; TN=78 (more than one answer)

Majority of respondents in the survey are aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017. During interviews and focused group discussions, respondents equally admitted to being aware of the peace agreement have actually read the content of this agreement.

Contrary to the views of the researcher, more than half of the respondents agreed that the peace agreement was negotiated by the right actors. When interrogated during interviews and focused group discussions, the respondents admit that indeed the negotiators are the right people

representing the warring parties. However, they questioned the inclusivity as they indicated that only a few people were directly involved, leaving the majority including key commanders out. One of the Interview Respondent confirmed this exclusiveness of the negotiation team and approach.

*Most negotiations we have seen are not inclusive as the soldiers and commanders involved in the fighting were left out. It is often the breakaway groups that negotiate with the government therefore making it exclusive (Respondent 11, Interviewed on 12/6/2023 in Lasu Payam).*

It should also be noted that there is not one approach to negotiation and that not all conflicts require negotiation. When negotiation fails, mediation comes to play, as discussed in the next section.

**Table 10: The Composition of the Mediation Team**

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The peace agreement was mediated by the right people	3	11.5%	8	30.8%	7	26.9%	4	15.4%	4	15.4%
The mediation team was inclusive in composition.	2	7.7%	9	34.6%	11	42.3%	4	15.4%	0	0.0%

Source: SQ17, N=26 SQ18, N=26; TN=52 (more than one answer)

Table 10 shows that , most respondents disagreed with the mediators of the peace agreement. They indicated that they were not the right people to mediate the peace process. They wanted a neutral body to be the one mediating between the two warring parties. This is what differentiates negotiation from mediation.

Equally, the respondents also questioned the inclusivity of the mediation team. During interviews and focused group discussions, they indicated that the mediators specifically the Archbishop of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC-Yei) is a partisan actor who sided with the government against the rebels and wouldn't have been in charge of the mediation. They also indicated that civil society actors, women leaders, youth leaders, traditional leaders (chiefs) and religion leaders across denominations would have formed a neutral and inclusive mediation team. One of the respondents has this to say:

*When it comes to the mediation, the team must always go beyond the parties in conflict. We expect that in mediation, all people with grievances assisted by a mediator who is supposed to be neutral and focused on the problem. However, what I have seen with the local peace agreement process is that mediation did not include other religious leaders who have so much influence in Yei. no civil society, women, youth and traditional leaders' representation in the mediation Only the EPC team and the American Charity Organisation were party in the negotiation (Respondent 4, Interviewed on 4/6/2023 in Yei Town).*

From the above quote a positive outcome from a conflict is possible where actors must not be dissatisfied in the process of settlement, it will be retaining a sense of loss. The agreements should also not be one where one party achieves a victory or have few groups represented. This will leave a bitter legacy of defeat experienced by their adversaries. In the next section, the keys issues handled in the local peace agreement have been explored.

#### **4.5.2 The Key Issues Addressed in this Local Peace Agreement**

The survey response in Table 11 below highlights the key issues that have been addressed in the local peace agreement. It further shows the extent to which items in the peace agreement were addressed from the view of the respondents.

**Table 11: The key issues addressed in the peace agreement.**

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I have read and understand the content of the agreement	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	3	11.5%	18	69.2%	3	11.5%
The peace agreement has adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts	3	11.5%	14	53.8%	4	15.4%	5	19.2%	0	0.0%
There is room for improving the peace agreement to make it work and bring sustainable peace to Yei.	0	0.0%	2	7.7%	1	3.8%	11	42.3%	12	46.2%

Source: SQ19, N=26 SQ20, N=26 SQ21, N=26; TN=78 (More than one answer)

In table 4.9 above, majority of respondents indicated that they have read the agreement. More than half of the respondents also indicated that the peace agreement did not adequately address the causes of the conflicts in Yei. When respondents were asked during interviews and focused group discussions, respondents indicated that the question of land grabbing remained unaddressed, political representation wasn't clearly stipulated, disarmament and transitional justice not addressed as well. Also, majority respondents did not believe in the grass root peace agreement as a viable approach to ending the conflicts in Yei. They indicated that since there is a broader/national peace agreement in implementation, the focus must be on it instead of having to negotiate a parallel local peace agreement. They indicated that the issues facing Yei require a national solution and not a grass root peace agreement. One of the respondents stated that:

*As part of the key issues that we removed Matiang anyor (the notorious parallel army) from the Yei area as a result of the agreement. Partial calm was also achieved in the area. The area was hard to penetrate but now, there is calm and normality is returning. Another key issue was the reopening of access routes to and from Yei and to Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. These access routes are important for boosting trade among our people. Without peace trade is impossible (Respondent 1, Interviewed on 2/6/2023 in Yei Town)*

The concerns of the respondents still raise concerns as to whether the local peace agreement will be an effective measure. In Table 4.9 above, the majority (53.2%) of the respondents noted that, the peace agreement has not adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts despite the fact that majority of them (69.2%) have read and understood the content of the agreement. This contradiction can be attributed to my earlier findings about the types of negotiation and nature of the mediation. This acknowledgement of the gaps in the local peace agreement is not only positive but shows the fluid nature of conflicts.

#### **4.6 The Ways of Improving Local Peace Agreement as a Lasting Solution in Resolving Conflicts**

This section discusses the question: what can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution to resolving conflict? The various proposals advanced by the respondents (from the interviews and focused group discussion) have been discussed, and lessons have also been drawn to strengthen the findings.

One of the key areas found important in this study is ensuring inclusivity. The importance of inclusion has been discussed earlier as lack of it is a cause of conflict. The lack of inclusivity has been highlighted in the interview quote below.

*I mean there is need to ensure inclusivity in the mediation by involving the faith-based leaders, chiefs, youth and women representatives and Civil Society representatives. Also, ensure that a neutral body is charged with the mediation such as the EPC Church which was looked at as a partisan body supporting the government in power is replace by one which is neutral and is able to include all parties in the conflict (Respondent 5, Interviewed on 4/6/2023 at Mugwo)*

The above concern clearly shows that people's lack of involvement or perceptions of being excluded drive conflicts. One key area raised by Respondent 5 above is the neutrality of the mediator. This concern has also been raised by Respondent 7 as below.

*The negotiators must be the right people and not splinter group only as this has a direct impact on the legitimacy and ownership of the agreement. All warring parties must be brought to the negotiating table (Respondent 7, Interviewed on 10/6/2023 at Ootogo)*

The concern of neutrality is vital to the success of any negotiation venture. As discussed earlier, mediation is a process of discussions facilitated by a third party aimed at encouraging cooperative dialogue and assist individuals achieve integrative resolution of their concerns (Moore, 2014). For emphasis, the role of mediator is to facilitate constructive communication in a structured meeting or series of meetings to foster the likelihood of a joint agreement between the disputing parties. The quality of good mediation is that it should be a formal and confidential process. "Confidentiality is a considered a central principle of mediation because it helps foster candid and constructive dialogue" (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.489). Therefore, before commencing the mediation process, the mediator is expected to ensure that all participants understand and accept the processes, agree if it will be confidential and parties are aware about compliance. Siding with

and supporting one party as stated by Respondent 5 clearly undermines not only the integrity of the mediator and mediation process, but also the peace agreement.

The study also found that inadequate resource allocation undermined the local peace agreement processes and its implementation. For example, Respondent 4 observed that:

*There is need to ensure adequate resources are put into the implementation of the signed peace agreement. First of all, negotiation and mediation process are expensive and even implementing and monitoring the agreement is equally require resources... (Respondent 4, Interviewed on 4/6/2023 in Yei town)*

Resources are not a problem during the peace process but lack of it also causes conflicts that were discussed in previous chapters. It is therefore important that resources towards implementing what has been agreed upon are allocated, if not it may cause distrust and worsen the grievances of people.

Several other ways of improving peace were highlighted in the focus group discussion with the Ex-combatants and the SPLA soldiers. Below is the key points picked from the two FGDs.

*There should be adequate time invested in understanding the root causes of the conflicts, the actors and their interests... to me, it is important to ensure that justice and accountability against perpetrators of violence and killing during the conflicts...well for me, I think there is need to have adequate consultation with the people affected by the conflicts... I am also adding another point to those raised. There should be joint monitoring and evaluation be part of the peace agreement by parties involved in the conflict. (FGD with Ex-combatants and SPLA Soldiers held on 14/6/2023 and 15/6/2023 respectively in Yei Town)*

From the FDG responses, it is clear that a lot needs to be done to improve the local peace agreement but importantly achieve peace. Some of the issues are the same issues I discussed concerning the causes of conflict and the fact that they appear here means not enough was done in terms of the negotiation and mediation processes to develop the agreement. If the agreement was more integrative, some of the issues raised would not have surfaced. This study is with the opinion that, a revisit of the agreement and initiating amendments to it is vital.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This section discusses the findings presented in chapter four with existing literature (discussed in chapter two of this study). The discussion highlights the key area warranting an intervention but also shows the gaps in previous studies upon which this study added new insights. This section (discussion of findings) has been organised along themes derived from the research questions which include: What are the causes of the conflict, the key actors, and their interest in Yei River County? What was the composition of the negotiating and mediation teams? What were the key issues addressed in this local peace agreement? What can be done to get the local peace agreement as a lasting solution in resolving conflict?

#### **5.1 Cause of Conflict, the Key Actors, and their Interest in Yei River County**

This discussed the causes of the conflict, the key actors, and their interest based on the context of Yei River County. In terms of the causes of conflicts, respondents identified political disagreement, arbitrary arrests and rampant killings, rampant corruption, lack services, marginalization of the people and unbalanced resource distribution. These causes relate to what researchers found out. For example, the issue of misappropriation of resources and corruption have direct link to the risk of armed conflict. In their study, Neudorfer & Ulrike (2014) found that corruption increases the risk of armed conflict. This is because corruption increases group inequality and grievances whereby those benefiting or are perceived to have been benefiting from corruption are seen as enemies that must be fought at all costs. Further “distrust, dissatisfaction, and grievances with the existing political system” are found to be result of poor service delivery,

misappropriation of resources and corruption (Taydas, *et al.* 2010 cited in United Nations; World Bank. 2018, p.159).

Relatedly, the issue of lack of institution is what has been highlighted by researchers as another cause of conflicts. For example, Håvard (2014) points out that a political system with a mix of democratic and autocratic institutions is risky. Therefore, risk of armed conflicts is high when a state moves from autocracy towards democracy, or from democracy towards autocracy (Sida, 2023). This discussion shows that there are several causes of conflict, which are interconnected requiring a multilateral approach to peace agreements if a lasting solution is to be achieved. Therefore, any peace agreement must address such structural problems if peace is to be attained. This has been emphasized by Lederach (1995). who emphasized a multipronged approach to building peace in his conflict transformation theory.

Another cause of conflict is associated with fighting for equality and dignity of people and secure resources. For instance, Berman *et al.* (2017, p.1564) found that threat to or lack of natural and valuable minerals fuel armed conflicts. They drew on the case of “the heavy fighting that broke out between the Rizeigat and Bani Hussein, two Arab tribes, for territorial control of the Jebel Amer gold mine in Darfur region.” The conflict whose parties are the Rizeigat and Bani Hussein, two Arab tribes and are interested in territorial control of resource rich Darfur is said to have killed more than “800 people and displaced some 150,000 others since January 2013” (Berman *et al.* 2017, p.1564). Therefore, lack of access to and control of resources causes conflicts.

Research has confirmed that inequality has been found to be one of the main contributors to grievances in armed conflict (Wood & Wright 2016). The marginalization and relative deprivation people perceive in relation to others (United Nations; World Bank, 2018) causes conflicts.

Inequality with a strong group identification (ground identity), and a degree of intergroup competition and evaluation of the injustices and blame game (othering) (United Nations; World Bank, 2018) are critical drivers of conflicts and this confirms the reasons respondents have advanced in the FGD and interviews. When governments fail to address grievances of people and groups and actively exclude them, the risk of violence increases. Evidence suggests that “perceptions of exclusion and inequality are at least as important for the mobilisation of violence as objectively measured inequality” (Cederman, *et al.* 2013). Therefore, the feeling of exclusion, injustice and threat to resources in the community of Yei play a powerful role in mobilizing them towards conflicting and use of violence (Cederman *et al.* 2013).

In terms of the actors involved in the conflicts, the study found that there were several actors both victims and perpetrators. For example, politicians, community (cultural) leaders, business community or people, foreigners among other have interest in the conflict. But this also shows that there are often multiple actors in single conflicts beyond the victims and perpetrators. Most times the factors that drive conflicts are visible and sometimes invisible and the way it is resolved will either make conflict more constructive or destructive (Kriesberg, 2015; Bobić, 2020). This implies that some actors will be visible and other invisible, and this is the reason why conflict persist or “protracted conflict arise. That is, due to the failure to map out the actors requires to ensure and manage antagonistic relationships (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015, p.9). In another study, Berman *et al.* (2017, p.1564) found that conflicts always attract several parties whose interests may worsen or complicate the conflict. In context of extractive industry, for example, they found that the “armed groups extract revenues from mines without necessarily directly managing them, and extortion and bribery have been widely documented in mineral-abundant conflict areas.” In the conflict, the “financial and logistical support provided by the mining company AngloGold Ashanti in 2003–

2004” went to the “Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI), a rebel group operating in the gold-rich district of Ituri in eastern DRC.” The nature of violent events in this kind of conflict are often seen when mineral price spikes fuel both low-level violence (riots, protests) and organized violence (battles) (Berman *et al.* 2017). Therefore, it is clear from this case that actors in conflicts are quite many depending on their interest, which has been explored in the following discussions.

## **5.2 The Composition of the Negotiating and Mediation Teams and the Key Issues Addressed in the Local Peace Agreement.**

Negotiation and mediation are important strategies for resolving conflict. In the conflict continuum negotiation is powerful because the conflicting parties actually engage in resolving conflict. For mediation, a third party is involved, meaning the conflicting parties begin to lose control of the whole process (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001; Tasa & Chadha, 2023).

While majority of respondents were found to be aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017 and agreement have actually read the content of this agreement, they still questioned the inclusiveness of the agreement where only a few people were directly involved, leaving the majority including key commanders out. In support of this findings Jeong (2008, p.26) states that contradictory interests in conflict situation generates competition that involves a high win–lose component. Tasa & Chadha (2023, p.486) describe this type of negotiation as distributive negotiation where “the parties’ interests are strictly competing, their goals are separate and discrete, and relationship temporary, this often gives rise to a distributive deal.” Also known as “a zero-sum negotiation” the focus of the actors is succeeding and claiming the most value. Jeong (2008, p.26) further argues that, in this kind of negotiation actors’ interest are lost in “pursuing material interests, status, power, or privilege at the sacrifice of others” as stated by Respondent in chapter four of this study.

It should also be noted that there is not one approach to negotiation and that not all conflicts require negotiation. For instance, conflicts associated with economic interests can be more responsive to compromise through negotiation (distributive negotiation) than are value-based conflicts which are best addressed through an integrative negotiation where “the parties’ interests can converge... one parties’ attainment of their goals can help their counterpart to satisfy their interests” (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.486). This is also called win-win negotiation or a mutual-gain situation where the success of one party’s interests satisfies the interest of the other party. When negotiation fails, mediation comes to play. But as Lederach (1995) argues in his conflict transformation theory, whether negotiations or mediation actors must be balanced, and interest of all parties must be aligned. Therefore, the fact that many respondents question the inclusiveness of the local peace agreement contrasts with the continuous conflict they are experiencing. It is thus vital that efforts must be put in place to ensure all actors are not involved indirectly but are directly engaged in actual negotiation process but also as part of the implementation of agreement.

Although “mediation in many ways is an extension of negotiations where the parties to a dispute seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help, from a party not directly involved in the conflict, to resolve their differences without invoking the authority of the law” (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001, p.60). It is vital to note that mediation is broader than negotiation. In the other words “mediation as a form of assisted negotiation” (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001, p.60) is “a process of discussions or meetings conducted by a third party who acts as a facilitator to encourage cooperative dialogue to assist individuals achieve resolution of their concerns or issues” (Moore, 2014). During the mediation the individuals in a conflict are given an opportunity to create solutions that best fit their circumstances (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.489). The creation of the solutions is facilitated by the mediator through constructive communication either through a

structured meeting or series of meetings to foster the likelihood of a joint agreement between the disputing parties (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.489).

From the above discussions, the study agrees with Jeong (2008) and noted that a positive outcome from a conflict is possible where actors must not be dissatisfied in the process of settlement, it will be retaining a sense of loss. The agreements should also not be one where one party achieves a victory. This will leave a bitter legacy of defeat experienced by their adversaries. In terms of negotiation, while efforts should be about producing positive outcomes, “obtaining a mutually satisfactory agreement relies on the circumstances for negotiation that allow partisans to maximize their joint outcomes” Jeong (2008, p.15). The same can be said of mediation. That is, as “a form of assisted negotiation, the preconditions for negotiation also hold” for it (mediation) (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001, p.60).

Contradictory interests in conflict situation generates competition that involves a high win–lose component (Jeong (2008, p.26). This clearly characterized the local peace agreement, and this is also why majority respondents did not believe in the grass root peace agreement as a viable approach to ending the conflicts in Yei. In an event that the type of negotiation employed is distributive negotiation, the process turns as a competition (zero-sum negotiation) as opposed to value-based solution which is integrative (integrative negotiation or win-win outcome) where all the interests and needs of parties are satisfied (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.486). The most positive finding is that majority of the respondents believe that there is room for improving the peace agreement to make it work and bring sustainable peace to Yei.

### **5.3 The Ways of Improving Local Peace Agreement as a Lasting Solution in Resolving Conflicts**

One of the key areas found important in this study is ensuring inclusivity. The importance of inclusion has been discussed earlier as lack of it is a cause of conflict. For instance, Sida (2023) found that inequality and exclusion are among factors that drive violent conflicts. The above concern clearly shows that people's lack of involvement or perceptions of being excluded play a powerful role in creating feelings of exclusion and injustice and if such are not addressed, they are mobilised toward violence (Cederman, *et al.* 2013).

The concern of neutrality is vital to the success of any negotiation venture. As discussed earlier, mediation is a process of discussions facilitated by a third party aimed at encouraging cooperative dialogue and assist individuals achieve integrative resolution of their concerns (Moore, 2014). For emphasis, the role of mediator is to facilitate constructive communication in a structured meeting or series of meetings to foster the likelihood of a joint agreement between the disputing parties. The quality of good mediation is that it should be a formal and confidential process. "Confidentiality is a considered a central principle of mediation because it helps foster candid and constructive dialogue" (Tasa & Chadha 2023, p.489). Therefore, before commencing the mediation process, the mediator is expected to ensure that all participants understand and accept the processes, agree if it will be confidential and parties are aware about compliance. Siding with and supporting one party as stated by Respondent 5 in chapter four clearly undermines not only the integrity of the mediator and mediation process, but also the peace agreement.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings and conclusions of the study. First part is the summary of the findings, and the second part is the conclusion of the study.

#### 6.1 Summary of the Findings

Below is the summary of research findings based on the data collected using the different methods and the secondary data read.

- i) The data collected and analyzed shows that the main causes of the conflicts in Yei are political. Most respondents highlighted poor governance, corruption, lack of rule of law, arbitrary arrests and killings of the local people of Yei, nepotism in public offices and underdevelopment in Yei as some of the causes of the conflicts. However, there are also social and economic causes highlighted which include land grabbing, destruction of farmlands by stray cattle keepers and unemployment.
- ii) The research results also indicate that actors involved in this conflict have vested interests and that the actors include non-politicians as well. It further reveals that the interests are political, social and economic.
- iii) The data also shows that most of the people are aware of the peace agreement in Yei and have read it. However, they indicated that although the negotiators were the right people, they were not inclusive as they left key members out of the negotiation process.

- iv) The data also indicates that the mediators were not the right people to undertake the mediation process. Many respondents pointed to the Archbishop of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as a partisan party and questioned his position as a mediator. They called for a neutral body that is inclusive and brings on board a wide range of actors.
- v) The research also reveals that the agreement did not explicitly address the causes of the conflict.
- vi) Finally, the research findings indicate that there is room for improvement of the peace process and respondents suggested ways to do that which include ensuring inclusivity in the negotiations, having a non-partisan and inclusive mediation team and ensuring adequate involvement of local people.

## **6.2 Conclusions**

This research study was undertaken to find answers to the central research question; What are the factors hindering the local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County? Based on the findings, below are my conclusions as to what factors are responsible for the continued conflict even when a local peace agreement exists.

The local peace agreement has not addressed the root causes of the conflict in Yei River County. The agreement left out core political causes such as poor governance, corruption, lack of rule of law, arbitrary arrests and killings of the local people of Yei, nepotism in public offices and underdevelopment in Yei but focused on how to quickly end the conflicts by providing financial incentive for those who accept to shun conflict and join the government. This made so many rebel forces continue with their demands, hence the continued conflicts in Yei.

There was a lack of inclusivity during the peace talks. Both the negotiators and mediators were not

inclusive enough. There were questions about the independence of the mediators particularly the position of the Archbishop of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church who was seen to be siding with the government. Also, the negotiators on the side of the rebel group were seen as a click of a breakaway group with personal interests. This left the agreement in the hands of a few while leaving out majority of the actors such as the chiefs, civil society groups, women groups, women groups and the broader faith-based leaders who would otherwise put weight to the agreement. Since they were not engaged at the very beginning of the peace process, they do not feel part of the process and therefore do not own it. This explains why the agreement couldn't bring peace to Yei River County.

The vested interests of all actors involved in the conflicts also contributed to the continuity of the conflicts even after a local peace agreement was signed. These vested interests override the urge for unity in addressing conflicts. It is easy to imagine how difficult it was to reach a consensus on core issues during the peace talks. This can also be attributed to the fact that the agreement didn't address the root causes of the conflicts.

As all round of the peace talks were done in Kampala – Uganda, there was a disconnection with the reality on the ground. It is good to use Kampala as a neutral ground but there wasn't adequate consultation, if any, with the grass root on how to address conflicts. This brings questions of ownership as well and results in difficulty in the implementation processes of the agreement.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Peace agreements are meant to bring an end to conflicts. However, where conflicts endure after a peace agreement has been signed as is the case with the local peace agreement in Yei River County,

ways to address the factors leading to this continuity must be established. Here are my recommendations on how to improve the local peace agreement in Yei River County.

- i) The peace process must focus on addressing the root causes of the conflicts. Where peace talks are not focused on the root causes, chances are high this peace agreement won't work. It is therefore important to ensure that an effective conflict analysis is done prior to the peace talks so that the root causes of the conflict are determined. Once this is done, the talks can then be done based on the conflict analysis results.
- ii) There is also a great need to pay attention to the inclusivity of both negotiators and mediators. While doing so, it is important to do background checks on individuals or parties which are seen as partisan, especially on the side of the mediators. Allowing partisan individuals or groups to mediate will endanger the outcome of the peace process. As for the negotiators, it is important to bring everyone on board. By ensuring that all key actors are brought around the table, there will be greater ownership and therefore, implementation becomes easier. This will lead to ending the conflicts.
- iii) Peace agreements should not result from a rush process but an inclusive process that is given adequate time so that everyone is given due attention, and all interests are digested and consensus built upon. The vested interests of all actors involved in the conflicts, if not addressed, can contribute to the continuity of the conflicts after the agreement is signed. It is therefore important to ensure that all interests are digested and incorporated in the peace agreement.
- iv) Finally, it is important to find neutral ground for the talks but adequate consultation must be done at the grass root to ensure that everyone is part of the process. This will help

mediators and negotiators to understand the demands of the people at the grass roots. It will also lead to ownership of the agreement which will facilitate easy implementation.

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## **APENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Interview Guide**

#### **How local peace agreement can work in Yei River County.**

This interview guide is used for collecting data during individual interviews. It is divided into parts starting from Part A to F. The information collected will be used to help in ensuring that local peace agreements practically work and bring lasting peace in Yei River County. I assure you (respondents) of the highest level of confidentiality of information you will provide. I also assure you that your name will be kept anonymous in the report.

#### **A. Demographic Information**

1. Age of respondent:
  - a. 1-18
  - b. 18-35
  - c. 35-50
  - d. 50 – above
2. Gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. Education level:
  - a. None at all
  - b. Primary
  - c. Secondary
  - d. University

4. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Causes of conflict in Yei River County**

5. Where did the conflicts in Yei find you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. In your own opinion, what are the causes of this conflict?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you describe the current state of the conflict in Yei?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C. Actors involved in this conflict and their interests.**

8. Are there specific people or groups involved in this conflict that you know?

Yes

No

If yes, who are these people or groups?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you think these actors have social, economic and political interests in this conflict?

Yes

No

If yes, what do you think are these interests?

a) Politically?

---

---

b) Economically?

---

---

c) Socially?

---

---

**D. The composition of the negotiating teams.**

10. What do you know about the peace agreement signed in 2017 between the SPLM/A –IO and government of Yei?

---

---

11. What in your view is the composition of the negotiating teams?

---

---

12. Do you think there is inclusivity in the negotiating teams?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your choice

---

---

13. **The composition of the mediation team.** Who were the mediators of this peace agreement?

---

---

14. What in your view is the composition of the mediation teams?

---

---

15. Do you think there is inclusivity in the mediation team?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your choice

---

---

**E. The key issues addressed in the peace agreement.**

16. To what extent do you understand the content of the peace agreement?

- a. Fully understand
- b. Moderately understand
- c. Somewhat understand
- d. Not understand at all
- e. I do not know

17. Do you think the peace agreement has adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts?

Yes

No

If not, what issues do you think are left out in this agreement?

---

---

18. If any, what can you recommend for this peace agreement to hold and bring total peace in Yei River County?

---

---

## **Appendix II: Survey Questionnaire**

Dear Respondent, this survey questionnaire is aimed at collecting information that which will help in ensuring that local peace agreements practically work and bring lasting peace in Yei River County. You have been selected as a respondent because I believe that you possess the information required for this study. I would like to assure you that the information you provide will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Also, all respondents will be anonymous in the report.

### **Part I: General Information.**

1. Age.
  - a. 1-18
  - b. 18-35
  - c. 35-50
  - d. 50 – above
  
2. Gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
3. Education level:
  - a. None at all
  - b. Primary
  - c. Secondary
  - d. University

4. Religion:
- a. Christian
  - b. Muslim
  - c. Other (State): \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where do you currently work? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II: Causes of conflict in Yei River County**

Please put a tick in one of the columns at the extreme right section that best describes your opinion regarding the statements in the second column. Choose the corresponding number. For example, 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for Not Sure, 4 for Agree and 5 for Strongly Agree.

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree.
6	I have witnessed the conflict in Yei					
7	The conflict has reduced in Yei River County					
8	The causes of the conflicts are not known to the citizens of Yei					

9. Please outline four causes that you know?

I \_\_\_\_\_

ii \_\_\_\_\_

iii \_\_\_\_\_

IV \_\_\_\_\_

**Part III: Actors involved in this conflict and their interests.**

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree.
10	The people behind the conflicts in Yei are not only politicians but include local leaders, youth, women, traditional authorities and external allies					
11	The actors to the conflict in Yei have social, economic and political interests?					
12	All actors to the conflict have vested interests.					

13. Please outline the interests that you know:

---

**Part IV: The composition of the negotiating teams.**

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree.
14	I am aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017 between the parties?					
15	The peace agreement was negotiated between the right actors to the conflict.					
16	The negotiating teams were inclusive in the composition					

**Part V: The composition of the mediation team.**

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree.
17	The peace agreement was mediated by the right people					
18	The mediation team was inclusive in composition.					

**Part VI: The key issues addressed in the peace agreement.**

No	Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree.
19	I have read and understand the content of the agreement					
20	The peace agreement has adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts					
21	There is room for improving the peace agreement to make it work and bring sustainable peace to Yei.					

22. Suggest three ways that can help make peace agreement to hold and bring total peace in Yei River County.

I. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

III. \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and answers. I am sure this will help in addressing the factors hindering peace agreements from holding.

## **Appendix III: Focused Group Question Guide**

### **How local peace agreement can work in Yei River County.**

These questions will be used for collecting data during focus group interviews. The information information collected will be used to help in ensuring that local peace agreements practically work and bring lasting peace in Yei River County. I assure all respondents of the highest level of confidentiality of information provided. I also promise to maintain all respondent anonymous in the report.

#### **A. General Information.**

<b>Personal Details for Focused Group Discussion participants.</b>						
<b>Group category:</b>						
No.	Name (Optional)	1. Age	2. Education Level	3. Gender	4. Religion	5. Occupation
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

#### **B. Causes of conflict in Yei River County**

6. Where did the conflicts in Yei find you?
7. In your own opinion, what are the causes of this conflict?
8. How would you describe the current state of the conflict in Yei?

#### **C. Actors involved in this conflict and their interests.**

9. Who are the actors to the conflict?
10. What are their interests?

#### **D. The composition of the negotiating teams.**

11. Are you aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017 between the parties?

12. What in your view is the composition of the initiating teams?

13. Do you think there is inclusivity in the negotiating teams? If not, how?

**E. The composition of the mediation team.**

14. Who were the mediators of this peace agreement?

15. What do you think of their composition and suitability for the mediation?

**F. The key issues addressed in the peace agreement.**

16. How much do you know about the peace agreement?

17. Do you think the peace agreement has adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts?

If not, what issues do you think are left out in this agreement?

18. If any, what can you recommend for this peace agreement to hold and bring total peace in Yei River County?

## **Appendix IV: Letter of Introduction**

**Study Title: How local peace agreement can work in Yei River County.**

**Researcher: Mawa George Lazarous,**

**Contact Details: 0925851521, [mawageorge@ymail.com](mailto:mawageorge@ymail.com)**

Before agreeing to participate in this research, I strongly encourage you to read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose and procedures of the study. Also described is your right to withdraw from the study at any time. This study is a requirement for my Masters Degree Course at Uganda Christian University and has been approved by the University Leadership.

This study is designed to examine the factors hindering local peace agreement from bringing peace to Yei River County.

I am conducting this study to learn more about this topic as there have been questions regarding the local peace agreement in Yei River County. Participation in the study involves completion of a survey and responding to interview questions that ask you basic questions about yourselves and your understanding of the conflict and peace agreement in Yei River County.

The interviews will be conducted by myself, audio-taped and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

There are no risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Potential risks or discomforts include possible emotional feelings of sadness when asked questions during the interview.

The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss factors, perceptions, and concerns related peace agreements in Yei which will in turn help in improving peace agreements so that they can bring lasting peace.

The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in secure premises during this study. There will not be any identifying names on the surveys or interview transcripts. Your names and any other identifying details will never be revealed in any publication of the results of this study. The tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study. The results of the research will be published in the form of a research report and may be presented at professional meetings.

Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any question we might ask you. You are welcome to ask the researcher any questions that occur to you during the survey or interview.

If you have other questions or concerns about the study, please contact the coordinator; Ms. Dorcus Magooba of Master of Organizational Leadership and Management at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, Uganda via e-mail at [dmagoba@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:dmagoba@ucu.ac.ug)

**Appendix V: Consent Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name; please print clearly), have read the above information. I freely agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous. \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix VI: Code Book.**

### **Part I: General Information.**

19. Age.

- e. 1-18
- f. 18-35
- g. 35-50
- h. 50 – above

20. Gender:

- c. Male
- d. Female

21. Education level:

- e. None at all
- f. Primary
- g. Secondary
- h. University

22. Religion:

- d. Christian
- e. Muslim
- f. Other

## **Part II: Causes of conflict in Yei River County**

6. Witnessed the conflict in Yei

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

7. The conflict has reduced in Yei River County

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

8. The causes of the conflicts are not known to the citizens of Yei

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

## **Part III: Actors involved in this conflict and their interests.**

10. The people behind the conflicts in Yei are not only politicians but include local leaders, youth, women, traditional authorities and external allies

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

11. The actors to the conflict in Yei have social, economic and political interests

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

12. All actors to the conflict have vested interests.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

**Part IV: The composition of the negotiating teams.**

14. I am aware of the peace agreement signed in 2017 between the parties

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

15. The peace agreement was negotiated between the right actors to the conflict.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

16. The negotiating teams were inclusive in the composition

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

**Part V: The composition of the mediation team.**

17. The peace agreement was mediated by the right people

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

18. The mediation team was inclusive in composition.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

**Part VI: The key issues addressed in the peace agreement.**

19. I have read and understand the content of the agreement

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

20. The peace agreement has adequately addressed the causes of the conflicts

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

21. There is room for improving the peace agreement to make it work and bring sustainable peace to Yei.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Not Sure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree.

## Appendix VII: Data Sets

DATA SETS																				
Categories: County officials, payam Administrators, chiefs, State Ministry of Peace building officials, youth representatives, women representatives, Civil Society representatives, EPC peace desk officials, ex-combatants, SPLA soldiers, intellectuals, religious leaders.																				
Serial No.	Age	Gender	Educational Level	Religion	6	7	8	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
1	d	a	d	a	4	2	2	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4		
2	b	a	d	a	2	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	3	3	4	5		
3	c	b	d	b	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	2	3	4	3	4		
4	b	a	d	a	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	2	5	3	5	4	4		
5	c	a	c	a	4	4	4	2	2	1	1	4	4	4	3	4	4	5		
6	c	b	c	b	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	4		
7	b	a	d	a	1	3	5	5	5	4	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	2		
8	d	a	d	a	5	1	5	1	5	5	3	2	1	3	2	3	1	5		
9	b	a	d	a	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	1	3	2	4	3	5		
10	d	b	d	b	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	2	4		
11	b	a	c	a	5	5	1	4	4	5	4	1	5	1	1	1	1	4		
12	b	a	d	a	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	2	1	2	3	2	3		
13	d	b	d	a	5	4	2	4	5	5	5	4	4	2	2	4	2	5		
14	d	b	d	a	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	4	2	5		
15	b	a	c	a	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4		
16	b	a	c	a	3	5	5	4	3	4	2	3	3	2	4	4	4	4		
17	c	b	d	a	5	4	2	5	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	2	4		
18	b	a	d	a	4	5	2	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	2	5		
19	c	a	d	a	5	4	2	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	2	4		
20	b	a	d	a	5	2	2	4	5	5	5	2	1	1	1	4	1	2		
21	b	b	d	a	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	4	2	5		
22	b	a	d	a	4	4	3	5	5	5	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4		
23	d	b	d	a	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	2	2	4	2	5		
24	d	b	d	a	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	4	3	2	3	4	2	5		
25	c	b	c	a	5	4	2	5	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	4	2	5		
26	d	a	d	a	5	4	2	5	5	5	5	2	2	2	2	4	2	5		

Source: Survey Questionnaire responses.

## Appendix VIII: University Letter Of Introduction.



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

May 26<sup>th</sup> 2023

To Whom It May Concern;

Dear sir/Madam,

**RE: STUDENT RESEARCH AND PROJECT WORK**

**NAME:** LAZAROUS Mawa George

**ACCESS NUMBER:** A92632

**REGISTRATION NUMBER:** RJ22M02/208

The above named is a student of Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management (UG-UCU-22 cohort) at Uganda Christian University with the School of Business during the second year of study.

Besides attendance of theory lectures, the student is required to demonstrate abilities in applying the acquired knowledge by conducting a research and writing a project paper on a Leadership problem/situation in Uganda.

**The research topic:** How can the local peace agreement hold and bring peace in Yei River County?

By this letter, we are requesting you to assist the student herewith and avail the information requested or participate in surveys.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Magoba Dorcas".

Magoba Dorcas

**Coordinator, Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management  
UCU, School of Business**

---

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