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# Strategies Used by South Sudanese Diaspora in Kenya for Peacebuilding in South Sudan

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the strategies used by the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya for peacebuilding in South Sudan between 2011 and 2023. Despite the ongoing conflict in South Sudan since its independence, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the role of diaspora communities in supporting peacebuilding initiatives. This study, therefore, examines the role of the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya in contributing to peacebuilding in their home country. The study was guided by transnationalism and social capital theories and adopted a case study research design. Qualitative data were collected using interview guides and focus group discussion (FGD) guides. The research was conducted in Nairobi City County, which hosts a large South Sudanese diaspora population, and in Juba, where several peacebuilding initiatives are implemented. A total of 102 participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling from South Sudanese embassy officials in Nairobi, Kenyan peace mediators, returnees, South Sudanese residents in Nairobi, and employees of non-governmental organisations involved in peacebuilding. Data were analysed thematically. The findings reveal that the diaspora employs several strategies for peacebuilding, including diaspora diplomacy, negotiation initiatives, educational support, mobilisation of women, promotion of socio-economic development and good governance, the use of remittances, and the promotion of cultural diversity. The study concludes that diaspora communities can play a significant role in peacebuilding and recommends policy frameworks that integrate diaspora contributions in post-conflict reconstruction, as well as further research on gender and youth diaspora peacebuilding initiatives.

**Key words:** Diaspora strategies, South Sudanese diaspora communities, social capital, transnationalism.



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## INTRODUCTION

Diaspora communities have emerged as pivotal transnational actors in peacebuilding, leveraging their multi-sited embeddedness to connect host countries and homelands through various strategies. Their unique context-specific knowledge, exposure to democratic values, and access to resources enable them to address the root causes of conflict such as inequality and exclusion, while fostering dialogue and mobilising international support (Toivanen & Baser, 2020).

Globally, Syrian diaspora groups in Europe, particularly those in Germany, engage in peacebuilding through humanitarian assistance, advocacy, lobbying for international support, and justice initiatives such as supporting universal jurisdiction trials. They foster dialogue and rebuild social capital amid fragmentation by using their relatively neutral position in host countries to mediate and promote reconciliation indirectly through cultural diplomacy and storytelling. These efforts have shifted from direct political engagement during the early stages of the conflict to integration support and small-scale humanitarian assistance in response to the protracted nature of the crisis.

Similarly, the Colombian diaspora in cities such as London, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, and Barcelona organised public hearings, victims' forums, and women's reconciliation commissions to influence peace negotiations and advocate for rights within the 2016 peace agreement. They contributed more than 2,100 testimonies to the Truth Commission (2018–2022), enabling truth-seeking processes, psychosocial healing, and increased visibility of exile experiences through bottom-up alliances. Their strategies included bridging political divides through activism, challenging exclusion, and fostering dialogue across ideological lines.

In discussing post-conflict engagement models, Potters (2010) details how the Tamil diaspora shifted strategies after the LTTE conflict by advocating lobbying efforts, redirecting fundraising initiatives, and promoting intra-community dialogues in order to transition from conflict support to reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Similarly, the Ukrainian diaspora mobilises humanitarian aid, refugee assistance, and civil society partnerships for reconstruction, leveraging transnational networks to facilitate mediation and the flow of resources. Both cases emphasise inclusivity, psychosocial support, and policy recognition as essential elements for sustaining long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Within the African context, diaspora strategies include investments of time, financial resources, and professional skills to support stabilisation, economic recovery, and development initiatives in sectors such as health and education, particularly in conflict-affected countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Organisations such as Ilaynabad and the Anti-Tribalism Movement implement community-based programmes aimed at youth social healing and conflict resolution, while groups such as Governance Programming Overseas (GPO) support governance initiatives in transitional contexts.

Diaspora communities from East African countries including Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda employ strategies such as bridge-building between conflicting parties, transmitting peace values through training, lobbying policymakers, establishing networks for partnerships, and facilitating dialogue initiatives to enhance awareness. These soft power approaches emphasise capacity-building workshops, fundraising, and conflict resolution training, drawing insights from Diaspora Academy workshops held in Europe with participants originating from these countries (Toivanen, 2018).

Tanin (2020) examined the role of diaspora diplomacy in state reconstruction, particularly in countries that have experienced conflict and political instability. The study highlights how diaspora communities engage in political advocacy by pushing for reforms and accountability in their home countries. Their ability to mobilise support and raise awareness on international platforms influences both domestic and foreign policy and thereby fosters a more conducive environment for state reconstruction.

Focusing on the African diaspora, Antwi-Boateng (2012) examined the transformation of the Liberian diaspora in the United States into norm entrepreneurs who forged partnerships with non-governmental organisations, corporations, and host states to promote post-war reconciliation. Similarly, Tombe (2024) conducted a survey on the South Sudanese diaspora and peacebuilding in South Sudan and found that members of the South Sudanese diaspora in Nebraska in the United States were actively involved in peacebuilding initiatives in their home country.

Within the Horn of Africa, Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2016) analysed Ethiopian diaspora engagement in transitional justice processes and identified variations in advocacy for mechanisms such as truth commissions and

reparations as peacebuilding tools. Although the study highlights the diaspora's role in promoting international norms, it gives limited attention to diaspora-state diplomatic engagement within federal governance systems.

Additionally, Hoehne et al. (2010) examined the contributions of Horn of Africa diasporas across conflict zones and emphasised their transnational roles in mediation and economic stabilisation. Their focus on multi-sited engagement reveals gaps in diplomatic coordination during ongoing conflicts, including the implementation of South Sudan's Revitalised Peace Agreement. Approaches such as the appointment of diaspora attachés in Kenyan diplomatic missions could help to systematise these efforts.

Examining Somaliland's experience, Galipo (2015) investigated the role of the Somali diaspora in Somaliland's peace processes and highlighted the importance of remittances, skills transfer, and lobbying in transforming local governance. These successes are attributed to a hybrid approach that combines formal and informal diplomatic engagement; however, the study does not address the scalability of such approaches to state-level conflicts. In a related study, Abdullahi (2017) examined the role of traditional institutions and authorities in the reconstruction of the Somali state and argued that the combination of clan structures and religious institutions, particularly Islam, played a significant role in the restoration process.

Focusing on South Sudan, Amoui (2022) observes that peacebuilding constituted a key component of post-civil conflict state reconstruction. The political processes of their home countries are significantly influenced by African diaspora communities, which form the basis for diaspora agency and engagement in domestic affairs. This perspective is relevant to the present study, which examines how the South Sudanese diaspora contributes to peacebuilding in countries recovering from civil war and armed conflict.

Moreover, members of the South Sudanese diaspora have actively participated in governance in their country of origin. Following South Sudan's independence, hundreds of diaspora members returned to serve in government positions. In addition, the South Sudanese community in Australia exercised advocacy by urging the Australian government to intervene through material, logistical, and financial support for peacebuilding initiatives in South

Sudan. They also called on the Australian government to exert pressure on the warring political factions in South Sudan to cease hostilities (Gauchi, 2018). This study highlights the role of the South Sudanese diaspora as an agent in conflict resolution and governance.

The foregoing literature reveals several research gaps, including the limited integration of diaspora strategies with formal diplomatic channels, insufficient coordination of advocacy efforts with host governments, and inadequate incorporation of diaspora narrative strategies within intergovernmental forums. Furthermore, the literature gives limited attention to bottom-up diaspora approaches to peacebuilding at the national level. In addition, existing studies have not sufficiently examined the processes and networks through which the South Sudanese diaspora engages in peacebuilding.

Scholars have also not adequately demonstrated the need to link South Sudanese diaspora strategies with transitional justice mechanisms under regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which creates gaps in institutionalised engagement. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how the diaspora may exert pressure on national governments in coordination with host governments, despite both being key actors in conflict dynamics.

Importantly, Kenya serves as a significant host country for a large number of South Sudanese diaspora members within the East African region. Kenya has historically played an important role in the peace process between North and South Sudan under the IGAD-led mediation process chaired by General Lazarus Sumbeiywo. The country has also remained actively involved in mediation efforts in the ongoing South Sudanese conflict by providing its good offices for negotiations. Consequently, South Sudanese citizens often view Kenya as a relatively safe host country both as members of the diaspora and as refugees.

### **Rationale of the Paper**

Although diaspora communities seek to build livelihoods in their host states, they have also played a role in conflict management within their respective countries. This is evident in the contributions of the Rwandese diaspora after the 1994 genocide, the Somali diaspora during the transitional period, and the Congolese diaspora during periods of crisis in their country. These diaspora communities have employed various strategies

that reflect their historical experiences, the nature of their conflicts, and the parties involved. However, the strategies documented in the literature largely relate to countries that have experienced protracted and long-term conflicts.

The uniqueness of the South Sudanese diaspora community in Kenya lies in the need to examine the strategies they employ for peacebuilding, particularly because South Sudan is a relatively newly formed state. In addition, South Sudanese living in Kenya may not possess the same level of resources as diaspora communities located in the Global West, yet they have remained involved in peacebuilding efforts in their home country.

Despite the persistent conflict in South Sudan, the strategies employed by its diaspora in Kenya for peacebuilding remain underexplored and underutilised, with limited empirical studies examining their remittances, advocacy, and civic engagement. This gap limits effective policy integration and constrains the full utilisation of diaspora potential in promoting sustainable peace. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill this gap by interrogating evidence-based diasporic strategies from host states in the Global South and examining their contribution to peacebuilding, with a focus on South Sudanese diaspora communities living in Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a case study research design because it provided rich insight into the complex relationship between the South Sudanese diaspora and peacebuilding processes, while also allowing flexibility in data collection. The design enabled the researcher to systematically and accurately focus the study within defined spatial and temporal boundaries while providing an opportunity to collect different sets of data.

Juba and Nairobi were selected as the areas of study. Juba was included because most South Sudanese political and peacebuilding activities are based there, while Nairobi hosts South Sudanese diaspora members who engage in peacebuilding initiatives. The target population for this study consisted of South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya, estimated at 24,000 based on non-refugee data from the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Report. Additionally, Kenyan peace mediators involved in South Sudan, returnees, members of the local population living in South Sudan, personnel from non-governmental organisations working on peacebuilding

issues, and officials from the South Sudan Embassy in Nairobi also formed part of the research population.

A purposive sampling technique was used to collect in-depth data from respondents considered knowledgeable on the topic, “*Strategies used by South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya for peacebuilding in South Sudan.*” Snowball sampling was also employed to identify participants with extensive knowledge who were difficult to identify for interviews. In total, 42 key informants were purposively selected and six focus group discussions consisting of eight participants each were conducted. The study therefore adopted a sample size of 102 participants. This sample size was justified through the principle of data saturation achieved by combining purposive and snowball sampling strategies, emphasising information power and the saturation point. An interview guide, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide, and a document review checklist were used to collect primary data. Secondary data were obtained from journals, books, theses, and online resources. Relevant documents were also sourced from institutions of higher learning such as libraries, ministry records, and records held in embassies. These documents were carefully scrutinised and analysed in line with the research question of the study.

Data analysis involved processing the collected data into consistent segments that informed the entire study. The data were coded and grouped into themes according to the research question, after which thematic analysis was conducted. The analysis was guided by Transnationalism Theory and Social Capital Theory in interpreting the findings. The information was then presented logically using content analysis in prose form. During data collection, respondents were informed of their rights and the purpose of the study. In managing the data, objectivity was maintained by relying on available evidence to draw conclusions rather than personal bias.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis and interpretation of the findings related to the research question on the strategies used by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya for peacebuilding in South Sudan.

### **Use of Conventional Diplomatic Strategies by the South Sudanese Diaspora for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya employed several conventional diplomatic strategies to support peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. These strategies

included participation in multilateral initiatives, engagement in diaspora diplomacy, and the use of negotiation as an approach to promote peacebuilding in South Sudan.

### **South Sudanese Diaspora in Kenya and the Use of Multilateral Initiatives for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The international community has been at the forefront of supporting peacebuilding activities in South Sudan. The South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya has employed various strategies, including lobbying, advocacy, and the use of pressure groups, to influence multilateral institutions to engage more actively in supporting peacebuilding initiatives in South Sudan.

Key multilateral actors involved include the United Nations (UN), Troika countries, the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the East African Community (EAC). The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has engaged these organisations to strengthen peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. For instance, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which was mandated to support peacebuilding, protect civilians, and stabilise the situation following South Sudan's independence referendum in 2011, has operated with approximately 17,000 soldiers and 2,000 police officers. An interviewee working for a non-governmental organisation dealing with peace issues in South Sudan observed that there was a need to blend peacebuilding strategies by fostering collaboration between the South Sudanese diaspora and UNMISS in order to benefit from their initiatives towards achieving sustainable peace in South Sudan, despite the existence of vested interests in the peace process.

This paper argues that the engagement of UNMISS by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya could represent an important step towards realising sustainable peace. These findings align with Hellmuller (2014), who argued that such integration represents hybrid peacebuilding, and Mac Ginty (2011), who noted that hybridity often leads to local peace efforts being incorporated into broader international peace intervention strategies and frameworks. The involvement of the United Nations in South Sudan therefore demonstrates interaction between international and local actors working together to complement each other's efforts.

The UN Peacekeeping Report (2024) further highlights how the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has

appealed to the United Nations to intervene in peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. Through their leaders, members of the diaspora have urged the UN to call upon South Sudanese leadership to engage in dialogue and organise democratic elections. A participant in a focus group discussion observed that the diaspora community had lobbied the UN to intervene in a manner similar to its involvement in Somalia and Libya, while also advocating dialogue among the political leaders of South Sudan.

This paper holds that UNMISS intervened in peacebuilding activities by encouraging the leaders of South Sudan to prepare for elections in order to reduce hostilities within the country. This development followed pressure from the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya and other parts of the world. These findings correspond with those of Mugo (2016) and Sing'Oei (2024), who observed that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya acts as a political bridge between the leaders of South Sudan and the local population. They further argue that the role of UNMISS has evolved to include providing political support by legitimising external dialogues and ensuring that members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya are involved in implementing peace agreements in South Sudan.

In their quest for peace in South Sudan, the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has also engaged the Troika countries through various approaches, including lobbying, advocacy, and petitioning. One informant noted that this engagement aimed to persuade South Sudanese leaders to review the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) and implement its key provisions. These efforts contributed to the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) following demands from diaspora communities. This paper argues that engagement with Troika countries by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya complemented local peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.

These findings are supported by reports from secondary sources, including IGAD and the United Nations Security Council, which indicate that IGAD intervened in 2014 partly due to pressure from Troika countries while the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya was actively engaging these actors. The Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) signed the IGAD-mediated

2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) in Addis Ababa. The agreement addressed several key issues, including power-sharing arrangements, joint security mechanisms, humanitarian assistance, economic reforms, transitional justice, constitutional reforms, and the organisation of a general election at the end of a three-year transitional period. These findings are consistent with Rourke (1999), who observed that Troika countries and other members of the international community later intervened through the High-Level Revitalisation Forum with the objective of securing a permanent ceasefire and ensuring full implementation of the peace agreement based on revised timelines and the conduct of free and fair elections after a forty-four-month transitional period.

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has also engaged the African Union to support peacebuilding in South Sudan by advocating for peacebuilding conferences, which have produced notable achievements. An interviewee noted that the AU played an important role in bringing together political actors in South Sudan and facilitating the signing of peace agreements due to external influence from the South Sudanese diaspora, although the responsibility for implementation ultimately lies with the leadership of South Sudan. This paper argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya successfully engaged the AU in encouraging South Sudanese leaders to participate in round-table discussions aimed at implementing peace agreements, thereby contributing to peacebuilding efforts in the country. These findings align with Keitany (2016), who argued that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya participates in AU peacebuilding processes by engaging in dialogues organised by the organisation.

IGAD has historically played a significant role in promoting peace in Sudan and later in South Sudan. Recognising IGAD's unique capacity in peace mediation, the South Sudanese diaspora community has actively lobbied and appealed to the organisation to intensify its mediation efforts in order to promote stability and peace. An interviewee observed that IGAD organised high-level meetings and conferences aimed at mediating the conflict in South Sudan and called for dialogue among political leaders, an initiative that may not have occurred without pressure from the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya. This paper argues that IGAD's involvement in mediating the conflict helped bring South Sudanese leaders together to discuss and implement peace

agreements, thereby contributing to peacebuilding initiatives in the country.

These findings correspond with Maru (2016), who noted that following the atrocities of 15 December 2013, IGAD dispatched a Ministerial Delegation led by the former Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, to Juba on 19 December 2013. Grang (2015) similarly observed that IGAD attempted preventive diplomacy measures to contain the violence and encouraged both the government and political opposition groups to engage in political dialogue.

During a focus group discussion, participants indicated that IGAD played a critical role in facilitating dialogue between President Salva Kiir and the then Vice-President Riek Machar. This dialogue helped ease tensions in the country following sustained pressure from South Sudanese diaspora communities across the world. The discussions drew the attention of South Sudanese leaders, who eventually announced a cessation of hostilities. This paper contends that South Sudanese experts in Kenya working through IGAD were able to exert pressure on the South Sudanese administration, which eventually opted for negotiations that led to a reduction in violence within the country.

These findings are consistent with Motsamai (2017), who observed that the IGAD Ministerial Delegation secured the willingness of President Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar to engage in political dialogue. Furthermore, the IGAD Council of Ministers, together with the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, and the United Nations Special Envoy to the African Union, Haile Menkerios, conducted a two-day fact-finding mission to Juba to assess the situation and encourage the parties to announce an immediate cessation of hostilities followed by peace negotiations.

The admission of South Sudan into the East African Community created new opportunities for the organisation to become involved in matters of peace and security in South Sudan. This development also provided the South Sudanese diaspora with a platform within the EAC Secretariat and the East African Legislative Assembly, which they have used to advocate initiatives that promote peacebuilding in South Sudan. During a focus group discussion, it emerged that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya raised concerns to the EAC regarding the possibility of imposing sanctions on South Sudanese leaders in order to compel them to implement

peace agreements and end the conflict. This paper argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya engaged the EAC in an effort to persuade South Sudanese leaders to commit to implementing peace agreements and thereby achieve sustainable peace in the country.

These findings are consistent with Sentry (2018), who noted that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has urged the EAC to address the conflict in South Sudan by supporting initiatives aimed at bringing conflicting leaders to the negotiation table and encouraging them to implement the peace agreements they have signed. Sentry further observed that the diaspora has called upon the EAC to consider seizing assets and properties owned by South Sudanese officials, including President Salva Kiir, former Vice-President Riek Machar, military officials, and politicians implicated in corruption and the perpetuation of conflict in South Sudan. According to the report, some of these officials own properties in Kenya, while others use Kenyan banks to transfer large sums of money, often holding assets under the names of family members. Such measures, it is argued, could encourage leaders to commit more seriously to peace processes.

South Sudanese diaspora communities in the Global West have continued to maintain networks and communication with their counterparts in Kenya due to Kenya's close proximity to South Sudan. These networks have facilitated communication between diaspora members in Kenya and communities in South Sudan as they attempt to address domestic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, weak institutions, and ethnic conflicts. An interviewee observed that coordination between South Sudanese diaspora communities in the Global West and those in Kenya created networks that linked them with local entities in South Sudan for peacebuilding initiatives. This paper therefore holds that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has been motivated and supported by counterparts in other parts of the world to continue peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.

These findings correspond with Shandy (2006), who observed that members of the South Sudanese diaspora in North America continue to send remittances to their immediate families, many of whom reside in neighbouring countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. She further noted that single South Sudanese individuals in the United States send an average of about 5,000 US dollars annually to their families in Ethiopia and Kenya. Shandy emphasised that the South Sudanese

diaspora continues to provide financial support to relatives and friends residing in refugee camps and urban centres in various countries. Consequently, host countries benefit from hosting South Sudanese refugees whose remittances support their families and communities.

### **South Sudanese Diaspora Diplomacy in Kenya and Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has utilised diaspora diplomacy as a strategy for peacebuilding in South Sudan. Diaspora diplomacy can be understood in two ways. First, it refers to diplomatic actions undertaken by governments outside their countries. Second, it refers to activities undertaken by diaspora citizens aimed at influencing developments in their countries of origin. The latter characterises the activities of the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya. Members of the diaspora have adopted a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding in South Sudan by implementing initiatives at the grassroots and community levels.

One informant observed that members of the diaspora had come together to support peacebuilding efforts through donations and by urging their government to implement all signed peace agreements. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has leveraged diaspora diplomacy to advocate for the implementation of peace agreements in South Sudan. These efforts have contributed to peacebuilding in the country.

These findings are consistent with Gamlen (2014), who noted that states often mobilise their diaspora citizens to become influential actors in domestic affairs. The findings also align with Ho and McConnell (2019), who observed that diaspora strategies frequently involve groups and organisations formed by diaspora citizens to engage with one another while maintaining connections with their countries of origin.

An interviewee further noted that the diaspora had initiated a programme known as "Prosperity for All", which aimed at lobbying, dialogue, and the empowerment of South Sudanese women both in Kenya and in South Sudan to support peace initiatives. According to the respondent, the initiative sought to discourage women from becoming involved in war-related activities. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has used diaspora diplomacy to initiate community-based projects that encourage women to participate in productive economic

activities, thereby reducing their involvement in violence. These initiatives have contributed to peacebuilding in South Sudan.

The findings correspond with Newland and Plaza (2013), who argued that diaspora diplomacy serves as an important mechanism through which diaspora communities can participate in economic activities and projects that promote socio-economic development in their countries of origin. This study established that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has engaged in several economic activities through diaspora diplomacy, including investments in businesses, real estate development, and agriculture. These ventures have been undertaken both in Kenya, where members of the diaspora reside, and in South Sudan through investment initiatives.

The study further found that such economic investments have created employment opportunities and attracted individuals to productive economic activities, thereby discouraging participation in war-related activities. As a result, these initiatives have contributed to peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.

### **South Sudanese Use of Negotiation Strategy for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has also used negotiation as a strategy for peacebuilding in South Sudan. Negotiation has been employed as a means of encouraging dialogue among conflicting parties and promoting peaceful resolution of disputes.

One informant observed that various stakeholders, including members of the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya, contributed their ideas to peace initiatives because they were directly affected by the conflict in South Sudan. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya played a critical role in advocating for dialogue between the two principal leaders of the country and for the inclusion of other groups involved in the conflict. Such efforts contributed to reducing tensions among their ethnic followers and supported peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. These findings correspond with Bedigen (2022), who noted that negotiation as a strategy for peacebuilding in South Sudan has contributed to the reduction of tensions. She further observed that integrating indigenous cultural practices into peacebuilding strategies, including local ceremonies, rituals, and institutions, can strengthen

negotiation processes and enhance their relevance in promoting long-term stability in South Sudan.

The findings also align with Jok (2015), who emphasised that negotiation strategies for peacebuilding should move beyond a narrow focus on the main warring parties and instead adopt a more inclusive approach that incorporates civil society organisations, community leaders, and women. Jok further argued that negotiation processes can be limited in achieving sustainable peace in South Sudan when peace actors prioritise elite power-sharing arrangements for personal interests rather than pursuing genuine peace and institutional reforms.

Another informant noted that after retiring and relocating to Kenya, some members of the diaspora mobilised support for power-sharing arrangements as a means of reducing tensions and promoting peace in South Sudan. This study therefore argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya supports negotiation processes that lead to power-sharing agreements, which have contributed to easing tensions among rival groups in South Sudan. These findings correspond with Horowitz (2014), who observed that negotiation and power-sharing arrangements contain accommodative elements that can address the conflicting interests of antagonistic groups and thereby foster peace.

The foregoing discussion on the South Sudanese use of conventional diplomatic strategies for peacebuilding in South Sudan highlights the use of multilateral initiatives, diaspora diplomacy, and negotiation as key approaches. Although these strategies are not directly under the control of the South Sudanese diaspora community, members of the diaspora utilise their networks and lobbying strategies to leverage conventional diplomatic mechanisms in support of peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.

### **Provision of Education Services for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

Education has increasingly become a key tool for peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict contexts. Among the strategies adopted by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya, education has been instrumental in promoting peacebuilding in South Sudan. Education has multifaceted implications for peacebuilding, functioning both as a deterrent to conflict and, if mismanaged, as a potential trigger of tension. As a deterrent, South Sudanese diaspora members who have acquired formal education have used their skills to empower themselves

through formal employment. In turn, they have contributed to peacebuilding by applying their knowledge and expertise in conflict resolution.

One informant observed that, upon acquiring education in Kenya, they initially applied their skills to promote peace within the diaspora community itself, which fostered neutrality in addressing conflicts. Subsequently, they encouraged their relatives in South Sudan to shun violence. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has embraced education as a strategy for promoting peaceful co-existence within their communities in Kenya, thereby overcoming tribal differences and contributing to peacebuilding in South Sudan.

These findings are consistent with Maber (2018) and Bush and Saltarelli (2000), who noted that education can function either as a catalyst for conflict or as an instrument for peace. They highlighted that unequal access to education can trigger conflict whenever disparities exist between groups. They further argued that diaspora involvement in the provision of education plays a vital role in producing qualified human resources. Unlike educational institutions established by governments or local entrepreneurs, those run by diaspora members often provide exposure to international curricula and academic programmes, making trainees and pupils suitable agents of peacebuilding.

An informant also noted that education equipped them with expertise in conflict resolution mechanisms, which they employed to mobilise fellow South Sudanese to acquire similar knowledge and apply these skills in their communities back home. This study argues that educational training obtained by the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya has enabled them to counsel one another and transmit these skills to South Sudanese citizens, who subsequently supported peacebuilding activities in South Sudan. These findings align with Kapur (2018), who observed that education fosters character formation, reconciliation, and socialization, critical components of peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that education as a peacebuilding strategy has enabled the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya to acquire knowledge and skills for employment, thereby increasing their resource capacity. This enhanced capacity has allowed them to engage more effectively in peacebuilding activities in South Sudan.

### **Mobilisation of Diasporic Women's Involvement in Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The role of women in peacebuilding cannot be underestimated, as they have demonstrated significant contributions over the years. Historically, during conflict situations, women have often been viewed primarily as victims requiring protection. However, this narrative has shifted in recent times. Literature on gender and peacebuilding emphasises that women, through leadership, education, social support, and cultural practices, play a crucial role in national peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries. In the context of South Sudan, the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya has highlighted women's contributions across key pillars such as security, governance, justice and reconciliation, and socio-economic development.

An informant noted that South Sudanese women in Kenya have actively organised peace conferences to lobby, sensitise, and advocate for the restoration of stability in South Sudan. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya recognises the importance of women's access and inclusion in peace campaigns, as their involvement strengthens the peacebuilding process through their skills and community influence. These findings align with Andersson and Simonsson (2024), who observed that women play a critical role in the democratisation of peace processes. The authors further argued that women's generally less violent and more caring approach increases the likelihood of enduring peace outcomes in their countries.

An informant also noted that a group of South Sudanese diaspora women in Kenya had formed an organisation that enabled them to conduct workshops and seminars aimed at promoting unity among South Sudanese citizens in Kenya. Through sharing their experiences of the conflict in South Sudan, these women facilitated healing and disseminated messages of peace to communities back home. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya prioritises women's participation in justice and reconciliation initiatives, which contributes to broader peacebuilding efforts. Women, through their networks and organisations, create platforms to discuss conflict-related issues, bringing together warring parties, fostering trust, and opening channels of communication that facilitate reconciliation. These findings are supported by Andrews (2016), who argued that peacebuilding should adopt local mechanisms

that allow victims to articulate the harms they have suffered, a process crucial to genuine reconciliation.

An informant further observed that South Sudanese diaspora women maintain networks with women in South Sudan, providing moral, financial, and advisory support. The study argues that women's involvement in peacebuilding is reinforced by collaboration with indigenous institutions of women leaders, such as Honyomiji. These local institutions are recognised as valuable assets in post-war peacebuilding and as key actors in ensuring communities thrive peacefully. These findings align with Simonse (2009), who noted that local women's institutions should work collaboratively with diaspora initiatives rather than viewing diaspora members as outsiders. This study established that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya actively collaborates with local women's institutions to strengthen peacebuilding in South Sudan.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that South Sudanese diasporic women in Kenya engage in peacebuilding by organising conferences, lobbying, sensitising communities, and advocating for stability. However, their full potential can be realised only through gender mainstreaming, ensuring access and inclusion of women in peace campaigns in South Sudan. Their participation equips them to champion peacebuilding processes effectively through their skills and leadership.

### **Promotion of Socio-Economic Development and Good Governance for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

Socio-economic development involves structural changes that affect the political, social, and economic spheres of a country. Among the strategies adopted by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya, socio-economic development has been instrumental in supporting peacebuilding in South Sudan.

An informant noted that diaspora groups in Kenya advocated for and supported equitable socio-economic development across all states of South Sudan to prevent recruitment of citizens into conflict. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya strongly support socio-economic development to improve the living standards of their people, including increased income, improved healthcare, and enhanced education systems. Such improvements are seen as critical to promoting peacebuilding in South Sudan. These findings align with Pieterse (2001), who observed that development is grounded in economic growth,

political, and social modernisation. Pieterse further noted that social development results from applying human intellect to organise physical resources, social activities, and ideas to achieve greater material, social, mental, and spiritual outcomes.

During a focus group discussion (FGD), participants observed that some South Sudanese youths who had previously been mobilised into violence by leaders have, while in Kenya, redirected their efforts towards lobbying for peace initiatives in their country. This study argues that socio-economic development is particularly important for fragile states or post-conflict societies like South Sudan, as it provides pathways towards peace and stability. Socio-economic development includes creating employment opportunities and empowering citizens to become job creators, thereby providing sustainable sources of income. South Sudan possesses enormous potential for socio-economic development, with abundant natural resources such as oil and fertile soils for agriculture. Proper exploitation of these resources can benefit the population and help avert conflict. These findings correspond with Asquith and Owusu (2020), who emphasised that socio-economic development is critical for national stability and survival. Roche (2018) similarly noted that raising living standards, increasing prosperity, and promoting social progress can foster peace and stability in conflict-affected nations.

An informant reported that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya empowered fellow citizens in South Sudan with skills and knowledge, deterring them from being drawn into the conflict and encouraging them to advocate for peace. This study argues that the diaspora actively supports socio-economic development by investing in South Sudan, and by equipping citizens with knowledge, skills, and experiences that improve livelihoods and contribute to peacebuilding. These findings align with Lafleur and Vintila (2020), who highlighted that diasporas can significantly contribute through trade, foreign direct investment, business creation, and knowledge transfer.

One informant added that, after achieving economic stability in Kenya, they mobilised fellow South Sudanese diaspora members to remit money and materials to support the development of schools and hospitals, thereby deterring participation in conflict. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya promotes socio-economic development as a key element of peacebuilding, providing financial and material

contributions that strengthen local infrastructure and services. These findings are supported by Hammond et al. (2011), who noted that diaspora remittances make vital contributions to social and economic development and human assistance in conflict zones. Hassan and Chalmers (2010) further observed that diaspora financial and material support sustains local projects and basic services, easing tensions between warring communities.

Socio-economic development is also promoted when diaspora members return to their home country to transfer knowledge and skills. An informant reported that over 13 years in Kenya, they frequently returned to South Sudan to provide food, medicine, and guidance on income-generating activities. This study argues that returnees bring valuable knowledge, resources, and skills that can be harnessed to foster socio-economic development and support peacebuilding. These findings are consistent with Koser and Black (1999) and Faist (2008), who noted that returnees can significantly contribute to development and peacebuilding in their home countries.

The South Sudanese diaspora also transfer financial, social, cultural, and human capital from their countries of residence. An informant observed that diaspora organisations in Kenya advocate for and support socio-economic development projects aimed at preventing violence. This study argues that the diaspora actively engages in social, economic, and political initiatives to enhance peace and stability in conflict-affected areas. These findings are supported by Bercovitch (2007), who noted that diaspora contributions through projects and mechanisms help ensure compliance with peace agreements and prevent the recurrence of conflict. Cochrane and Hansen (2007) similarly argued that diaspora involvement in economic and social advancement creates the foundation for sustainable peace.

In addition to socio-economic development, the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya supports good governance as a critical element for sustained peace and security. An informant observed that diaspora members finance forums that enhance citizen participation and strengthen governance institutions, promoting stability and accountability. This study argues that the diaspora advocates for inclusivity of all ethnic communities in governance, recognising that respect for citizens' rights and participation in decision-making processes is fundamental to ending violence. These findings align

with Francesco and Veronica (2015), who argued that effective governance should be collaborative, participatory, and inclusive, incorporating minorities, vulnerable groups, and stakeholders to build trust and understanding, particularly in high-conflict contexts. Ansell and Gash (2008) further noted that collaborative management in low-trust environments can build trust among stakeholders and support peacebuilding efforts.

Overall, the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya promotes socio-economic development and good governance as strategies for peacebuilding through improving living standards, lobbying for peace, empowering citizens with skills and knowledge, transferring resources, and financing forums to strengthen governance institutions. These approaches collectively create conditions for stability, development, and sustainable peace in South Sudan.

### **Celebrating Cultural Diversity for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya regard celebrating cultural diversity as a key strategy for peacebuilding in South Sudan.

During a focus group discussion (FGD), participants reported that they organised cultural celebrations to foster unity among South Sudanese in Kenya, which also served to diffuse ethnic tensions back home. This study argues that by celebrating cultural diversity, the diaspora has strengthened mutual appreciation and understanding among different ethnic groups. Emphasising culture in peacebuilding recognises that states are composed not only of government institutions but also of the diverse cultures and identities of their people. Lasting peace can only be achieved when both aspects are acknowledged and integrated into peace initiatives.

These findings are supported by McKay (2009), who noted that culture plays a critical role in maintaining peace in conflict-affected states. He highlighted that several civil wars between tribes aligned with Northern Sudan and those aligned with South Sudan were mitigated through cultural engagement.

An interviewee reported that diaspora groups organised festivals featuring dances, cuisines, and football matches, participating in tournaments that mobilised South Sudanese citizens to unite against violence in their country. These activities facilitated social interaction, enabling participants to learn about each other, and were

documented through photos and videos shared online or during visits to South Sudan. This practice contributed to peacebuilding by demonstrating unity and promoting positive inter-ethnic relations. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya strongly value their cultural heritage and emphasise the importance of maintaining cultural practices while living in the diaspora. Historically, culture has been used to resolve conflicts, and it continues to provide an effective tool for fostering peace in South Sudan.

These findings are further reinforced by Hagg and Kagwanja (2007), who highlighted the role of traditional justice mechanisms, including cultural celebrations, in peacebuilding in South Sudan. They argued that war begins in the mind, and so too must peace, and that celebrating culture can broaden social perceptions, build relationships, and dispel misconceptions about adversaries. This study established that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya have transformed their attitudes towards each other, fostering appreciation and understanding that help overcome historical prejudices.

In conclusion, regarding the celebration of cultural diversity, the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya first engaged in peacebuilding among themselves before extending these practices as a strategy for South Sudan. By holding cultural celebrations to foster unity in Kenya and showcasing this unity back home, they contributed to mitigating ethnic tensions and promoting a shared sense of purpose.

#### **Remittances for Peacebuilding in South Sudan**

The South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya also utilise remittances as a strategy for peacebuilding in South Sudan.

An informant observed that they frequently sent donations back home due to their empathy for people affected by the conflict. They lobbied for material and financial support, sending donations freely to assist their compatriots in alleviating the effects of war. This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya have been able to generate wealth which they channelled to support their people back home, helping many to avoid joining the conflict in South Sudan.

These findings are supported by Abdel-Samad and Flanigan (2018) and Best et al. (2013), who noted that emotional ties to a shared homeland, language, and culture create a sense of responsibility among diaspora

members. They further argued that diaspora members often give due to higher relative wealth or quality of life in the host country, or as part of cultural and moral obligations.

Remittances have significant implications for peacebuilding, acting as a deterrent to conflict. An interviewee reported that they had joined a group of South Sudanese diaspora in 2016, making monthly contributions in the form of funds and material goods to local organisations in South Sudan. They ensured that the remittances specifically targeted people affected by the war, improving access to food, education, and livelihoods, thereby reducing incentives to engage in fighting.

This study argues that the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya, motivated by moral obligation and sympathy, have sent remittances in the form of finances, material aid, and even political advocacy. Such support contributes to social, economic, and political development, which is crucial for sustainable peace. Remittances provide hope to those affected by conflict, promote resilience, and support broader peacebuilding efforts. These findings align with Mohamed (2021), who noted that diaspora remittances are motivated by family ties, morality, and religious obligations, with the aim of improving lives.

Remittances therefore serve as a practical tool for peacebuilding. South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya send donations and lobby for material and financial support, which their counterparts in South Sudan use to meet basic needs and engage in peacebuilding programmes.

Anchored in the theory of transnationalism, which emphasises cooperation, cross-border connections, and interdependence among states, the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya have established social networks that enable coordinated support for peacebuilding initiatives. Social capital theory further explains that networks of trust, cooperation, and social cohesion allow the diaspora to work together effectively despite occasional challenges. These collaborative networks have facilitated sustained contributions to peacebuilding in South Sudan.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Conclusion:** In line with the research question on the strategies adopted by the South Sudanese diaspora living in Kenya for peacebuilding in South Sudan, this paper identified several key strategies. These include engagement with multilateral initiatives, utilisation of

diaspora diplomacy, negotiation strategies, provision of education services, mobilisation of women for peacebuilding, promotion of socio-economic development, remittances, celebration of cultural diversity, and advocacy for good governance. Each of these strategies has contributed to peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan.

It can therefore be concluded that the strategies employed by the South Sudanese diaspora represent a whole-of-community approach. Activities by men, women, and youth were combined to restore peace in South Sudan.

The strategies discussed in this paper highlight the contributions of these critical groups within the South Sudanese diaspora in Kenya.

**Recommendations:** Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that future studies focus on gender-specific diaspora communities to explore their unique strategies for peacebuilding in South Sudan. Additionally, research should examine the contributions of youth in the diaspora and the strategies they adopt to support peacebuilding initiatives in their home country.

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