

The Challenges and Opportunities facing United Nations Mission and Peace Building Strategies in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges and opportunities that United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces during its operations in South Sudan. It identifies critical challenges and defines various opportunities that the mission could utilize to enhance peace-building strategies' effectiveness and positive outcomes. The study borrows from liberal institutionalism and conflict transformation theory. The theories explain the collaborative approach to addressing the root causes of conflict in South Sudan. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodology utilizing descriptive statistics. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 28) was used for quantitative data and thematic excerpt evaluation for qualitative data. It targeted military peacekeepers, including troops, staff officers, Military Observers (MILOBs), and Police, including both UN Police and GOSS local Police, with a target population of 3280. The sample population of 354 participants was determined by using Yamane's (1967) formula. Equally cluster sampling, convenience sampling and purposive sampling were utilized. Primary data was collected from questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) and interview schedules while secondary data was collected through a review of various publications. The article concludes that the mission could resolve most of the critical challenges by conducting a contextual analysis of the conflict dynamic, investing in finding sufficient resources and funding for operations and evaluating the current efficacy of peace-building efforts. Equally further studies focusing on analyzing relations between mission, regional, and international agencies, establishing the differences, and identifying further multidimensional opportunities should be conducted to enhance the effectiveness and stability of peace-building programs in South Sudan.

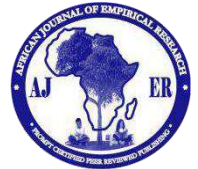
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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations' main objective entails the restoration of peace and security within zones in conflict. Some UN missions may take years, depending on the nature of the conflict and state tensions. According to Agada (2008), the UN responds to conflict within states and takes military action across borders in order to deal with inter-state skirmishes. The aim is to reduce conflict tension and facilitate the development of peace strategies by participating in the negotiation processes. Over time, UN missions have evolved with varying conflict situations, causes, and the nature of the countries in question (Johnson, 2016). The traditional structures are mainly focused on reducing tension and protecting the victims of violence who are often civilians.

The UN mandate has had to develop strategies and customize the mission from one country to another due to the diverse causes and dynamics of war. These changes have also led to collaboration with regional bodies, including the African Union. This collaboration has had a significant impact on the structure and effectiveness of the United Nations Mission. Such collaborations have effectively commissioned peacekeepers in Mali, Central African Republic, and South Sudan in Africa. These missions have had varying experiences with diverse challenges and definitions of successful outcomes.

Every regional community have their guidelines and scope of intervention in conflict. The European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) promote sustainable peace by using various mechanisms in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict, upon involvement. Some of the interventions have been successful, including the signed treaty between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018, which was due to the involvement of the AU and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (UN, 2022). Regional community interventions are successful because they have structured the mandate according to the deeper understanding of the countries involved with respect to their culture and structure of authority.



United Nations has utilized its mandate to develop the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in an attempt to restore peace. The mission's main aim is to ensure cease-fire and be at the forefront in the development of peace building strategies and implementation. Significantly, peace building in South Sudan has a complex multispectral framework (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). It has involved the participation of international, regional, national, and local actors in the development of strategies that would address the root conflict of conflict and develop sustainable peace building initiatives. The strategies target the establishment of effective governance, rule of law, and promotion of democratic institutions, which will consider the needs of all key actors in South Sudan.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the vast success related to the UN peacekeeping missions, some factors present as hindrances. Currently, the missions are reeling with challenges ranging from political instability, security concerns, humanitarian crisis, limited resources and inter-communal violence. These issues influenced change in the implementation of some strategies and several authors have highlighted some of these factors. UNMISS is in collaboration with other international, regional, and local actors who facilitate the implementation of peace-building strategies. These actors provide a multidimensional approach to restoring peace in South Sudan.

However, this involvement presents the mission with challenges that have adverse effects on the implementation and structure of the initiatives. They complicate the peacekeeping and peace-building missions due to diverse interests, and political, humanitarian, and military issues. The gaps also present the mission with various opportunities that can present progress and positive changes which can be harnessed through strategic partnerships and interventions hence the improvement of the peace building projects. There is inadequate coverage of these challenges and opportunities present during the UN mission in South Sudan. This article attempts to expound this knowledge by providing candid information and explaining the extent of the effects of these factors.

1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims:

- i. To explore challenges that United Nations missions face in South Sudan, and how they impact peace-building strategies.
- ii. To highlight opportunities that exist to enhance the efficacy of United Nations peace-building strategies in South Sudan.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study utilizes liberal institutionalism and conflict transformation theories to elucidate the conflict in South Sudan and UNMISS peace-building efforts.

2.1.1 Liberalism institutionalism theory

The study is hinged on Liberal institutionalism theory and is used to explore the South Sudan conflict from an international perspective. According to the key proponents, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye the theory is viewed as the international interventions to individual states that promote unity (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The theory focuses on utilizing a collaborative effort to facilitate diplomatic negotiations, promote cooperation and coordination among member states, and encourage global peace through international law. As seen in UNMISS, the mission works as a collaborative action to resolve the conflict in South Sudan. The mission has partnered with other international, regional, and national actors to promote peacebuilding processes in South Sudan. The mission faces challenges associated with varying interests, insufficient resources, and coordinating diverse representatives of actors. Regardless, it has structured the interventions to align with the complex nature of the culture and needs of South Sudanese citizens. The interventions emphasize the inclusivity of national, armed groups, and local community representatives through the dialogues and decision-making processes.

2.1.2 Conflict transformation theory

The conflict transformation theory, developed by John Paul Lederach, recognizes the complexities of conflict and the need to use complicated approaches in developing positive, sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997). It emphasizes that peace processes should consider the relationship of involved parties, explore multi-level approaches, and focus on implementing long-term changes. The theory rules traditional conflict resolution mechanisms as temporal solutions since they fail to address the root causes. UN mission in South Sudan focuses on developing political, economic, and social peace building initiatives. The mission has employed collaborative efforts to develop problem-solving strategies.

It has also emphasized the significance of including marginalized communities, women, and the youth in developing sustainable and effective peace building solutions (UNMISS, 2023). Thus, conflict transformation theory provides an extension of liberal institutionalism. While the latter explains UNMISS's collaborative inclusion of international actors in South Sudan's peace building efforts, conflict transformation theory explains the need for processes addressing root causes and the significance of inclusivity from all levels.

2.2 Empirical Review

South Sudan faces many challenges as it moves towards achieving its peace-building missions. One of the main setbacks is the persistent conflicts which have hindered sustainable peace in many areas within the country. This is because the violent conflict has served to reverse many gains by peacekeepers in South Sudan. These violent conflicts hinder the implementation of peace agreements resulting in a relapse into conflict. As opined by Smith (2017), protracted conflict continuously exacerbates the already worsening humanitarian crisis in the country thus disrupting the government structure and further promoting a cycle of violence which complicates the peace efforts.

Equally, the shaky government and the current political instability serve to impede the efficacy of UNMISS as reiterated by Johnson (2019) who argues that political divisions and lack of centralized power in South Sudan have exacerbated the challenges of the process of implementing cohesive peacebuilding strategies in South Sudan where addressing matters relating to insecurity and causes of conflict is fundamental for sustainable peace.

Despite the ever-growing challenges, there also exist many opportunities which if exploited can enhance the effectiveness of the mission's peacebuilding strategies. One of the opportunities lies in the strengthening of international and regional partnerships (Magara, 2022). This partnership and collaboration with regional bodies like the African Union, IGAD and East Africa Community (EAC) and by engaging with other neighbouring countries, the United Nations can influence collective efforts that can help in addressing the root causes of conflict and thus promote peace.

As emphasized by Jones et al. (2020), regional cooperation is critical in bolstering the legitimacy of United Nations peace-building efforts. This it does by promoting resource mobilization and expertise in a wide range of disciplines. Equally investing in community-led approaches and initiatives opens another avenue for enhancing holistic peace-building efforts. A related study by Patel (2018) further highlights the important role of empowering the local communities and promoting dialogues at the lowest grassroots level. This will promote trust, and reconciliation and further mitigate the impact of violence and conflict.

These efforts and opportunities reinforce the need for critical, comprehensive and inclusive efforts that recognize the importance of local and regional actors in support of peace-building efforts in South Sudan (Jones et al, 2020). These opportunities underscore the need for holistic and broad approaches that acknowledge the roles played by both local and regional actors in peace-building processes.

The theoretical and empirical review of the study resulted in the development of the variables. The challenges and opportunities identified during the execution of the mission presented the causal effect of the strengthening and weakening of the peacebuilding initiatives. The independent variables entail reducing violence and conflict, improving security, enhancing social cohesion, increasing political stability, developing socio-economic development, and protecting human rights, and civilians. These variables align with the mandate and main objectives of UNMISS. The intervening variables entail the challenges and opportunities to the mission. South Sudan faces several challenges ranging from insecurity, political instability, insufficient resources, international law, varying UN Mandate and resolutions, regional laws, and violation of human rights among others (Johnson, 2019). However, there also exist many opportunities like conflict prevention and recovery, capacity building and local ownership, gender mainstreaming and women empowerment which if harnessed can propel the country to greater political stability and sustainable peace.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed method design across five regions of Juba, Aweil, Malakal, Rumbek, and Wau in South Sudan and Nairobi in Kenya. The choice of the study design has relevance in combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches thus aiding in addressing the research questions more holistically. It entailed the use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in acquiring findings and justification for the study. The study had a target population of 3280 which comprised both military and police personnel, Payam administrators, religious leaders, United Nations International staff, diplomats, humanitarian affairs heads and personnel from International Non-governmental organizations (INGOs)

To select settings and participants, the study utilized a sample size of 354 with a response rate of 290 combined with both probability and non-probability sampling techniques consisting of purposive, clusters, stratified proportionate and simple random sampling. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to achieve recommended sample size (Louangrath & Sutanapong, 2019). Primary data was collected through Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interview

while Secondary data collection involved literature review and analysis of academic papers, policy documents, reports, and relevant publications from reputable sources such as the United Nations, governmental agencies, and NGOs (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

Quantitative data was analyzed using numerical techniques and statistical methods while excerpts were used to explain plausible interpretations of qualitative data. Equally face and content validity processes were considered alongside data triangulation from numerous methods and sources to identify key challenges and opportunities facing UN missions and peace-building strategies in South Sudan

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed to explore challenges that United Nations missions face in South Sudan, and how they impact peace-building strategies and highlight opportunities that exist to enhance the efficacy of United Nations peace-building strategies in South Sudan.

4.1 Response Rate

To facilitate an in-depth investigation, the study collected data from a sample size of 354 individuals with a response rate of 82% which was achieved by the successful completion of 290 surveys, and FGDs. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), any response rate above 72% is recommended and holds statistical significance for a reliable conclusion and findings.

Table 1

Response rate

S/No	Category	Total Participants	Response received	Response rate (%)
1.	Surveys, FGD and Interview schedules	354	290	82%

4.2 Challenges

The study identified and analyzed the following challenges and their impact on UNMISS peace-building strategies.

4.2.1 Funding

Funding affects the budget allocation and capabilities of the UN mission components, including the military, police, and civilians. It defines the scope of the mission and the extent of focus on executing the roles (Agada, 2008). When funding becomes a challenge, the mission must redefine and strategize some roles to ensure its involvement has attained the maximum possible outcome despite the limitations of resources. The study identified the following main sources of funding as shown in figure 1 below.

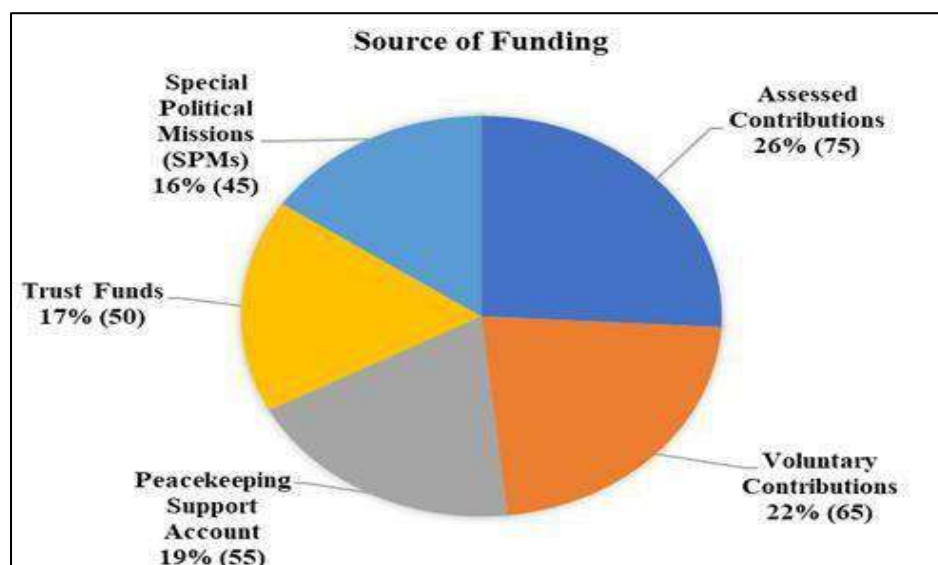


Figure 1
UNMISS Sources of Funding and Peace Building Efforts

The mission funding can be traced back to the policies established by the UNSCR which determine the mission scope and tasks. Availability of funds was identified to affect the mission’s operational activities and inadequate funding has had adverse effects on the mission by limiting the mission’s ability to address the complex challenges. The source of funding and budgeting for the mission has considerably influenced the nature and efficacy of the mission and various peace-building efforts (Johnson, 2018). Based on the findings, assessed and voluntary contributions are critical in providing financial resources for the mission.

Budgets for peacekeeping operations are based on the missions' mandate from the Security Council. The mission’s mandate are based on available resources and the scope of the problem (Roberts, 2015). Factors such as financial strains and resource inadequacy, influence the development of activities and division of roles, based on the intensity of conflict (United Nations, 2015). These issues influence decisions on areas of priority and focus. Various recent reports have highlighted insufficient funding as an inhibitor to the mission.

The UN report indicated that the UN allocated \$1.77 billion to UNMISS during the fiscal year 2022-2023 (United Nations, 2022). Although this was substantial to the project, only 46% of this figure was used during implementation. This percentage indicates that the mission faced considerable financial challenges, considering the length of the mission and the evolving nature of the conflict. The financial constraints hindered the practicality of the intended activities and sustainable peace development. One respondent from UN International Staff observed that;

...The mission’s funding will always impact the mission's ability to invest in other essential areas such as human rights, governance, and socio-economic development, thus possibly affecting the extensiveness of peace-building efforts...

The aim is to maintain critical infrastructure, maximize outcomes, and offer logistic support to enhance the effectiveness of programs, including the mediation process, protection of civilians, and promotion of local peace-building efforts. However, the changes inhibit the achievement of initial goals and focus on completing the activities regardless of low-efficiency levels.

4.2.2 Security Situation

Security has been an issue for the country and the mission in South Sudan. South Sudan has struggled with conflict through multiple variations due to ethnic and political factors. The UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has recorded that approximately 7 million citizens, 60% of the population, need humanitarian assistance (United Nations, 2022). The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on the security situation as a challenge and findings are presented in Figure 2 below.

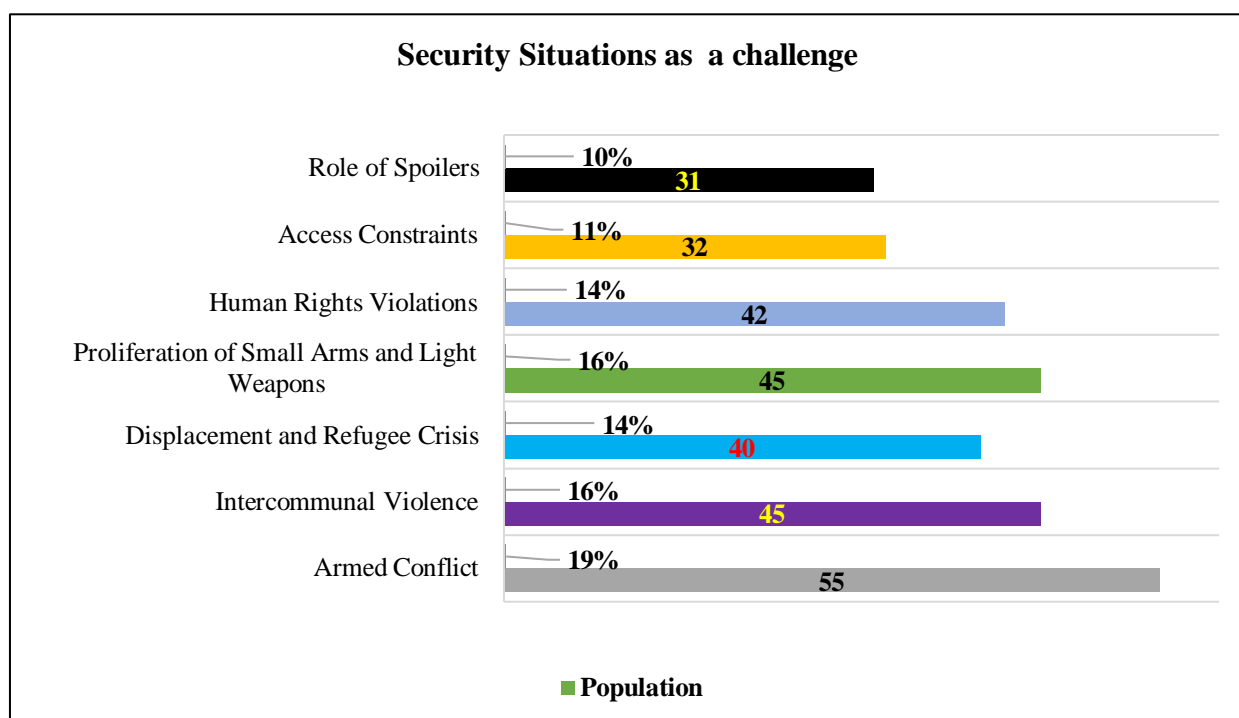


Figure 2
Security Situation Attributes



The study findings indicate that the mission faces many security challenges because violence escalates in various parts of the country further exacerbating the security situation (Francis, 2017). This not only poses a danger to the local communities but also to UN personnel and infrastructure and thus hinders the effective operation of the mission.

The mission faces formidable challenges in carrying out its mandate due to insecurity and limited infrastructure in some areas. In the Central Equatorial State, violence has escalated, resulting in the displacement of civilians and attacks on the mission personnel. This insecurity not only endangers the lives of South Sudanese but also hinders the mission's capacity to operate effectively. The continuous and ongoing armed conflict obstructs the mission in maintaining security, especially in red zones areas. Conflict in the country has involved various armed groups and political factions that have created varying hostilities with different demands thus threatening the safety of helpless civilians. One key informant remarked that;

...The country currently has five vice presidents each commanding their own armies' supporters and loyalist. The fragmentation has exacerbated the internal divisions, increased expenditure and hindered unification of the forces. There is need for urgent judicial, police and defence reforms ahead of the 2024 elections...

Additionally, unexpected and existing inter-communal conflicts compromise security by endangering the safety of the victims and causing drawbacks to peace-building efforts (Smith, 2017). Most of these conflicts involve varying ethnic groups, and primarily caused by competition for scarce resources, deep-rooted ethnic division and political opinions which cause eruption of conflicts due to unresolved grievances and revenge urges. The conflicts also increase the number of IDPs and Refugees which increases the dependency on the mission allocated resources due to surges of conflicts and humanitarian crisis (Francis, 2017). These vulnerability issues compromise the focus of the mission as they necessitate the development of additional tasks and goals which further complicates the mission's efforts thus hindering peace-building initiatives. One respondent from TCCs remarked that;

...One of the main challenges facing peacebuilding is the ongoing conflict. This is because, despite the signing of a peace agreement in 2015, conflict and violence have continued to plague the country, particularly in the states of Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states. This conflict is fueled by several factors, including competition for resources, ethnic tensions and political power struggles....

The lackluster security situation is also associated with human rights violations. Anderson (2018) claims that most violations are unaccounted for because they happen during a disaster. Extrajudicial killings, sexual abuses, and violations of human rights, child rights, rule of law, and insecurity are common during conflict. The mission has faced challenges in accounting for the cases and promoting justice by punishing perpetrators. The lawless state has also limited peace-building efforts since most of the victims opt for revenge missions, especially within inter-communal clashes. The mission also faces challenges in establishing active justice mechanisms in the area and ensuring that they are effective in promoting justice (United Nations, 2022). This challenge affects crime deterrence efforts and the restoration of peace and justice.

Moreover, peacekeepers have become victims of kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, and harassment from armed groups while executing their duties (Smith, 2017). Exemplifying this is the 20 Dec 2013 killing of two Indian peacekeepers in Jonglei state town of Akobo. Several civilians were also killed during the incidents and several others were injured. Such events discourage peacekeepers and affect their confidence in personal safety. It also increases the probability of other groups attacking military bases, reducing people's confidence in their effectiveness. The mission's inability to curb human violations has affected the mission's effectiveness in restoring peace.

The mission struggles to access some conflict zones due to increased threats to security. Armed groups that control these areas deny peacekeepers access to conflict zones, limiting their operations. The restriction can exist in the form of roadblocks and obstructions (Johnson, 2016). In May 2022, the mission reported that armed groups set roadblocks in parts of Unity State. Similar areas are prone to human violations, and inaccessibility affects the monitoring and reporting process. This further hinders the implementation of peace strategies and humanitarian aid to victims.

4.2.3 Political Instability

The political issues in South Sudan have undermined the mission's peace-building efforts and slowed down the mission's success in achieving its key objectives. Since its formation, South Sudan has undergone political challenges and power struggles (Brosché, 2019). The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on a fluid political environment as a challenge and findings are presented in Figure 2 below.



Table 2

Political Instability as a Challenge to UNMISS Peace-building Efforts

Political instability elements	Population	Percentage
Fragile Political Transition	60	21%
Lack of Political Will	55	19%
Disputed Boundaries and Resource Control	42	14%
Weak Institutions and Rule of Law	48	17%
Lack of Inclusivity and Political Representation	45	16%
International Interference and Geopolitical Dynamics	40	13%
Total	290	100

The study findings revealed that political instability presents a major obstacle to mission’s peace-building efforts thus affecting the effectiveness of the mission in realizing its mandate as noted by Rolandsen and Arnold (2019). Over time, multiple incidences of politically related clashes have disrupted any peace-building efforts in South Sudan. According to UNMISS (2023), the mission had recorded at least 215 violent incidences affecting over 600 civilians, mostly by killing, injury, abduction, and conflict-related sexual violence. These Incidents were attributed to community-based militias and/or civil-defense groups. This issue has resulted in the overuse of resources to influence ceasefire, protect civilians, and provide humanitarian aid.

The influence of political instability takes several forms. Lack of political will fuels political instability in South Sudan. The mission has faced several incidences in which the primary stakeholders failed to commit to established governance (United Nations, 2022). Sometimes, the failure to commit is due to trust issues, revenge missions, and changes in perspective about the opponent’s commitment. Additionally, political instability arises due to territorial disputes and overlapping boundaries, especially among ethnic groups. Due to the growing gap, the ongoing unresolved conflicts increase tension and varying perspectives that hinder the mission from restoring peace or implementing peace-building strategies. One respondent from the Humanitarian affairs remarked that;

...By addressing the challenges related to resource control and disputed boundaries, the mission contributes to creating a stable and secure environment which is essential for effective peacebuilding...

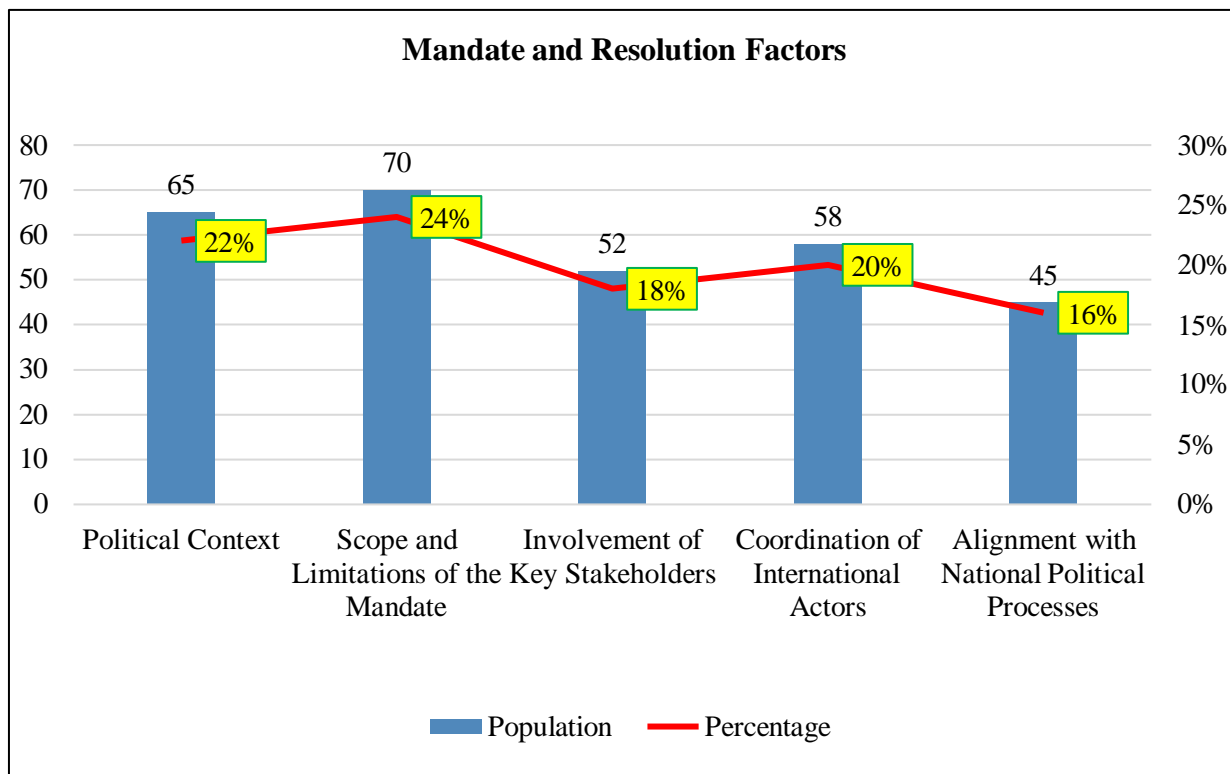
The prolonged lack of peace has also led to weak institutions and poor justice application (Keil & Anderson, 2018). Although there is a constitution and a judiciary body of government, conflict has affected the application of the rule of law and accountability of crime, fueling increased war crimes. These issues hinder the mission from actively establishing peace-building efforts in the country, considering there are no active players in the judicial system to activate and develop legal frameworks. Inclusivity being a sensitive factor in promoting political stability, mission has carefully selected parties that must be present during political negotiations and discussions. The mission has had to consider all groups regardless of their superiority and size, including youth and women because the exclusion of marginalized groups has been an issue that resulted in diminishing peace-building efforts. One local leader remarked that;

...With a backdrop of ongoing difficulties, the likelihood of holding elections in 2024 seems hazy. The voting process is hampered by several factors, including political turmoil, a weak legal system, incomplete registration of voters, insecurity, a lack of civic education, and logistical issues. With such unresolved issues, legitimate, transparent, and peaceful elections remain elusive....

External involvement and influences complicate peace-building processes. On the one hand, regional and international actors’ involvement facilitates the mitigation process, however their varying mandate and purpose can be a hindrance, especially when they fail to consider South Sudan’s culture and the ongoing changing dynamics of warfare. Johnson, 2016). The mission has been sensitive to selecting adequate and relevant external players to curb adverse external interference because differing points of view hinder the effectiveness of the mission’s peace-building strategies.

4.2.4 United Nations Mandate and Resolution

The UN mandate defines the scope of the missions’ engagement and purpose under legal frameworks and dictates the mission's roles in protecting civilians, engaging the local communities in peace-building processes, and implementing sustainable peace (Mac Ginty, 2011). The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on various UN mandates and other Security Council resolutions as a challenge and findings are presented in figure 3 below.

**Figure 3***Mandate and Resolution Factors*

From the study findings above, 24 % and 22% of the surveyed respondents observed that the scope and limitations of the mandate and political context of the mandates and UNSCR respectively have the biggest hindrance to the effectiveness of the mission (Francis, 2017). This is because they limit the mission authority and scope of work. Equally, the role of stakeholders, poor coordination and alignment with the national political process also affected the mission's effectiveness

The findings provide a clear understanding of the respondents' perspectives and viewpoints on the roles and impediments that the elements can cause in limiting the mission from maximizing the gains. On the other hand, a small scope would help target specific issues, defining and resolving the root causes. Conversely, although such a strategy may address root causes extensively, another untargeted element may compromise the process, resulting in mission failure. Thus, the UN has to be strategic in defining the scope and mandate of the mission in balancing the mission's authority, resources, and objectives.

UN mandate and resolutions are essential in resolving political issues in South Sudan. As critical stakeholders in the negotiation processes, it analyses the country's political dynamics, assessing the needs and risks associated with peace negotiations and treaty formulations (Autesserre, 2011). The mandate also specifies the missions' geographical involvement, power application, and objectives. Although these specifications enhance the clarity of the mission, they need to recognize minute details that could arise during the implementation phase, including transitional justice and the role of marginalized communities in political negotiations.

The UN mandate emphasizes that the mission must engage representatives from the armed groups and all parties with political interests. These groups have hostile relations, varying demands, and different perspectives on the definition of sustainable peace (Agada, 2008). Although inclusivity is essential, the mission has struggled with establishing sincere and effective communication channels and breakdowns that would consider varying interests (Autesserre, 2011). The mission has had to be sensitive in managing these groups, aiming to increase ownership of the process and make the outcome valuable, practical, and long-lasting. One Diplomat, a key informant remarked that;

...The limitations restrict the mission's capacity to respond efficiently to emerging challenges or adapt to evolving dynamics on the ground. Equally, they hinder the mission's capability to address acute peace-building issues like transitional justice and the inclusion of marginalized groups...

International organizations also have coordination issues. As external actors, they have varying objectives, responsibilities, and agendas (Anderson, 2018). The UN, global, and regional organizations create a pool of resources and support needed to restore peace in South Sudan. However, these bodies have varying operating mechanisms, adversely impacting coordination and unified decisions (Lederach, 2019). The mission has had to develop effective communication, coordination, and information-sharing tools to clarify roles and tasks.

Moreover, the UN mandate also considers national political processes. Although the international community has a peace-building plan, it must align with the national political agenda (Agada, 2008). Such a unified approach ensures a synchronized approach to agenda, priorities, and decision-making processes. It also creates a sense of ownership and legitimacy of the initiatives, increasing the sustainability of the peace-building interventions.

4.2.5 Regional Law

Regional legal frameworks are essential in providing guidelines concerning conflict management, human rights, security, and economic dynamics. However, regional communities have different treaties, missions, and legal frameworks (Autesserre, 2011). These charters are based on the involved members' history, customary laws, culture, and political nature. The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their opinions and perspectives on regional laws as a challenge and the findings are presented in Figure 4 below.

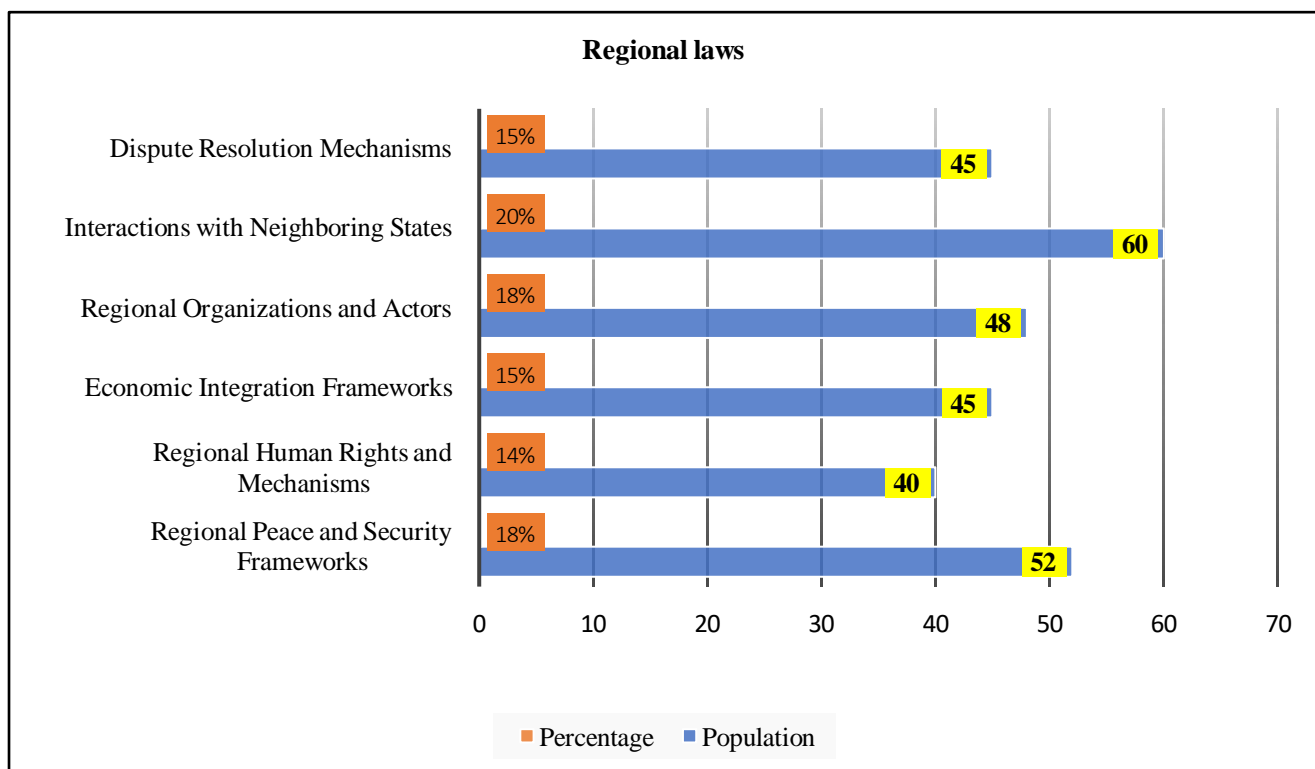


Figure 4
Regional laws as a challenge

The study findings indicate that regional laws present a challenge to peace-building strategies and the wider sustainable peace in South Sudan. They indicate that the elements affect the effectiveness of the mission since they influence the mission's alignment with international laws, cooperation and coordination, and pose certain legal constraints to the mission (Johnson, 2016). The findings also pointed out issues relating to judicial issues, a hindrance to compliance with host nations laws legal protection and immunities and the effect on conflict resolution and mechanism.

Regional Laws can have varying definitions from international actors. Johnson (2016) explains that successful missions incorporate international, regional, and local actors in the development, implementation, and evaluation phases. These groups have different priorities and interests in enforcing their involvement and human rights standards. Consequently, each group has varying needed outcomes and contributions of resources for specific mission objectives. Moreover, these diverse opinions and needs for involvement complicate the missions' objectives and activities. Within the regional legal frameworks, there are different subgroups with different missions which influences the UN's definition of mission's scope and operations.



Regional economic frameworks prioritizes macroeconomic stability and trade, sidelining the socioeconomic issues that significantly contribute to conflict (Davis, 2021). The mission has had to conduct a thorough assessment to ensure South Sudan can participate in trade, especially in the post-conflict era. Additionally, regional economic frameworks must consider the varying wealth distribution among involved members. These differences affect political stands and cause power struggles. The mission dealt with this challenge by including regional actors' representatives in political dialogues and negotiation processes. One respondent noted that;

...The complexities of regional organizations, actors and dynamics, including diverse interests and power struggles among regional actors, can always hinder the efficacy of these frameworks and impact the mission's peace-building efforts....

Regional actors, including neighbouring countries, could promote and hinder the mission's activities. The conflict in South Sudan has led to increased numbers of refugees and cross-border issues, such as proliferation of arms, illegal migration, and illicit activities. Consequently, the mission engaged neighbouring states in political dialogues and activities development to curb these challenges. In some cases, the conflict situation in South Sudan threatened the peace of neighbouring countries and has forced the states to amend their policies to protect their interests and prevent violence extension across their borders.

In response, the mission has changed some of their policies and regulations to ensure that its activities are effective within South Sudan but do not violate these policies. The mission has also had to be vigilant in all its decisions to ensure that it does not undermine the political views and powers of regional actors (Francis, 2019). It has ensured recognition of all contributions from regional actors equally to prevent clashes and withdrawal of support.

4.1.6 International Law

Under the UN mandate, international law plays a significant role in the mission. Despite these efforts, the mission has failed to act to the standards of the internal law due to its inability to curb most of the conflict-related crimes and human violations affecting South Sudanese IDPs and refugees (United Nations, 2008). International law emphasizes the need for the mission to protect civilians. However, the mission cannot control and prevent every conflict-related crime, including harassment and abuse of women and children, through targeted attacks, sexual abuse, and forced migration. Moreover, the mission has faced funding and resources issues. The growing number of people in displacement camps and reliance on humanitarian aid for basic needs causes strains in the division and budgeting of available resources. These issues compromise the mission's ability to protect civilians effectively. One respondent a civilian UN staff observed that;

...The mission has faced challenges relating to judicial constraints which link to sovereignty and territorial integrity. The government sometimes poses restrictions on the mission's freedom of movement or access to certain areas, this hinders the mission's capacity to carry out its mandate effectively, especially when there are disputes over the interpretation of international legal norms concerning peacekeeping operations....

The mission has formulated frameworks addressing impunity, punishing perpetrators, and promoting justice. Although these frameworks have been effective, the mission has been forced to assess the situation and needs of the population, diving the legal needs into current and long-term efforts. This practicality has brought about friction between the mission and state actors (Autesserre, 2011). Too much involvement from the mission has raised concerns about the independence and impartiality of the mission to South Sudan, especially in terms of transitional justice (Anderson, 2018).

It was established that the prolonged conflict has weakened the state, increased corruption, and led to the development of illicit businesses, which could challenge a post-conflict South Sudan government. Interestingly, the mission has remained focused on re-establishing the rule of law, which would be highly significant after the closure of military bases (Anderson, 2018). One respondent, a civil affairs officer remarked that.

...International laws and legal frameworks are dependent on interpretation and may contain ambiguities or gaps that complicate the mission's operational effectiveness. For example, the use of force in the protection of civilians and laws regarding detention of civilians. In the recent past the mission has faced challenges in dealing with complex legal issues while ensuring obedience to international legal norms....

Without the rule of law, the departure will increase crime rates due to the sudden ease of humanitarian aid, military protection, and active justice. Socioeconomic challenges, including poverty, inaccessibility of basic amenities, and inequality, would contribute to the prevalence of crime in South Sudan. As part of the peace-building processes, the mission has continued to train national authorities and civil servants on developing reforming and rehabilitation institutions.



4.3 Opportunities

The study identified and examined the following opportunities and how they can improve the efficacy of the mission.

4.3.1 Capacity Building

The mission utilizes its tools and opportunities to increase the coping capacities of communities in South Sudan (Lederach, 2019). They offer technical and informal training for interested and qualified civilians as a strategy for improving their living standards. With these lessons, they have the opportunity and skills to qualify their participation in peace-building programs, including dialogues on reconciliation and forgiveness (Autesserre, 2011).

The training also increases the sense of authenticity of the peace-building programs, encouraging more people to participate. These lessons will have a ripple effect on future generations by providing tools to curb crimes due to socioeconomic issues. Positive contributions from the community will promote the rule of law and respect for human rights. The study findings established that the training should also include conflict management lessons on mediation, negotiation, risk assessment, and effective communication (Anderson (2018). These skills will equip the community with other mechanisms of resolving differences, lest the situations escalate to armed conflict. The peace restoration process is fragile, especially after the prolonged ongoing conflict. One respondent observed that;

...Capacity-building initiatives under UNMISS can foster the development of local expertise, empower communities, and promote sustainable peace-building practices....

The capacity-building initiatives should be inclusive of all groups, including marginalized communities and minority groups, people with disabilities, and Indigenous people. The mission has the privilege of considering women and youth in decision-making and countering cultural limitations that hinder its effectiveness (Agada, 2008). Their engagement in peace-building missions enhances ownership of the decision-making and implementation processes, which improves the communal sense of ownership and sustainability of the programs. Inclusivity empowers community members by equipping them with tools to develop long-term plans for sustainable peace initiatives (United Nations, 2008). Their participation and activeness will enhance their positive attitude toward peace and peaceful negotiations from the local to government levels.

4.3.2 Conflict Prevention and Recovery

The conflict prevention and recovery process in South Sudan will be gradual and will involve considering several elements. Conflict early warning systems will serve as valuable tools in reducing conflict tension and developing sustainable peace (Anderson, 2018). Early identification of potential situations with risk of escalation would promote response and conflict prevention strategies that would eventually de-escalate the tension (Wiborg, 2021). Early warning systems will also enhance understanding of conflict dynamics and identify the root causes and critical elements in conflict resolution, dialogues, and reconciliation processes. Thus, early warning systems will hinder the escalation of conflict, promoting sustainable peace by creating opportunities for addressing the root causes.

Conflict prevention and recovery conversations should be all-inclusive. Women and youth should use this opportunity to raise their concerns, establish their societal position, and become part of the solution development plan (de Guevara & Kostic, 2018). It is an opportunity to communicate their grievances and incorporate strategies to increase their participation in future governance and leadership roles (Autesserre, 2011). One respondent remarked that;

...The mission has been able to integrate traditional reconciliation mechanisms including community dialogues and truth reconciliation approaches that have so far facilitated healing and addressed the root causes of conflict in ways that reverberate with customs and traditions of the locals....

The study findings established that this opportunity should also emphasize local involvement in the decision-making process. The mission emphasizes its will to take ownership of the decision-making and dialogue processes, facilitating the foundation of trust, effective communication, and inclusion of empathy. Participation can bring about unique perceptions of ideas and incorporation of gender discussions, leading to solid negotiation mechanisms that are inclusive, understanding, and value diverse opinions without barriers to gender issues.

The mission considers local community stakeholders in the peace-building process. The conflict resolution process at the community level should consider local actors' better understanding of the root causes and impact of conflict on their lives. They have local intelligence, which is often undocumented, on cultural values and social dynamics (Lederach, 2019). Their participation in the conflict resolution process enhances their sense of ownership. It enriches the decision-making process by providing unique ideas and perspectives on how the mechanisms can be efficient and sustainable to them.

The mission can improve community living standards by improving socioeconomic development, which would be efficient and significant after the mission is completed. Livelihood support programs help reduce people's vulnerability by curbing poverty and improving their lives (Boyce and O'Donnell, 2007). The conflict resolution



dialogues should include discussions on economic policies and projects. These topics promote cooperation, inclusivity, and trust by emphasizing the participation of different forms of people with knowledge and skilled labour. Additionally, DDR programs for ex-combatants provide an opportunity to offer training in varying skills and reintegration into the local community. One key informant remarked that;

...The mission has been able to foster and achieve ownership and legitimacy of the peace process by encouraging the participation of diverse actors and stakeholders thus promoting social justice and inclusivity.....

The initiatives equip the conflict-to-peace transition process by disarming the ex-combatants, offering vocational training, reintroducing them to a regular functioning community, and ensuring they adjust to the post-conflict environment. The DDR process also entails support services, such as medical assistance and counselling sessions, which meet their individual needs. The mission can promote such programs' sustainability and prevent further re-recruitment.

Legal reforms and the re-establishment of the rule of law in South Sudan will require the mission's active involvement. The mission can extend support to developing the rule of law, reestablishing the judiciary body, and promoting transitioning justice mechanisms (Autesserre, 2011). Process-sensitive elements such as training law enforcers and ensuring the institution's development and legal frameworks are based on trust and authentic processes that determine people's confidence in the legal system and the effectiveness of the rule of law.

4.3.3 Gender Mainstreaming

The mission is guided by several UN resolutions that promote gender mainstreaming. It adheres to UNSCR 1325 (2000) in promoting gender equality in the management and execution of roles. The resolution emphasizes the effectiveness of inclusivity from the gender perspective (Wiborg, 2021). It aims to curb gender-based discrimination and violence in the mission. The mission can incorporate knowledge and skills in promoting women's rights by ensuring the system acknowledges and respects their skills and needs in conflict resolution, management, and recovery.

UNSCR 1820 (2008) encourages women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes. The mission can promote this resolution by increasing the number of women representatives in dialogues, negotiation processes, and community initiatives. It would also entail addressing gender-based violence by considering women's rights and developing programs for victims. One respondent, a gender specialist observed that;

...Gender mainstreaming refers to the integration of gender perspective into all aspects of programs, policies, and activities thus recognizing the significance of addressing gender inequalities

The respondents opined that gender mainstreaming aims to promote gender equality at all levels of peace-building processes. It entails integrating a gender perspective in dialogues and peace-building initiatives, including women's contribution to decision-making processes (Brüntrup-Seideman et al., 2021). Some associated benefits include recognition of women's voices, expertise, and influence in peace and security.

Respondents reiterated it entails recognizing women's potential as change influencers rather than only considering them as receivers of the implemented policies (Wiborg, 2021). Gender mainstreaming also advocates against gender-based violence, which is rampant in conflict zones and addressed in UNSCR 1888 of 2009. The mission can champion the development of gender-sensitive policies and victim response plans. These strategies are highly efficient and practical because they accept the complexities of the cases, providing more practical solutions and prevention strategies.

Gender mainstreaming programs focus on changing society from gender stereotyping. The program focuses on conducting mass education forums and campaigns that create awareness and counter misconceptions and negativity on the division of labour and peace-building roles. The mission encourages gender mainstreaming programs by allocating time and resources for the campaigns and programmes. The mission also helps save vulnerable communities exposed to gender-based violence and extreme practice, including young girls exposed to early marriages. One key informant observed that,

...Gender mainstreaming has helped in identifying and tackling the root causes of gender-based violence and inequalities by looking into diverse perspectives and needs of men, boys, women and girls. These perspectives are frequently intertwined with the broader cause of conflict....

The mission's initiatives also aim to promote UNSCR 2242 of 2015 which sought to encourage the development of institutions that are gender sensitive and encourage inclusivity. The mission targets government and community institutions, including the justice and political systems, to ensure that they adhere to and uphold women's rights (Autesserre, 2011). It also ensures that the legislation has women representatives and actively participates in amending policies to enhance inclusivity in leadership roles.

The mission also upholds UNSCR 2467 (2019) which focuses on women empowerment programs that target peace-building positions. UNMISS has created women-led programs that offer training to female civilians, who then gain positions in the initiative programs (Agada, 2008). These roles create a ripple effect and development of communal-owned programs that have economic value and are sustainable even after the conflict ceases.

4.3.4 Women, Peace and Security

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda forms a sensitive part in UNMISS peace-building mission and initiative roles. WPS stresses women's inclusion and participation in leadership and governance positions (Smith, 2021). It claims that by their involvement, the initiatives will be authentic, practical, and accepted by many, due to an increased sense of community participation and inclusion.

The study further sought to investigate women's peace and security as an opportunity that the mission has exploited to support the peace process and the broader peace-building initiatives in South Sudan. The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on various elements of WPS as an opportunity and the results were analysed and presented in Figure 5 below.

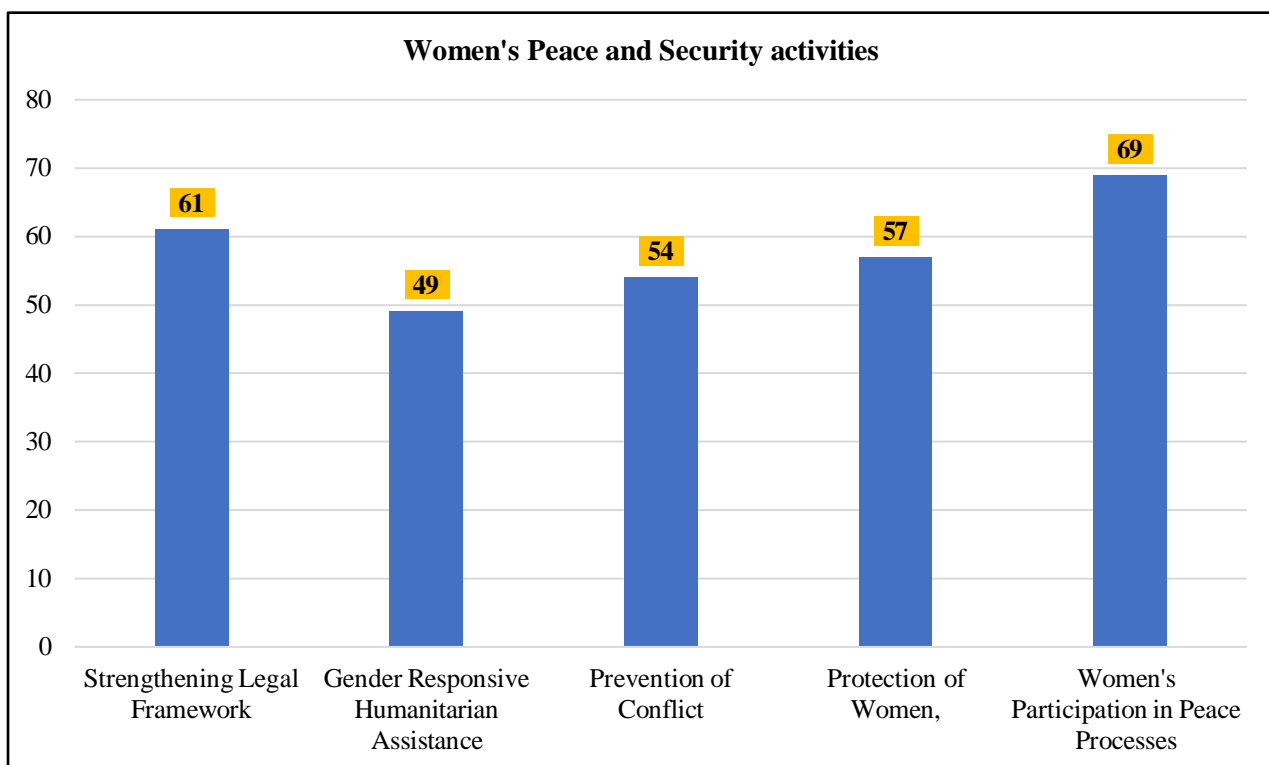


Figure 5
Women's Peace and Security

It was established that respondents' opinions on each of these elements highlight the potential benefits and opportunities that each offers under UNMISS's peace-building initiatives. 23 % and 21% of the respondents noted that women's participation in peace processes and strengthening the legal framework respectively worked best to support WPS in the mission area. Others put a lot of emphasis on addressing concerns like gender-responsive humanitarian assistance, prevention of conflict and physical protection of women and children from harm.

The findings indicate that WPS offers significant opportunities to the mission's peace-building efforts and can be utilized to promote sustainable peace as it also promotes respect for human rights and the rule of law in a mission area. (Smith, 2021). Key activities like participation of women, conflict prevention protection, recovery and relief and instituting various gender-responsive institutions and women protection advisors (WPA) networks can enhance and bolster the efficacy of UNMISS in attaining sustainable peace and development

WPS resolution has enabled the mission to change South Sudan's culture by creating positions for women in peace-building programs. Moreover, some programs, such as those that manage conflict-related sexual violence to women and children are best led by fellow women, who have a better understanding of the impact of such effects on the community



The mission also includes women in the distribution of humanitarian aid supplies as they form the greatest number of the vulnerable displaced population in need of protection and supplies.

WPS also provides the mission with an opportunity to challenge the legal frameworks and develop inclusive policies (Smith, 2021). It is an opportunity to challenge the legal frameworks, developing more protective and inclusive policies, which promote participation and security of women (Aronsson, 2021). These changes ensure that future activities are gender sensitive and responsive to women, delivering their needs effectively and timely. Thus, the mission has the privilege of using WPS's agenda to change South Sudan's leadership systems.

4.3.5 International and Regional Cooperation

The mission could conduct all its roles and operations due to regional and international cooperation (Anderson, 2018). Although different actors have varying priorities and need varying gains from their participation, the mission has the opportunity to craft these ideas into unified goals that ensure all parties' agendas are included in the initiatives. The study surveyed a total of 290 respondents to obtain their views and perspectives on how and why regional and global corporations can present a fleeting opportunity to UNMISS and the results were analyzed and presented in table 3 below.

Table 3

International and Regional Cooperation

International and regional activities	Population	Percentage
Political Support	35	12%
Resource Mobilization	40	13%
Diplomatic Mediation	38	13%
Security Sector Reform	36	12%
Humanitarian Assistance	35	12%
Reconciliation and Transitional Justice	32	11%
Regional Economic Integration	36	12%
Information Sharing and Coordination	38	13%
Total	290	100

The study findings revealed that international and regional cooperation present a great opportunity for the mission through various activities as identified above by the respondents. Further analysis of research findings reveals that there is a need to facilitate dialogue and promote social cohesions and community-led initiatives to build trust and solidarity among various global and regional groups (Anderson, 2018). Through this the mission can leverage the opportunity to strengthen and support cooperation with all actors and partners

The cooperation also provides support to the development of SSR in South Sudan. The actors are made of experts with technical skills, who offer substantial assistance in the missions peace-building implementation process (Smith, 2017). These experts offer training programs to active officers and civilians interested in the development of best SSR practices. Moreover, the actors provide South Sudan with guidelines on how best to develop SSR programs.

These tools form the foundation of good governance and SSR development. Regional actors cooperate with the mission in developing conflict resolution and mediation criteria. The African Union used its understanding of African culture and societal norms in drafting practical mechanisms that would encourage dialogue and reconciliations among the warring parties. The actors also hold South Sudan accountable for promises made during SSR policy development. They offer monitoring and evaluation programs that assess the government's performance in analyzing the best practices and effectiveness of the reforms.

Regional and International actors are best at offering humanitarian assistance, especially during the critical first stages of managing the conflict tension. These supplies help address the immediate needs of the vulnerable population, reducing conflict and tension that arise due to uneven and inadequate availability of resources (Anderson, 2018). This form of help also lowers the urge for revenge and the insecurity feeling that could entice people to seek help and protection from armed groups. It also reduces the probability of the youth considering joining the armed groups as participants aiming to address the needs of fellow loved ones (Smith, 2018). Thus, the mission uses humanitarian assistance as an opportunity to change the mentality of the displaced population.

Reconciliation and transitional justice present the mission with opportunities to advocate for peace restoration. They provide an environment for peaceful negotiations, the establishment of truth, and the restoration of trust (Roberts, 2015). The Truth Commission and its initiatives provide platforms for victims to share their experiences from a personal perspective and receive acknowledgement of their adverse experiences. These testimonies help change people's attitudes while noticing similarities in suffering. Thus, it enhances cooperation in establishing justice and preventing future conflict prevention mechanisms (Smith, 2018). Transitional justice and reconciliation encourage inclusivity and social

justice by engaging different stakeholders and communities in workshops and cultural exchange programs that enhance understanding of diversity and the best strategies for promoting peace-building initiatives.

Information sharing and coordination present the mission with the opportunity to enhance the efficiency of peace-building processes. Gathering data through monitoring and reporting mechanisms enhances the mission's understanding of conflict dynamics, impact, and potential threats that would escalate the situation to violence (Roberts, 2015). These pieces of information are also essential in addressing root causes of conflict by enhancing understanding of the crucial factors and actions of the groups involved.

They promote truth and transparency, effectively curbing misunderstandings and misconceptions (Anderson, 2018). It creates unified approaches to peace-building efforts. Information sharing through agencies of varying disciplines creates a multidimensional approach that enhances the effectiveness of the programs. It also enables the development of effective resource allocation and distribution channels that would ensure balanced distribution and prevent duplication of efforts (Roberts, 2015). Coordinated efforts can have overlapping roles, potentially resulting in resource scarcity conflict. Thus, information sharing and coordination ensure that all involved bodies have updated data on activities and roles, creating an integrated approach in conflict prevention and peace-building approaches.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The article explores the challenges that the mission faces during peace-building processes. It also discusses opportunities UNMISS could utilize to increase its effectiveness in South Sudan. The challenges arise from insufficient resources, the UN definition of mandate and scope of engagement, and the security situation. These factors arise from the missions collaborations of local, national, legal, and international involvement.

The multiple cycles of conflict affect the development and progress of peace-building projects. Despite these challenges, some factors have allowed the mission to enhance its participation and effectiveness in peace-building programs. The opportunities aim to improve the living standards in South Sudan by engaging local members, marginalized communities, and regional and international agencies. This multidimensional engagement aims to structure interventions and change social norms to suit the needs of South Sudan and promote substantial peace.

5.2 Recommendations

The mission can address most of the challenges associated with its presence in South Sudan by increasing funding and ensuring the availability of resources. Expanding the pool of resources will increase the mission's effectiveness in South Sudan. The resources will increase the scope and improve the multidimensional approaches to developing peace-building strategies.

It will also enhance the stability and sustainability of the programs during and after conflict resolution. Adequate resources will be significant in ensuring that the foundation and implementation of the program have an increased impact by overcoming complex conflict structures and operational constraints. Thus, funding will increase the mission's positive outcome, making the programs inclusive, stable, successful, and sustainable

The mission could resolve most of the critical challenges by conducting a further contextual analysis of the conflict dynamic and by evaluating the current efficacy of peace-building efforts. Equally further studies focusing on analyzing relations between mission, regional, and international agencies, establishing the differences, and identifying further multidimensional opportunities should be conducted to enhance the effectiveness and stability of peace-building programs in South Sudan.

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