Conflict Factsheet

Climatic Changes and Communal Conflicts in South Sudan

Type of conflict	Intensity
Main	4

Conflict Locality	Time
Southern Africa	1944 –ongoing

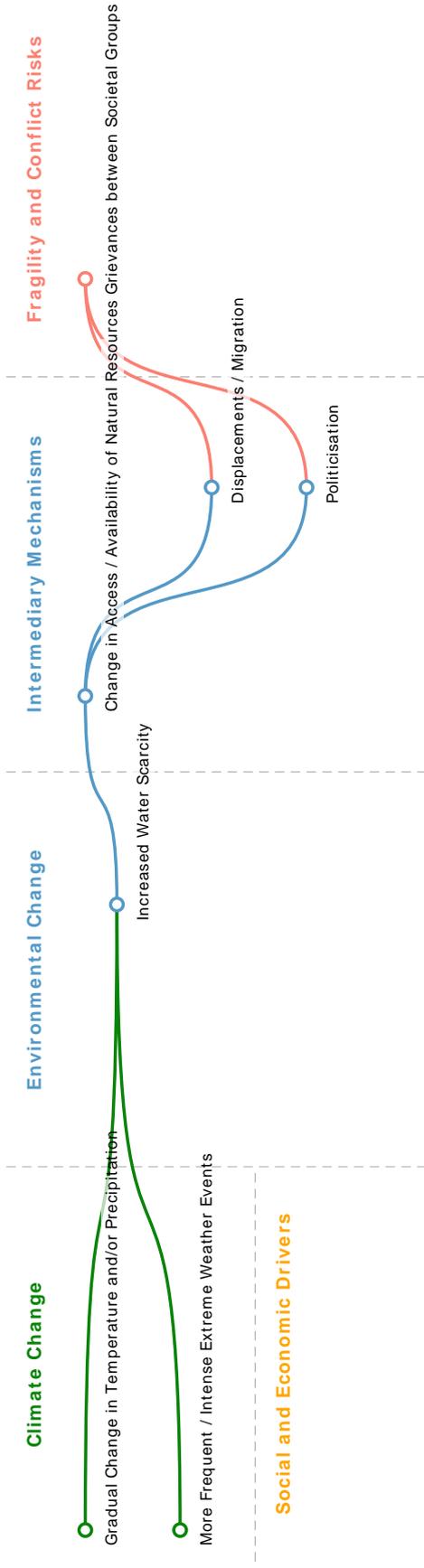| Countries	Resources
S. Sudan	Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water
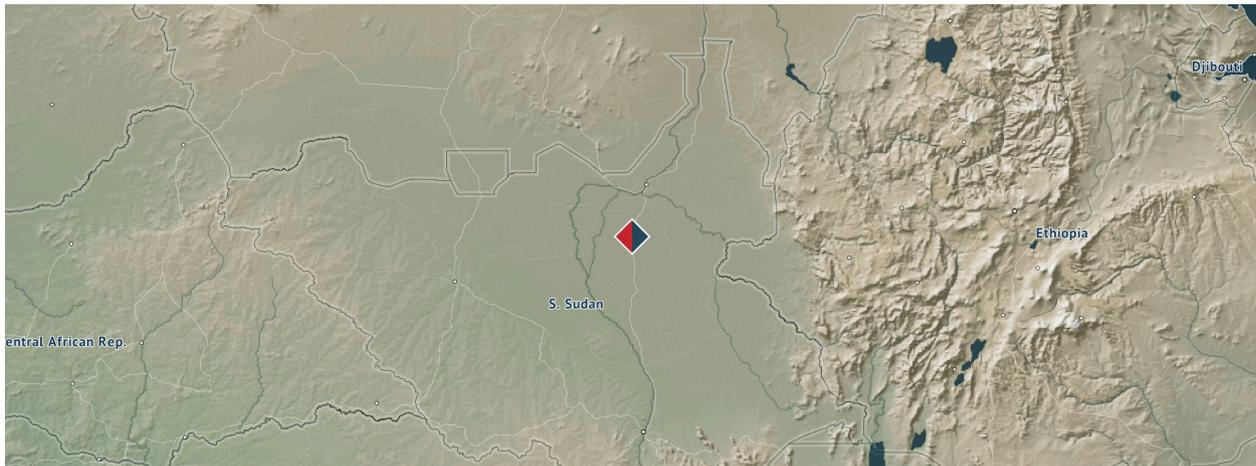
Local resource
competition

Conflict Summary

Closely linked to South Sudan's deteriorating environmental conditions, communal conflicts over land, livestock and water have played an important part in the country's troubled history. They remain a major source of political instability in this young nation.

Conceptual Model

Climate Change

Environmental Change

Intermediary Mechanisms

Fragility and Conflict Risks

Social and Economic Drivers

Gradual Change in Temperature and/or Precipitation

More Frequent / Intense Extreme Weather Events

Increased Water Scarcity

Change in Access / Availability of Natural Resources

Grievances between Societal Groups

Displacements / Migration

Politicisation

Food Insecurity
History of Conflict
Lack of Alternative Livelihoods
Low Level of Economic Development
Political Transition
Unresponsive Government
Weak Institutions

Context Factors

Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

ECC Factbook

Page 3 of 6

A project by

adelphi

supported by

Federal Foreign Office

Conflict History

Rising temperatures, recurrent drought, economic marginalisation and decades of civil war in South Sudan (formerly part of Sudan) have exacerbated resource conflicts between and within local communities such as the Dinka, Nuer and Murle. Frequently taking the form of attacks on wells and villages in contested areas these conflicts have claimed more than 7000 direct victims between 1993 and 2013 alone (UCDP, 2015). In 1992 and 1993 particularly intense fighting killed more than 1000 people and disrupted the local economy. This contributed to famine conditions, which killed an estimated 300.000 people (Prendergast, 1997). In 2013, South Sudan's two largest communities - Dinka and Nuer – aligned with rival army factions loyal to South Sudan's president Salva Kiir and former vice-president Riek Machar. The ensuing violence left more than 1188 people dead (UCDP, 2015). Recurrent conflicts have also impeded local trade and agro-pastoral production, initiating a vicious cycle of impoverishment and further violence in certain parts of South Sudan.

Changing weather patterns and communal violence

Pastoral communities in South Sudan are increasingly exposed to adverse environmental conditions. Rainfalls have decreased by 10-20% and temperatures have increased by more than 1ºC since the middle of the 1970s (Funk et al., 2011). At the same time, the frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods has augmented, with more than 55% of the South Sudanese population being directly affected (UNEP, 2007; Tiitmamer, 2015).

These changes have forced local pastoralists to shift migratory routes for camels and cattle, often leading to local conflicts with farmers and other herders over crop damages and the access to water and grazing resources (Richardson, 2011). Not coincidentally some of the worst communal conflicts have occurred in drought-prone regions. Droughts do not only create poverty and destitution among pastoralist communities, thus providing strong incentives for livestock raiding as a means for young herders to immediately improve their livelihoods. They also displace large populations and bring them together under stressful conditions, which facilitate conflict over scarce resources. This situation is further aggravated by the inability of the South Sudanese government to prevent the proliferation of weapons and armed militias across its territory (Patey, 2010; Schomerus & Allen, 2010).

Political rivalries and the exploitation of local conflicts

Most importantly, communal conflicts in South Sudan have been and continue to be closely linked to wider political dynamics. During the civil war opposing the Government of Sudan and the South Sudanese SPLM/A (Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army) as well as the period following South Sudan's independence in 2011, local resource conflicts have frequently been exploited and exacerbated as a way to foster support for different military and political leaders. These conflicts have been associated with counter-insurgency strategies utilised by the Government of Sudan and with different factional disputed within the SPLM/A during the civil war (Bradbury et al., 2006; Schomerus & Allen, 2010), but also with more recent rivalries within the South Sudanese government (see Schneider, 2013; Gordon, 2014).

ECC Factbook

Page 4 of 6

A project by

supported by

adelphi

Federal Foreign Office

Various local initiatives have tried to address South Sudan's ongoing communal conflicts. However, lacking capacities, unclear roles and responsibilities of local government and customary authorities, as well as the lack of involvement by the national government have often impeded the design of lasting solutions for local resource conflicts.

Resolution Efforts

At the national level, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 has laid the foundations for a settlement between the SPLM/A and the Government of Sudan and prepared the transition of South Sudan into an independent state in 2011. It has, however, not addressed the multitude of local conflicts between South Sudanese communities (Schomerus & Allen, 2010). The UN has sent over 12.000 personnel to South Sudan with a broad mandate that includes the prevention of inter-communal violence and the protection of civilians (UN, 2015). Effective conflict management is however hampered by internal capacity and security challenges (Gordon, 2014).

Local initiatives

At the local level, church-based organisations have worked together with the Sudanese Government, the SPLM/A and different international aid organisations to enable various "people to people" peace meetings, including local chiefs, elders, women community leaders, and military commanders (see Bradbury et al., 2006). The most notorious and by far most successful of these meetings, the 1999 Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference, helped pacifying Dinka-Nuer-relations (see Conflict between Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan).

Institutional pluralism and lacking capacities

Yet, considering the omnipresence of communal violence in South Sudan, the overall effectiveness of these local initiatives has to be questioned (Wilson, 2014). Lack of financial resources, trained facilitators and trusted third parties, as well as the weakness of local government have often precluded the efficient implementation of local agreements. In many cases linkages between formal and customary authorities have not been clarified, leading to a proliferation of actors with unclear roles and responsibilities (Wilson, 2014).

Further challenges

Attempts at political decentralisation and the redefinition of internal administrative borders by the Government of South Sudan, in some cases, have fostered inter-group competition over resources and encouraged populist patronage politics, rather than solving local disputes between communities (Schomerus & Allen, 2010). At the national level, internal power struggles and economic challenges, as well as tensed diplomatic relations with the northern neighbour Sudan have hindered the Government of South Sudan from taking more effective measures against local resource conflicts (Gordon, 2014).

A lasting solution to these conflicts needs yet to be found, which reflects both, local competition for resources and national struggle for political power between South Sudan's multiple communities.

Intensities & Influences

1   2   3   4

INTENSITIES

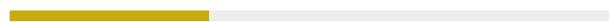International / Geopolitical Intensity

Human Suffering

INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences

Societal Influences

Violent Conflict

Yes

Salience with nation

Regional

Mass displacement

More than 100.000 or more than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.

Cross Border Mass Displacement

Best estimate that more than 100.000 or more than 10% of country population are displaced across borders.

Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence reduced significantly, but did not cede.

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

The capacity to address grievances in the future has increased.

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been partially addressed.

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Decrease in conflict intensity at least partially the result of conflict resolution strategies.

Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Peacekeeping The UN has sent personnel to South Sudan with a broad mandate that includes the prevention of inter-communal violence and the protection of civilians.	**2**
Mediation & arbitration Church-based organisations have worked together with the Sudanese Government, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and different international aid organisations to enable various peace meetings.	**2**

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

Conflict between Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan

References with URL

Bradbury, M., Ryle, J., Medley, M. & Sansculotte-Greenidge, K. (2006). Local Peace Processes in Sudan. A Baseline Study

Funk, C., Eilerts, G., Verdin, J., Rowland, J. & Marshall, M. (2011). A Climate Trend Analysis of Sudan

Gordon, R. (2014). South Sudan. The peace that never was

Patey, L.A. (2010). Crude days ahead? Oil and the resource curse in Sudan

Prendergast, J. (1997). Crisis response : humanitarian band-aids in Sudan and Somalia

Richardson, T. (2011). Pastoral Violence in Jonglei

Schomerus, T. & Allen, M. (2010). Southern Sudan at Odds with Itself: Dynamics of Conflict and Predicament of Peace

Schneider, J. (2013). Experts Weekly: South Sudan in Violent Crisis

Tiitmamer, N. (2015). Assessment of Policy and Institutional Responses to Climat e Change and Environmental Disaster Risks in South Sudan

UCDP (2015) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia. South Sudan

UN (2015). UNMISS: United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

UNEP (2007). Sudan. Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment

Wilson, J. (2014). Local Peace Processes in Sudan and South Sudan

Further information

https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/communal-conflicts-south-sudan