Learning from Youth as Peace Builders

Youth Counter Hate-Speech
& Identity-based Violence in South Sudan
2019 - 2021

South Sudan Youth Peace and Development Organisation (SSYPADO) is a Youth Organization based in Juba, South Sudan. It has been engaging youth in inter-ethnic dialogue and peacebuilding for over ten years.

SSYPADO promotes youth affirmative action to ensure the participation of youth in public life, and conducts youth and intergenerational dialogues, bringing the youth, women and elders together to engage in open discussions to resolve conflicts. SSYPADO also organises an annual youth social forum bringing youth from South Sudan together to discuss challenges and develop action points.

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Rights for Peace is a UK-based non-profit working to prevent mass atrocity crimes using human rights approaches, including human rights education. Rights for Peace undertakes training, research and advocacy to address the drivers of violence and co-creates projects with local organisations to strengthen capacities and resilience.

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Foreword

Since its inception as an independent sovereign state, South Sudan has been beleaguered by identity-related conflict and inter-communal violence. As part of the **Youth Counter IBV Project**, led by South Sudan Youth for Peace and Development Organisation (SSYPADO) and Rights for Peace from September 2019 to July 2022, this report draws upon the experiences of young people who have experienced the turmoil of inter-ethnic conflict, which continues to pervade South Sudan to the present.

SSYPADO's mission is to promote responsible citizenship and mutual understanding among young South Sudanese. We aim to contribute to a South Sudan in which youth from all walks of life can peacefully coexist. Since our establishment, we have engaged in:

- Civic education,
- Advocacy on youth involvement in peace processes and decision-making forums,
- Dialogues (bringing youth together with key constituencies to share perspectives of the vulnerable youth, especially those displaced and living in refugee camps,
- The prevention of identity-based violence (IBV) in South Sudan.

This report exhibits the issues of identity-based violence (IBV) currently occurring in South Sudan and strategies and lessons learned to counter hatred and discrimination in the future.

SSYPADO provides spaces for young people to become aware of deep-seated prejudices and jointly identify the causes of disputes through dialogue and build trust building activities between communities. This report highlights the outcomes of the youths' own initiatives, lessons learned and strategies to counter hate and prejudice.

The youth initiatives undertaken through this project have sharpened the skills of our young leaders and encouraged hundreds of 'uninformed youths' to embrace inter-communal social and cultural programs, defying prejudice and mistrust often fomented by their elders.

Above all this project has recognised that young people can be powerful agents, able to trigger widespread attitude change when given the opportunity. In some areas the initiatives were able to become self-sustaining, such as in Malakal and Juba, giving us hope of peaceful co-existence in our young country.

Mr. Augustino Deng Allier, Executive Director of SSYPADO.

Project Methodology

The **Youth Counter IBV Project** used a peacebuilding and human rights education methodology tailored to strengthen participants' critical thinking, exploring personal understandings and experiences around identity, equality, discrimination, prejudice, hate speech, stereotyping, scapegoating and dehumanisation, including with a gender specific focus. The methodology aimed to strengthen positive attitudes and values including common identities and narratives, pluralism, empathy and personal responsibility amongst civil society actors and their target groups.

Training was provided by Aegis Trust at the Kigali Peace School, at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, as well as in Juba by Rights for Peace.

Materials and curricula were inspired from several sources, including:

- Council of Europe's COMPASS Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People,[1] and
- We Can: Taking Action Against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives.[2]

Aegis Trust Peace School at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Site

Learning by doing is a crucial element to the methodology, as emphasised by key scholars such as Prof. Ervin Staub, who, amongst others, inspired the youth peace education work of Aegis Trust in Rwanda, emphasising that positive behaviours such as helping, and social engagement fuel positive attitudes.[3] Engaging young people in positive actions is said to change their self-perception, affirming them as positive actors. By way of contrast, when perpetrators make choices to commit dehumanising acts based on prejudiced attitudes, stereotypes and ideologies, they then see themselves as individuals capable of perpetrating harmful acts or inflicting harm in what Staub calls a "changing self-concept".

Providing opportunities for young people to see themselves and others engage in positive

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[1] Council of Europe, 'COMPASS Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People' <https://www.coe.int/be/web/compass/home> accessed 9 June 2021.
[2] Council of Europe, 'We Can: Taking Action Against Hate Speech through Counter and Alternative Narratives' <https://rm.coe.int/wecan-eng-final-23052017-web/168071ba08> accessed 9 June 2021.
[3] Ervin Staub, 'Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins and Prevention' in The Encyclopaedia of Peace Psychology (2011), D.J. Christie (Ed.) <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470672532.wbepp120> accessed 9 June 2021.

actions can be life changing. The more often young people are exposed to positive behaviours and opportunities to engage in positive actions, the more likely they will continue such behaviours.[4]

In addition to strengthening human rights competencies, the project's methodology focused on practical skills for youth leaders, including project identification, budgeting, implementation and measuring impact. This replication strategy saw 379 youth become activists as direct beneficiaries, changing the attitudes and behaviours of an estimated 11,750 members of their wider communities.

SSYPADO youth leaders at the Kigali Peace Education Visit, 2019.

Watch a short film about the Kigali Exchange visit and how its impact on our youth leaders.

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[4] Vincent Flores (2012), 'The Continuum of Violence and Peace: Applying a Contemplative Framework for Turning the Problem into a Solution' in Practicing Matters (2012) <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2012/03/01/continuum-of-violence-and-peace/> accessed 10 July 2021.

Context: Identity Based Violence in South Sudan

After a bitter conflict that lasted twenty-two years, South Sudan became the youngest country, following a referendum that delivered independence from Sudan in July 2011. Peace was short-lived, however, when civil war broke out between rival forces loyal to the President (Salva Kiir) and Vice President (Dr. Riek Machar) in December 2013.

The conflict has led to the deaths of as many as 383,000 people according to a recent estimate, displaced nearly four million people as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs)[5] and subjected thousands to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).[6]

Much of the violence has been identity-based: both the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights raised the alarm over the rise in inflammatory rhetoric, stereotyping, hate speech and incitement to violence against certain ethnic groups in South Sudan.[7]

Examples of Hate Speech and Incitement

"Halhalna" – these relatives of ours (not): used against Mundari or Dinka, and generally for cattle keepers.

"MTN" - MTN is one of the four mobile networks in South Sudan with the slogan 'everywhere you go'. In this context, Dinkas are said to be everywhere like the MTN mobile service, thereby aiming to instil fear by exaggerating the number and location of Dinkas within South Sudan, suggesting an increasing presence and pervasive (negative) influence throughout the country, specifically in competition for land, access to water, government services, and jobs.[8]

"Nyam nyam": Both Dinkas and Nuer are reported to use this term to refer to Equatorians. The phrase is used to describe an Equatorian as "someone who's very short

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[5] Council on Foreign Relations, 'Global Conflict Tracker: Civil War in South Sudan' (2021): <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan> accessed 9 July 2021.

[6] Devon Cone, 'Still in Danger: Women and Girls Face Sexual Violence in South Sudan Despite Peace Deal' (Refugees International, October 2019) <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/16806/pdf/southsudan-devon-october2019-1.0.pdf> accessed 9 July 2021 .

[7] UN News, 'South Sudan continues to face persistent challenges to peace and stability, Security Council told' (17 November 2016) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/11/545682-south-sudan-continues-face-persistent-challenges-peace-and-stability-security#.WNIZWhD6KCY> accessed 21 July 2021; OHCHR, 'South Sudan: Dangerous rise in ethnic hate speech must be reined in – Zeid' (25 October 2016) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20757&LangID=E> accessed 21 July 2021.

[8] PeaceTech Lab, 'Social Media and Conflict in South Sudan' <https://www.peacetechlab.org/south-sudan-lexicon> last accessed 21 July 2021, 7.

and eats everything" or, if given something worthwhile, "would sell you out."[9] It also can mean "weak" in reference to Equatorian fighting skills; stupid; and donkey.[10]

"Nua scum" / "Dinka rats": In 2014, the compound of the NGO Nonviolent Peaceforce in Bentiu was heavily shelled and looted. All along the damaged walls were written messages of hate: "Death will come to all Nuer scum" signed with a name and age, Chol, age 16. Next to a message that read "God hates Dinka like rats" signed with a name and age, James, age 17".[11]"

"Elimination": In 2016, letters with graphic warnings of violence against people from the Equatoria region were left outside the gates of humanitarian organisations in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, purportedly written by individuals from the Dinka community, which warned Equatorians to leave or be "eliminated", with threats of violence, mutilation and murder.[12] The threats emerged in reaction to the killing of an unconfirmed number of Dinka civilians. Rumours circulated on social media about the number of civilians killed, calling for revenge attacks.[13]

"Jenge" - This term is used by Nuer, or those in Equatoria, to refer to Dinkas. The term degrades Dinkas by associating them with cattle, characterizing the targeted person or group as illiterate, primitive, or barbaric.[14] It is also used to scapegoat the Dinka people generally for the behaviour of government officials or soldiers.[15]

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[9] Peace Tech Lab, 'Social Media and Conflict in South Sudan' <https://www.peacetechlab.org/south-sudan-lexicon> accessed 21 July 2021.
[10] Ibid.
[11] SwissPeace, 'Rumor Control & Hate Speech in South Sudan' (November 2020) <https://www.swisspeace.ch/apropos/rumor-control-hate-speech-in-south-sudan/> accessed 21 July 2021.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Peace Tech Lab, 'Social Media and Conflict in South Sudan' <https://www.peacetechlab.org/south-sudan-lexicon> last accessed 21 July 2021.
[15] Ibid.

Who is our target?

⇒ **We are targeting 'uninformed youth'**

Youth activist, Juba 2019

In South Sudan the youth make up more than 72% of the population. But despite their numerical representation, they face unimaginable generation-threatening challenges which include forced conscription into military activities, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, restricted access to education and healthcare, high rates of unemployment and severely limited opportunities for developing skills.

Many young people also find themselves divided by inherited hate narratives. As put by a young participant who took part in one of SSYPADO's youth-led initiatives:

"I grew up in a not so peaceful environment... It's sad but sometimes our parents and relatives actually teach us to hate other people different from us, other tribes. Not directly telling us to hate them but by telling us to stay away from them or being careful when we are around them. "

An example of extreme hate that led to specific violence was highlighted by the UN Panel of Expert Report on South Sudan in October 2016, that described how several youth factions from different ethnic groups got involved in an exchange of "hate letters".[16] This led to inter-ethnic armed violence breaking out, leading to a blockage of major roads around South Sudan mainly manned by young people. In the rural areas, youth continue to be engaged in traditional inter-communal cattle raids that result in casualties, destruction of properties and revenge attacks. Given the lack of development and prospects for youth, armed groups and political leaders are able to lure young people into violence.

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[16] The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'South Sudan: Dangerous rise in ethnic hate speech must be reined in - Zeid' (OHCHR News, 25 October 2016) <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20757&LangID=E> accessed 16 October 2021.

In order to give effect to UN Security Council Resolution 2250, it is critical that youth from diverse communities are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage constructively in civic structures and political processes, and to be inclusively represented in decision-making at all levels and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict.[17]

Alongside a review of the youth initiatives and their efficacy in promoting awareness and education of IBV, this report sets out a community-level, five-step framework designed to assist the prevention of IBV in South Sudan.

Baseline attitudes and behaviours survey

The youth leader cohort participated in a survey on attitudes and behaviours developed on the basis of existing scales designed for peace education work. The survey addresses different types of empathy (empathic reasoning, empathic resonance, and empathic response)[18] as well as critical thinking skills, that address propensity to follow prejudice and stereotyping, as well as gender attitudes. The youth leaders all showed starting points consistently above the average youth (determined as a baseline from a control group of randomly selected youth). The youth leaders then all increased their critical thinking and empathy scores following the training. The highest increases were seen in response to the following questions:

% of those who agree or disagree as appropriate	**Control** group of random youth	Youth leaders **before** training	Youth leaders **after** training
Your friend tells you that people from the other ethnic group deserve the bad things that happen to them. You agree. (disagree)	38%	52%	78%
Can you share the suffering of somebody who also hurt you? (agree)	33%	39%	61%
Do you think that all Arabs bring troubles to South Sudanese?	33%	30%	43%

Overall, the questions relating to empathic reasoning (critical thinking or cognitive part of empathy) saw the highest positive shift, with 46% change following the trainings.

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[17] UN Security Resolution 2250 (2015), para 12, para 1.
[18] Pre-post tests conducted in Kigali (September 2019) and control group survey conducted in South Sudan (September 2020).

Gender attitudes started very low and were harder to shift, though still saw a significant change with 14% improvement.

Highest area of attitude change: empathic reasoning	46%
Lowest area of attitude change: gender attitudes	14%

A breakdown of the scores relating to gender attitudes:

	Control	Before	After
A man should have the last say in decisions about the home" (disagree)	10%	52%	61%
Should a woman tolerate violence from her husband to keep her family together? (disagree)	19%	39%	43%

Overall, the figures demonstrate that human rights education and training regarding identity, human rights and gender issues, has a significantly positive impact on building resilience to identity prejudice, empathy and critical thinking.

Your friend tells you he wants to rejoin an armed group. Are you going to try to convince him not to?	38%
Do you think that all Arabs bring troubles to South Sudanese?	33%
Your friend tells you that people from the other ethnic group to yours deserve the bad things that happen to them. You agree with him.	38%

* The figures represent the % of the control group who selected the best possible response.
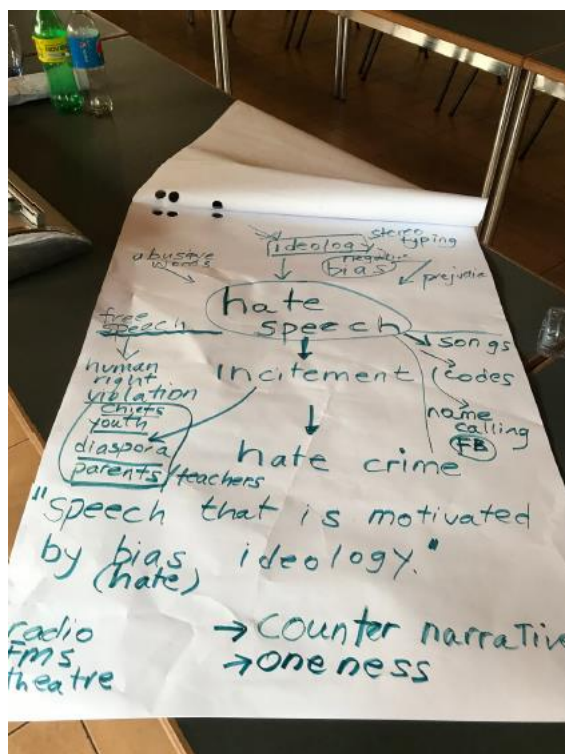
Project Phases

1. Training and Empowerment

In September 2019, a group of 25 young people travelled from various parts of South Sudan to Kigali, Rwanda, to spend time learning about Rwandan history and the process that leads to genocide - as well as its reversal. The exchange visit, hosted by Aegis Trust, involved visiting the Kigali Genocide Memorial, the Prison Fellowship and a Reconciliation Village, where they heard from perpetrators and victims who are now living together.

Visit to the Kigali Genocide Memorial – September 2019

Following the Kigali exchange trip, in October 2019 Rights for Peace and SSYPADO co-facilitated a week-long training for youth leaders in South Sudan on countering violence in their communities. During the week of training, the youth explored their own identities, both individual and shared, discovering that often the most interesting things about the others in the group were quite personal - to do with their interests and experiences - and had nothing to do with tribal identities.

Through group work, the youth leaders mapped out root causes, drivers and consequences of the conflict in South Sudan. Importantly, they explored entry points to peace building and potential inter-community initiatives that could invoke positive attitude and behaviour change.

*October 2019 training in Juba, unpacking "Identity Violence": its origins and consequences.*

During the Juba training in October 2019, the youth participants developed proposals for projects that would engage 'uninformed youth' from opposing communities in activities which in turn would engage a wider audience and indirectly benefit other members of their communities. These were presented to the whole group for feedback and discussion around concepts of impact and measuring impact. A set of criteria was developed by the youth themselves setting out necessary characteristics that would make impactful projects, including target numbers of others to involve and engage through their initiatives.

In particular, each youth leader was required to complete an impact form for each activity they carried out. This form included questions such as 'What changes were observed during the activities?' and 'What skills did the participants practice or gain?'. Not only did this allow the youth leaders to monitor the progress of their projects but it also gave them the opportunity to evaluate the responses of their participants and to gauge the overall reception of their activities. The feedback from these forms served as a source of reference and also an opportunity for both the youth leaders and their participants to reflect on the values and beliefs they held prior to the activities and the change of attitudes and skills they developed throughout the projects.

In addition to the impact forms, targets for the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries to be reached alongside other outcomes and milestones were identified. For instance, for the second year of the project (April 2020-March 2021), it was agreed that 50 new direct beneficiaries and 750 new indirect beneficiaries would be gained throughout the project. From the seven SSYPADO youth initiatives during that year, a total of 367 new direct beneficiaries (734% of target achieved) and 8700 new indirect beneficiaries (1160% of target achieved) were obtained. In line with the results framework provided by UK Aid Direct and the Jo Cox Memorial Grants, the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of the SSYPADO initiatives surpassed the targets of the project.

The participants were then able to go back to their communities, share their knowledge, consult with stakeholders and submit new projects based on local discussions and concrete plans. Some youth leaders instinctively amplified the messages that they had learned upon returning home from the Kigali and Juba trainings. The creation of a WhatsApp group ensured that the group were able to motivate each other by sharing news and evidence of their own attitude and behaviour changes.
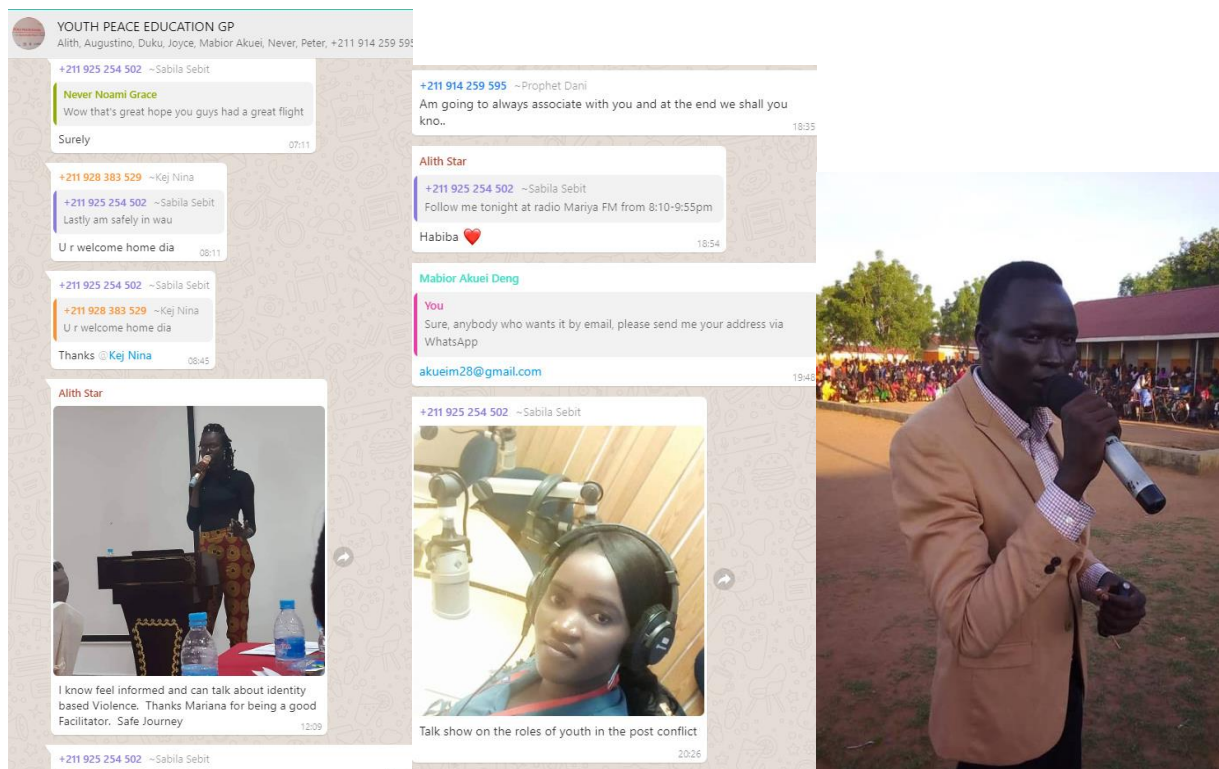
Alith (Juba), Sebila (Wau) and Mabior (Adjumani, Northern Uganda) share what they learned in Kigali and Juba with new audiences, broadening the base of indirect beneficiaries exposed to counter-narratives to identity-based violence.
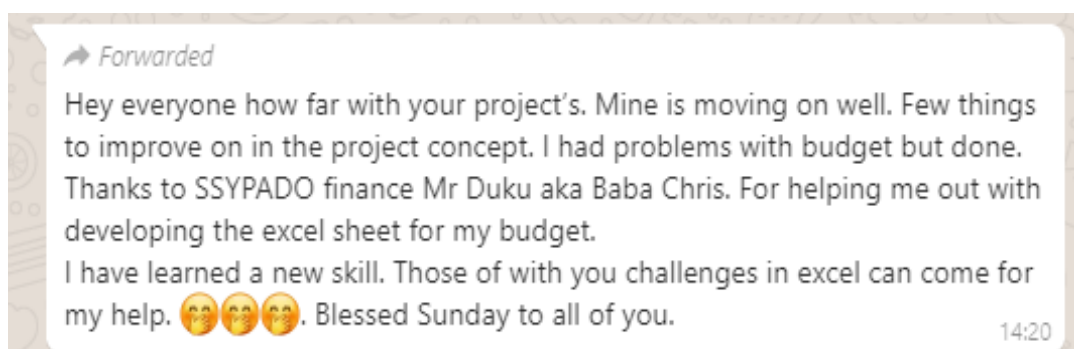
Youth leaders share challenges and skills on WhatsApp.

Project Phases
3. Implementing Youth Initiatives

#StaySafeStayUnited
Adjumani refugee camps: April – August 2020

Following an attack against a refugee camp resident with stones because others suspected Covid-19, Mabior decided to run an awareness campaign to educate camp residents and inspire peace during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With youth peers, Mabior produced and disseminated posters across four camps: Nyumunazi, Ayilo, Pagirinya and Baratuku camp. All fall into the Dzaipi region of Northern Uganda. The posters were produced in a small cyber enterprise owned by several other young South Sudanese refugees. They spread messages to promote peace through a public speaking campaign, using a sound system. They worked with community elders, becoming leaders in furthering education on coronavirus in the camps.

During Covid-19 lockdown, Alith Cyer Mayer, youth leaders and published poet, co-organised an online Writing competition: "Write for Peace":

'**Writing is so powerful it can change the type of human the reader becomes'.**

48 young people joined 5 consecutive days of online training. They explored the contrasting experiences of:

1. Being discriminated against based on prejudice
2. Discovering common identities

The group worked through difficult topics of identity, narratives and counter-narratives.

Exploring identity:
"There is something that defines me more than just being a South Sudanese … what defines me more are my personalities, the characters I have, how I use my time".

Whilst coming from diverse communities and locations, participants discovered shared identities, which they agreed made them feel 'connected, 'excited and positive'.

Exploring prejudice:
"It is so hurtful to be judged on assumptions about your identity traits."

- "You're too light and short to be South Sudanese",
- "How come your English is so good and you're South Sudanese?"
- 'Just because I am South Sudanese, someone judged me to be arrogant',
- 'Junubin' means South Sudanese – one participant recalls this word being used as an insult when she expressed anger in the past; 'South Sudanese are always mad and angry? And when I'm courteous and nice and polite I'm not South Sudanese?'
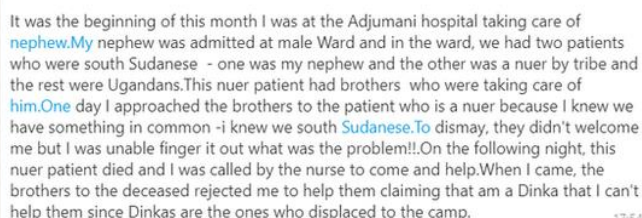
Tribal stereotyping:
- "Acholi men, are seen to be 'womanisers', and this affected my relationship with my girlfriend's family'.
- 'Stereotypes that my tribe people like running with kids' caused one participant's boyfriend to leave her.
One participant recalled being told, "you are too open-minded and patient to be a Dinka".
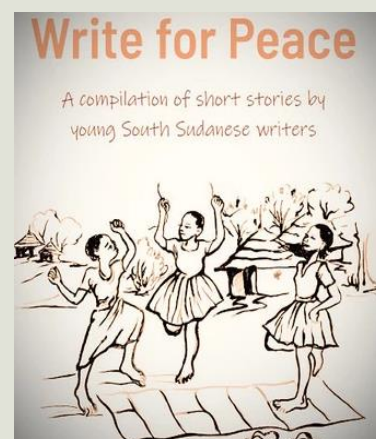
Mistrust based on identity:

One participant, who grew up in refugee camps outside of South Sudan, recalled his visit to a hospital where he approached another South Sudanese patient's family on the same ward, but they refused to let him help them because he was from an 'opposing' tribe. This was despite the potential unifying situation of being South Sudanese refugees attending sick family members in Uganda.

It was the beginning of this month I was at the Adjumani hospital taking care of nephew.My nephew was admitted at male Ward and in the ward, we had two patients who were south Sudanese - one was my nephew and the other was a nuer by tribe and the rest were Ugandans.This nuer patient had brothers who were taking care of him.One day I approached the brothers to the patient who is a nuer because I knew we have something in common -i knew we south Sudanese.To dismay, they didn't welcome me but I was unable finger it out what was the problem!!.On the following night, this nuer patient died and I was called by the nurse to come and help.When I came, the brothers to the deceased rejected me to help them claiming that am a Dinka that I can't help them since Dinkas are the ones who displaced to the camp. 17:54

The writing competition called for stories to counter narratives of hate. The winning stories published in **Write for Peace Story Book**, printed and distributed for youth in countering identity-based hate, while providing a literacy resource.

Cultural Heritage Project
Malakal, Upper Nile State, Nov 2020 – July 2021

Nehemiah's initiative, entitled 'Intercultural Society and Shared Heritage', engaged youth in developing music and drama productions carrying alternative narratives to division, which were performed to large audiences. The narratives covered topics such as common and shared heritage, trauma, discrimination, hatred, and tribalism. Productions were shown in a range of locations and 'on tour', including in hospitals and a prison. The aim was for people from different communities to enjoy the cultural experience but most importantly to be impacted by the messages and show of unity from the group of diverse young performers.

Throughout the project, Nehemiah faced scepticism and resistance, but this has only reinforced his belief in the project's importance. In an interview with Nehemiah, he stated that he wants *"the youth to understand the value of human life: killing each other does not mean anything, it simply reduces the numbers in our community"*. His initiative involved over 40 young people in Malakal and throughout the activities he gradually noticed behaviour change among the young people that participated: *"those involved started behaving as one community, building relationships with each other"*.

Nehemiah (left) focused on using music and drama to unite people from different communities.

Tell Your Story and Countering IBV
Juba University

Alith led workshops addressing hate speech in the media with the aim of young people creating stories that counter prejudice and challenge stereotypes.

A safe space was created for 30 young ambassadors to discuss solutions to conflicts in their communities and consider how hate speech and identity-based violence can be mitigated and prevented. The project allowed the participants to *"recognise that prejudice and bias towards other groups can lead to mistrust and [create] situations where it is easier to blame others for problems...[causing] more anger and violence."*

The participants were able to write and tell their own stories, challenging the traditional prejudices and negative stereotypes that can fuel conflict and identity-based violence in South Sudan. Through the initiative, and the development of her organisation (the Writer's Writing Fellowship), Alith aspired to "build new narratives of South Sudan as a country...and to challenge the labelling and hate speech [promoted through] the media." The Writer's Writing Fellowship continues to meet and discuss the dangers of IBV and discrimination, specifically how to mitigate hate speech in their circles of influence.

Alith (left) provided a safe environment for many young people of Juba to tell their stories and state their opinions on the current situation in South Sudan

Training on conflict mitigation
Mangateen IDP camp

Gatkouth trained 25 young people among three conflicting communities as peace ambassadors, and conducted a Covid-19 awareness campaign within their home and communities. He stated that *"In Mangateen it is extremely rare to find youth from different communities interacting peacefully due to mistrust and hatred of one another." Gatkouth believes that Mangateen's citizens are capable of trust and tolerance, and that through education and sport this can be achieved. This belief is what motivated him to collaborate undertake a project entitled "Diffusing the conflict among the communities in Mangateen."*

 Gatkouth's workshops brought together all three communities in Mangateen, training participants to tackle identity-based violence, prevent and resolve conflict and encourage peace. Bringing the three communities together for the training was challenging but Gatkouth expressed how he was "amazed at the way the youth had turned up and began to challenge prejudice and biased attitudes towards different groups". He also state that "the workshop or training on identity-based violence makes a huge impact in their lives [and that] slowly the ideology of dividing themselves is coming to an end, now at least you can find some sitting together in tea and sports places."

Peace Clubs
Adjumani refugee camps April – June 2021

Mabior trained youth from refugee and host communities to equip them with conflict analysis, early warning signs and peacebuilding skills.

"Young people from both the host and refugee communities collaborated and established conflict resolution strategies." Mabior's initiative allowed the young participants to develop a deeper understanding of the causes of the conflict and the cultural and ethnic dynamics which continue to incite the current hostilities.

Many of the participants *"...were able to build confidence and trust by actively participating in the peacebuilding training"*. Mabior stated that one of the most important elements of the initiative was identifying the areas that connected and divided the participants. Establishing these areas gave them the opportunity to understand each other's perspectives on the inter-ethnic divides and to determine similarities between their communities.

Mabior held discussions with community elders regarding conflict resolution and the prevention of IBV: ***"intergenerational dialogue is a crucial step towards peace."***

Let's counter identity violence: that includes SGBV
Bidi Bidi Camp, Northern Uganda, April – June 2021

The rise in sexual violence instigated Never's ambition to promote unity among the younger generation, with a view to reducing further violence and inter-tribal conflict.

Never's projects trained youth in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Northern Uganda, engaging them in sporting activities and a radio talk show in Koboko, allowing participants from different tribes to discuss the causes and effects of identity-based violence.

The event was designed to promote a "peaceful co-existence among refugees and host communities" in the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Uganda.

Never empahsised that an **"intergenerational dialogue is necessary, whereby the older and younger generations are brought together to discuss their mindsets".**

The youth of the Kapoeta and Torit are divided on political and ethnic lines.

Saviour trained youth from the opposing communities on identity, dialogue, leadership and conflict mitigation strategies, transforming their perceptions towards one another.

Together they conducted community services at public hospitals and a clean-up of the historical site of the Saturnino Ohure memorial as a 'learning by doing' exercise.

Saviour's inspiration for the project was to *"reduce the degree of hate and build a culture of peace among the youths in these areas."*


The initiative led to the creation of a local Youth Peace Forum aiming to meet every month.

Project Phases
4. Reflection: What Worked and Why?

During a final reflection workshop in June 2021, youth leaders reported on their respective youth initiatives, reflecting on turning points that hindered or supported their work. For instance, there was a discussion about the pros and cons of youth leaders working within their communities or coming in as outsiders.
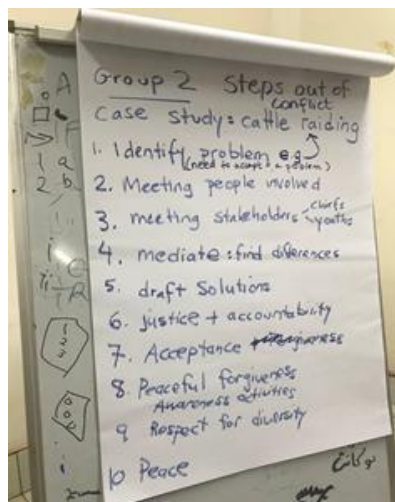
Keah presents his group's vision of how to reverse the steps to conflict in South Sudan (June 2021).

In group work, the youth identified common steps and strategies used in each project location. They considered counter narratives that were used to build common identities and lessons learned. These strategies have been synthesised into five steps to counter IBV.

Step 5 **Advocacy for Prevention:** create and use joint platforms; amplify messages to prevent IBV.

Step 4 **Community Engagement:** Strengthen leadership skills through training and practice. Champion fair resolutions. Engage others in a shared sense of community.

Step 3 **Personal Engagement:** Accept and find compromises; use moral courage; build trust by being honest, transparent and personally committed. Take a Stand. Point out prejudice, stereotyping and misinformation

Step 2 **Strengthen Common Identities:** Reinforce unity and shared identities; find counter-narratives to prejudice and stereo-typing; emphasise shared social values, shared histories and common goals.

Step 1 **Dialogue & Awareness:** Establish communication; listen to each other; use exchanges and mediation to identify the issues; establish intercultural dialogue. Practice non-violent communication.

Project Phases
5. Steps to Counter and Mitigate IBV in South Sudan

Step One: Dialogue & Awareness

Step 1	**Dialogue & Awareness:** Establish communication; listen to each other; use exchanges and mediation to identify the issues; establish intercultural dialogue. Practice non-violent communication.

The youth identified that mistrust between communities and tribes as a first blockage to dialogue:

⇒ There are few opportunities for positive engagement between communities, who sometimes live side by side in displacement camps but are separated and segregated due to overt hostility.

⇒ Establishing opportunities for communication and dialogue between the communities can be hindered by inter-communal prejudices, tension over access to resources, as well as past feuds and allegiances.

⇒ With simple training it becomes easy to see others' attitudes and behaviours from an identity bias lens. This awareness is the starting point.

The youth leaders encouraged target groups to present proposals on:

⇒ how to create opportunities for communication
⇒ what the sources of tension and hostility were about
⇒ what actions could help resolve current hostilities

Intergenerational dialogue as a common theme

Participants identified that lack of constructive communication, specifically between younger and elder community members was contributing to a lack of social cohesion. At times, prejudicial views of older members informed and shaped the views of youth.

⇒ Promoting intergenerational dialogues should be the first step to building social cohesion, encouraging older members to participate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

⇒ Future peace initiatives must include representatives from both the younger and older generations to ensure diverse representation and collective ownership.

Step Two: Strengthening Common Identities

Step
2

Strengthen Common Identities: Reinforce unity and shared identities; find counter-narratives to prejudice and stereo-typing; emphasise shared social values, shared histories and common goals.

Interactions between participants from different ethnic groups improved after they were provided with opportunities to explore their common identities and discuss peacebuilding concerns in a safe and moderated space.

Target youth participants were more collegiate when voicing support for football teams, this was a way to build solidarity and common identities before moving to discuss more contentious social and political issues.

Following his initiative, Gatkouth felt strongly that the youth participants were willing to interact with each other on a deeper level without feeling intimidation or fearing any repercussions.

⇒ Safe and moderated spaces are needed for youth to open up to each other
⇒ Common identities can be strengthened by using common themes such as hobbies and common interests
⇒ Youth immediately felt collegiate when discussing support for Premier League football clubs

"I am amazed at the way the youth have begun to challenge prejudice and bias attitudes towards different groups"
– Gatkouth, 2020.

Step Three: Personal Engagement

Step 3 | **Personal Engagement:** Accept and find compromises; use moral courage; build trust by being honest, transparent and personally committed. Take a Stand. Point out prejudice, stereotyping and misinformation

The youth initiatives gave young people the opportunity to personally engage with people from opposing communities.

"I have never felt as free or open to express my views."
– participant, Juba 'Tell Your Story Training'

⇒ The space provided to share differing opinions empowered the young people to freely express conflicting views and participate in debates.
⇒ Speaking of personal experiences is not threatening or confrontational and helps to kick off dialogue.
⇒ It takes one person to have moral courage to be honest and speak from personal experience for others to open up

⇒ Once you have the flavour for being honest and speaking up, it comes more easily.
⇒ Opportunities are needed to start this process.
⇒ Once you can see others' attitudes and behaviours from an identity-bias lens, you can start to find ways to point out prejudice, stereotyping and misinformation.
⇒ Generalising is easier than thinking critically
⇒ Labelling whole groups for what some people have done is dangerous, and we can point this out: it can feel offensive and feeds into stereotyping and blame narratives

Following their initiatives, the young participants had stronger voices to encourage and implement change in their communities.

They also gained a sense of personal commitment: change starts with me.

"The most significant change observed is change of perception, mind and attitude." – Never, a youth leader, 2020.

Step Four: Capacity Building & Self-Sustaining Actions

Step
4
Community Engagement: Strengthen leadership skills through training and practice. Champion fair resolutions. Engage others in a shared sense of community.

⟹ How to move beyond individual attitude change to affect the **behaviour of groups**?

The youth initiatives triggered self-sustaining actions amongst South Sudanese civil society, participants, and their wider communities.

In an insightful training on leadership skills, youth discovered that leadership is also about supporting others to reach their potential.

⟹ Leadership is needed to support behaviour change
⟹ Leadership is needed to engage others in a shared sense of community
⟹ Strengthening the capacities of our youth leaders in managing and leading initiatives is critical to building self-sustaining actions of others

⟹ We can define leadership as: achieving results beyond expectations by creating a climate in which others can shine.

"It is possible for us to live together despite our differences and our tribes too" – Youth activist, Juba 2020.

"The South Sudanese... desperately want to be productive and self-sufficient" – Gatkouth, youth leader 2020.

Step Five: Advocacy for Prevention

Step 5	**Advocacy for Prevention:** create and use joint platforms; amplify messages to prevent IBV.

This final step of our framework is arguably the most important, but it is also the most difficult to achieve. Moving beyond individuals, groups of opposing individuals, we need to affect **attitude and behaviour change in wider communities and at national level.**

⇒ How to trigger attitude and behaviour change amongst policy and decision makers?

Sustained advocacy is required for the prevention of hate speech, discrimination and IBV, and it is crucial for the youth to have a voice in this arena.

⇒ Youth involvement of and leadership is critical in the transformation of the South Sudanese and the prevention of future mass atrocities.

⇒ Identity is often a mobilising factor for violence, and thus, being able to bridge identity divisions is a critical first step to prevention.

⇒ Youth need to be informed of processes that affect them in order to engage with these

⇒ Gain access to visible platforms and strategies to amplify messages

The youth must be supported to continue developing their skills and encouraging other generations and groups to advocate for increased societal cohesion and decrease in IBV.

"Those involved started behaving as one community, building relationships with each other."
Nehemiah, a youth ambassador, 2020.

Social media

Since the completion of the SSYPADO initiatives, many of the youth leaders and participants have organised social media groups and monthly meetings to maintain contact with each other and to continue the peacebuilding and human rights discourse put into effect throughout the projects.

Social media, specifically Facebook, has played an important role in amplifying the SSYPADO initiatives. This has been particularly important during 2020/21 when travel and face-to-face contact has been severely limited due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The use of Facebook, in particular, has facilitated the promotion of the initiatives.
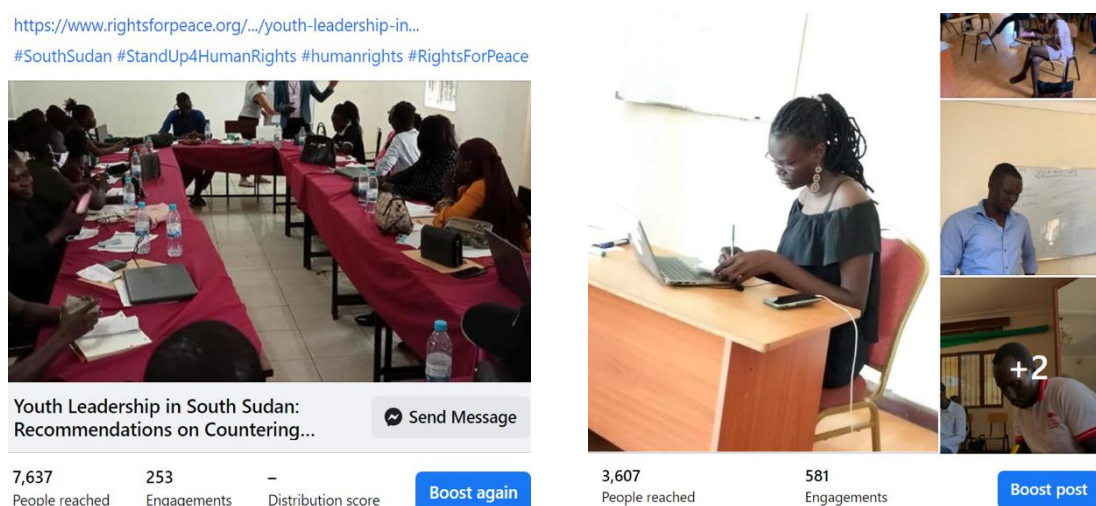
The above screenshots represent the considerable amount of people reached on social media through various Facebook posts regarding SSYPADO and the youth leaders.

Radio talk shows:

The use of technology and media was exemplified by Never's project which allowed participants to take part in a radio talk show. They were able to discuss the causes of IBV as well as the potential solutions to the violence and conflict they have experienced and witness in their communities. This form of media gave Never and the participants the opportunity to broadcast their work and views to a wide audience in South Sudan.

Never (left) alongside other youth participants discussing issues of discrimination and IBV on the radio. *Listen to a clip of Never's radio talk show [here](#)*

Knowledge of, and access to, social media, the internet and technology has been crucial for many of the youth leaders and for the development of their initiatives. For capacity-building to have a greater impact, external agencies and international organisations must invest in, and provide support for, South Sudanese civil society use of technology.

Posters and public speaking:

As part of Mabior's ad hoc initiative to raise awareness to educate camp residents and inspire peace during COVID-19, he produced posters which were disseminated across multiple camps: Nyumunazi refugee camp, Ayilo camp, Pagirinya camp and Baratuku camp, all which fall into the Dzaipi region of Northern Uganda. The posters were produced in a cyber enterprise which is owned by several South Sudanese youth refugees. They decided to spread messages that promoted peace through a public speaking campaign, alongside the posters.

Youth Communiqué on the 10th Anniversary of Sudan:

On South Sudan's 10th anniversary, youth leaders from around the country made recommendations on how to ensure effective Truth, Reconciliation & Healing while also countering identity-based prejudice, mistrust and violence. They emphasised that "Youth need to be informed about processes that concern them", laying out a series of recommendations which have also informed this report. **Read the Communiqué [here](#).**

Lessons Learned:

i.   **The importance of youth as vehicles of change cannot be overstated**

- SSYPADO centred 'youth' as a category of identity, equitable with ethnicity and other markers, and highlighted shared experiences which cross traditional identity barriers.

- It was found that this enabled them to recalibrate in participants' minds what constitutes identity, thereby breaking down the boundaries of how participants originally perceived the concept.

ii. **Dissecting definitions of IBV is helpful to tap into participants' lived experiences**

- The youth leaders found that dissecting definitions of IBV with beneficiaries was highly beneficial, as it allowed them to gain a true understanding of participants' lived experiences, which in turn informed the design of the work.

- When SSYPADO held discussions amongst youth groups about what constituted IBV, women immediately identified gender-based violence, whereas none of the men did. This resulted in more explicit gender elements in their programming, as well as serving as a useful learning moment with men participants.

iii. **Applying a gender lens is critical**

- The discussions among SSYPADO participants and youth leaders on gender-based violence as identity-based violence has demonstrated that many South Sudanese young women identify and understand this dynamic easily based on their lived experience.

- There is much work to be done with society at large to sensitise the population on this issue, to contribute to attitude change, and to push for law reform to protect women and girls' rights.

- Viewing violence against women as a bias motivated hate crime is an important lens to further understandings and policy responses to it. Misogyny (the hatred of women) has harmful ramifications for society at large, as it not only harms women but also anyone perceived to be 'like a woman' based on their (perceived or real) sexual orientation or gender identity.

iv.   The use of cultural activities to build common identities is powerful.

- Art is non-binary, non-adversarial (as opposed to some sporting activities) and can serve as a tool for opening up, as it provides a medium for people to express difficult emotions in a safe and non-confronting space.

- Nehemiah's project, which engaged youth in developing music and drama productions carrying alternative narratives to division, had a powerful effect on the group's ability to bond. Nehemiah noted that "Those involved started behaving as one community, building relationships with each other." It was found that after the project, the youth of the PoC and the town began to mix freely.

- During Alith's Writing Project on 'Countering Identity-Based Violence', she noticed that through storytelling and writing together, the youth were able to discuss problems together from different communities. She learned that people were able to open up and started to trust each other: *"Through artwork together we saw young people build a new narrative of their country working on themes of unity and common identity" - Alith, Youth Leader*

v.   The effectiveness of projects is generally enhanced when the youth leaders worked within their existing locality and spheres of influence

- Some projects were initiated by youth leaders in their own communities, others were conducted by outsiders.

   o outsiders had to counter mistrust and be accepted by all, but
   o outsiders were also seen as neutral as they did not come from any of the opposing communities.

- Ensuring projects are led by members of the local community can allow projects to become self-sustaining.

2. Recommendations:

- Youth need to be informed of processes that concern them, and participation must be inclusive without discrimination.

- Youth need sustained capacity building on national processes and opportunities to participate in decision making processes.

- Youth need to make their voices heard and understood and be supported by the South Sudanese authorities and the international community in this endeavour.

- Youth need further capacity building and training on identity-based violence and how to counter it.

- Youth need support with opportunities for skills and jobs.

- Conferences on youth issues are needed.

- Nation building programmes must be inclusive again without discrimination as a matter of public principle.

- Support for youth initiatives is needed, including with budgetary commitments.

- The Transitional Government of South Sudan should introduce a youth national development policy, based on inclusive consultations with South Sudanese youth.

- We need an age definition of youth in South Sudan!

- A 20% quota for youth participation in national institutions and a 20% quota in financial allocation is required.

- Guarantees of freedom of speech and open civic space are desperately needed to ensure that South Sudanese youth feel safe raising their voices. To this end, the President of South Sudan needs to sign the decision by the Transitional National Legislative Assembly to enact the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Government will need to deposit instruments of accession to the UN Secretary-General.

- Prevention of IBV must be prioritised, with hate speech awareness trainings and inter-communal activities.

- Legal reform is needed to prevent youth from being discriminated or excluded.

- Equal opportunities should exist for all the youth: awareness needs to be raised about discrimination.

Learning from Youth as Peace Builders
Youth Counter Hate-Speech
& Identity-based Violence in South Sudan
2019 - 2021

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