EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

REPORT 6/2016 **COUNTRY EVALUATION BRIEF**

Norad

South Sudan

The purpose of this **Country Evaluation Brief** is to present relevant knowledge about donors' development efforts in South Sudan. The brief systematises relevant findings from existing evaluations of development interventions in the country. The idea is to present the findings to the reader in a succinct and easily accessible format.

Readers who want to explore key issues in depth can access the underlying reports through the reference list. At our website, you can also find a set of short "Evaluation Portraits" summarising the key contents of those documents.

The Country Evaluation Brief was researched and produced by the Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Oslo, November 2016
Per Øyvind Bastøe, Evaluation Director

PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

Main findings

While the international community is primarily concerned with trying to restore stability and providing protection and relief to an increasing number of people in South Sudan, evaluations of past development interventions provide important lessons that are relevant for future aid policy and implementation. Development and humanitarian programmes in South Sudan had four main weaknesses:

THE DONOR COMMUNITY did not develop an overall strategic plan for recovery and development for itself or in collaboration with the government.

DIPLOMATS, POLITICIANS AND DEVELOPMENT practitioners did not collaborate closely enough to develop joint approaches.

THE DONOR COMMUNITY mostly failed to adapt their development interventions to the volatile and fragile South Sudanese context. Their vision for South Sudan was often different from what national or local political actors pursued.

THE AID ARCHITECTURE was inconsistent and lessons learned did not alter approaches.

These lessons are a useful reminder when considering the long list of challenges the international community is facing in South Sudan, as they apply to modes of operation, to the relationship between aid and politics, and to both humanitarian and development assistance.

SOUTH SUDAN

Estimated population in 2014
11.7 mill. (UNDP 2015)

Population age structure
65.42% under 25 years (CIA 2016)

Urban population
18.8% of population in 2015 (CIA 2016)

Rate of change (urbanisation)
5.05% annually, estimate between 2010–2015 (CIA 2016)

Internally Displaced Persons
1.69 mill. estimated as of 31 December 2015 (IDMC 2016)

Military expenditure
10.32% of 2012 GDP (CIA 2016)

Health expenditure
2.2% of 2013 GDP (CIA 2016)

Human Development Index ranking
169 of 188 countries (UNDP 2015)

Population below national poverty line
50.6% (UNDP 2015)

Mean years of schooling
5.4 years (UNDP 2015)

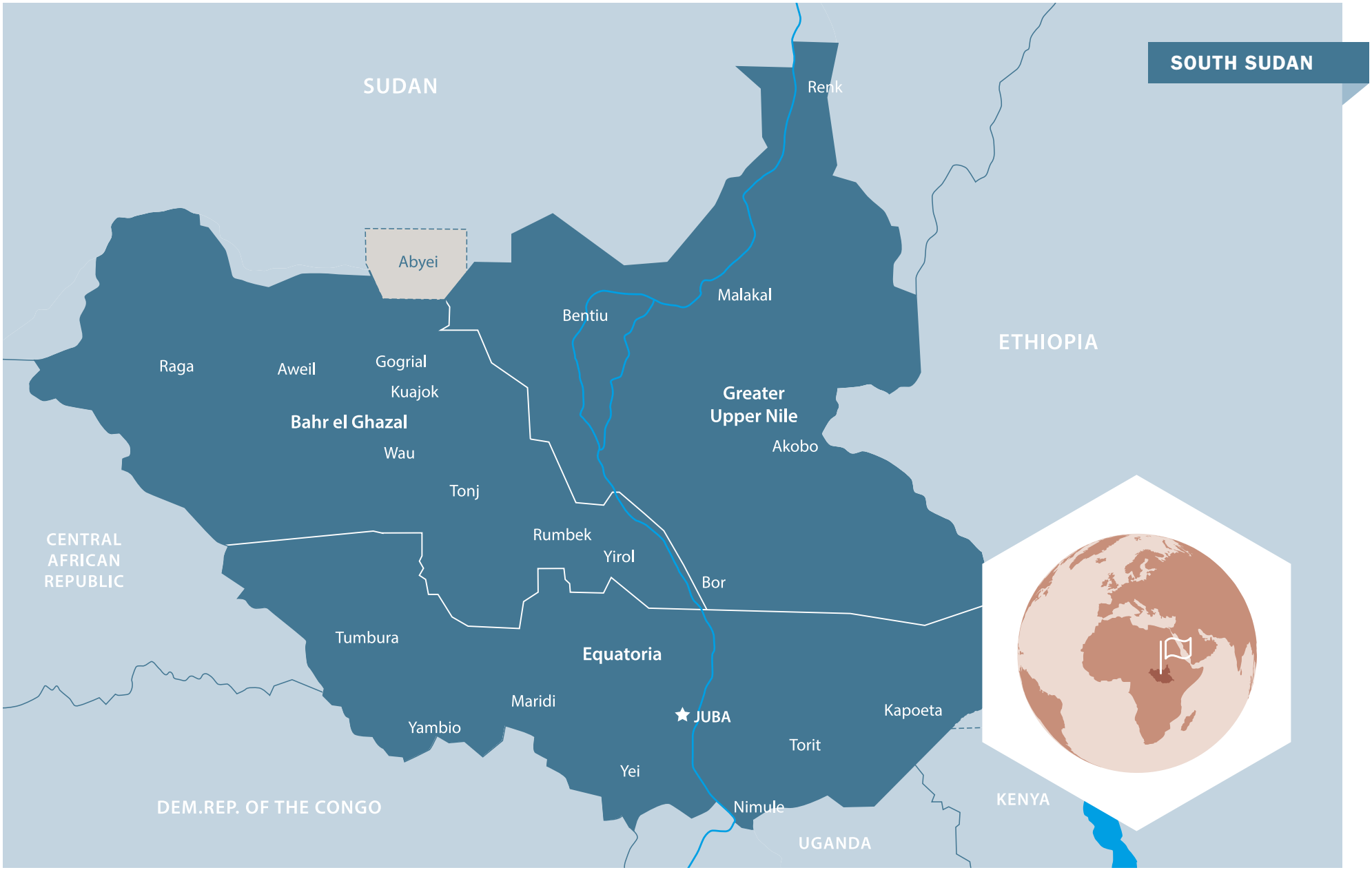
Life expectancy at birth
55.7 years (UNDP 2015)

Infant Mortality Rate in 2013
64.1 per 1000 live births (UNDP 2015)

Net ODA received
13.4% of GNI (UNDP 2015)

Corruption Perception Index
163 of 168 (TI 2015)

Camp for internally dicplaced persons (IDP) in Bentiu, Unity State, August 2014, with severe floods during the rainy season. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE


SOUTH SUDAN
SUDAN
Renk
Abyei
Malakal
Bentiu
ETHIOPIA
Raga
Aweil
Gogrial
Kuajok
Bahr el Ghazal
Greater
Upper Nile
Akobo
Wau
Tonj
CENTRAL
AFRICAN
REPUBLIC
Rumbek
Yirol
Bor
Tumbura
Equatoria
Maridi
JUBA
Kapoeta
Yambio
Torit
Yei
DEM.REP. OF THE CONGO
Nimule
KENYA
UGANDA

KEY EVENTS 2005 – 2016

1. Introduction

South Sudan, the world's youngest country is at war and increasingly fragile. Its future is ever more unclear after civil war broke out in 2013, followed by renewed fighting since July 2016. The situation is further exacerbated by the crashing economy and an extremely toxic relationship with international actors.

First Day of Voting in Southern Sudan Referendum, January 9, 2011. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/TIM MCKULKA

The relationship with the United Nations is likely to deteriorate further after the Security Council authorised an additional force of 4,000 soldiers, staffed through the African Union in August 2016, against the will of the government. At this moment, the international community is mainly concerned with restoring stability and providing protection and relief.

South Sudan provides a puzzle to donors who ordinarily work with and through national governments. In the absence of a functioning state, it remains unclear how donors can best provide development and emergency aid. Using a review of evaluations of past development interventions, this brief seeks to identify how policy makers might use lessons from the past for these particularly challenging times.

We first provide some context to donor engagement in development and humanitarian assistance in South Sudan. The next sections draw out main findings from prominent evaluations of funding mechanisms and development interventions to support state building, security,

UNMISS forces near Juba, July 2016. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/TIM MCKULKA


PHOTO: NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/RAGNHILD H. SIMENSTAD

humanitarian aid and cross-cutting issues. The concluding section articulates lessons learnt and future challenges.

This brief draws on close to 30 evaluations and reviews of development interventions in South Sudan, published after 2010. We selected evaluations on the basis of whether or not they addressed key policy issues for future aid. We prioritised evaluations and reviews of aid to state building and governance, security and justice sector reform, humanitarian assistance and emergency response, and funding mechanisms, with a focus on pooled funds that are commonly used in other fragile contexts as well. We have also included evaluations on cross-cutting issues, mainly gender equality, as evaluations on other issues (such as environment and anti-corruption) are lacking. Other significant gaps include the relative lack of attention to agro-pastoralism, which is the mainstay of most rural economies in South Sudan and critical for poverty reduction.

The evaluations vary in scope, approach and methods as well as the level or ambition of measuring results. Very few addressed impact, and most of them evaluated projects and programmes only on the basis of their stated goals. Some also assess progress

in underlying problem areas, for example sustainability of programmes.

Most evaluations expressed the need for better baseline information and documentation to assess outcomes, since paucity and quality of data remain problematic. Underdevelopment, violence and political crisis affect both programmes and their evaluations. Rigorous data collection is difficult. Comparison of data sets over time might be meaningless due to these shortcomings. Further, development programmes and evaluations remain centralised in Juba. This affects aid programmes, not least humanitarian aid, which is typically delivered under great time pressure and with very limited baseline data available.

We further consulted academic literature, including policy studies and various types of assessment.

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2. Country context

Despite its oil wealth and the international community's large mobilisation of humanitarian aid to the country, South Sudan has remained one of the world's least developed countries. War, conflict, neglect and corruption have prevented the expansion of basic services and infrastructure, placing South Sudan near the bottom of the UNDP's Human Development Index. The resumption of war in 2013 has made the economic and humanitarian situation even worse.

PHOTO: JASON PATKIN/AP PHOTO/NTB SCANPIX

Having fought for decades, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Until 2005, almost all aid to southern Sudan was humanitarian, motivated by the need to relieve human suffering in civil war, and by political support for what many international actors conceived as a legitimate liberation struggle against the Islamist regime in Khartoum. In that sense, South Sudan shows clearly that aid characterised as humanitarian often also tends to be political.

The peace agreement notably only dealt with the north/south conflict: It made no provisions for south/south tensions. Since the bloodiest period of the war had occurred in the early 1990s when the SPLA split and Riek Machar led a faction against the then-leader John Garang, this was a significant oversight.

The agreement stipulated an equal sharing of the oil wealth of Sudan (most of the oil fields are located in the south) giving the new state a substantial resource base. In addition, donors mobilised mainly humanitarian aid funds to help build institutions and infrastructure, provide services and promote development.

After South Sudan gained independence in 2011, it could draw on oil revenues providing funds for public spending equivalent to USD 340 per capita, which was eight times that of Ethiopia and five times that of Uganda. The new country also received generous foreign assistance equivalent to more than USD 100 per capita (World Bank 2013). On paper, South Sudan was a middle-income country.

Despite this, however, decades of neglect, war and corruption have made the country's population one of the most deprived in the world. South Sudan ranks 169th out of 188 countries on UNDP's Human Development Index. When conflict is considered, the score becomes very low compared to all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, which shows humans cannot develop unless there is peace (UNDP 2015a).

Aerial view of the fertile land in the Abyei region, 2011. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/TIM MCKULKA

The South Sudanese today barely have any basic services, due to poor infrastructure and a lack of trained personnel. Despite donor initiatives to strengthen the position of women, gender disparities are dramatic. Female-headed households are among the poorest in the country and the maternal mortality rate is among the highest in the world (WHO 2014). Only 16 percent of women and girls over 15 are literate, compared to 40 percent for men (World Bank 2016). Sexual assaults on women by soldiers has remained one of the main forms of violence against women (Ali 2011). This is particularly striking considering that half of total government spending was on the army and security (World Bank 2013).

The country is vast and development efforts are concentrated in easy-to reach places. Donors hardly diversified aid to local levels. Urban areas have fared marginally better, with a huge amount of service delivery focused on Juba. Funds for basic services have been disbursed unreliably to local government, hampering growing capacity where it matters most.

From 2005-2010, low intensity warfare, often involving the government army, made recovery and development difficult. Conflicts were interlinked, with tensions over access to land and water, difficulties in demobilising and reintegrating soldiers, handling Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees from Sudan or East Africa, youth alienation/ lack of livelihood opportunities, and divisions within the national leadership (Schomerus and Allen 2010).

This time also saw a significant shift in South Sudan's economy. While much of the oil income was lost to corruption or vanished in a system not capable to absorb such funds, it did provide an income that propped up the security sector.

From 2005-2010, low intensity warfare, often involving the government army, made recovery and development difficult.

Particularly the finance ministry in the early interim period was considered as hugely problematic. This was coupled with a substantial aid income that provided increased legitimacy to the same leaders that poorly managed the oil income. An added effect was that there was a gradual monetisation of the economy, with more South Sudanese than before relying on purchased goods.

At the same time, however, the early days of the period following the peace agreement marked a time of hope for many South Sudanese. Also, donor investments at first seemed to pay off: service delivery improved from being non-existent, some infrastructure was built, and there was progress particularly in health and education. The statistics on undernourishment of children were promising: Starting from a very low base, more children enrolled in school and learned to read and write. Yet after a sharp early increase (from a near-zero baseline), education indicators deteriorated over subsequent years. Today only 27 percent of the population are literate (World Bank 2016). Health was doing somewhat better, due to foreign aid.

These first signs of possible success helped garner international endorsement for the South Sudanese vote for independence in 2011. However, the newest country in the world continued to be riven by internal conflicts and to suffer from high levels of corruption and underdevelopment. The optimism that had accompanied international engagement since 2005 was soon muted. External support increasingly came to focus on stabilising the state and reducing the potential for conflict with Sudan, where intricate interdependencies and unresolved issues related to the divorce offered numerous points of friction.

The resumption of war has been catastrophic.

Since late 2013 most of these efforts have stopped and the narrative about South Sudan has changed drastically. There is great despair about political, social and economic developments. The situation has been particularly bad since civil war erupted in December 2013, caused by political/ethnic divisions and grievances within the ruling party, which had become exacerbated through leadership challenges to Salva Kiir; the collapsing economy, which meant that the ruling elite was polarising around their constituencies to ensure continued access to funds; and Salva Kiir's dismissal of leading politicians, including Machar. The resumption of war has been catastrophic. Thousands of people have been killed, some six million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 1.6 million people are displaced within South Sudan, and 900,000 have fled to neighbouring countries (OCHA 2016).

President Salva Kiir for the government and former Vice President Riek Machar signed the Agreement on Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS) in August 2015. A Transitional Government of National Unity was formed on

A man celebrating independence, July 9, 2011. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/PAUL BANKS

Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, Salva Kiir and James Wani Igga on 29. April 2016. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/ISAAC BILLY

29 April, 2016, but by mid-year had collapsed as fighting flared up in Juba. Since July 2016, following the deadly clashes in Juba between government forces and soldiers loyal to Machar (who had been reinstated as First Vice President), the situation has deteriorated. Further political fragmentation and ethnic strife are likely as various armed groups continue to fight for power and resources. Some warn that the ethnic tensions could further worsen and result in ethnic cleansing.

The country's economic situation is precarious. Hyperinflation and devaluation of the South Sudanese pound are devastating for citizens trying to eat every day. Oil revenue has declined since the government stopped production in 2012 due to transit disagreements with Khartoum. After this dramatic decision some donors shifted their focus towards humanitarian initiatives and put development activities on hold. Others withdrew altogether. Even though production resumed, output will never recover to 2011 levels due to limited reserves, transit charges, conflict, damage to the infrastructure, and falling oil prices (UNDP 2015a).

South Sudan languishes at the very bottom of international rankings measuring the perception of corruption and quality of government indicators (see for example Transparency International). There is no political will to implement anti-corruption or transparency measures – and even if there was, it is questionable whether the country would have the necessary capacity to do so (Mores 2013, Tiitmamer & Awolich, 2014).

Conflict patterns that have emerged in South Sudan reflect local and regional peculiarities. Inter- and intra-community fighting intensified after the economy collapsed in 2012 and then even more so after the return of war in December 2013. Local conflicts have also increasingly become part of a complex interconnected conflict "system". Conflicts are both "decentralised" and "deconcentrated". Decentralised conflicts are locally driven, often over land, cattle or other resources, and those committing violent acts are accountable only to their followers. Deconcentrated conflicts, on the other hand, have a strong link to or even originate in the centre. The visible theatre of violent conflict has shifted to the local level; the driving force or "command centre" sits elsewhere (Schomerus and Aalen 2016). A good example is when powerful people in Juba own cattle and disregard tension that the movement of their herds causes locally. Local militias ally themselves with regional and national actors, and local agendas provide the latter with local allies, who are crucial in maintaining military control, continuing resource exploitation, or pursuing political and ethnic enemies. South Sudanese governance thus mirrors that of Sudan, with peripheries under "a system of monetised and militarised tribalism" (de Waal 2014, p. 349). The ethnic dimension has become increasingly important after the break-out of civil war in December 2013.

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3. Donor engagement in South Sudan

Donor spending in South Sudan since the 2005 peace agreement focused on delivering a peace dividend through state building and social services provision. Spending remained high, even when success was minimal.

A school at the Protections of Civilians (POC) site of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), located in the Tomping area of Juba, 2014. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

The 2005 peace agreement committed donors who had supported it to making "unity attractive", which made it difficult to focus aid efforts, especially in relation to governance of the (possible) future state. A Joint Assessment Mission by donors and the negotiating parties to the 2005 peace agreement reflected conventional wisdom in the World Bank at the time: It suggested that lack of development was a major cause of conflict. Donors consequently focused on delivering "peace dividends", assuming that peace and development would reinforce each other. The prevailing donor paradigm became "postwar reconstruction" which brought in the conventional aid apparatus, including support to service delivery. However, many institutions or infrastructure simply were not there to be reconstructed. Existing local structures were often overlooked as they did not look like institutions in a functioning state.

Despite the peace agreement, South Sudan remained closer to "suspended war" with local conflicts frequently erupting into violence. Nevertheless, the aid presence was massive:

Mediation workshop. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

an analysis for the period 2005-2010 counted 2,189 development interventions (Barnett and Bennett 2014, p. 40). In 2010, total pledged donor funds amounted to USD 739 million, a huge increase compared to the USD 400 million anticipated by the government in Juba after the 2008 Oslo Donor Conference. The increase partly reflected a sense of urgency among donors trying to prevent the unravelling of all that had been achieved since 2005, particularly as the decision on independence was drawing closer.

In 2013, Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) represented 13.4 percent of South

Donors consequently focused on delivering "peace dividends", assuming that peace and development would reinforce each other.

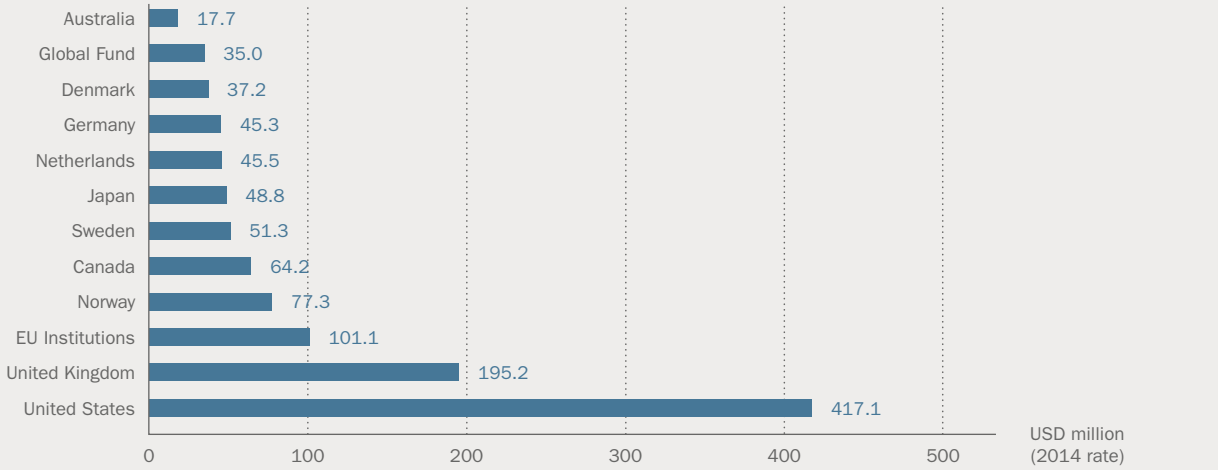
Sudan's Gross National Income (UNDP 2015a). The largest bilateral donors were the US, the United Kingdom and Norway. The disbursement from Norway was NOK 472.4 million in 2015, which makes South Sudan the sixth largest recipient of Norwegian development aid (Norad 2016).

Until the onset of the crisis in December 2013, international actors continued to emphasise post-war recovery and state building. Large sums of aid were spent on infrastructure, and to establish and strengthen government institutions, build capacity, and deliver services. Donor funds towards security sector projects

doubled from 2009 to 2010, from USD 63 million to USD 127 million. Although the government spent almost four times that amount, increasing donor commitment reflected a concern over the deteriorating security in large parts of the country and the role the national army played in this.

South Sudan was selected as one of the seven pilot countries for the implementation of the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals introduced as part of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States in 2011, which was sponsored by the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. In December 2012, a Fragility Assessment conducted by the government concluded that "the Republic of South Sudan has made sufficient progress… to move beyond the crisis stage of the fragility spectrum" (Government of the Republic of South Sudan 2012). With the outbreak of armed violence in December 2013, however, the country returned to a crisis stage.

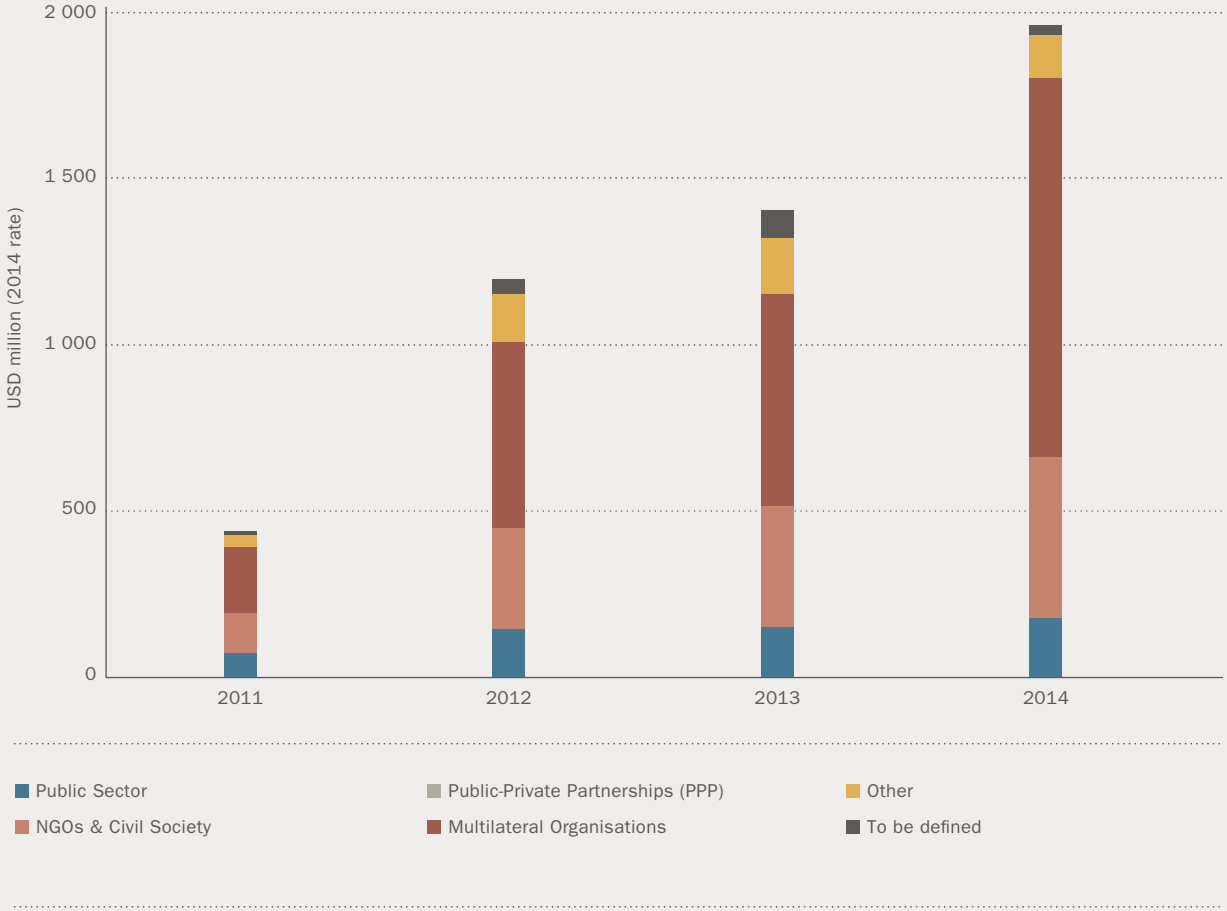
FIGURE 1 // TOP 12 DONORS OF GROSS ODA TO SOUTH SUDAN, 2011-2014 AVERAGE



However, the crisis has not changed the donor logic that gains made should not be lost. Thus ODA spending prevailed after the political and humanitarian crisis at the end of 2013, when ODA increased from USD 685 million to USD 1315 million in 2014 (OECD 2016).

Over a number of decades, South Sudan has been a crucible for many of the debates over relief assistance and development aid and the optimal interaction between the two. International outrage over the level of human suffering in the war-induced famines in 1988 and 1989 led to the founding of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), a UN operation that coordinated humanitarian efforts in both North and South for much of the ensuing two decades of conflict, until the peace agreement was signed in 2005. A prominent evaluation of Operation Lifeline Sudan has been hugely influential and shaped debates on the politics of humanitarian aid in Sudan and beyond (Duffield et al. 2000).

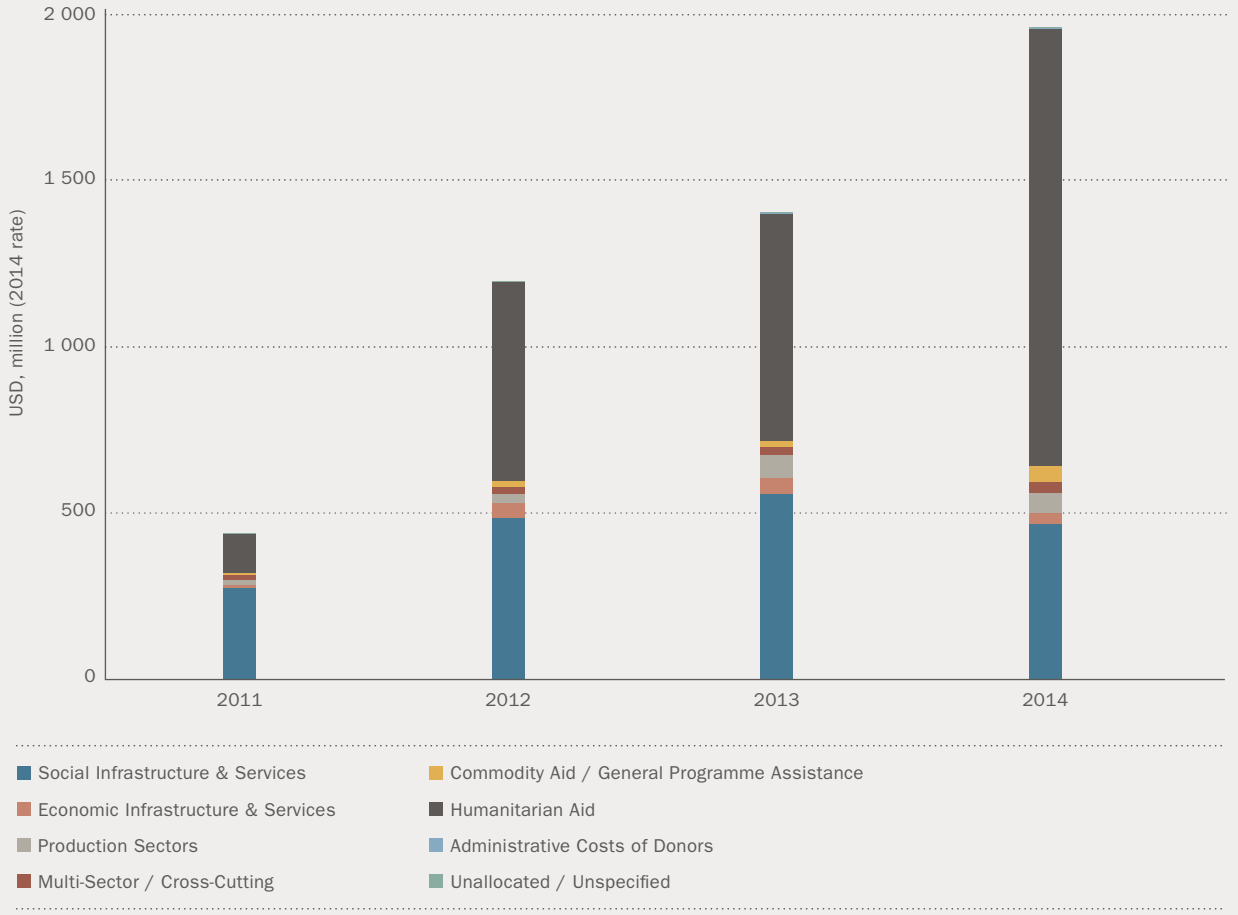
FIGURE 2 // TOTAL ODA TO SOUTH SUDAN BY CHANNEL (2011-2014)



Since 2013, with once again widespread, armed violence and a humanitarian crisis, the international community's attention has switched abruptly from state building and recovery to protection and relief. This means that in 2014, 67 percent of the aid to South Sudan was categorised as humanitarian aid (OECD 2016). Several evaluations and reviews of projects implemented by NGOs testify to the continued importance of humanitarian actors in South Sudan. Many local NGOs and civil society organisations, particularly the churches, have played a role in humanitarian assistance, but have also had service delivery, peace-building and advocacy functions.

At present external actors are divided in their approach. Some try to avoid government institutions altogether, due to documented human rights abuses and atrocities by government forces. The same reservations hinder working with SPLM/A-IO in areas under opposition control. Others focus on the local level, avoiding the central government as much as possible, while a third group continues to work with the government.

FIGURE 3 // TOTAL ODA TO SOUTH SUDAN BY SECTOR (2011-2014)



4. Evaluations of aid

After the signing of the 2005 peace agreement, aid donors became increasingly aware of the link between an improved situation for the South Sudanese people and the potential for sustained peace. Yet, they lacked an understanding of the overall and possibly contradictory impact of donor engagement.

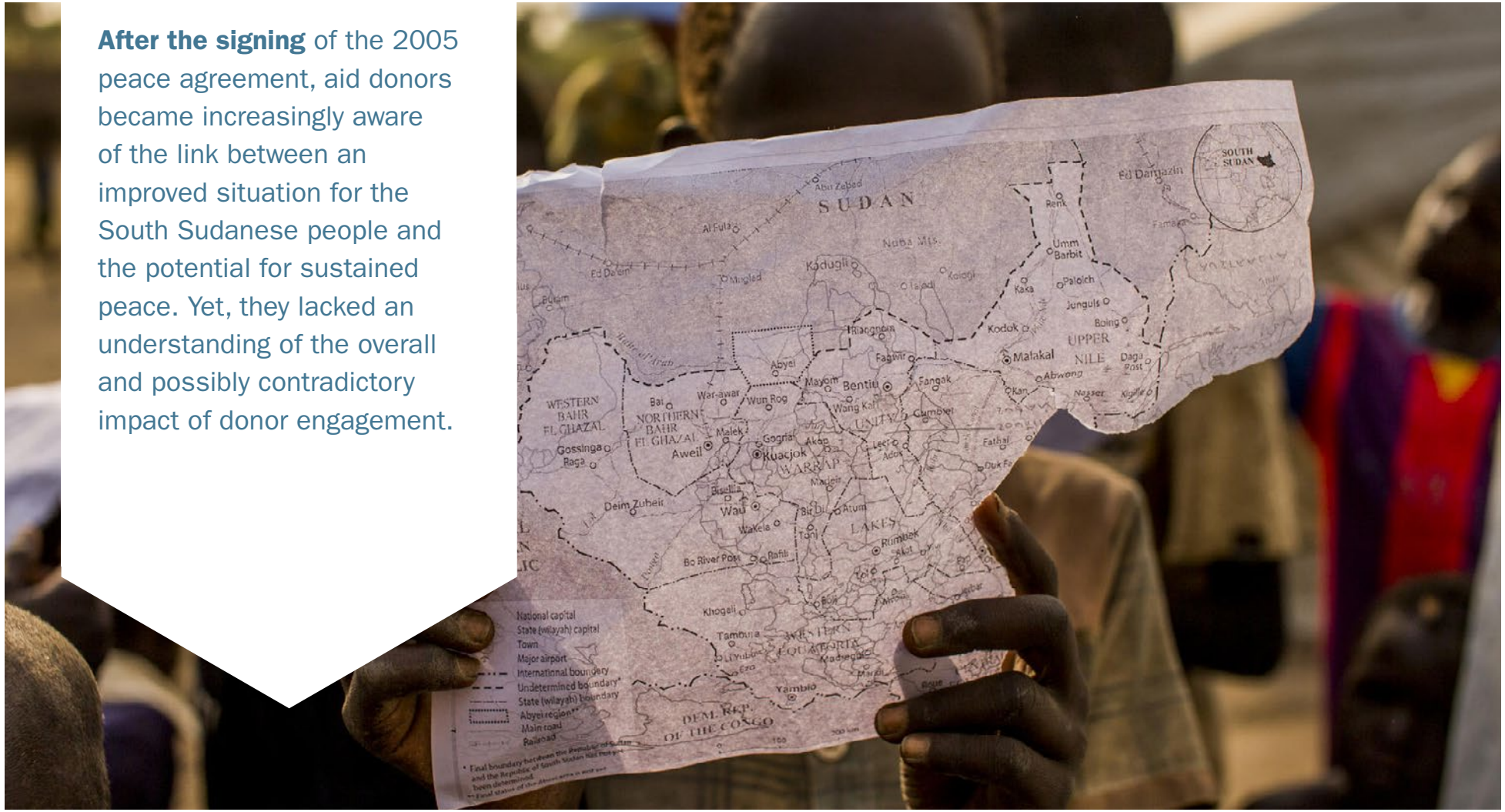


PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

Between 2005 and 2009, several project evaluations and reviews looked at internationally supported programmes, projects and policies, as well as the different aid instruments that were in use, such as the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (Scanteam 2007) and the Common Humanitarian Fund (Willits-King et al. 2007). In this period, there was a growing perception that the failure to quickly deliver results for the population posed a serious overall threat to the implementation of the 2005 peace agreement. Yet donors lacked a comprehensive understanding of whether funding mechanisms were delivering results and whether different interventions were mutually reinforcing or undermining each other. In 2009, an inventory of evaluations and reviews found that each study gave only a partial assessment of the development assistance provided, and, in most cases, lacked specific evidence of results. Findings tended to be relevant only to the project, programme or aid instrument being evaluated at that particular time, rather than examining more broadly the theories and ideologies underpinning donor engagement (van Beijnum and Hemmer 2009).

As a result, a group of 15 donors and development organisations sought to evaluate the extent to which aid to southern Sudan was contributing to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Published in 2010, the milestone report Aiding the Peace addressed key policy issues related to the relationship between development and peacebuilding, or aid and politics (Bennett et al. 2010).

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AIDING THE PEACE

"Aiding the Peace" stated that donors often worked with insufficient knowledge about local dynamics and drivers of conflict. It found that assumptions that underpinned programme designs to support peace and development were often flawed.

Aiding the Peace focuses on the dominant notion that development would bring peace, stability and prosperity to South Sudan. The report finds that this assumption might be flawed. Donors worked with a poor understanding of local power relations, drivers of conflict and causes of vulnerability; this created flawed and unsustainable programme designs which barely involved existing structures or communities (Bennett et al. 2010). Due to the many channels and programmatic approaches, the links between such activities and peacebuilding were weak. Aid was compartmentalised, scattered and unresponsive to the demands of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Community consultation outlining patterns of conflict. PHOTO: UNDP SOUTH SUDAN/MARIA FRIO

Ignorance about drivers of conflict, particularly at the sub-national level, left little room for early warning that developing tensions might affect programming. Even when political dynamics were clearly changing, the same type of projects continued to be funded through an unresponsive system. Most donors and international organisations (with some notable exceptions) failed to undertake systematic conflict analysis. More generally, donors did not sufficiently realise that transition from war to peace is not a technical exercise but a highly political process that requires continued political engagement with government actors.

Aiding the Peace concluded that donors had been generally over-optimistic in their prognosis of peace, overlooking that South/South conflict was a significant threat. The aid architecture – largely based on the OECD/DAC Paris Declaration principles and assumptions about peace dividends – reflected the assumption that South Sudan would follow a path of "normal" post-war recovery, although it remains unclear which model of a state donors or the government were working towards.

Insecurity, low capacity of the government at all levels, and slow implementation of new pooled funding mechanisms hampered efforts to rapidly scale up basic service delivery. Overall assistance was fragmented with different agencies pursuing different interventions, particularly when working with returnees. There were insufficient activities supporting young people's livelihoods and employment opportunities, which was viewed as potentially exacerbating tensions. Governance programmes were overly ambitious and technical and there was never a clear strategy on how to support decentralisation.

FUNDING MECHANISMS – A RELIANCE ON POOLED FUNDS

Pooled funding is particularly popular in fragile and post-war contexts. However, pooled funds work only if they engage the local government, often non-existent in post-war settings. This works to undermine the funds' effectiveness. The record of pooled funds in South Sudan has been mixed due to this conundrum. However, evidence that bilateral funding works better is inconclusive.

Pooled funding has been a popular mechanism in South Sudan, although it never fully replaced bilateral funding. The US did not join the pooled funds; the European Commission supported some pooled instruments in addition to its own bilateral programme. The UN managed two pooled funds, the Common Humanitarian Fund and the South Sudan Recovery Fund. A Capacity Building Trust Fund managed by the Netherlands, and the Basic Services Fund spearheaded by the UK (and managed by a British company) were established in 2005, while the Health Pooled Fund, also led and managed by the UK, was launched in 2012.

Yet, the largest funding mechanism in South Sudan has been the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), administered by the World Bank, to which 14 donors pledged USD 650 million. Through the fund, donors sought to: (i) co-ordinate their assistance and preserve scarce state capacity; (ii) reduce fiduciary risk in a low-capacity environment by using the World Bank's systems and procedures; and (iii) remain involved in policy dialogue and resource allocation decisions. The Juba government signalled strong commitment to playing a leading role in the fund's governance by committing funds at the matching rate of 2:1.

According to a Fafo evaluation, time pressures and inflated expectations meant that the Multi-Donor Trust Fund was not adapted to South Sudanese reality. Pressured to build a funding mechanism, the fund existed before the government was consolidated. Donor presence, moreover, was not up to full capacity until 2006, and the Bank was slow to mobilise its operations in South Sudan (Fafo 2013).

Only about 35 percent of the available funds had been disbursed by the end of 2008, which created tensions between donors. Fearing that this might undermine the peace agreement, some donors developed alternative funding channels. After 2008, the importance of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund began to decline. Nevertheless, more than 60 percent of planned disbursements were achieved from 2009 to 2012 and the fund recorded strong outcomes in improving access to basic services and in building state institutions. This was considered a critically important contribution as there were no durable state institutions in 2005.

Most of the other pooled funds for South Sudan have also been evaluated. Reviews have been mixed, but on the whole rather positive (e.g. Johnson et al. 2013, HEART 2015, OCHA 2015). The Basic Services Fund was seen to have significantly improved access to basic services, "outperforming the MDTF" (Bennett et al 2010: 135), but its short-term nature reduced the scope to develop local capacity (Johnson et al. 2013). The success of the Health Pooled Fund was mixed and most evaluations question the sustainability of programmes reviewed.

Since pooled funds now often administer large aid transfers in fragile or post-war countries, DFID commissioned a "systematic review" of the comparative effectiveness of pooled funds. It emphasised how important it is to consider the context and that there is a danger of unrealistic expectations. An important conclusion is that "strong national governments are necessary for proper MDTF implementation" (Barakat et al.2011, p. 44).

The paradox, then, is that although the most well-functioning and efficient funds are those where recipient governments are active partners, this aid mechanism is often deployed in highly fragile environments where government institutions tend to be weak, like in South Sudan. The DFID review suggests that this aid modality cannot flourish in the absence of local capacity, yet it recommends further research to explore the nexus between MDTFs and fragile countries (p. 45).

The paradox, then, is that although the most well-functioning and efficient funds are those where recipient governments are active partners, this aid mechanism is often deployed in highly fragile environments where government institutions tend to be weak, like in South Sudan.

It is unclear if bilateral funding fares better. While some evaluations suggest that the US support was more effective and that DFID missed its target because it put two thirds of its funds via pooled funds channels (DFID 2010), the evidence is inconclusive particularly on USAID programmes. Evaluations on these cite problems of delivery and sustainability, not engaging with stakeholders, and poor capacity building (e.g. USAID 2015a).

SECURITY AND STATE BUILDING

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) was an integral part of the peace agreement. Still, DDR did little to improve the security situation on the ground. The main problem was the lack of political will to reduce the number of soldiers in the force. Although support to state building through governance projects was reported to have increased knowledge and awareness of democratic principles, critics pointed to weak local ownership and heavy dependence on donors for technical and financial assistance.

Security and state building were linked from the start – however, probably in different ways than imagined by donors. South Sudan built its state on an ever further reach of the security sector, rather than on provision of professionalised security. Donors sought to stabilise the state by enhancing its capacity, institutions, and legitimacy (Larson et al. 2013).

Under the broad umbrella of justice and security support, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, as well as democratisation, promotion of the rule of law, and human rights were considered appropriate channels.

DDR was an integral part of the peace agreement and the two Sudanese armies of the North and South committed to demobilising 180,000 combatants (90,000 each). Actual demobilisation in southern Sudan, however, only started in 2009. The programme provided financial incentives, vocational and skills training and family assistance to participants, giving priority to elderly, disabled and female ex-combatants of the SPLA as well as "Other Armed Groups".

However, very few combatants and women associated with the army were demobilised in South Sudan over the several phases of the programme; even fewer had received assistance for their reintegration into society.

Ex-combatant retrained through DDR. PHOTO: UNDP SOUTH SUDAN/BRIAN SOKOL

According to a 2012 evaluation, the DDR programme had no links to other peacebuilding or development programmes in the country; there were long delays between disarmament and reintegration assistance; and the programme's contribution to help communities deal with issues related to conflict, insecurity and arms proliferation was limited. According to the report, the DDR programme was driven by the political necessity of being seen to deliver on the terms of the peace agreement, rather than responding to the needs of communities and vulnerable sections of the population affected by conflict, displacement and militarisation of society (UNDP 2012).

Other evaluations have shown that national ownership and inclusive stakeholder commitment to the programme are key to successful DDR (e.g. Scanteam 2011). A main problem in South Sudan was the lack of political will to reduce number of soldiers in the force. The government perceived security in terms of the North/South relationship, in which an efficient and effective armed force was a stated priority, whereas the DDR programme asked for a weakening of the security forces of the new state and the government's power base. In addition, factions within the SPLA had remained, making it more complex to determine who was going to be part of DDR.

Other parts of the state-building assistance included more traditional governance projects, ranging from technical assistance and capacity building of government agencies to promotion of human rights awareness through civil society organisations. USAID has been a principal funder of capacity building, and, through the use of international consultants, has installed technical advisors in major ministries in Juba since 2005. The practice has been widely criticised. Instead of building capacity, it has increased institutional dependence on the international community and facilitated the growth of domestic patronage (Larson et al. 2013).

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The concern over institutional dependence is also a common denominator in evaluations

of projects supporting democratic participation and processes, access to justice and the rule of law. Several reports on aid to civil society organisations and rule of law institutions find that the training and organisational support have increased knowledge and awareness of democratic principles and electoral and constitutional processes (USAID 2015, UNDP 2015b, International Media Support 2013). Problems remain regarding weak local ownership and heavy dependence on donors for technical and financial assistance. Little capacity has been built and the sustainability of many civil society organisations beyond international support is thus questionable.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian assistance is generally seen to have helped minimise the impact of humanitarian disasters in South Sudan. Still, the experiences from the Operation Lifeline Sudan are still very relevant given the multiple political challenges and the need to strengthen resilience over time to ensure some degree of sustainability.

Considering how important humanitarian aid is in South Sudan, it is surprising how few evaluations of the sector were conducted after 2005. The few documents that exist focus on technical challenges and largely disregard the extent to which humanitarian aid is building political structures (e.g. UNHCR 2013, Norwegian Refugee Council 2013, Oxfam 2012, 2015).

It is thus helpful to look further back to the Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which remains a field-defining humanitarian operation that has spawned significant scholarly and evaluative engagement. Many studies argue some of the following points:

- OLS inadvertently increased aid dependency.
- OLS legitimised the SPLM/A as an armed rebel movement.
- OLS relieved the SPLM and the Government of Sudan of their obligations towards citizens and international actors of the need to work on political problems.

PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILLWAINE

When in 2014 the UN led a new large-scale humanitarian response to the widespread violence, most NGOs distanced themselves from both the government and the opposition. Tensions between the government and NGOs and the UN continue to run high. So far, the timely provision of humanitarian assistance has helped avert a catastrophic deterioration in food security and malnutrition, but there are many challenges as the conflict has become more fragmented and more complex.

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) was evaluated in 2015 and found to be instrumental

While several projects have addressed gender equality and women's empowerment, these are largely detached from other major interventions.

in meeting the needs of South Sudanese both before and during the current emergency. However, the report finds that the focus on "traditional" life-saving activities has led to missed opportunities for integrating resilience approaches that would ensure sustainability (OCHA 2015).

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Common to the three cross-cutting themes, gender equality, environment and anti-corruption, is that they are being disconnected from other major interventions. Gender is generally mainstreamed into policy documents, but is for instance absent in wider security reforms.

The 2005 Joint Assessment Mission defined gender as a cross-cutting theme for consideration, alongside conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS and the environment. Gender aspects were supposed to be included in manuals, technical assistance, and capacity-building programmes, and outcome indicators were to be disaggregated by gender. However, no guidance was provided on how to do this in practical terms, and despite all the effort and resources

PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

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expended, the report was not much used (UNDP 2010).

While several projects have addressed gender equality and women's empowerment, these are largely detached from other major interventions. The Ministry of Gender, funded by the World Bank, has implemented microcredit schemes for women and promoted gender mainstreaming across ministries and sectors (World Bank 2012). However, there seems to have been limited engagement with scholarship that doubts the effectiveness of both types of programmes for reaching gender equality.

Civil society organisations, funded by various bilateral donors, have worked to influence constitutional and other political processes, to promote female leaders in local government and to increase the number of girls in secondary and tertiary education (UN Women 2012 and 2015, USAID 2012). Evaluations find that these projects have contributed to an increased awareness about gender issues and women's rights, and have to some extent built female leadership capacity in civil society and the government, although limited by cultural barriers and the persistence of customary legal practices. Given the widespread sexual abuse by security forces, the absence of

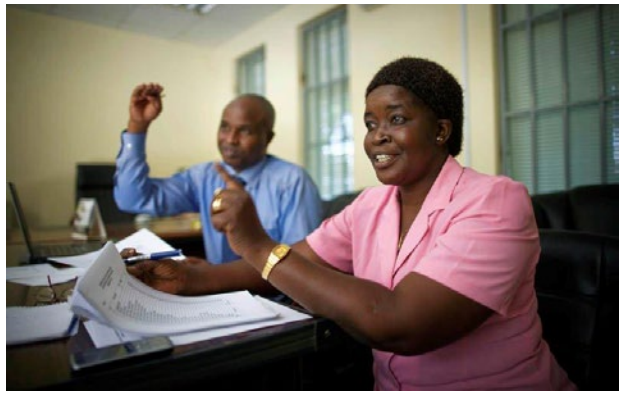

PHOTO: UNDP SOUTH SUDAN/BRIAN SOKOL

gender perspectives in wider security sector reform is notable.

There is increasing concern over environmental degradation and climate change in South Sudan, related to the impacts of oil production (Cordaid 2014), but also more generally to the threats from decreasing water levels, decreasing and irregular rainfall, soil and pasture degradation, habitat degradation following from both unsustainable landuse and violent conflicts that have affected wildlife as well. An assessment of environmental impacts has been made (Government of South Sudan and UNDP 2012), but environmental issues have not been prioritised by donors.

Donors recognise corruption as a major obstacle to future development and stability. At the same time, safeguarding donor funds is also a concern. With limited funds passing through the government budgets (e.g. UK Aid is currently 100 percent off budget) ensuring that donor funds are not lost does not necessarily have a positive effect on the quality of public financial management, accountability and transparency in the running of government.

Support targeted at government typically seeks to put in place and strengthen institutional and legislative frameworks, but also to empower citizens to monitor the delivery of government services (see e.g. DFID's anti-corruption strategy for South Sudan). Yet, these efforts often do not address the underlying issue of a lack of political will.

Anti-corruption efforts often do not address the underlying issue of a lack of political will.

5. Lessons learnt

A number of weaknesses in the international donor engagement in South Sudan can be identified: a lack of an overall strategy for recovery and development; lack of a joint diplomatic and developmental approach; a failure to adapt interventions to a highly volatile and fragile local context; and insufficient coordination of international aid efforts.

UNMISS Peacekeeper in Pibor, Jonglei State, 2013. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILWAINE

A number of crucial lessons have been learnt and should guide future engagement in South Sudan.

- Aid and other interventions are part of South Sudan's political economy as provider of resources. As such, they are not neutral (Bennett et al. 2010).
- The path that South Sudan has taken is partly also the path of the international community.
- According to the OECD, the donor community in South Sudan failed to adhere to the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States. Specific failures include: development interventions were not adapted to the context; donors often bypassed government authorities to deliver services more effectively; donors did not openly tackle corruption; key dimensions of state-building were overlooked, including the need for economic diversification, domestic resource mobilisation and nation-building; obvious political exclusion of groups remained unaddressed; and donors did not sufficiently coordinate (OECD 2011).

This means that, with the benefit of hindsight, four main weaknesses in international donor engagement in South Sudan can be identified.

1. Donors lacked an overall strategic and prioritised plan for recovery and development. Where strategies were crafted, they were mostly fragmented and not part of an integrated vision. Adequate planning for the post-referendum/independence period, for example within USAID, was largely absent (USAID 2015b).
2. Diplomats, politicians and development practitioners did not collaborate closely enough to develop joint approaches. While programmes were informed by peacebuilding approaches, practice was often apolitical and failed to engage with political issues at the local level. Aid programmes were not sufficiently informed about conflict dynamics to allow them to mitigate rather than exacerbate conflict.
3. The donor community mostly failed to adapt development interventions to the highly volatile and fragile local context of South Sudan, with no nationwide-reaching institutions. Efforts to build the state followed a "business as usual" model divorced from local realities, constraints and political interests. The donors' vision for South Sudan often differed from what national or local political actors pursued. This discrepancy was particularly stark in the security sector, where aid programmes seemed to run counter to the objectives of government.
4. Pooled funds were prioritised to promote donor coordination and reduce fiduciary risk. Since it proved extremely challenging to allocate funds through pooled mechanisms, donors chose alternative mechanisms to continue their work and to remain relevant. As a result, pooled funds contributed to the fragmentation of funding mechanisms.

These deficiencies had several consequences.

Development partners underestimated the state-building challenge in South Sudan, and overestimated the capacity of the government to take on responsibility for service delivery. This resulted in over-ambitious and un-sustainable programmes.

The trade-offs between rapid delivery to demonstrate "peace dividends" and efforts to strengthen national ownership and capacity were also underestimated. A review of the South Sudan Recovery Fund (Government of South Sudan and UNDP 2012) argued that a *rapid* peace dividend is not the same as an *effective* one, and called for a reconceptual-isation of what "peace dividends" mean in a context such as South Sudan.

In many ways, the need to solve "process problems" reduced the focus on achieving impact (Bennett et al. 2010). The donor community became increasingly overwhelmed by the extremely difficult contextual environ-ment in South Sudan. They responded by creating parallel systems and delegating government functionality to foreign advisers, in an attempt to preserve the success of donor-funded projects. This "cocooning", allowed donors "to ensure *their* project succeeded in a low capability environment" (Larson et al. 2013). But the longer-term, systemic problem with cocooning is that it forecloses the opportunity for scaling or for actual capacity transference: "cocooning is a valuable technique of persistent failure as one can have long strings of demonstrably successful projects while a sector itself never improves" (ibid.).

Police training in Western Bahr el Ghazal. PHOTO: UNDP SOUTH SUDAN/BRIAN SOKOLA

Polio vaccination campaign. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/JC MCILLWAINE

LOOKING AHEAD: DIFFICULT TRADE-OFFS

Even if peace is restored in Juba, or at the very least physical violence is reduced, humanitarian needs will remain and the cumulative impact of the conflict will take years to address.

Donors must thus consider it likely that there will be protracted, increasingly fragmented conflict that makes security management more challenging; a fragile economy; and a global funding environment that does not prioritise South Sudan while humanitarian needs continue to grow.

This highlights the following needs for development work:

- Donors need to build their own capacity for greater coordination and flexibility between humanitarian and development modes, including more flexible funding and the ability to engage differently in different parts of a vast country with enormous challenges (see also Maxwell et al. 2016).

- Donors need to provide better integration of political and developmental interventions. Taking political refuge in demand-led humanitarian aid without working on government capacity to supply goods and services to its citizens is not likely to be a good long-term strategy, and will probably lead to more – not less – tension between citizens and the state. Therefore, the familiar question of how long donors can respond to emergencies without losing sight of longer-term development needs will again be taking centre stage, but in a context where dealing with divisive political actors will be a particular challenge.

- Bypassing the government will have negative consequences. Restoring basic functionality of the government is central to the recovery capacity of a nation and the resilience of its institutions and communities. For anything to change, however, donors must accept and manage a high degree of political risk as the price of future success. This might mean taking a tough stance on government actors – with the risk that civilians pay the price – or overlooking unacceptable political and military behaviour. No general recommendation on which stance to take or the direction of travel is possible here, as donors need to evaluate their own appetite for risk of failure.

Humanitarian actors face similar problems. South Sudan has been on life support for several decades, one implication currently being that its leaders may again be bailed out from taking responsibility for its own population. Engaging with the state in complex emergencies where the state itself is a party to the conflict, and where victims also may be perpetrators, is deeply problematic. The use of aid to legitimise non-state actors is also a difficult issue. The literature suggests that, where possible, relying on local authorities rather than non-state actors as the bridge between humanitarian actors and affected communities, leads to better outcomes, though this is not necessarily always the case. While the South Sudan crisis is still being played out, several lessons from the OLS experience are still relevant.

While this brief has not considered evaluations of diplomatic efforts in South Sudan, peace agreements reached on the basis of power-sharing alone will most likely not lead to genuine peace, “especially if it does not have a conception about how to repair the social, ethnic and regional fractures that have been caused by nearly 30 years of conflict among and between communities” (Jok 2015, p.1). A negotiated settlement between elites can bring an end to the fighting between the SPLA and forces belonging to SPLM-IO, but will not by itself necessarily stop the fighting between opposed communities whose relations have been shattered by decades of conflict. Further, even a negotiated agreement is unlikely to

quickly shift the political settlement – that is the relationships and ways of dealing among political elites.

In order to restrain violence, and promote peace and communal reconciliation, it will be necessary to support efforts at different levels. As Hutchinson and Pendle have shown, writing about two Nuer prophets, there remain local enclaves of civilian security that can be grown into a tangible peace in the daily lives of more South Sudanese, but it depends on changing current perspectives that tend to ignore local, seemingly "non-political" actors and, therefore, overlook and narrow the diversity of possible solutions available. Despite being key regional peacemakers, people like the two Nuer prophets are often invisible to the international community (Hutchinson and Pendle 2015).

A crucial misconception in the donor community has been that engaging with government has to mean government at the central level. While the sub-division of South Sudan into 28 states is highly controversial in some parts, it also provides an opportunity to genuinely work at

PHOTO: FORSVARETS MEDIESENTER/ TORBJØRN KJOSVOLD

the local (state) level. This, however, would require a substantial shift in donors' ways of working. Understanding local context is not just a task for those looking at South Sudan: Donors also need to be more aware of how their own established ways of working have contributed to being less than effective in South Sudan.

This also applies to the choice of funding mechanisms. Pooled funds are popular in fragile states, yet they require presence, deep contextual knowledge, cooperation with government and long-term staff commitments to succeed. A report looking into the documented experiences of "whole-of-government" approaches highlights that analysis, coordination, monitoring, feedback as well as programme adjustment are best served by well-staffed embassies, particularly in the difficult operational contexts of fragile states and situations (DIIS 2013). Yet most countries reduce staff in fragile and insecure countries like South Sudan. This is a vital shortcoming as particularly in fragile situations there is a need for institutional memory, relationships and conflict expertise. The current employment modes of international agencies run counter to this.

None of this comes without cost and there are several difficult trade-offs in balancing multiple priorities.

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Abbreviations

ARCISS	Agreement on Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan 2015
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM/A-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army in Opposition
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WHO	World Health Organisation

Commissioned by
The Evaluation Department

Carried out by
Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)

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NOVEMBER 2016

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November 2016

Photo: UN Photo/Stuart Price (cover)
A patrol of peacekeepers from the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) passes through streets lined with looted items awaiting collection in Abyei after an attack, 2011.

ISBN: 978-82-7548-839-6